

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

2 -----  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING  
3 In the Matter of the  
2022-2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON  
4 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
5 -----

6 Virtual Hearing  
Conducted Online via Zoom

7  
8 January 26, 2022  
9:35 a.m.

9  
PRESIDING:

10 Senator Liz Krueger  
11 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

12 Assemblywoman Helene E. Weinstein  
13 Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

PRESENT:

14 Senator Thomas F. O'Mara  
15 Senate Finance Committee (RM)

16 Assemblyman Edward P. Ra  
17 Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

18 Assemblyman Michael Benedetto  
19 Chair, Assembly Education Committee

20 Senator Shelley Mayer  
Chair, Senate Education Committee

21 Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre  
22 Chair, Assembly Committee on Libraries  
and Education Technology

23 Senator Sean M. Ryan  
Chair, Senate Committee on Libraries  
24

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Libraries  
5 and Education Technology

6 Senator John Liu  
Chair, Senate Committee on New York City  
7 Education

8 Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick

9 Assemblyman Michael Reilly

10 Senator Robert Jackson

11 Assemblyman Steven Otis

12 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

13 Assemblyman Harry B. Bronson

14 Assemblyman Josh Jensen

15 Senator James Tedisco

16 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

17 Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh

18 Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

19 Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

20 Senator Samra Brouk

21 Assemblyman Erik M. Dilan

22 Senator Daniel G. Stec

23 Senator Gustavo Rivera

24 Assemblyman Michael Cusick

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Senator Diane J. Savino

5 Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens

6 Senator Brad Hoylman

7 Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

8 Assemblyman Jeffrion L. Aubry

9 Senator Pete Harckham

10 Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson

11 Assemblyman Ron Kim

12 Senator Leroy Comrie

13 Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner

14 Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski

15 Senator John W. Mannion

16 Assemblywoman Jennifer Lunsford

17 Senator Patty Ritchie

18 Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes

19 Assemblyman Christopher S. Friend

20 Senator Sue Serino

21 Assemblywoman Nily Rozic

22 Senator Peter Oberacker

23 Assemblyman Al Taylor

24 Assemblywoman Amanda Septimo

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes

5 Assemblyman Doug Smith

6 Assemblyman Kevin M. Byrne

7 Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou

8 Assemblyman Mike Lawler

9 Assemblyman William Conrad

10 Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

11 Assemblywoman Melissa Miller

12 Assemblyman David G. McDonough

13 Senator Andrew Gounardes

14 Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

15 Assemblyman William Colton

16 Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

17 Assemblyman David I. Weprin

18 Senator Toby Stavisky

19

20

21

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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS

| 4  |                                | STATEMENT | QUESTIONS |
|----|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 5  | Betty A. Rosa                  |           |           |
|    | Commissioner                   |           |           |
| 6  | NYS Education Department       | 14        | 19        |
| 7  | David Banks                    |           |           |
|    | Chancellor                     |           |           |
| 8  | NYC Department of Education    | 222       | 238       |
| 9  | Andrew Pallotta                |           |           |
|    | President                      |           |           |
| 10 | New York State United Teachers |           |           |
|    | -and-                          |           |           |
| 11 | Michael Mulgrew                |           |           |
|    | President                      |           |           |
| 12 | United Federation of Teachers  | 358       | 366       |
| 13 | Jennifer Pyle                  |           |           |
|    | Executive Director             |           |           |
| 14 | Conference of Big 5            |           |           |
|    | School Districts               |           |           |
| 15 | -and-                          |           |           |
|    | Jaime Alicea                   |           |           |
| 16 | Superintendent                 |           |           |
|    | Syracuse City School District  |           |           |
| 17 | -and-                          |           |           |
|    | Kriner Cash                    |           |           |
| 18 | Superintendent                 |           |           |
|    | Buffalo Public Schools         |           |           |
| 19 | -and-                          |           |           |
|    | Dr. Lesli Myers-Small          |           |           |
| 20 | Superintendent                 |           |           |
|    | Rochester City School District |           |           |
| 21 | -and-                          |           |           |
|    | Dr. Edwin M. Quezada           |           |           |
| 22 | Superintendent                 |           |           |
|    | Yonkers City School District   |           |           |
| 23 | -and-                          |           |           |
|    | Kaweeda Adams                  |           |           |
| 24 | Superintendent                 |           |           |
|    | Albany City School District    | 439       | 459       |

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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

|    |                                   |     |     |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 5  | Dr. Bernadette Kappen             |     |     |
|    | Cochair                           |     |     |
| 6  | 4201 Schools Association          |     |     |
|    | -and-                             |     |     |
| 7  | Stephen Beovich                   |     |     |
|    | Vice President                    |     |     |
| 8  | Coalition of Special Act Schools  | 492 | 498 |
| 9  | Robert Lowry                      |     |     |
|    | Deputy Director                   |     |     |
| 10 | New York State Council of         |     |     |
|    | School Superintendents            |     |     |
| 11 | -and-                             |     |     |
|    | Mark Cannizzaro                   |     |     |
| 12 | President                         |     |     |
|    | Council of School Supervisors     |     |     |
| 13 | and Administrators (CSSA)         |     |     |
|    | -and-                             |     |     |
| 14 | Cynthia E. Gallgher               |     |     |
|    | Director, Government Relations    |     |     |
| 15 | School Administrators Association |     |     |
|    | of New York State (SAANYS)        |     |     |
| 16 | -and-                             |     |     |
|    | Brian C. Fessler                  |     |     |
| 17 | Director, Government Relations    |     |     |
|    | NYS School Boards Association     |     |     |
| 18 | -and-                             |     |     |
|    | Brian S. Cechnicki                |     |     |
| 19 | Executive Director                |     |     |
|    | ASBO New York                     |     |     |
| 20 | -and-                             |     |     |
|    | Kyle Belokopitsky                 |     |     |
| 21 | Executive Director                |     |     |
|    | NYS Parent Teacher Association    | 517 | 541 |

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|--|-----------|-----------|
| 5 Jasmine Gripper<br>Executive Director                    |           |           |
| 6 Alliance for Quality Education<br>-and-                  |           |           |
| 7 Alli Lidie<br>Network Lead                               |           |           |
| 8 NYS Community Schools Network<br>-and-                   |           |           |
| 9 Beth Rizzi<br>President                                  |           |           |
| 10 New York Association of<br>School Psychologists         | 571       | 581       |
| 11   |           |           |
| 12 Yomika Bennett<br>Executive Director                    |           |           |
| 13 NY Charter Schools Association<br>-and-                 |           |           |
| 14 Jason Montanez<br>Charter Parent                        |           |           |
| 15 Charter Parent Council<br>-and-                         |           |           |
| 16 James Merriman<br>CEO                                   |           |           |
| 17 NYC Charter School Center                               | 592       | 602       |
| 18 Briana N. McNamee<br>Director of Government             |           |           |
| 19 Relations & Advocacy<br>NY Library Association          |           |           |
| 20 -and-   |           |           |
| 21 Ben Dubin-Thaler, Ph.D.<br>Founder & Executive Director |           |           |
| BioBus, Inc.   |           |           |
| 22 -and-   |           |           |
| 23 Joshua Stapf<br>Executive Director                      |           |           |
| Literacy Rochester   | 619       | 628       |
| 24   |           |           |

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| 5 Fred Koelbel<br>Legislative Committee Cochair<br>6 NYS School Facilities<br>Association<br>7 -and-<br>Nicholas Vallone<br>8 President<br>New York School Bus Contractors<br>9 Association   | 658       | 665       |
| 10 Dan White<br>Legislative Chair<br>11 BOCES of New York State<br>-and-<br>12 David A. Little, Esq.<br>Executive Director<br>13 Rural Schools Association<br>of New York State<br>14 -and-<br>Andy Mager<br>15 Organizer<br>Neighbors of the<br>16 Onondaga Nation | 673       | 685       |
| 17 James D. Cultrara<br>Executive Secretary<br>18 NYS Council of Catholic School<br>Superintendents<br>19 -and-<br>Avrohom Weinstock<br>20 Chief of Staff<br>Agudath Israel   | 689       |           |
| 21 Ryan Gallentine<br>22 Director of Electrifying<br>Transportation<br>23 Advanced Energy Economy   | 696       | 701       |
| 24  |           |           |



1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good morning.

2                   I am Helene Weinstein, chair of the New York  
3                   State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and  
4                   cochair of today's hearing.

5                   And today we begin the second in a  
6                   series of hearings conducted by the joint  
7                   fiscal committees of the Legislature  
8                   regarding the Governor's proposed budget for  
9                   fiscal year '22-'23. Today the Assembly Ways  
10                  and Means Committee and the Senate Finance  
11                  Committee will hear testimony concerning the  
12                  Governor's budget proposal for elementary and  
13                  secondary education.

14                  I'll now introduce the participating  
15                  members from the Assembly, then I will turn  
16                  it over to Senator Krueger, the cochair of  
17                  this hearing, to introduce the Senate, and  
18                  our respective rankers will introduce the  
19                  members from their conference.

20                  So we have with us Assemblyman  
21                  Benedetto, chair of our Education Committee;  
22                  Deborah Glick, chair of our Higher Ed  
23                  Committee; Crystal Peoples-Stokes, the  
24                  Majority Leader; Assemblywoman Bichotte

1 Hermelyn; Assemblyman Bronson; Assemblyman  
2 Conrad; Assemblyman Cusick; Assemblyman  
3 Dilan; Assemblywoman Hyndman; Assemblyman  
4 Kim; Assemblyman Otis; Assemblywoman Rozic;  
5 Assemblywoman Simon; and Assemblyman  
6 Zebrowski.

7 As other members join us, we will  
8 introduce them.

9 And I see Jennifer Lunsford is here  
10 also.

11 And Senator Krueger, would you like to  
12 introduce your colleagues?

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
14 much.

15 I'm seeing, so far this morning,  
16 Senator Gustavo Rivera; Senator Shelley  
17 Mayer, chair of Education; Senator Liu, chair  
18 of New York City Education; Senator John  
19 Mannion; Senator Pete Harckham; Senator  
20 Robert Jackson; Senator Samra Brouk;  
21 Senator Sean Ryan, chair of Libraries.

22 Let's see -- and if you don't mind,  
23 I'll just turn it over to Tom O'Mara, my  
24 ranker in Finance, to introduce members of

1 his conference.

2 SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning.

3 Joining myself from the Minority side this  
4 morning is Senator Patty Ritchie. I assume  
5 we'll have some more when our Republican  
6 conference is over this morning.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 Assemblyman Ra, would you like to  
11 introduce your colleagues, please.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Sure.

13 Good morning. We are joined by Josh  
14 Jensen, our ranker on Libraries, as well as  
15 Mr. Friend and Mr. Mike Lawler. And I expect  
16 our ranker on Education, Doug Smith, will be  
17 joining us shortly.

18 (Zoom interruption.)

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Robert Jackson,  
20 please mute.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Please -- you  
22 can self-mute yourself, so please do that.  
23 But we'd rather people handle that  
24 themselves.

1           We've also been joined by  
2       Assemblywoman Buttenschon and Assemblywoman  
3       Jackson.

4           So just before we go to the first  
5       witness, I just want to remind all the  
6       witnesses testifying today to keep your  
7       statement within the time limits so everyone  
8       can be afforded the opportunity to speak.  
9       It's even more important now that the  
10      hearings are virtual.

11          Just to go over the timelines for  
12      witnesses and then the members: All  
13      government entities will get 10 minutes to  
14      make an oral presentation. And we'll be  
15      starting in a few moments with the New York  
16      State Ed Commissioner, Betty Rosa. Then  
17      we'll proceed to hear testimony from other --  
18      there will be an opportunity for members  
19      after the commissioner speaks to ask  
20      questions. We'll then proceed to testimony  
21      from other witnesses.

22          And the nongovernmental witnesses who  
23      have asked to testify here today will each  
24      have three minutes to make an oral

1 presentation. They'll mostly be in panels.  
2 And again, witnesses should be reminded to  
3 keep their time within the countdown clock,  
4 which will be in your screen. So we  
5 encourage you to keep it on the gallery view  
6 so you can see that clock.

7 Members also should keep an eye on the  
8 clock. Just to refresh members, the chairs  
9 of the committees relevant to the hearing get  
10 10 minutes each to ask questions and receive  
11 answers. The ranking members of these  
12 committees will get five minutes each. All  
13 other members of the relevant committees,  
14 three minutes each. And the chairs can get a  
15 three-minute opportunity for a second.

16 And again, just want to remind  
17 everybody that the time is not just to ask  
18 the question; the time is to ask the question  
19 and receive your answer.

20 And with that, let us go to our first  
21 witness, New York State Education Department,  
22 Commissioner Betty A. Rosa. She'll be let in  
23 in a moment, I believe.

24 THE MODERATOR: She is here.

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: May I begin?

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Oh, yes.

3 Yes, Commissioner. Yes, please.

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You're welcome.

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

7 Thank you. And good morning to everyone.

8 So good morning, Chairs Krueger,  
9 Weinstein, Mayer and Benedetto, and members  
10 of the Senate and Assembly here today.

11 I'm Dr. Betty Rosa, the Commissioner  
12 of Education. And I'm joined here by  
13 Executive Deputy Commissioner Sharon  
14 Cates-Williams; Senior Deputy Dr. Jim  
15 Baldwin; Chief Financial Officer Phyllis  
16 Morris; Assistant Commissioner Kathleen  
17 DeCataldo; and Senior Policy Advisor  
18 Dr. Laura Glass.

19 First and foremost, I want to thank  
20 Chancellor Young for his amazing leadership  
21 of the Board of Regents and the Department of  
22 Education, as well as the Regents who are  
23 watching today.

24 The Regents and the department have

1 two strategic priorities: First and  
2 foremost, creating equity for all students to  
3 prepare for college, careers and civic  
4 engagement regardless of background, zip  
5 code, first language or ability. And second,  
6 the implementing of a fundamental shift to a  
7 service-and-support-oriented approach to our  
8 statewide educational community.

9 To achieve both priorities, the  
10 department urgently needs the funding we  
11 requested to hire and maintain appropriate  
12 staffing levels. As most of you know, a  
13 strict hiring freeze since April 2020 -- that  
14 only was rescinded recently -- has made this  
15 extremely challenging.

16 To illustrate this point, I just want  
17 to point to the fact that the department's  
18 full-time equivalent, FTE staffing levels  
19 decreased from 3,200 FTEs in 2008 and '09 to  
20 2,500 FTEs in 2021-'22, a decrease of  
21 22 percent. During this time period the  
22 department's responsibilities have grown  
23 without funding for additional staff to  
24 address them.

1           In response to the Division of  
2           Budget's October 2021 call letter, the  
3           department requested 302 positions to rebuild  
4           our capacity. We are pleased that the  
5           Executive included funding for 134 of these  
6           positions, which is 44 percent of the  
7           positions requested. But, as we all know,  
8           additional resources are needed to support  
9           essential functions of the department such as  
10          information technology, human resources,  
11          curriculum and instruction, and facilities  
12          planning, among others.

13          The department is no stranger to  
14          meeting the needs of students across the  
15          state in the face of scarcity. However, at a  
16          time when funds are available, it is  
17          imperative that we receive the resources  
18          necessary to meet our responsibilities to our  
19          children and our communities.

20          Of course there are several proposals  
21          in the Executive Budget we are pleased with,  
22          including the continued phase-in of the  
23          Foundation Aid formula; full funding of all  
24          expense-based aids without changing



1 current-law aid formulas; an increase of  
2 \$700,000 to expand the Readers Aid program;  
3 and much-needed capital funding for our three  
4 Nation Schools and our State Schools for the  
5 Deaf and Blind, a priority of the Regents.

6 There are also those areas that we  
7 would consider concerns. First, we oppose  
8 transferring administration of the over  
9 \$1 billion federal and state child nutrition  
10 programs to the Department of Agriculture &  
11 Markets. There is no justification offered  
12 for doing such, and none exists.

13 At this time I just want to pause and  
14 say our landscape of education -- our  
15 schools, our districts -- have gone through  
16 such disruptions, as we know even this week.  
17 To add another major disruption and barrier  
18 to our landscape of educating in our  
19 communities would be quite difficult.

20 Second, while authorization to waive  
21 late building final cost reports and  
22 transportation contract penalties is welcome,  
23 the proposal does not even include funding to  
24 repay current claims, let alone older claims.

1       Districts will never receive the funding  
2       they're waiting for.

3               Finally, the proposal to create  
4       temporary permits for teachers and other  
5       school professionals and to authorize  
6       individuals holding expired certificates to  
7       be employed in a teaching or other  
8       professional capacity are considered quite  
9       challenging.

10              Finally, we request the Legislature  
11       support investments we requested to further  
12       ensure equity for all: The \$1.6 million to  
13       translate department information and  
14       resources into languages other than English;  
15       \$5 million to increase participation rates  
16       and diversity in teaching careers through  
17       successful teacher opportunity programs --  
18       the TOC II program -- which is essential;  
19       \$125 million to design a new tuition  
20       rate-setting methodology for preschool and  
21       school-age special education providers. And  
22       we must achieve enactment of the legislation  
23       passed unanimously by both houses to provide  
24       funding parity for the providers serving

1           these children.

2                       Finally, I urge you to restore the  
3           \$20 million cut to public library  
4           construction and provide an additional  
5           \$11 million, per the Regents' request.

6                       I extend gratitude to our staff, who  
7           have worked so hard every day, in the face of  
8           inadequate resources, on behalf of the  
9           students and the districts across New York.  
10          I share primary concerns as we continue to  
11          sustain the educational process and the  
12          physical and mental health, safety and  
13          well-being of our children and adults in our  
14          schools.

15                      And for that, I thank you for  
16          listening to us today and I look forward to  
17          additional questions and any other materials  
18          we can provide to ensure that our voices are  
19          heard. Thank you so much for this  
20          opportunity.

21                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
22          Thank you, Commissioner.

23                      We're going to go first to our chair  
24          of Education, Assemblyman Benedetto. And

1           then the -- oh, I see those raised hands  
2           there, people following instructions. So  
3           first we will go to Assemblyman Benedetto,  
4           and I will -- in the chat, members will be  
5           able to see the order of their testimony --  
6           their question.

7           Assemblyman Benedetto.

8           ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very  
9           much, Chair Weinstein.

10          And good morning, Commissioner. How  
11          are you today?

12          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Fine, thank  
13          you.

14          ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, that's  
15          my first question. Okay.

16          Listen, you mention in your testimony  
17          about the transfer of the food nutrition  
18          program from SED to the Agriculture  
19          Department. Can you expand on that, you  
20          know, a bit? What are we talking about here?  
21          Is -- can the Department of Agriculture,  
22          right now as it stands, be able to handle  
23          this program and do it well?

24          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first

1 and foremost, I do want to share the fact  
2 that I was informed of this change and this  
3 transfer by Commissioner Ball, who called me  
4 right before the holidays. And so I have had  
5 amazing conversations with him in terms of  
6 addressing the issue of nutrition and  
7 expanding the program Farm-to-School, which  
8 is about a \$1.5 million program, versus a  
9 \$1.3 billion program.

10 So during that process, absolutely, we  
11 have been collaborating. He went with me to  
12 the Bronx to see an amazing program, the  
13 Green Machine program that really focuses on  
14 nutrition. We have been trying to really  
15 create synergy about some of the concerns and  
16 issues that we have and that we can expand  
17 on.

18 But at the same time, I have really  
19 reached out to try to understand the  
20 rationale for this decision. And not only  
21 just the rationale, but also to try to impart  
22 the fact that this is going to be extremely  
23 disruptive, and trying to share with the  
24 Chamber and others that when we make these

1 kinds of decisions, usually you want a person  
2 who is going to be part of the exchange to be  
3 part of the conversation.

4 I have no idea what the rationale is.  
5 I have no idea what the design is. And  
6 furthermore, I have no idea why this is being  
7 advanced without engaging in a thorough  
8 conversation and also with some serious  
9 planning around the implications and what the  
10 impact would be in our landscape of schooling  
11 and communities.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,  
13 Commissioner.

14 Commissioner, you may have known about  
15 my bill that we passed late last session  
16 regarding the special ed schools -- the 4102  
17 schools, the 853 schools -- and providing  
18 them with an increase in monies to better  
19 balance their salary rates to make them  
20 competitive and so forth.

21 Well, the Governor of course vetoed  
22 that but made a commitment that she will this  
23 year look into and do it, and supposedly she  
24 has, increasing the funding for these

1 schools.

2           However -- and that's great and it's  
3 wonderful and we're looking forward to that,  
4 that she keeps her commitment. And I know  
5 she will. But what's going to happen after  
6 this year? How do you see us in the state  
7 telling the 4201 schools, the 853 schools  
8 that they have worked, that the teachers are  
9 comparable to the teachers in the public  
10 schools of this state, and can we in effect  
11 do something to balance out our commitment  
12 and monies to these schools?

13           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, let me  
14 start by saying that we are extremely  
15 grateful that it was -- on both houses it was  
16 a unanimous issue.

17           I think it is also -- the whole  
18 rate-setting methodology has to be looked at  
19 for the long term. I think that while we're  
20 extremely grateful about the 11 percent,  
21 we're extremely grateful about the commitment  
22 in terms of funding, we really have to look  
23 at the issue of parity and looking at the  
24 whole methodology system that's used long

1 term. So I think we really truly need, as I  
2 said in my testimony, we truly need a  
3 commitment to looking at this long term.

4 Again, I am hopeful -- and I'd like to  
5 turn to -- at this point I'd like to turn to  
6 our budget person, Phyllis Morris, to really  
7 go into just one example of the granular  
8 issue here in terms of what the implications  
9 are.

10 Phyllis?

11 NYSED CFO MORRIS: Thank you,  
12 Commissioner.

13 So the issue is that the current  
14 methodology has what's called a  
15 reconciliation process. So if the provider  
16 is unable to spend the full amount that their  
17 rate provides in a given school year, the  
18 under-spending is recovered.

19 So the -- while we, as the  
20 commissioner said, appreciate the 11 percent  
21 one-time increase in the trend factor for  
22 '22-'23, it's going to be very difficult for  
23 providers to spend up to -- you know, to  
24 spend \$240 million kind of instantly in one



1 school year.

2 So what we would be looking for is  
3 elimination of the reconciliation process at  
4 a minimum for '22-'23, and ideally over a  
5 five-year period, which is an administrative  
6 proposal that the department has advanced, to  
7 give providers more time to manage the ups  
8 and downs -- enrollment fluctuations,  
9 one-time unanticipated costs -- and to have  
10 that five-year period be the bridge to a new  
11 methodology.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you  
13 very, very much.

14 Lastly, there is great concern in my  
15 conference for the learning disabled -- for  
16 screening, proper screening of the learning  
17 disabled before they enter school, at a very  
18 young age, to see if there are problems  
19 there. If we get those problems early enough  
20 and work on them, give them the proper  
21 services, that maybe we can, well, solve a  
22 lot of problems in the future.

23 And I credit my colleagues Assemblyman  
24 Carroll and Assemblywoman Simon for their

1 efforts in this area.

2 Commissioner, could you please give me  
3 your opinion here? Can we effectively use a  
4 screening process at such an early age for  
5 kids in, let's say, prekindergarten and  
6 kindergarten, and do it adequately and  
7 cheaply enough?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, let me  
9 start by both thanking, as you said,  
10 Assemblywoman Simon -- actually, I would add  
11 Brooks and Assemblyman Carroll.

12 As you know, we had an extensive  
13 conversation with a presentation on the whole  
14 screening process, particularly the early  
15 start process. One of the interesting  
16 conversations that came out of that -- and I  
17 think there's been extensive research done on  
18 this -- is that the issue of dyslexia in  
19 particular has really been one that has been  
20 studied in terms of connecting it to are  
21 young people ending in -- in the --  
22 incarcerated in many situations due to the  
23 fact that many of them have really -- have  
24 had challenge and have not received the kinds

1 of resources along the way.

2 Screening at an early stage is really  
3 essential. Like we know that the whole issue  
4 of addressing the issue in the early part of  
5 our young children's education is vital. And  
6 not only that, but maintaining the screening  
7 as a way of creating the resources and the  
8 responses to addressing those issues early  
9 on, capturing them early on, so that we can  
10 really create an investment at the early  
11 phase of our children's education.

12 And so we're very committed to  
13 continuing this work, continuing to commit to  
14 looking at the screening process as a way of  
15 identifying the barriers and identifying the  
16 way that we can then match the resources, the  
17 educational resources that are needed to  
18 respond to our young people.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Commissioner,  
20 thank you very much. And to all my  
21 colleagues, I say thank you for putting up  
22 with the first questions. Okay? I'm  
23 19 seconds early; let that be a lesson for  
24 everybody.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 Just before I turn it to the Senate, we've  
4 been joined during the commissioner's remarks  
5 by Assemblywoman Seawright; Assemblywoman  
6 Jean-Pierre, chair of our Libraries  
7 Committee; Assemblywoman McMahon; Assemblyman  
8 Colton, and Assemblyman Weprin.

9 Senator Krueger, I turn it over to  
10 your Senate colleagues.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
12 much. I just also want to -- I believe we've  
13 been joined by Senator Sue Serino and Senator  
14 Pete Oberacker. I'm not sure -- I think  
15 that's who I'm seeing is new.

16                   And we'll hand it first to the chair  
17           of our Education Committee, Senator Shelley  
18           Mayer.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Chair  
20 Krueger, and thank you, Chair Weinstein.

21                   And Commissioner, a pleasure to see  
22           you and your staff. And I do have to start  
23           by thanking you for leadership in a very  
24           rocky time for schools, for students and

1 parents, teachers and staff, boards of  
2 education and superintendents.

3 You and I have been in constant  
4 contact, and I'm very appreciative of your  
5 responsiveness to myself and all my  
6 colleagues, both Democratic and Republican,  
7 in the Senate with issues within their  
8 districts. So thank you for your leadership  
9 on that.

10 The first question is about the -- I  
11 think it's 168 positions you requested that  
12 were not funded in the Governor's proposal.  
13 Do you have a breakdown that you could  
14 share -- not this minute, but with us -- of  
15 exactly what departments they would be in and  
16 what tasks they would do? Because I think  
17 there is widespread agreement that you need  
18 more support and more staff.

19 But do you have that? It's not  
20 reflected in detail in your testimony.

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. And  
22 thank you for that question, because that is  
23 something that you have taken a leadership in  
24 asking us to make sure that not only do we

1 detail it, but also to have a rationale and  
2 an explanation of these individual positions.

3 So we will make that available right  
4 after our testimony. And it's something that  
5 we truly believe is needed in order to make  
6 our arguments about why we need these  
7 positions. So thank you.

8 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. The second  
9 question is, you know, we all collectively  
10 fought hard to get not only additional  
11 Foundation Aid, with your leadership and now  
12 with Governor Hochul's leadership -- that we  
13 are finally getting there, we're incredibly  
14 appreciative. But districts also got a lot  
15 of money through the federal stimulus  
16 programs.

17 Have you done any analysis of whether,  
18 from your department's estimation, districts  
19 are using these funds appropriately? As you  
20 know, we did have a hearing on that early on.  
21 But I wonder what your perception is about  
22 whether the services are being provided that  
23 were intended with these funds.

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So

1           again, thank you for that question.

2           The work that we started, not only  
3           when -- of course, you know, when we first  
4           had the initial funding through CARES and  
5           then we went through CRRSA and of course ARP.  
6           We have been not only meeting with our  
7           stakeholders, our monthly meetings, we have  
8           been also meeting individually in small --  
9           both DSs and our different regions, meeting  
10          with our superintendents. Part of this was  
11          to -- also we've been doing, and we'll share  
12          a little bit of this work that Phyllis has  
13          been doing in terms of -- and the staff in  
14          general -- looking at keeping in mind the  
15          cliff. Right? These are fundings that we're  
16          very concerned about how they're used --

17                   (Zoom interruption.)

18           SENATOR LIU:  Somebody unmute -- mute.  
19           Mute.

20           SENATOR MAYER:  Whoever that is,  
21           please mute your --

22           SENATOR LIU:  Tom, that's you. Tom  
23           O'Mara.

24                   (Continued Zoom interruption.)

1           SENATOR LIU: Tom, you've got to  
2 unmute -- you've got to mute. Tom, MUTE.

3           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So one of  
5 the things that -- to your point, knowing  
6 that the funding is essential, what was the  
7 design of these fundings in terms of not only  
8 our recovery process, rebuilding, our  
9 students' needs, specific -- both in terms of  
10 their mental health services, trauma, looking  
11 at our students' needs in terms of academic,  
12 and all the kinds of services that are very  
13 specific to our children, but also making  
14 sure that we have the resources that are used  
15 over a period of time that we all know that  
16 September 30th, 2024, cliff is real.

17           And so what we've tried to do is  
18 provide workshops, guidance, conversations,  
19 both on a small scale, on the larger scale.  
20 Also providing, through technical support,  
21 what are the one-shot deals that, you know,  
22 can provide in terms of usage of -- you know,  
23 we have also tried to express that while  
24 there are opportunities to use this in terms



1 of capital, that there are some pitfalls,  
2 right, when you're using them in that manner.

3 So our entire department, at different  
4 levels, whether it's been in terms of looking  
5 at if it's capital, if it's instruction, if  
6 it's personnel, we've tried to work with the  
7 field in designing their plan, making sure  
8 that they are working with their  
9 constituents, with their communities, and  
10 designing the kind of usage of these dollars,  
11 whether it's in technology, staffing, that  
12 really is going to be prudent and be used for  
13 what we would consider long-term and having  
14 the opportunity to also address the  
15 short-term issues.

16 But the one thing we do provide  
17 guidance in that we are concerned about is  
18 that because these are one -- you know, these  
19 are dollars that are now, that we don't want  
20 districts to become so -- to purchase items  
21 that need long-term maintenance, long-term  
22 support, and when that funding disappears,  
23 that -- you know, that districts have a  
24 problem.

1 I can also share with you by calling  
2 on our finance person, Phyllis Morris, who  
3 can you give you specifics of some of the  
4 webinars and some of the ways that we have  
5 been supporting the field, if you like.

6 SENATOR MAYER: Well, I want to get to  
7 my other question, Commissioner.

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

9 SENATOR MAYER: So I look forward to  
10 that.

11 So school mental health continues to  
12 be a very pressing problem in every district,  
13 urban, suburban and rural. And we're all  
14 concerned about it. As you know, I fought  
15 for \$10 million in the budget pre-COVID; I  
16 don't think any of that has gone out the  
17 door. I look forward to that. But on the  
18 Governor's ReCOVs proposal, which is a mental  
19 health proposal, do you have comments or  
20 thoughts about how effectively to maximize  
21 every asset we can for ensuring our kids deal  
22 with mental health issues as we come out of  
23 COVID?

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So

1       let me start -- you're absolutely right that  
2       the -- along with the response to our  
3       students' academic needs, there's so much  
4       trauma, there's so much social-emotional ways  
5       that we have to address.

6               So the Department of Health, I have to  
7       tell you that we -- we just did a recent  
8       convening, because we've realized that the  
9       idea of cross-agency work is essential. So  
10      we're working -- not only looking at it from  
11      our own department, but we're working with  
12      Commissioner Sullivan to really create that  
13      cross-agency work that is so essential to  
14      support our students' mental health. And  
15      we're looking at different ways that we can  
16      do this and -- you know, telepractice, we're  
17      looking at ways that we embed this idea of  
18      mental health services into our landscape,  
19      and the best ways, the most efficient ways of  
20      doing it.

21             I can also ask Jim to give you some  
22      specifics as well, if you like, Senator.

23             SENATOR MAYER: Sure. If it's quick.

24             (Laughter.)

1                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Yes.

2                   SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN:  Thank  
3                   you, Commissioner.  Thank you, Senator.

4                   One of the areas that we're focusing  
5                   on is social-emotional learning.  And that is  
6                   really designed to help students develop the  
7                   skills, the knowledge, the attitudes that  
8                   they can carry forward to develop healthy  
9                   relationships, to avoid risky behaviors.  We  
10                  know that drug use, violence, bullying,  
11                  dropping out are all issues that our schools  
12                  are dealing with.  The department has  
13                  supported districts in their efforts to  
14                  provide additional social-emotional learning  
15                  opportunities for our students.

16                  And then in addition to that we have  
17                  our program that would help support  
18                  culturally responsive and sustaining  
19                  education in our schools.  And that really  
20                  starts from the premise that we are welcoming  
21                  students into our schools, and we are looking  
22                  at the assets that they bring to the  
23                  classroom, we're looking at the assets that  
24                  they bring to the school, and we're building

1 an educational program for them around those  
2 experiences and those assets.

3 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much.  
4 I will yield my remaining time. Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
6 go to the Senate -- I'm sorry, Senator  
7 Krueger. So let's go to our Majority Leader.  
8 Yes, Crystal Peoples-Stokes, please, for  
9 questions.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank  
11 you very much, Madam Chair. And I certainly  
12 want to thank the chairwoman from the Senate  
13 as well, Senator Krueger.

14 An honor to see you, Commissioner.  
15 Thank you for being here this morning. It's  
16 good to see all my colleagues. I just have a  
17 couple of really quick questions.

18 One, I just want a confirmation on if  
19 it's in fact true that much of the basis of  
20 education, academic education, is provided  
21 during kindergarten through 4th grade. Is  
22 that a correct assumption?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry,  
24 that most of --

1           ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: Most of  
2           the academic basis of education is provided  
3           K-4, and everything else that happens after  
4           that is kind of built on that foundation that  
5           young people receive at those grade levels,  
6           is the question.

7           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: The -- it's  
8           like building a house. That foundation has  
9           to be solid. And when the foundation is  
10          built to be solid, it can really support as  
11          we go through our education.

12          So you're absolutely -- early  
13          childhood, that foundation is essential  
14          throughout --

15          ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: Okay.  
16          So -- and I actually concur. I just wanted  
17          to make sure because, you know, sometimes  
18          those of you who are in the field, you know  
19          these things a lot better than those of us  
20          who sit around and think we know what's  
21          right. So I wanted to confirm that.

22          And given that is a fact, would you  
23          say that your agency, State Education, spends  
24          considerably more amount of resources and

1 focus on early childhood education than you  
2 do on other grades? Or is it simultaneous  
3 across the board?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I would  
5 say -- well, you know that we spend -- we had  
6 the blue ribbon report that addressed the  
7 issue of early childhood. We clearly agree  
8 when you asked the question about the  
9 foundation.

10 But the foundation is the starting  
11 point. So you build on that foundation. And  
12 again, you know, having been a middle school  
13 and a high school principal, you see that --  
14 you take the foundation and you really  
15 develop from the early childhood through the  
16 elementary, from the elementary, we begin to  
17 expand, extend the knowledge base.

18 So middle schools and high schools are  
19 just as important. And so that the continuum  
20 has to be looked at. Each segment is just as  
21 important, because you're -- it's building  
22 blocks. So you can't just build a strong  
23 foundation that's not there. You have to  
24 then move it, when you move them into middle

1 school, there are other aspects of middle  
2 school that are essential to build on. And  
3 then from middle school, of course, we know  
4 high school, and then getting them ready in  
5 terms of whether it's college readiness or  
6 getting them ready for college and career.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: So a  
8 lot of the data tells us, of recent, that  
9 most -- or a lot of young people who end up  
10 in high school, who actually end up  
11 graduating from high school, who are not  
12 college-ready. So somewhere along the line  
13 academically, the system that's supposed to  
14 provide them with this education failed.

15 And I don't know if you can actually  
16 determine whether that is something that  
17 happened in early childhood or middle grades  
18 or high school. But wherever it happened at,  
19 there needs to be a concerted focus on fixing  
20 that. I think that there are a number of,  
21 you know, SUNY and CUNY colleges that would  
22 acknowledge that, you know, K-12 is sending  
23 far too many students to college that are not  
24 prepared to be in college. And that is not a



1           very good return on the investment that we've  
2           put in for K-12.

3                     And so I am appreciative that, you  
4           know, the Foundation Aid dollars are there.  
5           I'm appreciative that you're actually going  
6           to get access to additional positions,  
7           although I hope that those positions end up  
8           having some concerted focus on making sure  
9           that that foundational education is provided  
10          for everyone who attends schools in the State  
11          of New York.

12                    And given that does not happen,  
13          what -- how are we ever going to hold  
14          somebody responsible for the fact that every  
15          year we spend more but every year we're not  
16          getting more?

17                    NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, let me  
18          just say that obviously, you know, we try to  
19          isolate many of these issues in terms of  
20          looking at -- obviously we know that in  
21          society there are many, many, many issues  
22          that we grapple with, even in our educational  
23          space.

24                    For example, we've had a tremendous

1           influx of young people coming to our country  
2           from places that -- right now we're placing  
3           students that have never even been to school  
4           and, you know, are coming from different  
5           places, different stages --

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: You  
7           know what, Commissioner, I appreciate that.  
8           And you know I understand that.

9                     NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right.

10                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: And I  
11           appreciate the fact that we are in a position  
12           where we are the kind of country that  
13           welcomes new citizens here. I think it's an  
14           awesome thing.

15                    But I represent a district of people  
16           where many of them have already been in this  
17           country, they were born in this country, and  
18           they're being -- going through a system of  
19           education where they've not properly been  
20           educated. I think it's easy enough to find a  
21           lot of reasons why that doesn't happen. I  
22           get it. But at some time, somebody has to be  
23           the professional in the room and say, This is  
24           what has to happen in order for this to

1 change. And I'm just trying to figure out  
2 who that professional in the room is going to  
3 be, and when are we going to hold them  
4 accountable for the massive investments that  
5 we make in education and not necessarily  
6 getting back the return.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So let me  
8 respond from -- you know, we obviously work  
9 with our local school districts, our local  
10 superintendents. Right? School boards hold  
11 the local superintendents responsible. So  
12 collectively, we have a commitment, an  
13 obligation to do this work.

14 Now, one of the things that I think is  
15 critical is that we look -- you know, we look  
16 at our societies and our different school  
17 districts, and as you know, even in the  
18 department, why do we have monitors in  
19 certain districts? Why do we have schools  
20 under review? Why do we have, you know, all  
21 of these different ways of looking at these  
22 situations at the local level? Because in  
23 many situations we do have school districts,  
24 we do have schools, we do have communities

1       where the results are not obviously what we  
2       want them to be. That is as a department, we  
3       are responsible to support the local  
4       educational endeavors and success.

5               Now, granted, I have to tell you I  
6       have some districts that we work with, but we  
7       don't have the final -- you know,  
8       superintendents are hired by school boards,  
9       and you know this. I'm not telling you  
10      anything you don't know. But -- and they  
11      hold their schools accountable. And we try  
12      to work under some very difficult situations  
13      because we don't -- we don't have the  
14      authority to hire and fire principals,  
15      superintendents --

16             ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: But --  
17      life is hard, I get it. Can you just tell me  
18      who the person is in your agency that works  
19      with early childhood education? And then  
20      I'll reach out and speak with them later.

21             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry,  
22      who is the person that --

23             ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: The  
24      staff person that works in State Education

1 with early childhood education.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, sure.

3 We have --

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: Who  
5 does that?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, I will  
7 send you several names of different people  
8 who work with childhood education, because  
9 it's not just one person. We have -- I'll  
10 not only send you that, but also how -- we  
11 will send you documentation of how we work  
12 with the various districts in this area.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PEOPLES-STOKES: Okay.  
14 Thank you, Commissioner. I appreciate you.

15 And thank you, Madam Chair, for the  
16 opportunity to raise this issue.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure.

18 Before we turn it over to the Senate,  
19 I just want to acknowledge that we've been  
20 joined by Assemblyman Taylor, Assemblyman  
21 McDonough, and Assemblyman Byrne.

22 And now we go to Senator Krueger.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
24 much, Assemblywoman.

1                   And our next questioner is Senator  
2 John Liu, chair of the --

3                   SENATOR TEDISCO: Senator? Senator?

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes?

5                   SENATOR TEDISCO: This is Senator Jim  
6 Tedisco. I'm the ranker on Education in the  
7 Senate.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'll get to you.  
9 We'll get to you, Senator.

10                  SENATOR TEDISCO: I've had some  
11 problems getting in today, I don't know what  
12 the problem was. Was there some dysfunction  
13 when we started the meeting?

14                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There's always  
15 something with Zoom, Jim.

16                  So I will put you higher up on the  
17 list, but you still come after chairs.

18                  So Senator John Liu, chair of the  
19 New York City Education Committee, next.

20                  SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you.

21                  SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

22                  I want to assure Senator Tedisco that  
23 there was not a special Tedisco block on the  
24 Zoom entries.

1                   SENATOR TEDISCO: Oh, I know, I know  
2                   that.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I don't actually  
4                   know if that's true, John Liu, but that's  
5                   fine if you want to say that.

6                   (Laughter.)

7                   SENATOR LIU: In any event, I -- first  
8                   of all, I want to thank the chairs for  
9                   holding this important hearing. The budget,  
10                  the education budget is by far the largest  
11                  part of our state budget every single year.  
12                  And along those veins, I want to thank my  
13                  colleagues in our house, Senator Mayer and  
14                  Senator Krueger, for advancing the Foundation  
15                  Aid, the victory of which we celebrated last  
16                  year.

17                  My first question to our wonderful  
18                  commissioner, Betty Rosa, is are we  
19                  definitely on track for Foundation Aid to be  
20                  fully phased in by next fiscal year?

21                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
22                  We are -- we are on track. And I'm going to  
23                  ask Phyllis to give you some specifics, but  
24                  I'm also looking to -- looking down the road

1           when we're fully -- you know, we fully have  
2           made our commitment, that we look at our  
3           current formula.

4                     So Phyllis?

5                     SENATOR LIU: Well, I -- I -- thank  
6           you, Commissioner. With all due respect, I  
7           don't need the specifics, I just wanted an  
8           assurance. Because we believe we're on  
9           track --

10                    NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

11                    SENATOR LIU: -- but I wanted to make  
12           sure that you and the State Education  
13           Department still believe that we are on track  
14           to fully fund the Foundation Aid --

15                    NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

16                    SENATOR LIU: -- by next year.

17                    NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

18                    SENATOR LIU: Okay, great.

19                    And then I also want to commend you  
20           for your comments about providing funding for  
21           our special education providers. We all know  
22           that it's lagged far behind. Senator Mannion  
23           had a great bill that we all supported.  
24           Unfortunately, the Governor had vetoed it,



1 but promised to address it in the state  
2 budget, which I believe she did, with the  
3 11 percent increase.

4 But to Assembly Chair Benedetto's  
5 point, there needs to be an ongoing -- some  
6 kind of indexation, which you referenced in  
7 your testimony.

8 So my simple question to you is, does  
9 that require legislation or simply the  
10 appropriation of \$1.25 million that you  
11 requested?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I  
13 think the appropriation.

14 But I also -- to -- you know, the  
15 statement that Phyllis made is critical as  
16 well. I am concerned about the \$240 million.  
17 The spending in one year is going to be quite  
18 challenging.

19 So I think it's something that I'd  
20 like to work with -- you know, to work on.  
21 Because as I said, the 11 percent is welcome,  
22 I think the base is excellent. I just don't  
23 know -- I shouldn't say I don't know. We  
24 have had internal conversations about the

1 fact that this appropriation should be a --  
2 five years. And this way -- I want the  
3 spending to be used with thoughtfulness and  
4 so that people are not looking to just rush  
5 --

6 SENATOR LIU: Okay.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So if --  
8 with all due respect, if I can have a  
9 specific conversation of what our concerns --  
10 I think Phyllis alluded to some of them. We  
11 have been doing some extensive looking at  
12 this issue, and we will share that with you.

13 SENATOR LIU: Terrific.

14 So if there's any legislation that  
15 would help ensure that this funding remains  
16 appropriate and not lagged for so many years  
17 behind the rest of the education budget,  
18 please let us know. We would like to --

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right.  
20 Yeah. And I think our methodology -- we're  
21 going to need to correct the current method  
22 that's used. So that's why we were looking  
23 at the funding to do so. And we will include  
24 that in our response.

1           SENATOR LIU: All right. A couple of  
2 easy questions first.

3           Commissioner Rosa, I found your  
4 testimony interesting on a number of  
5 different levels. There was one statement  
6 that you made towards the beginning, I guess  
7 in your introductory remarks, that I just  
8 wanted to ask for some clarification on. You  
9 mentioned the word "equity," which these last  
10 couple of years, it's just become like a  
11 catch-all phrase for almost everything. And  
12 it's -- I will admit, it's hard for me to  
13 understand exactly what people are talking  
14 about whenever they will mention the word  
15 "equity" without more context.

16           So in your introductory comments  
17 you've mentioned the word "equity" as it  
18 relates to -- "equity for all students to  
19 prepare for college, careers and civic  
20 engagement, regardless of background, zip  
21 code, first language or ability." I  
22 understand the background. I understand zip  
23 code and first language. I'm not sure what  
24 that "ability" means. What is equity with

1           regard to ability?

2                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Sure.

3                   So when we -- a lot of times we talk  
4           about disability, right?

5                   SENATOR LIU:   Okay.   So that's what  
6           you mean --

7                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Yeah.   So I  
8           like to think of -- I like to think about  
9           equity in terms of ability meaning that  
10          different children, different young adults  
11          have different talents.

12                  SENATOR LIU:   Okay.

13                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   I like to  
14          focus on their abilities.   I like to focus on  
15          their potential.

16                  SENATOR LIU:   Commissioner, I am  
17          completely clarified at this point.

18                  You know, the word "ability" is also  
19          not necessarily just referring to students  
20          without disabilities or students with  
21          disabilities, but there's a continuing debate  
22          and discussion about whether, for example,  
23          students can learn at an accelerated pace  
24          relative to other students.   So I thought

1        maybe that's what you might have been  
2        referring to. But I totally understand your  
3        clarification about students without  
4        disabilities.

5                NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And if I can  
6        just add one more element to that. For  
7        example, we have students whose talents may  
8        be in performing arts. Right? We have  
9        students whose talents may be very specific  
10       to the sciences and other areas. They may  
11       have an ability, a strength, if you will, in  
12       one area and not necessarily in another area.

13               So building on those building blocks  
14       to their abilities is, I truly believe, an  
15       education. We have in many cases  
16       one-size-fits-all, which in effect is  
17       something that we are trying to make sure  
18       that through our grad measures conversations,  
19       that we think about how do we meet the  
20       students where they are and how do we look at  
21       their talents and build on those talents.  
22       Because a lot of times students have certain  
23       talents and look at other students -- so in  
24       our system we value certain talents and we do

1 not value others. So equity for me, in terms  
2 of ability, is to really meet the students  
3 where they are and enhance those, support  
4 those, and make sure we celebrate those.

5 SENATOR LIU: If I understand your  
6 statements correctly, then I am in full  
7 agreement with you that there should be some  
8 recognition of ability or, as you say, talent  
9 in different areas of our public school  
10 system, whether they be in the performing  
11 arts or in the sciences, what some people  
12 might consider more traditional academic  
13 areas, versus performing arts or sports or  
14 things that people may consider less academic  
15 in nature.

16 So I think it's a good thing that we  
17 recognize the ability or talent of some  
18 students to excel along those lines.

19 My final question for you,  
20 Commissioner -- I know this is a topic we've  
21 been talking about for a long time, but we've  
22 got to keep talking about it because we need  
23 to get this stuff done. And that is that,  
24 you know, for a long time the

1 African-American community has been calling  
2 for curricula and educational requirements in  
3 public schools throughout the State of  
4 New York. As you are fully aware, the last  
5 couple of years has been terrible for the  
6 Asian-American community. We still face a  
7 huge amount of anti-Asian hate, even --  
8 especially with the recent rise of Omicron,  
9 we also saw a severe uptick in anti-Asian  
10 attacks. And I think education and helping  
11 our future generations, including the current  
12 generation of schoolkids in our New York  
13 public schools, understand Asian-American  
14 history and our experience will help, you  
15 know, take away this perpetual foreigner  
16 syndrome and "model minority" myth that, you  
17 know, Assemblymembers Ron Kim and Yuh-Line  
18 Niou are fully, you know, advocating for to  
19 dispel those kinds of myths so that we can be  
20 treated as humans and we all face these kind  
21 of vicious attacks on the streets, in the  
22 subways, anywhere that we have seen  
23 throughout these last couple of years.

24 So we need to get the syllabi and the

1 requirements and the material out to our  
2 public schools.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And I  
4 totally agree. And which is why I think you  
5 know we've been having these conversations  
6 around different needs and trying to, through  
7 our culturally responsive way, creating  
8 resources so that we really -- the tapestry  
9 has to become obviously one that gives voice  
10 to the voiceless. And so I totally agree.

11 SENATOR LIU: I love you, Commissioner  
12 Rosa, I love Chancellor Young -- but I also  
13 love a schedule. So we need to get a  
14 timetable on this.

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

16 SENATOR LIU: Thank you. Thank you so  
17 much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to our  
19 Higher Ed chair, Deborah Glick.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. It's  
21 good to see you, Commissioner.

22 And I know that I will have a chance  
23 to go over some of the higher ed issues at  
24 another table, so let me just ask you:



1       During this period of COVID, we believe that  
2       students have had significant learning loss.  
3       We had issues with graduation rates and with  
4       college readiness before the pandemic, but  
5       now many educators are very concerned about  
6       learning loss.

7               So I'm wondering what strategies are  
8       being discussed or considered in order to  
9       help students who are in high school to --  
10      I'll get the phrase -- catch up in order to  
11      be ready to take this step into college.  
12      College admissions are down partly because  
13      students don't want to spend their lives on  
14      Zoom, they don't want to spend their  
15      resources to -- they want a college  
16      experience. But many students aren't going  
17      to be ready.

18             What plans are there? Are you  
19      thinking about summer school catch-ups or  
20      what?

21             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So even  
22      before the -- you know, when we were looking  
23      at -- when we were at the -- if there's such  
24      a thing as pre-pandemic, one of the things

1           that I think in the department we have  
2           attempted various times is the issue of P-20,  
3           looking at the whole issue of P-20.

4                     But within P-20, to your point, how do  
5           we create opportunities to create a continuum  
6           of what the needs are? And more than ever  
7           during the pandemic, not just because of  
8           learning loss but also because of the trauma,  
9           the social, the emotional, the helping  
10          students regain and feel the kind of support  
11          to get back on -- you know, excited about  
12          education, excited about, as you said, going  
13          to college, excited about -- even with  
14          work-related issues.

15                    So part of -- this has been with us  
16          every single day. We have conversations, you  
17          know, in terms of not just the higher ed, how  
18          collectively we can make those transitions --  
19          as recent as this week -- those transitions  
20          inviting, exciting again, even while we're  
21          going through this. What are the kinds of  
22          things beyond summer, extended? How do we  
23          look at time of -- you know, kids getting --  
24          looking at projects and things that they can

1           get excited about so that it's not just  
2           adding more and looking at the negative of a  
3           loss, but rather what's the way that we can,  
4           as a system, support our young people to find  
5           a path, a way to engage with the learning  
6           process again? Because some of them really  
7           fell off in many ways.

8                        So we want to really -- you know, I  
9           look back and I'm sure Senator Jackson is  
10          here. You know, I came from a middle school  
11          that was Monday through Friday from 7:30 in  
12          the morning till 10 p.m., and on Saturday  
13          it's till 6 p.m., because the kids could do  
14          projects. I think we have to look at how do  
15          we create expanded opportunities for our  
16          young people to regain, to really become very  
17          much involved again in looking at where these  
18          openings, these holes are, and how to fill  
19          them. And what are the ways that we can do  
20          that to support them doing that.

21                       I've even had a conversation, just to  
22          give you one quick example --

23                       ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Maybe -- maybe  
24          we could talk a little bit more about that

1 example -- you know, I only have a limited  
2 amount of time in which to ask and get  
3 answers.

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Sure.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Since you  
6 brought up the issue of the school buildings  
7 being open longer days, I certainly remember  
8 an after -- you know, a night school that  
9 provided a wide range of things to people in  
10 the community, whether they were children or  
11 not. And maybe that is something that we  
12 could have more of a discussion on at another  
13 time.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: But I'm  
16 wondering, there was a discussion earlier  
17 about early identification of students with  
18 various types of learning disabilities,  
19 whether it's dyslexia or some other learning  
20 disability. And I'm wondering what kind  
21 of -- since the systems are so large and so  
22 vast, what are the targeted response to  
23 those, identifying those students, and how do  
24 you bring them up to their grade level?

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And what is your  
3 time frame for doing that?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right.

5 Well -- and let me just clarify. The  
6 identification is not just for dyslexia or  
7 students that -- you know, every student --  
8 many students need an EP, and educational  
9 plan. It's not just our special-needs  
10 students.

11 The screening process is just a way of  
12 finding early on, you know, what are the  
13 kinds of resources that we have to -- whether  
14 it's an English language learner, whether  
15 it's a student that may need some management  
16 skills on their study habits. I mean,  
17 they're just different -- the screening  
18 process helps -- for this particular  
19 screening process, that was dyslexia. But I  
20 think we have to look at how do we use the  
21 screening process early on to find the  
22 resources and align those resources with the  
23 specific needs.

24 To your point, some of this will be

1 extended-day. Some of this will be ways that  
2 we find project-based -- different ways of  
3 engaging our students. Some of our kids  
4 would go to mentors. That was a way of  
5 connecting with a particular -- you know,  
6 some of my middle schools would go to  
7 Project Lib {ph}, Morgan Stanley, and would  
8 have an experience with other individuals and  
9 business. And this was in middle school.

10 So I think that there are many  
11 practices that have been embedded. We just  
12 have not built capacity and expanded in many  
13 of these excellent practices that we need to  
14 expand. And what we've been doing with our  
15 superintendents is working on sharing these  
16 practices so that they take hold and we  
17 can -- you know, we can clearly help  
18 individual schools and individual school  
19 districts to really expand on some of these  
20 best practices.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We have a new  
22 mayor in the largest school district in the  
23 state. The Governor recommends a  
24 reauthorization of mayoral control for four

1       years. I'm wondering what your experience  
2       was with the prior administration under  
3       mayoral control and what you think -- some of  
4       us think that perhaps we need a shorter  
5       timeline just to ensure that the new team is  
6       working appropriately.

7               And so I'm wondering how you feel  
8       about maybe a two- or three-year extension  
9       and whether you've had -- been engaged with  
10      the new DOE team, which I have to admit I've  
11      had more communication with in the last two  
12      weeks than I had in the last two years with  
13      the prior administration.

14             So I'm just wondering what your  
15      thoughts are about the largest school  
16      district and the changes that are underway  
17      with the new administration.

18             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I  
19      think the mayoral control issue obviously is  
20      in your lane.

21             I do believe that -- and to your  
22      point, and I'm going to be very succinct with  
23      this, we have had amazing -- in a short  
24      period of time, amazing conversations with

1       the new administration, including the mayor's  
2       staff and the new chancellor. And while he's  
3       been specific about the backlog that has --  
4       in terms of our impartial hearing officers  
5       and OATH and the backlog on this issue, they  
6       have been very responsive, they've asked for  
7       information, they have followed up. We even  
8       agreed to monthly meetings with both the  
9       mayor's office and the DOE.

10               So I will tell you, if the early start  
11       is any indication of where we can go, this  
12       has been incredible. So I've had similar  
13       experience, as you've indicated, with the new  
14       administration. It has been encouraging and,  
15       more importantly, they have followed through.

16               ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, thank you  
17       very much. And I'll see you next week. And  
18       I yield back my 15 seconds.

19               CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the  
20       Senate now, Senator Krueger.

21               CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22               CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, beforehand,  
23       we've been joined by Assemblyman Aubry and  
24       Assemblyman Reilly.



1                   Thank you. To the Senate now.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3                   All right, we go to Sean Ryan, the  
4 chair of the Libraries Committee.

5                   SENATOR RYAN: Thank you.

6                   Thank you, Commissioner, for joining  
7 us here today. I think we're really  
8 fortunate to have you at the helm during the  
9 pandemic. It's not been easy. You've been  
10 in the hot seat. And, you know, it's been  
11 thankless. So I thank you for your good  
12 work.

13                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

14                  SENATOR RYAN: Thanks for your plug  
15 for the increase in the construction fund for  
16 libraries.

17                  Do you have a sense, Commissioner, of  
18 the long-term capital needs for libraries? I  
19 know that the programs are oversubscribed  
20 every year, but I haven't been able to get a  
21 handle on how much we would need over, say, a  
22 decade to catch up. Do you?

23                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Actually  
24 we've been doing some analysis, and we could

1           get that to you. Because this is -- you  
2           know, our connection with the library and the  
3           importance of the library, not just in terms  
4           of the funding -- as you know, last year,  
5           last January, around this time, we did some  
6           work in this area in terms of a virtual.

7                     We know the importance of the library  
8           and the connection in terms of family and  
9           students and the joy and the ways that the  
10          library can expand and enrich the lives of  
11          our young children and our young adults.

12                    So we will get that to you. I think  
13          internally we have been really looking at  
14          building a stronger way of messaging this  
15          narrative. As you know, we've put out a lot  
16          of -- in our both -- you know, in our parent  
17          newsletters and the way that we have been  
18          really focusing on that intersection and that  
19          connection.

20                    But I can turn to Jim if you want, but  
21          I am more than glad to --

22                    SENATOR RYAN: I'm happy just if you  
23          can just keep sharing information that you  
24          have.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Okay.

SENATOR RYAN: And, you know, thank you also for the increase in Operating Aid, the first time that's been increased in many years.

I wanted to switch over to the three Native Schools in New York State. Very happy to see the capital allocation to them. There was also an allocation to higher educational -- looks like Associates in Educational Improvements. I noticed that it was budgeted for two people on that. You know, there are three schools and they're geographically spread out. So just ask you to, you know, keep an eye on that to see whether or not one personnel at each school is better, because they are spread all over, from Northern New York to Western New York to Central.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right. And we're -- as you know, this was -- both the Regents -- we were very, very -- I would say, you know, we developed a strategy, we went to -- you know, the Regents got on board

1 immediately. We asked, for all three  
2 schools, what the funding looked like. We  
3 immediately responded because truly this  
4 whole idea of our Nation schools is extremely  
5 important to us.

6 So we will look out for the third  
7 position. And as I said, this is extremely  
8 important.

9 SENATOR RYAN: That's great. Thank  
10 you so much.

11 You know, going to the pandemic and  
12 how we're trying to recover, in Buffalo in  
13 particular I have some concerns that prior to  
14 the pandemic we were seeing declining test  
15 scores for the 3-8 benchmarks. And then we  
16 also had a persistent absentee problem, which  
17 has just been made worse. Our superintendent  
18 recently questioned the validity and the  
19 reliability of the benchmark testing. So,  
20 you know, if we have the superintendent  
21 saying the tests aren't reliable, that really  
22 sends a message to the parents.

23 So my question is, how the heck are we  
24 going to benchmark in a district like this

1           then?

2                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:  Well, what I  
3           would say is -- you know, the difficulty  
4           sometimes with this issue is that the test is  
5           reliable when it suits you to be reliable.  
6           And sometimes it's not reliable when it  
7           doesn't suit you to be reliable.

8                   I think our consistent message has to  
9           be that the tests are used for a  
10          particular -- especially high-stakes tests.  
11          But there are other -- you know, we can't  
12          lose sight of the complexity and the  
13          importance of multiple ways that we assess  
14          our students.

15                   SENATOR RYAN:  There seemed to be an  
16          inference that the tests were somehow  
17          changed.  No changes, right?  Same vendor?

18                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:  Correct.

19                   I mean, I think -- I think what they  
20          may be speaking to is that during the last  
21          tests we did shorten the test.  Perhaps  
22          maybe -- you know, I'm more than glad to  
23          speak to you offline to find out the  
24          specifics on this, and perhaps maybe even

1 speaking to the district. I'm not -- I'm not  
2 sure why, you know, why there would be some  
3 difficulty with this. Because as you know,  
4 we did a press release on this and then --

5 SENATOR RYAN: Yes.

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. So --

7 SENATOR RYAN: So I'd like to keep it  
8 working and keep in touch if you have both  
9 those issues of the scores and also the  
10 attendance problems.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Sure.

12 And you and I usually have conversations and,  
13 you know, I'm always available too.

14 SENATOR RYAN: Yes, thank you. Thank  
15 you so much.

16 Now switching to a matter that you  
17 addressed earlier on the Farm-to-School  
18 program. We have fantastic examples that I'm  
19 familiar with in districts like Buffalo and  
20 Hamburg, where they really embraced these  
21 programs and they've had a great outcome.  
22 That, you know, they're proud of their  
23 outcomes, that the kids are more interested,  
24 they understand better where their food comes

1 from.

2 But it hasn't been widely received in  
3 districts around the state. I don't know why  
4 the number is just about 4 percent of the  
5 districts. And I know there is a proposal to  
6 move this to Ag & Markets. You know, I want  
7 to work with you and the Department of  
8 Education and Ag & Markets through this  
9 process, because I believe we all share the  
10 common goal of having more of our food  
11 dollars spent in New York State. And I think  
12 we have a good template to get there. But I  
13 don't know the impediments to it now.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So what I  
15 would say is as follows.

16 Obviously you know that the program,  
17 Farm-to-School, is about 47 to 50 schools,  
18 right, throughout. So it's a small program.  
19 It just recently went through an audit and  
20 evaluation, which we're more than glad -- you  
21 know, I'm sure they'll share it with you; we  
22 can share it with you.

23 We have recently in the past year  
24 built a partnership with Commissioner Ball to

1       really, truly begin to do the kind of work  
2       that he has been doing, and to expand on --  
3       as you know, I think from our 1.3 there's  
4       about 750 -- you know, somewhere in the  
5       vicinity of 1.5 million, let's just use that  
6       number.

7               And so we have been very -- you know,  
8       obviously it's optional. We've been  
9       supportive, encouraging for individual  
10      districts to -- you know, to really become  
11      part of the conversation. My biggest concern  
12      is that to go from a program that is that  
13      size to the massive program where we have to  
14      deal with issues of student privacy, we have  
15      to deal with issues of -- we have a built-in  
16      system of administering the program. That is  
17      where I -- I have had the most amazing  
18      relationship. He came to the Bronx, we've  
19      built -- you know, conversations around, you  
20      know, other kinds of visits.

21             The relationship is one that needs to  
22      grow. The conversation of how we enhance the  
23      program that he currently has is another type  
24      of conversation. But I think there's been



1           some misunderstanding of how do you go from a  
2           small program without any conversation to a  
3           massive program that you will have to --

4           SENATOR RYAN: We'll continue to have  
5           conversations on this?

6           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure,  
7           absolutely. Absolutely.

8           SENATOR RYAN: And I'll just close  
9           with, you know, every year the budget comes  
10          over and every year the Schomburg Center for  
11          Research in Black Culture and the Langston  
12          Hughes Library and Cultural Center, they  
13          always get a cut. Every single year.

14          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

15          SENATOR RYAN: Can never figure out  
16          why, Commissioner. So if you have the  
17          knowledge base of why we cut out those  
18          programs, you know, let me know, and we can  
19          work to make sure they don't get cut.

20          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. Well,  
21          and I hope that the both -- you have been  
22          very gracious in restoring them, because I  
23          totally agree. I -- I will try to find out  
24          what the thinking is behind the cuts.

1           But again, as you know, the proposed  
2           budgets we get a very -- you know, we get a  
3           briefing on. We don't really sometimes  
4           understand the rationale, and I'm sure others  
5           would be able to help you understand as well.  
6           But we support both -- the restoration of  
7           both programs.

8           SENATOR RYAN: Thank you so much,  
9           Commissioner.

10          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

11          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
12          Assemblywoman Weinstein.

13          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to  
14          the Ways and Means ranker, Assemblyman Ed Ra,  
15          for five minutes.

16          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

17          Just quickly, if I can acknowledge  
18          Assemblywoman Missy Miller has joined us as  
19          well.

20          Good morning, Commissioner.

21          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Morning.

22          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Always good to see  
23          you. And I just want to quickly state  
24          something, and then I have some questions.

1           But I do want to express some  
2           frustration from yesterday. I don't  
3           necessarily blame the department. I think a  
4           lot of us were in a kind of "don't shoot the  
5           messenger" kind of situation, and certainly  
6           the department was. But a lot of confusion  
7           was -- happened yesterday, and I know that  
8           there was some information put out Monday  
9           night that said, you know, the mandate must  
10          be followed, and then yesterday the  
11          department said it should be followed, and  
12          that caused some confusion as well.

13                 So I hope that, you know, as we come  
14          to some further resolution of this, whether  
15          through the courts or when this does expire,  
16          we can make sure clear information and  
17          directives go out to our districts. And  
18          certainly I think -- I think you know the  
19          tremendous respect I have for you as an  
20          educator and a leader, both during your  
21          tenure on the Board of Regents and at the  
22          department. So I just wanted to state that.

23                 But I wanted to get into a topic that  
24          was brought up, and it's always music to my

1        ears, after 12 years of being on these budget  
2        hearings, when I hear chairs like Chair  
3        Benedetto and Shelley Mayer talk about  
4        853 schools and 4201 schools. And, you know,  
5        good to see them high up on the witness list  
6        this year. But Ms. Morris did get into a  
7        little bit the reconciliation process and all  
8        of that.

9                And I'm just wondering -- you know, I  
10       know we have this statement, really, that  
11       this COLA is going to be there and it's  
12       great. And, you know, I think the point was  
13       made about that money in terms of the  
14       reconciliation process and all of that  
15       needing to happen in the long run.

16               But I guess my concern is, and I'm  
17       wondering your thoughts, on whether there  
18       should actually be, you know, Article 7  
19       language in this budget to ensure that that  
20       happens. Something similar to the bill that  
21       was vetoed last year, to ensure there is  
22       parity for these schools in line with the  
23       increases we give to general public education  
24       each year.

1           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, if I  
2           can take half a minute and respond to your  
3           first part, I really --

4           ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Sure. Please.

5           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So just my  
6           decision, along with conversations with the  
7           Department of Health, my decision was based  
8           on knowing schools, as you know, as a  
9           principal and superintendent. It is very  
10          difficult to have a situation where a  
11          decision is made and you throw the system  
12          into chaos.

13          So my position has always been to  
14          maintain the integrity and maintain the  
15          stability of our educational system. It is  
16          always going to be my priority. I do not  
17          believe that any decision that I made should  
18          really force any district -- I mean, I -- as  
19          I'm sure you did -- watched the confusion for  
20          parents, the confusion for students. We  
21          always want to maintain that stability. And  
22          the only way that we can do that is to  
23          keep -- you know, while all these other  
24          things are going around the school, maintain

1           what currently exists until such time as we  
2           can -- legally we can work it through. And  
3           that was our message about stability.

4           Having said that, to your second  
5           question -- to your first question, I truly  
6           believe, to your point, that we really --  
7           parity is parity, and we really have to get  
8           to a point that we look at the current --  
9           looking at the rate-setting methodology. We  
10          need to address that. Other than that, I  
11          think this is not going to -- while, you  
12          know, the base is better, you know, we can  
13          look at this over a period of time. I'd like  
14          to move beyond the one year.

15          And we're more than glad to be  
16          specific with the legislators in terms of our  
17          specific concerns about this. But at some  
18          point we truly have to get to correcting a  
19          methodology that -- you know it and we all  
20          know it -- has not worked.

21          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes, absolutely.  
22          And, you know, I'd appreciate if your staff  
23          maybe could provide the details of that  
24          proposal --

1                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

2                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- for the five years  
3                   so that we have that window to finally  
4                   correct this so that, going forward, these  
5                   schools are on better financial footing.  
6                   Because it's important. And as you know,  
7                   with the pandemic, there were people not  
8                   getting evaluated that needed these types of  
9                   schools. And when everything is so dependent  
10                  on, you know, that reconciliation process  
11                  and, you know, pupil count, it certainly has  
12                  an impact.

13                  So thank you.

14                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

15                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the  
16                  Senate now.

17                  Senator Krueger.

18                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
19                  much.

20                  And we have come to Ranker Jim  
21                  Tedisco, five minutes.

22                  SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you, Senator.

23                  Commissioner, I can't see you yet, but  
24                  I hope they bring you up so I can be looking

1 at you on the screen here, you're not still  
2 looking at Senator Krueger. Oh, there you  
3 are. Okay, great.

4 Thank you for being here. Thank you  
5 for the wonderful service you've provided  
6 over the years as Regent, as the Regent  
7 leader, and now as the commissioner. We  
8 really appreciate your love of our children  
9 and education, something we share and I know  
10 many of my colleagues share.

11 The excitement is we've got full  
12 Foundation Aid geared up. It's something we  
13 all, many of us have been supporting, we know  
14 the importance of funding our educational  
15 system. Kids are our future, and their  
16 education is maybe the most huge part of  
17 their future in terms of their success. I  
18 think that's something we all agree upon.

19 But the concern I have, and I'll ask  
20 you about this, is we could have double the  
21 Foundation Aid, we could have triple the  
22 Foundation Aid, and I know it's been  
23 mentioned somewhat here, but if we don't use  
24 it in the most efficient and effective way to



1 bring those test scores up, to get those  
2 graduation rates in place, to make sure that  
3 they get the full extent of a great  
4 education, we fail. It's not only about the  
5 dollars, which we're going to receive and  
6 which they deserve, it's about creating  
7 parity and fairness along with that  
8 efficiency I initially talked about.

9 So what I think I want to ask you,  
10 first and foremost, is we know the funding's  
11 there and we've seen the budget that's been  
12 presented now. But over the years my  
13 concern, as someone who -- and I always say  
14 this tongue in cheek -- had a real job at one  
15 time, I was an educator, as you know, we've  
16 talked about that before.

17 NYSSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

18 SENATOR TEDISCO: For ten years I  
19 taught kids with learning challenges and I  
20 was special education instructor, got my  
21 degree from the College of St. Rose and Union  
22 College before that. My real concern is  
23 about maybe the lack of an understanding of  
24 diversity in the formula itself.

1           And could you address what your  
2           feelings are about the formula from the past  
3           and the formula now as we move towards  
4           Foundation Aid, and what you think we may be  
5           able to do? Because, Commissioner, I  
6           represent a very diverse district -- urban,  
7           rural and suburban. And some of them have  
8           the same -- many of the same needs, but many  
9           have different needs based on this  
10          environment that they're a part of, and high  
11          needs, low income, high wealth.

12          Can you tell what you feel about the  
13          formula the way it's been presented with the  
14          dollars we have in the budget this year as  
15          you've seen it?

16                NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

17                So three parts to this. One is that  
18                the formula in statute has not been updated.  
19                Right? We know that.

20                SENATOR TEDISCO: Right.

21                NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And that's  
22                the thing that since its inception, it has  
23                been -- you know, my understanding is that  
24                you look at the 2000, you know, Census,

1 poverty.

2           So one of the concerns we have is  
3 that, you know, once we get past these three  
4 years and we've fully -- you know, we've  
5 gotten to the fully funded, I think we really  
6 need to drill down and look at the formula  
7 and the way it has been -- to your point, how  
8 it's been responsive or not to the various  
9 needs.

10           Now, the one thing I do want to say is  
11 that we have been, for years, in a financial  
12 challenging issue. Therefore, to many of the  
13 questions that have come up, while we have  
14 this time and place of funding, we are still  
15 going to be backfilling, not only in terms of  
16 learning loss, but we're going to be  
17 backfilling the fact that not every school  
18 has a nurse. Not every school has a library.  
19 Not every school has the kinds of resources,  
20 to some of the questions that have come up,  
21 that really create a comprehensive space and  
22 place for children to have the very, very  
23 best resources to really be successful.

24           SENATOR TEDISCO: Let me just break in

1 on that point that you made now.

2 So are you saying that the formula  
3 right now and in the past did not have the  
4 fairness and the parity that we should be  
5 moving towards in terms of some high-need  
6 districts? Because if you don't have those  
7 things, obviously you don't -- you have a  
8 need that other districts were able to  
9 overcome.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I  
11 think, you know, we have to look at the  
12 reality of the financial situation that we've  
13 been -- education has been in for -- you  
14 know, if we look at 2008, I'll go that far,  
15 that's when I joined the Board of Regents.  
16 And so we have -- you know, even the whole  
17 issue of how we have been financing our  
18 high-demanding, high-needs -- I mean, this is  
19 per -- looking at per student allocation and  
20 looking at needs is a formula that has to  
21 really be reevaluated and --

22 SENATOR TEDISCO: Let me move into one  
23 other area of the evaluation I'm talking  
24 about.

1           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Time is -- the  
2 time has been up for some time.

3           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, yes,  
4 time has come. Sorry, Jim, you don't get  
5 another shot at the --

6           SENATOR TEDISCO: That was a fast five  
7 minutes.

8           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I know, it's  
9 amazing how quickly it goes. And I'm turning  
10 it over to Assemblywoman Weinstein.

11          SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you,  
12 Commissioner.

13          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You're  
14 welcome.

15          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We now go to  
16 our chair of Libraries, Kimberly Jean-Pierre,  
17 for 10 minutes.

18          ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Good  
19 morning, Commissioner.

20          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good  
21 morning.

22          ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Good  
23 morning, and I want to thank you and your  
24 staff for working so hard and for providing

1 your testimony and for the relationship that  
2 we have and we continue to develop for school  
3 districts in my district.

4 I first want to ask you -- yesterday I  
5 sent a letter for the \$15 million allocation  
6 for digital inclusion. Do you know if these  
7 funds have been released? And if not, when  
8 will they be released?

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

10 Phyllis?

11 NYSED CFO MORRIS: Certainly.

12 So they're in -- correct, in the  
13 '21-'22 enacted budget there was a  
14 \$15 million federal appropriation included  
15 for digital inclusion efforts. And our --  
16 and the funding source for that initiative,  
17 to our understanding, has not yet been  
18 identified. So when we've made inquiries  
19 about that, that's the answer we've received,  
20 is that the funding source still needs to be  
21 identified.

22 So once the funding source is  
23 identified we will certainly move forward  
24 with implementation.

1                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: And do you  
2 anticipate a time frame?

3                   NYSED CFO MORRIS: It really depends  
4 on when we're provided with the information  
5 about how the initiative is going to be  
6 funded.

7                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Okay, I'll  
8 follow up.

9                   NYSED CFO MORRIS: We'll move forward  
10 as quickly as we -- as we possibly can once  
11 that information is provided.

12                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Okay.

13                  And I know last year, Commissioner, I  
14 mentioned how important diversity is in our  
15 public schools. And I appreciate some of the  
16 conversations that you're having and things  
17 that you are doing for teacher diversity. It  
18 is so vital that our kids -- my daughter, who  
19 is in a predominantly white administrative  
20 school, that she has a teacher that looks  
21 like her and so many other children  
22 throughout the state.

23                  So I look forward to working with you  
24 to ensure that we can have some plans and

1 roll out plans for teacher diversity. That's  
2 so important.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.  
4 And thank you for your voice in this issue.  
5 And as you know, the Board of Regents  
6 collectively, Chancellor Young and all of us  
7 are committed -- you know, we're working very  
8 closely with NYSUT, we're working very  
9 closely with our higher ed, to ensure that  
10 the issue of teacher shortage, but  
11 particularly around diversity, is a priority.

12 Thank you.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: And I do  
14 want to also echo some of my colleagues who  
15 talked about how education is funded and  
16 we're utilizing the census numbers from  
17 20 years ago. And we talk about particularly  
18 suburban school districts who, you know, we  
19 say that children should not be -- the  
20 quality of education should not depend on the  
21 zip code that you reside in. And there are  
22 kids who live four blocks, two blocks away  
23 from each other and are receiving different  
24 qualities of education because of how we fund



1 education.

2 So I would really like your input into  
3 seeing how we can change the formula and we  
4 can be more progressive and to ensure that  
5 children all across New York State, no matter  
6 what zip code you reside in -- because these  
7 are hardworking families that live in each  
8 and every zip code, that their children will  
9 have a fair chance.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.  
11 And that's why we put that in our testimony,  
12 because we totally agree with you that we  
13 have to do a better job in that area.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Perfect.  
15 Thank you so much.

16 And I want to say if you can send --  
17 as the Majority Leader mentioned, the early  
18 childhood education, if you can share the  
19 contents that you will be sharing with the  
20 Majority Leader with the Education Committee.  
21 Surely early childhood education is important  
22 to all of us, and we would like to make sure  
23 that we are working with the right people in  
24 the department.

1                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

2                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you  
3 so much. Appreciate it.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
5 much, Assemblywoman. I'm now going to jump  
6 to Senator Hoylman.

7                   SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you, Chair  
8 Krueger, and to the Education chairs here. I  
9 really appreciate it.

10                  It's good to see you, Commissioner. I  
11 just wanted to relay a quick story. My  
12 husband and I have an 11-year-old daughter.  
13 We found out only when she was in fourth  
14 grade that she is dyslexic. And we only  
15 found out by happenstance. It was, in fact,  
16 Assemblymember Bobby Carroll who helped  
17 identify the fact that our daughter had this  
18 severe reading disability.

19                  And given the fact that estimates are  
20 up to 20 percent of school students are  
21 dyslexic, that's about 220,000 in New York  
22 City alone. While I appreciate your stating  
23 that screening at an early stage is  
24 essential, when are we going to start?

1 Again, my husband and I were fortunate in  
2 that I bumped into Bobby and was able to  
3 describe my daughter's symptoms. But an  
4 undiagnosed dyslexic student is failing.  
5 Because my daughter couldn't read, and we  
6 didn't know it.

7 So what can we do about it?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So that's a  
9 great question. And I know that -- I know  
10 that we have been trying to also work in a  
11 combination of early -- to your point, with  
12 our teacher training of understanding early  
13 on. By the way, there's even  
14 misunderstanding that -- you know, it used to  
15 be that people thought that dyslexia was  
16 specific to boys, right, young men, when in  
17 fact that is not -- there's so many -- I  
18 mean, information-wise we really have to do a  
19 better job. And --

20 SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you. Thank  
21 you. And then if I could just -- and I  
22 appreciate that. And I look forward to  
23 working with you and Assemblymember Carroll  
24 and Assemblymember Simon.

1           One more quick question is about a  
2           bill that a colleague of mine carries in  
3           connection with Holocaust education. Do you  
4           have a position on the Holocaust education  
5           requirement, given that studies show that a  
6           significant percentage of New York students  
7           aren't adequately receiving Holocaust  
8           education in our schools?

9           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

10          SENATOR HOYLMAN: That's legislation  
11          carried by Senator Kaplan and Assemblymember  
12          Rozic.

13          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah. And  
14          just so you know, we did provide last year  
15          specific information about what is in law,  
16          that is required. And we even had a  
17          conversation -- you know, we had agreed to  
18          obviously share the resources that we do use.  
19          I think there was a conversation around the  
20          possibility of even doing a survey, which we  
21          had no funding for, obviously, to try to find  
22          out how do we ensure that districts in  
23          fact -- what is required in law on -- they're  
24          addressing.

1           So it's a conversation that we're  
2           continuing to have. It's of interest to many  
3           around this issue, given not only the climate  
4           but definitely the need to -- you know, to  
5           make sure that it is happening.

6           So I will continue to -- I will share  
7           the information, and it's a conversation we  
8           will continue to have during this legislative  
9           session.

10          SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you so much.

11          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12          Assemblywoman Weinstein.

13          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. So I  
14          believe we go to Assemblyman Jensen, ranker  
15          on Libraries.

16          ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you, Madam  
17          Chair. Good morning, Commissioner.

18          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good  
19          morning.

20          ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: I just want to  
21          start by getting your thoughts on the  
22          Executive not including State Ed's proposal  
23          for \$16.2 million for Instructional Materials  
24          Aid, which would include Library Materials

1 Aid. I know State Ed proposed 16.2 and the  
2 proposed budgets were at 5.9.

3 What are your thoughts on that lack  
4 of -- that only 35 percent of what you're  
5 asking for?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well,  
7 it's -- you know, like anything else, anytime  
8 you ask for something that you believe is  
9 essential and -- so, you know, it's  
10 disappointing. But we're hoping to try to  
11 work -- you know, to work with the  
12 legislators to try to address this issue.

13 And again, I can tell you some of  
14 the -- you know, I can ask Jim to address the  
15 issue of how we are hoping to elevate this  
16 conversation.

17 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Sure,  
18 thank you, Commissioner.

19 This particular aid category is very  
20 important given what school districts are  
21 facing in terms of the funding cliff, in  
22 terms of the fact that the Smart Schools Bond  
23 Act is now almost fully committed and that  
24 much of the materials and equipment that was

1 purchased pursuant to that will age out. We  
2 also know that the availability of federal  
3 funding, COVID-related, has given school  
4 districts some additional capacity.

5 However, as with many of these issues,  
6 what we really need to be looking at is how  
7 do we create a reliable stream of funding to  
8 our school districts. And when we think  
9 about the implications of technology, we  
10 think about the implications of these various  
11 instructional materials, it was the feeling  
12 of the Board of Regents and the position of  
13 the commissioner that this was the level of  
14 aid that was required, and that that level of  
15 aid ought to be sustained and ought to  
16 increase as the need warrants.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you very  
18 much, Jim.

19 Long before I was elected -- not long  
20 before, but before I was elected --

21 (Zoom interruption.)

22 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Long before I was  
23 elected the Legislature put --

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry. Everyone

1 please mute if you're not the one talking,  
2 thank you. Sorry.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: -- Love Your  
4 Library fund was created. Could you tell me  
5 if those funds have been collected, have they  
6 been distributed? And if so, how have they  
7 been distributed?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Jim, I'm  
9 going to go back to you because -- go ahead,  
10 Jim.

11 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: I  
12 believe this would be a --

13 EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS: I was  
14 going to say actually, Commissioner, I will  
15 comment on that.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, go  
17 ahead.

18 EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS:  
19 Currently there is money in the account, and  
20 SED has been given -- has not been given the  
21 authority to spend the money. So the -- we  
22 continue to request it annually.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: So who would you  
24 need to get the permission from, from the



1 Executive or from the Legislature?

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: DOB.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Okay, thank you.

4 Shifting gears a little bit, do you  
5 believe that there's been a lack of focus or  
6 priority on adult education and literacy  
7 work? I know there's a divide between  
8 upstate and New York City where upstate is  
9 really driven by volunteer-based  
10 organizations, and New York City it's by paid  
11 staff.

12 Should there be a greater focus paid,  
13 both budgetarily and support-wise, to make  
14 sure we're empowering especially the  
15 volunteer organizations to make sure that  
16 they can reach the targeted groups they  
17 should be reaching?

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
19 And I know the time is limited, so I'm going  
20 to share with you, in terms of our adult  
21 literacy statewide, the specifics so that we  
22 can advocate to your point on a statewide  
23 basis.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you. I

1 appreciate the respect of the time, and I  
2 know I only have 30 seconds, so I just want  
3 to make this point. I don't really need a  
4 response.

5 But I certainly think it's worth focus  
6 for curriculum development, a greater focus  
7 on real-world skills --

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: -- like financial  
10 literacy for our high-schoolers,  
11 middle-schoolers and elementary. So I really  
12 hope that you and your team at State Ed try  
13 to start focusing on making that a required  
14 course of curriculum. So thank you --

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, just  
16 to answer quickly, the financial aid  
17 literacy -- by the way, this month on the  
18 On Board article I wrote a piece on financial  
19 literacy. And financial literacy is very  
20 much a part of the DEI framework.

21 So we are very focused on the  
22 importance of financial literacy across the  
23 board, not just, you know, for our high  
24 school students. It has been -- during our

1           conversations with our high school students  
2           during our task force, it was one of those  
3           key requested areas.

4           ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Well, there's a  
5           great bill that would push that further, so I  
6           look forward to that work.

7           Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you,  
8           Madam Chair.

9           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the  
10          Senate now.

11          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
12          much. We're up to Senator John Mannion.

13          SENATOR MANNION: Thank you, Senator  
14          Krueger.

15          Thank you, Commissioner, for your  
16          service to the children of this state. As I  
17          thanked you last year, those sentiments  
18          remain for sure.

19          I'm going to continue a conversation  
20          that was happening about the Foundation Aid  
21          formula with some of my colleagues, including  
22          Senator Tedisco. I know -- I couldn't be  
23          happier that we are going to fully fund  
24          Foundation Aid and we have a commitment to

1       it. But my concerns are that I represent  
2       districts like we've already heard about that  
3       are right next-door to other districts and  
4       they are at the wrong end of that funding  
5       formula, and continue to be, and it compounds  
6       the problems that exist in that district and  
7       the ability of those districts to retain and  
8       recruit teachers and other staff, because  
9       they're losing them.

10               So my question is, knowing that you  
11       have unfortunately several open positions  
12       within State Ed, and we need to fill those,  
13       is there currently actively a move towards  
14       reforming the Foundation Aid formula?

15               NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, the --  
16       you know, in my testimony and what I said  
17       earlier was that we requested a 1.2 million  
18       to do a top-to-bottom Foundation Aid review,  
19       but the funding has not been provided.

20               So when you ask me, yes, we really  
21       have to look at a review of the formula and  
22       we have to really get an external support to  
23       do this in order to do a top-to-bottom  
24       review.

1                   SENATOR MANNION: Thank you,  
2                   Commissioner. So my follow-up question was  
3                   going to be how can the Legislature help, and  
4                   I think you have answered that question.  
5                   Which is that we need to make sure that this  
6                   is a priority, that we put it in our budget  
7                   and we advocate aggressively for that. So I  
8                   appreciate that.

9                   Looking at the time, I'm going to jump  
10                  to this question. It does have to do with  
11                  the recommendation about the move regarding  
12                  Ag & Markets. So my question is about the  
13                  4 percent of the schools in New York State  
14                  that currently participate in the  
15                  Farm-to-School program. Has State Ed  
16                  conducted outreach to try to increase that  
17                  number over time?

18                 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
19                 And we have not only, as I shared earlier, my  
20                 relationship with Commissioner Ball, but also  
21                 Kathleen DeCataldo, who's on with us today,  
22                 who oversees the entire program for Child  
23                 Nutrition -- which includes of course, as you  
24                 know, breakfast, snack, lunch -- has really,

1           really been engaged in advancing this issue  
2           and trying to not only -- trying to expand.

3                     But we also have looked at, as I'm  
4           sure you have, you know, we looked at the  
5           audit that was done to try to figure out how  
6           do we support the kinds of things  
7           administratively, where there were some  
8           concerns, to also support the program as  
9           well.

10                    So Kathleen, you may want to add  
11           something else too.

12                   ASST. COMMISSIONER DECATALDO:   Sure.  
13           Yes, commissioner.   I would just add --

14                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   Just very  
15           briefly, please.   Because we've run out of  
16           time.

17                   ASST. COMMISSIONER DECATALDO:   We've  
18           provided numerous trainings and worked  
19           closely with the Cornell Cooperative  
20           Extension folks.   We meet with schools.

21                   We think one of the keys is to make it  
22           easier to identify the products, if we're  
23           talking about the Farm-to-School 30 percent  
24           initiative.

1                   So there are steps that can be taken.

2                   So thank you.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4                   Assemblymember.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the  
6                   Higher Ed ranker, Assemblyman Doug Smith, for  
7                   five minutes.

8                   ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you --

9                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Doug, you seem  
10                  to have frozen. Do you -- if you can't  
11                  unfreeze yourself, you may need to log out  
12                  and log back in, in which case we can ...

13                  Okay, I think, Assemblyman Ra, we're  
14                  going to skip to the next Assemblymember, and  
15                  then we'll come back to Doug.

16                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I'll get in touch  
17                  with him and see what's going on.

18                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So let's  
19                  go to Assemblyman Kim now for three minutes.

20                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Go ahead,  
21                  Assemblymember Kim.

22                  (Discussion off the record.)

23                  ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: All right, thank  
24                  you, Chairwoman. Am I up?

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Commissioner Rosa,  
3 you mentioned in your testimony that we need  
4 more funding to fully staff the department,  
5 and part of their funding is to properly  
6 administer language access mandates and  
7 support more instructional programming.

8 Do you have a sense of where we're  
9 falling short in providing language access  
10 and which communities are impacted?

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

12 In a couple of areas we have been  
13 asking for a while for translations, right,  
14 something as simple as translated materials.  
15 There's a 1.6 -- or a request of trying to  
16 make sure that, you know, we have the  
17 materials so that we're reaching the various  
18 communities in areas that have the materials  
19 available. We have also asked for, for  
20 example, not only translation of parent  
21 materials, translations for communities.

22 The other area is in terms of looking  
23 at supporting -- one of the big things is our  
24 dual language programs. And, you know, we



1 try very, very hard, particularly in areas  
2 where we can offer dual language or we need  
3 to offer and hire bilingual teachers, where  
4 we need to hire the kinds of staffing that's  
5 going to -- you know, one of the barriers --  
6 it's a strength, but it's a barrier, is the  
7 issue of language acquisition.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Okay, great. Thank  
9 you. If you can provide more specifics,  
10 there'd be follow-up, maybe very --

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Very good, thank  
13 you.

14 I want to just reemphasize Senator  
15 John Liu's point on bringing Asian-American  
16 curriculum to New York. As you already know,  
17 our schools play a large role in normalizing  
18 or dispelling certain stereotypes of  
19 Asian-Americans, and New York should be  
20 leading the country in systemically  
21 confronting rising hatred toward Asians.

22 Two states have already responded in  
23 recent weeks by directing their public  
24 schools to incorporate Asian-American history

1 in their curriculums. And I know you're  
2 aligned -- your values are aligned with us on  
3 this issue, Commissioner.

4 In addition to putting a time frame  
5 and a schedule, can we do something publicly  
6 to signal to all communities across this  
7 country that New York is taking anti-Asian  
8 hatred seriously?

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
10 And we will work with you and others. And I  
11 know, just very briefly, Regent Chin, as you  
12 know, and our chancellor are very much  
13 committed to doing this.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN KIM: Great. So we'll  
15 follow up with this, Commissioner.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 We go to the Senate now.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
20 much.

21 And we go next to -- excuse me, I lost  
22 my own list. Ah, Senator Robert Jackson.  
23 How could I forget Senator Robert Jackson.

24 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam

1 Chair. And Dr. Rosa, let me thank you for  
2 your service to the people and especially the  
3 children of New York State.

4 I have a couple of quick questions. I  
5 only have three minutes, so if you can be as  
6 precise as possible, I'd appreciate it.

7 DOE officials have said it's up to the  
8 commissioner to make the determination of how  
9 much funding is subject to the Contract for  
10 Excellence, CFE, requirements. Is this true?  
11 And if so, why hasn't the amount been raised?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm not --  
13 well, I'm going to take this offline because  
14 I'm not exactly sure, you know, why they're  
15 saying that or what exactly that means. So I  
16 would be more than glad to have an offline  
17 conversation on this issue with you --

18 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- so we  
20 have clarification on it.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: All right, I  
22 appreciate that.

23 The second question I have is can you  
24 please share with us why pre-K was not

1 included in your state aid proposal? Was the  
2 funding allocated last year spent? Or do  
3 high-needs schools, districts still have  
4 waiting lists for pre-K? Can you give us a  
5 quick update?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. I'm  
7 going to turn to Phyllis on the finances.

8 Quickly, Phyllis.

9 NYSED CFO MORRIS: So what we had  
10 asked for in our state -- our non-state aid  
11 proposal was close to \$2 million for staff  
12 for our Office of Early Learning to  
13 appropriately administer and monitor the  
14 almost \$1 billion in pre-K funding we  
15 administer each year.

16 We did receive that funding in the  
17 Executive Budget, we're very pleased to see  
18 that. That was our focus.

19 But just to touch on the American  
20 Rescue Plan federal funding that was put in  
21 the '21-'22 for pre-K, it's for a three-year  
22 period. So '22-'23 will be the second year  
23 of that \$210 million investment.

24 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. A little

1 later is it possible we can get statistics on  
2 how many pre-Ks around the State of New York  
3 so that, you know, at least we know from last  
4 year? If you don't mind.

5 And again, my third question: Do we  
6 know how many public schools hired social  
7 workers, school psychologists, school nurses  
8 as a result of the additional funding? And I  
9 have bills on that in the State Senate.

10 So do you have any insight on that  
11 that you can give us from a rough perspective  
12 right now? I know you don't have the  
13 specific details at this particular moment.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: To be quite  
15 honest with you, no. We have a broader  
16 understanding of, you know, what we are  
17 encouraging and what we are asking districts  
18 to consider. But the specifics, I would have  
19 to -- but it's an internal question that, you  
20 know, we really truly are gathering, and we  
21 will share it with you.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

23 My last question is legitimate  
24 concerns have been raised about the lack of

1 secular education in many yeshivas, and an  
2 inquiry found that 26 out of the 28 schools  
3 investigated failed to meet the basic  
4 standards for a secular education.

5 What will you do to ensure children  
6 are receiving the proper instruction in  
7 English, math, science and social studies?  
8 And there's a bill on that also. Thank you.

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

10 So very quickly, I know we ran out of  
11 time, we will provide -- as we have been  
12 having extensive conversations on it, we're  
13 bringing it to the March meeting -- the  
14 administrative information on -- we've been  
15 working for a year and a half on substantial  
16 equivalence and the specifics of it. And  
17 that has been shared with the cochairs, but I  
18 will make sure that you also receive a copy  
19 of it.

20 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right, thank  
23 you. Assemblymember.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we're

1 going to go back now to Assemblyman Doug  
2 Smith, the ranker on Education.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you so much,  
4 Madam Chair.

5 And good to see you, Commissioner,  
6 Take 2. You know, sorry about that, in this  
7 Zoom world. So it's so good to see you, and  
8 I just want to right out the gate say thank  
9 you so much for your help and meeting with me  
10 last year regarding the teacher certification  
11 process and this perhaps pending teacher  
12 shortage. I really appreciate that; the  
13 people in my district really appreciate that  
14 as well.

15 So that goes into my first question,  
16 because Governor Hochul announced a plan to  
17 address the teacher shortage. And as part of  
18 this plan, she's proposing increased funding  
19 to the State Ed Department to enhance the  
20 certification process. Do we know yet how  
21 the department might utilize the increased  
22 funding? And, you know, is it enough  
23 funding? Is this going to be helpful? And  
24 what can we kind of do to be more helpful?

1           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Okay.   So  
2           there are three parts to this.   So very  
3           quickly, because we only have -- we will make  
4           the information -- because we have been  
5           having internal conversations about the  
6           11 positions, the 8.1 million, that we have  
7           the money, we just have never had the money  
8           to develop our -- you know, our system.

9           So I'm going to very quickly turn it  
10          over, just to give you a highlight from  
11          Laura Glass.   Laura?

12          SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS:   Hello.

13          So we original proposed \$8 million,  
14          which is our carryover funds.   The Executive  
15          Budget proposes \$1.35 million, which actually  
16          coincides with the first year of what we  
17          would like to be a four-year plan.   The first  
18          two years of that plan would be analysis and  
19          design, because it would take a long time to  
20          really think carefully about how do we  
21          automate TEACH to make certification more  
22          streamlined.   And then the last two years  
23          would be the implementation process.

24          So we essentially got in the proposal



1           only the first year allocation of what we see  
2           as a four-year plan.

3                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   And the  
4           8.1 million we already had, so --

5                   SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS:   Yup.   These  
6           are all carryover funds that were generated  
7           from the application fees that we received  
8           through OTI.

9                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Which were  
10          withheld, yeah, and finally given to us.

11                  ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH:   Okay, thank you,  
12          yeah, because I think that's something that  
13          we had previously discussed.

14                  Now, the other thing I noticed that in  
15          the State of the State briefing book that  
16          Governor Hochul proposed a new program to  
17          assist paraprofessionals in the schools in  
18          obtaining a full teacher certification by  
19          offering financial assistance to cover the  
20          costs of tuition, books and fees at SUNY and  
21          CUNY.

22                  Would paraprofessionals seeking a  
23          full-time teacher certification be eligible  
24          to attend the schools online, or would they

1 be required to attend these, you know, in  
2 person? Do we know that information yet?

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Laura, I  
4 don't think -- no.

5 SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS: No, we  
6 haven't --

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, we  
8 don't. But let me just say this.

9 The idea of a pipeline of  
10 paraprofessionals is amazing. So let me  
11 start there. It is absolutely something we  
12 support, and it's amazing. The devil's in  
13 the details. So we don't have those yet, but  
14 absolutely we would be willing to meet with  
15 you and others to really discuss how do you  
16 go from trying to do something like that  
17 and -- whether it's online, in person, or  
18 career kind of focus.

19 We would love to be a part of the  
20 conversation on how we do that. And so we're  
21 hopeful that we will have that opportunity.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I really  
23 appreciate that. And I think, you know, your  
24 experience previously in the classroom and at

1 the building level as well I think is really  
2 helpful for that.

3 My last question is about digital  
4 equity, because this is something that  
5 schools across the state have brought up as a  
6 concern. So, you know, we know that students  
7 from low-income districts and students with  
8 disabilities were disproportionately affected  
9 by the pandemic due to learning loss from the  
10 lack of broadband infrastructure across the  
11 state and reduced special education services.

12 So have we been able to yet address  
13 the level of learning loss? I know that's  
14 been a -- you know, we've endeavored to find  
15 that. Do we have any information on that?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So we  
17 have a whole -- as I shared earlier, we did a  
18 whole analysis on the whole digital equity  
19 issue, from not just the infrastructure,  
20 equipment, you know, looking at the -- you  
21 know, the opportunities also for professional  
22 development and usage in terms of our grant  
23 that we did get from the federal -- which was  
24 19 million.

1           So what I would say is I will give you  
2       definite -- our outcomes of our digital  
3       analysis and also how we are asking districts  
4       to think about, given COVID and the platform,  
5       the digital platform and the extended use of  
6       it, and the investments that need to be made  
7       in order to take those learning lessons, as I  
8       call them, into that expanded learning  
9       process.

10           ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you so much,  
11       Commissioner. And I think I speak for all of  
12       us, I think you're doing a great job. So  
13       thank you for your help.

14           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

15           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16           We go now to the Senate.

17           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18           I believe we are up to Senator Samra  
19       Brouk.

20           SENATOR BROUK: Yes, thank you. Good  
21       morning.

22           Good morning, Commissioner. Thank you  
23       for joining us again. It's good to see you.

24           My questions revolve specifically in

1 relation to mental health for our young  
2 people. And I know you may have answered  
3 this before, but I was in and out. Can you  
4 just remind me, has the \$10 million for  
5 school mental health from last year's budget  
6 been disbursed to schools yet?

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, we  
8 did -- well, I think Phyllis -- Sharon?  
9 Phyllis?

10 NYSED CFO MORRIS: Yeah, the  
11 \$10 million is administered by the Office of  
12 Mental Health, so we'd have to defer that  
13 question to OMH.

14 SENATOR BROUK: Got it. I'll keep  
15 that for next week. Thank you.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: But there is  
17 a relationship, just so you know, with  
18 Commissioner Sullivan and her staff with our  
19 staff. We've been doing some cross-agency  
20 work. I did say that earlier.

21 SENATOR BROUK: Okay, got it. So I'll  
22 check in with them for certain.

23 One of my frustrations has been, as  
24 chair of Mental Health but also interested,

1 obviously, in our local education, is that  
2 all the way up to the surgeon general  
3 understands that we are in a crisis of mental  
4 health for our young people, that no matter,  
5 quite frankly, if we get all the math  
6 teachers, reading specialists, English  
7 language learner specialists, all the  
8 specialists we need for our students, if we  
9 don't care of their social and emotional  
10 well-being, it will all be for naught. They  
11 will not be able to learn, they have been  
12 traumatized.

13 So can you describe what other  
14 mechanisms there are for schools to take  
15 advantage of in order to better address this?  
16 And also, what are you going to do this year  
17 to better encourage our schools to spend this  
18 funding specifically on mental health?

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So just --  
20 so again, very quickly, we have been focused,  
21 along -- every one of our conversations, our  
22 workshops, have been the academics and the  
23 partner, equal partner, mental health,  
24 social-emotional. That has been critical.

1           We have encouraged schools in terms of  
2           their funding to make sure that these  
3           fundings are addressing those issues, whether  
4           it's affirming environment, whether  
5           expectations of how, you know, you Zoom in --  
6           just like we're doing, we're talking about  
7           screening. You have to screen the -- you  
8           know, and have knowledge of the staff,  
9           knowing when students are in crisis and what  
10          are the services that you provide during that  
11          period of time.

12           So I think it's really helping us to  
13          look at, in the sphere of culturally  
14          responsive, what are the kinds of things  
15          that -- the climate of the school and the  
16          readiness and the -- you know, we have  
17          suicide, you know, issues that are going on  
18          right now. What are the signs, what are the  
19          things that we need to look for to address in  
20          schools? You know, the isolating --

21           (Zoom interruption.)

22           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We will  
23          make -- we've done so much work on  
24          social-emotional and trauma, and we're trying

1 to do that cross, as I said, agency work in  
2 the convening that we've been doing. We're  
3 more than glad to share what we've been doing  
4 with the --

5 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you. I have  
6 zero questions left. My last quick just  
7 10-second --

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nope, sorry,  
9 Samra --

10 SENATOR BROUK: That's all right.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- zero mark.

12 Thank you. Assemblywoman.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
14 Assemblywoman Niou now for three minutes.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you so much  
16 for being with us, Commissioner.

17 I wanted to ask a couple of questions  
18 just -- I also wanted to say thank you to a  
19 couple of my colleagues because of the things  
20 that they were asking really kind of hit the  
21 target, I think, on the things that I'm very  
22 curious about. Senator Liu when, you know,  
23 he was talking about CFE, I really wanted to  
24 echo him on that.



1           When Senator Brad Hoylman was talking  
2           about, you know, the differences in whether  
3           or not early learning for folks with -- kids  
4           with dyslexia, et cetera, were very poignant  
5           to me because I am somebody on the spectrum  
6           and I was not diagnosed until I was an adult  
7           because there is very little help for young  
8           kids who are -- you know, it's very hard to  
9           screen, especially for autism, when you are a  
10          girl and there is, you know, generational,  
11          cultural things that -- you know, if you're  
12          also not an English first language person,  
13          there's a very difficult time for screening  
14          for young children.

15                 And so I wanted to kind of bring that  
16                 up as well and see what you guys were looking  
17                 at for -- you know, for early screening for  
18                 not just dyslexia but also for autism, for  
19                 other, you know, learning disabilities that  
20                 are very important for our children.

21                 And I also -- so that's one question,  
22                 I guess, and then the other is to echo  
23                 Assemblymember Ron Kim on -- and John Liu on  
24                 API education curriculum. Right now we would

1 be so far behind the -- New Jersey, Illinois  
2 and Wisconsin have already passed legislation  
3 on this, and so I wanted to echo their  
4 support because it's really important to our  
5 Asian-American community for our history in  
6 New York to also be learned.

7 And I also wanted to mention that, you  
8 know, we saw that many students were falling  
9 through the cracks during this epidemic when  
10 it came to lack of internet access, you know,  
11 echoing what our ranker was talking about,  
12 and we were trying to see -- I wanted to see  
13 if you had any programs to make up for that  
14 learning loss as well.

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right.  
16 Well, the extended programs as well as some  
17 of the other programs, the library and some  
18 of the other programs we support are being  
19 used to the extended.

20 What I would say is you've asked  
21 several questions. I am more than glad to  
22 meet with you personally and address some of  
23 these issues, because the issue of on the  
24 spectrum, particularly, as you said,

1 cultural -- you know, contextualized in a  
2 cultural type of situation, is very  
3 important. And I think that that is an issue  
4 that we constantly look at.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: The greening of  
6 our schools also is another --

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Excuse me,  
8 Assemblywoman. The time has expired.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Oh, sorry, the  
10 time clock isn't on my screen, I apologize.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We will meet  
12 with you.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Okay.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. The  
15 next speaker is Senator Reichlin-Melnick.

16 SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: Thank you,  
17 Madam Chair.

18 And thank you so much, Commissioner,  
19 for joining us this morning. I really  
20 appreciate your work on behalf of our kids,  
21 and you have been incredibly attentive and  
22 responsive to me and to the needs of the  
23 students in our districts, particularly the  
24 East Ramapo School District. I just want to

1           thank you for that once again.

2                       I wanted to ask you a question about  
3           the Foundation Aid formula. And now that, of  
4           course, we're phasing in Foundation Aid at  
5           the levels that it should have been all  
6           along, but really getting millions of dollars  
7           more to our schools, the formula is still  
8           using some very old census data and the  
9           Regional Cost Index is pretty out-of-date for  
10          the counties that I represent in Rockland and  
11          Westchester. The labor markets here are much  
12          closer to New York City and Long Island.

13                     I'm wondering what would be your  
14          strategy to try to update this formula and  
15          really move it into the new decade in a way  
16          that's going to work for our districts?

17                     NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, and  
18          that's why we said the department wants to  
19          look at that 1.2 million resource in order  
20          for us to do a deep dive into looking at  
21          this. Because you're absolutely right, it is  
22          outdated, it is not helpful, and so our  
23          request is that we hope we could get the  
24          funding so once and for all we can do this

1 work that is so needed.

2 SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: So you are  
3 actively planning to have the department work  
4 to try to propose some updates to the  
5 formula?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We had  
7 actually made a request at the end of this --  
8 you know, we've had this request made, so  
9 we're --

10 (Zoom interruption.)

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry?

12 SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: I think  
13 that was coming from somebody else on the --

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, so the  
15 Regents aid proposal, we made a request.  
16 Now, we know that -- we're trying to get --  
17 let's get through the financial aid formula  
18 and then, you know, have this money so that  
19 we can take the deep dive and look at it  
20 collectively. And --

21 SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: I  
22 appreciate that. And particularly when you  
23 look, I hope considering an update to the  
24 data on English language learners, because

1       most of the districts in my area have seen a  
2       major growth in English language learners.  
3       Which is welcome, it means our communities  
4       are vibrant, they're growing, but we need the  
5       additional funding to support.

6               So my last question is really on the  
7       mental health front. Most people I talk to  
8       in schools, they are dealing with a mental  
9       health crisis. I know some of my colleagues  
10      have asked about this. Do you feel that  
11      there's more we can be doing to try to  
12      support schools and having enough counselors  
13      to provide mental health services for our  
14      students?

15             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think that  
16      given the funding, the current funding, we  
17      are really -- we're working very closely to  
18      make sure that as we look at this funding  
19      from -- you know, even the one-time funding  
20      in -- during this crisis is that we do make  
21      sure that our social workers are, you know,  
22      individuals that are going to make a  
23      difference in making sure that the mental  
24      health component, which is a huge component

1 during this time because of isolation, trauma  
2 and everything else that we all know our  
3 students have gone through -- that in fact,  
4 we've asked at every meeting we have, we talk  
5 to our superintendents, our stakeholders,  
6 that we support the idea that these two  
7 components really have to go hand in hand.  
8 And that even into the future that our  
9 schools are, you know, provided with the  
10 kinds of resources to ensure that the mental  
11 health component of our teaching is a --  
12 dovetails the educational part.

13 SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: Thank you  
14 so much, Commissioner.

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
17 Assembly.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
19 Assemblyman Conrad.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Hi, Commissioner.  
21 Thank you, Chairs.

22 I want to talk about recruitment for a  
23 minute. I'm a big fan of the temporary  
24 licenses for pending professionals, the

1       paraprofessional work, the expired  
2       certificate work that's there, and of course  
3       the allowance for retired teachers and other  
4       staff to come back to the classroom. I think  
5       those are steps in the right direction.

6               Where is the conversation -- I'm going  
7       to put it in two parts for you. Where is the  
8       conversation about out-of-state licenses?  
9       I've got quite a few calls in my district  
10      from folk who are willing to come back to  
11      New York to deal with the teacher shortage.

12             And second, about diversity in  
13      teaching and teaching recruitment, what are  
14      the efforts right now -- and this is  
15      something I see as a burden -- to lower the  
16      costs or eliminate the costs of tests, fees,  
17      especially if somebody receives TAP or Pell?  
18      I just think about what it takes to become a  
19      teacher and the costs. You know, just the  
20      fees alone to get your fingerprints done, you  
21      know, the fees to take these tests -- you  
22      know, we talked about a four-year process  
23      earlier.

24             So I'm going to wrap it up in there,



1 is that what are we doing -- one, is there a  
2 conversation about out-of-state teacher  
3 licenses? And two, what are we doing to  
4 lower the costs? I heard about a four-year  
5 plan, but what I'm seeing right now in the  
6 classroom, this epidemic of teacher shortage  
7 is happening now.

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right. So  
9 the teacher shortage conversation is very  
10 comprehensive. It's not just from outer --  
11 you know, recruiting from external, but it's  
12 also looking at what are the ways -- and as  
13 you know, the Regents have made all kinds of  
14 flexibility, whether it's eliminating the  
15 edTPA, whether it's, you know, the COVID, and  
16 trying to really get many of the barriers, as  
17 I call them, out of the way so that not only  
18 do we recruit -- the recruiting process is  
19 easier so that the submission is easier in  
20 TEACH, so that in fact we have opportunities  
21 for individuals who are even thinking about  
22 this, can really be welcome.

23 Very quickly, Laura or Jim, because I  
24 know you only have 50 seconds.

1 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: I just  
2 want to -- let me address the temporary  
3 professional permits: Well-intended,  
4 ill-conceived, from our point of view. We  
5 believe it will end up adding complexity to  
6 an already complex system. We believe it  
7 puts a burden on the applicant to submit an  
8 attestation, under penalties of perjury, that  
9 they have completed the certification when in  
10 fact they may not know that.

11 Our experience with certification is  
12 that many, many of the applications that are  
13 submitted are deficient and what would end up  
14 happening, pursuant to this proposal, is that  
15 individuals could end up being employed by  
16 school districts when they are not  
17 appropriately certified and that, when they  
18 are informed of that, school districts will  
19 then have to terminate them and that will end  
20 up creating incredible disruptions throughout  
21 the educational system.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Just to add,  
23 we were not -- we have had no conversation  
24 when this came up, so --

1                   ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: All right. Good  
2 to know. Thank you.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the  
4 Senate.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6                   And I believe our next questioner is  
7 Sue Serino.

8                   SENATOR SERINO: Thank you,  
9 Chairwoman.

10                  And Commissioner, it's nice to see  
11 you.

12                  You know, mental health is the hot  
13 topic of the day, and rightfully so, and I  
14 know I don't have to tell you that we were  
15 not adequately addressing the mental health  
16 issues way before the pandemic. But we are  
17 really reaching a crisis point. And when you  
18 look at the CDC's statistics for emergency  
19 room visits for children as young as 5 years  
20 old, it's simply jarring.

21                  I've heard from parents who feel like  
22 they've hit a wall with mental health  
23 services and they don't know where to turn.

24                  So my question is, what can we do

1 better to thread the needle between services  
2 in our schools and additional services and  
3 support that the students may need that go  
4 beyond the school day, as we all know?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I  
6 think that if -- I think prior to the  
7 pandemic, to your pandemic, we learned that  
8 the mental health -- a healthy child has to  
9 be -- you know, the whole issue of the whole  
10 child, right? It has to be a complete  
11 conversation around creating the kinds of  
12 support resources to support the child in  
13 terms of readiness, even for learning.  
14 Readiness for learning. You know, we think  
15 it's an automatic -- it's not. There's all  
16 kinds of barriers that get in the way.

17 So I'm hoping that a huge lesson  
18 learned, to your point, is that mental health  
19 has to be a mega-component to our educational  
20 system. And that we do not lose sight of the  
21 importance of it but, more importantly, that  
22 we invest in this issue. And that we invest  
23 in the professionals that can identify --  
24 early identification, can see the -- you

1 know, help our teachers see the signs. But  
2 also support young children as well as young  
3 adults in our educational system so that they  
4 can receive the counseling, the kinds of  
5 services that they need to continue to grow  
6 and develop, but more importantly to sustain  
7 and to be able to deal with the kinds of  
8 counseling services that keep them on track.

9 We have not done a good job in this  
10 arena. And if the pandemic has taught us  
11 anything, it's the idea that we truly have to  
12 make an investment in this issue.

13 SENATOR SERINO: Yes, thank you,  
14 Commissioner.

15 The other part of -- my other question  
16 is about hearing from parents of students who  
17 receive special education services. Wow.  
18 You know, I just met with a bunch of them  
19 last night, and it's heartbreaking. They  
20 feel like throughout the pandemic their  
21 students were simply an afterthought to the  
22 state. So they weren't able to access  
23 services or services went remote, making them  
24 no longer effective, and they feel like their

1 children are even further behind and lost  
2 through the cracks.

3 What can you do to assure these  
4 families that their students are a top  
5 priority as we work to help students get back  
6 on track in the wake of the pandemic?

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right. And  
8 so -- by the way, early on, even in our  
9 comprehensive plan to the schools, we made  
10 special ed the priority. We continue to have  
11 these conversations with district  
12 superintendents and others that special  
13 needs -- you know, my background being  
14 special ed, as some of you may know, really  
15 lends itself to the fact that we have to  
16 differentiate, we have to support, we've got  
17 to have the ways that we reach our young  
18 people -- and in-person, for many of our  
19 young people, is the modality that supports  
20 them. You know, they need to see, they need  
21 to have the differentiated support that they  
22 need.

23 So we have been in communication with  
24 our superintendents, with our different

1 stakeholders to ensure that special  
2 education, both from the perspective of  
3 in-school as well as the types of programs  
4 that are created to support our students --  
5 we're having that conversation right now with  
6 New York City in terms of looking at their  
7 cap, which really has to address the needs of  
8 their students and the services that they  
9 need, related services as well as the program  
10 recommendation under FAPE.

11 SENATOR SERINO: Yeah, I'd like to  
12 follow up with you afterwards, because I'm  
13 having this issue in my district.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
15 Absolutely.

16 SENATOR SERINO: Thank you,  
17 Commissioner. Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
19 Assemblywoman Weinstein.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, I just  
21 wanted -- before we go to the next member,  
22 who will be Alicia Hyndman, we've been joined  
23 a while ago by several Assemblymembers:  
24 Latoya Joyner, Amanda Septimo, and -- I

1           thought I -- maybe -- that may be it for some  
2           of the new members.

3                     And now can we go to Assemblywoman  
4           Hyndman, please, for three minutes.

5                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
6           Chairs Weinstein and Krueger.

7                     Chancellor, the last time I saw you  
8           was under much warmer circumstances. And I  
9           will just say I know you're dismayed at the  
10          Governor's budget regarding the certification  
11          process for teachers.

12                    So how many vacancies do you have now  
13          in OTI? That is my first question. And how  
14          many -- you said SED disapproved over 2900  
15          teacher certification applications in 2021.  
16          How many did you actually approve in 2021?

17                    And how can you prioritize staffing in  
18          that department specifically because of the  
19          exodus of teachers -- not just in New York  
20          City but around the state -- when it comes to  
21          being in our classrooms, as teachers have an  
22          unfair burden or undue burden because of the  
23          work that they do post-COVID with our  
24          students?



1           And if you can tell us overall, what  
2           are the vacancies like in SED now that the  
3           hiring freeze I believe is over?

4           Those are my questions to you,  
5           Commissioner.

6           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Sure.

7           So let me start with an -- just I'm  
8           going to ask Laura to get ready. But we did  
9           a chart, and we'll share it with you and  
10          others, of the 29,000 rejections, but there's  
11          59 -- I mean, what's been processed. So we  
12          can share that chart specifically with you in  
13          terms of -- because we looked at this.

14          I'm going to go to Laura and Phyllis  
15          in terms of -- very quickly, in terms of our  
16          specific needs.

17          But to your point, the issue of the  
18          complex of not only looking at evaluating --  
19          we also have the issue of the higher ed  
20          submitting transcripts. You know, and we're  
21          hoping that that whole issue with the  
22          transcripts can be -- you know, we're working  
23          on that as well. Sometimes that holds up the  
24          processing, you know, if the student hasn't

1 made payment and the university's holding up  
2 the transcript as well.

3 But with that, Laura?

4 SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS: Yes. So  
5 currently OTI has 60 -- at full capacity,  
6 60 staff members. Within the last six months  
7 we've hired 11 staff members, and we still  
8 have nine vacancies left. And that's why  
9 we've requested \$1.53 million in additional  
10 general funds in order to support 11 new  
11 staff members.

12 And of those 11 new staff members,  
13 eight positions would be to redesign OTI's  
14 management structure in order to streamline  
15 the certification process, and then another  
16 three positions --

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Laura, how  
18 many -- is it 59 -- how many have we in the  
19 chart, quickly?

20 SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS: Oh, sure.  
21 Jumping to the chart, in terms of we -- that  
22 in 2021 we disapproved of the 29,000. We  
23 were issued 58,000. But there were  
24 another --

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: My time is  
2 done.

3 SR. POLICY ADVISOR GLASS: Oh, okay.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'll follow up  
5 with Jennifer Trowbridge to get the  
6 information.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes,  
8 absolutely.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
10 Chair Weinstein. Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
12 go to the Senate.

13 I just wanted to also acknowledge Inez  
14 Dickens has joined us. Joined us a while  
15 ago, actually. Thank you.

16 Senator Krueger?

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 We have quite a few Senators who I'm  
19 afraid I also didn't acknowledge. Let's see  
20 if we can try to slide them in as announced.  
21 Senator Andrew Gounardes, Senator Dan Stec,  
22 Senator Diane Savino, Senator Joe Addabbo. I  
23 think --

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I see some

1 hands up.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's fine,  
3 hands up is good.

4 Let me see if I can just get this --  
5 that's actually harder to see on the little  
6 boxes. Well, let's just go -- oh, I'm seeing  
7 Senator Leroy Comrie. Thank you so much.

8 And Senator Toby Stavisky, who joined  
9 us as our chair of Higher Ed, and we are  
10 giving Senator Stavisky the next round of  
11 questions. Thank you.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay?

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Very, very briefly,  
15 let me just echo what my colleagues have said  
16 in terms of the Asian -- the importance of  
17 education in terms of recognizing the needs  
18 of the Asian community.

19 Several years ago the State Education  
20 Department really was very, very helpful to  
21 the Korean-American community, and I just  
22 want to thank you for doing that and giving  
23 guidance to school districts on a specific  
24 issue in Korean history, and that is the

1 distinction of co-naming the East Sea and the  
2 Sea of Japan. It's a very sensitive issue,  
3 and the SED handled it with great dexterity  
4 and sensitivity.

5 And I hope that in the future we will  
6 continue this, because we do have specific  
7 needs for the children -- and adults, quite  
8 frankly, in the Asian-American community.

9 I did that in a minute and a half.  
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
12 much, Senator Stavisky.

13 Back to the Assembly. Let's see. Let  
14 me see if I can help figure out where we are  
15 on the Assembly list.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: I think it's up  
17 to me.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Based on the list  
20 in the chat.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Is it up to Mike  
22 Lawler?

23 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Yes.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Very good, we're

1 going to call on Mike Lawler.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Thank you,  
3 Chairwoman.

4 Commissioner, great to see you. I  
5 want to thank Senator Reichlin-Melnick for  
6 bringing up the Regional Cost Index. I  
7 certainly encourage him to carry my bill in  
8 the Senate that would change the Regional  
9 Cost Index for Rockland and Westchester  
10 counties and make it comparable to New York  
11 City and Long Island. Currently we are  
12 shortchanged significantly. This year alone,  
13 we would get \$11 million more for Rockland  
14 County schools if the Regional Cost Index was  
15 changed.

16 So, Commissioner, I know you're a  
17 part-time resident of Rockland. You can  
18 certainly attest to the high taxes that we  
19 pay, second highest in the country. Changing  
20 the Regional Cost Index would certainly help  
21 with that. So I don't really think there's a  
22 need for a study, I really think it just  
23 needs to be changed and better reflect the  
24 fact that our labor costs are high. So I

1           certainly would ask you to work with me and  
2           others to make that change happen.

3                     On the issue of curriculum, I have a  
4           bill to ensure that 9/11 is taught in our  
5           schools. Nobody in our primary and secondary  
6           school system today was born when 9/11  
7           occurred. And so I really think that's  
8           something that should occur.

9                     Also I know the Holocaust was brought  
10          up earlier. There's a bill in the Assembly  
11          to really ensure that the Holocaust is taught  
12          in our schools; I think that's necessary.  
13          And I think we really need to move forward  
14          with that legislation as well as my bill to  
15          ensure September 11th is taught in our  
16          schools.

17                    And I would really implore you to get  
18          an audit of the curriculum done sooner than  
19          later. I think that needs to happen, and I  
20          think we need to have a better understanding  
21          of what actually is and is not being taught  
22          in our schools.

23                    Finally, on the issue of East Ramapo,  
24          the monitors have been working very closely

1 with my office and my colleagues. We've been  
2 meeting with them quite frequently. But  
3 we've had this discussion, and I can't  
4 impress upon you enough that the challenges  
5 in this district are not going to change if  
6 we keep it the way it is.

7 The status quo is not working. Next  
8 year East Ramapo is going to have an influx  
9 of about 4100 new private-school students,  
10 4100. That is going to have a big impact on  
11 the finances of the district, and I think  
12 it's really time that we look for a solution  
13 that separates the private-school system from  
14 the public school system. There's about  
15 75 percent of the students are attending  
16 private-school now. It's unsustainable.

17 And I have put forward a bill to  
18 address that, to ensure that SED takes over  
19 the mandated services for the private-school  
20 community. And I really implore you to work  
21 with me on this, because what we're doing is  
22 not working anymore and we really need to  
23 change it, change the structure and get the  
24 private-school system out of the public



1 schools to ensure that all students get the  
2 services that they're entitled to.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I want  
4 to thank you, because we've started the  
5 conversation, as you know. And we will  
6 continue the conversation. So thank you for  
7 that.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Thank you,  
9 Commissioner.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 We go back to the Senate now.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Senator Leroy Comrie. Senator Comrie,  
14 are you there?

15 SENATOR COMRIE: Yes, I'm here.  
16 Sorry, I was --

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's okay.

18 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. Thank  
19 you, Madam Chair. Thank you, members.

20 I just wanted to ask the commissioner  
21 what are they doing to work on ensuring that  
22 there are opportunities to tie in social  
23 service agencies into the middle schools so  
24 that we can create more synergy with students

1           that need those extra services? And what is  
2           going to be done on a statewide basis to make  
3           that happen?

4           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, in  
5           terms of -- as I stated earlier, we are --  
6           you know, while we're working across the  
7           board, you know, the P-20 process, we also  
8           know that that middle school situation --  
9           having been a middle school principal -- is  
10          essential. That is the probably that  
11          midpoint where we can, you know, make some  
12          adjustments to your point. And that is also  
13          a space that really needs a lot of -- back to  
14          the mental health -- support systems.

15          And also it's really -- one of the  
16          things that I know, and Senator Jackson will  
17          attest to this, having a middle school that  
18          has project-based, that has other  
19          opportunities for students and makes the  
20          connection to that middle school and makes  
21          the connections so that students have  
22          different outlets and shared in the kinds of  
23          situations that other types besides the  
24          academic, that they have opportunity to be,

1       you know, focused on clubs and other kinds of  
2       things. That's going to make a tremendous  
3       difference in the lives of children in terms  
4       of middle school and getting them also ready  
5       for high school.

6               So I think the investment in some of  
7       these key points of extended-day is critical,  
8       absolutely the way that we need to keep our  
9       students engaged and keep our students  
10      focused on building their own sense of worth  
11      and also, you know, their sense of taking  
12      interest in various different opportunities  
13      that they may not get during the regular  
14      school day.

15             SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. I just  
16      want to get in one more question.

17             So how much money is allocated in the  
18      budget for extended-day programs at middle  
19      schools across the state?

20             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first  
21      of all, the school districts have their own  
22      specific budget. And so they work through in  
23      terms of how -- you know, with their own  
24      middle schools how and what kinds of

1           dollars --

2                   SENATOR COMRIE: Unfortunately, if  
3           that budget is left to a principal to have to  
4           figure out their needs, it's not really fair  
5           to the principal when they have to hire  
6           senior teachers and other personnel.

7                   I would hope that there is a specific  
8           budget targeted to middle schools for  
9           extended-day programs. I know my time is  
10          almost up, but I think that's a critical  
11          component of what we need to have throughout  
12          every school, actually, extended-day programs  
13          so that schools can stay open until 8 o'clock  
14          at night throughout the state. I think it  
15          would create a lot more preventative medicine  
16          that we would make sure that our  
17          16-year-olds, by the time they get to 16, are  
18          productive as opposed to destructive.

19                  So I would hope that that would  
20          happen. I'll look to try to make that happen  
21          in the budget.

22                  Thank you, Madam Chair.

23                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

24                  SENATOR COMRIE: I stayed in my -- a

1 little over my three minutes.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
3 much, Senator Comrie.

4 Assembly.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
6 Otis is up next.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Hey, Commissioner,  
8 nice to see you. And I think everyone should  
9 hear that when school districts have problems  
10 and need help from SED, SED is there and you  
11 are there.

12 And we had one school district in my  
13 district that needed some help earlier this  
14 year or last year, and your team was great  
15 and exceptional, and we solved those  
16 problems.

17 So -- but my two questions, and I'll  
18 ask them both and then hit -- you can hit the  
19 answers, you have a very good initiative in  
20 terms of diversity education that you and  
21 Chancellor Young have pushed out to the  
22 school districts. And so what I'd love to  
23 hear is a status report on how school  
24 districts are either accepting and supporting

1       this or resisting the teaching of a fuller,  
2       more accurate sense of history and culture in  
3       our schools. An update on that would be  
4       great, and how we can be helpful.

5               And then the second sort of update  
6       question is on where are we on science and  
7       technology education, especially in the lower  
8       grades, but also there's some concern that  
9       maybe some of the middle school grades are  
10      walking away from something that's very  
11      important to the future of our learning and  
12      economy.

13             So those are my two questions, and I  
14      left you some time in the little time that I  
15      have to hit those topics. Thank you,  
16      Commissioner.

17             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure, thank  
18      you. Thank you. Always a pleasure working  
19      with you.

20             Specifically to the DEI, I have to  
21      tell you we've been having many ongoing  
22      conversations and they have been  
23      well-received. It's been really, really --  
24      and we will share with you some of the

1 meetings we've been having and some of the  
2 strategies that we've been using, whether  
3 it's through My Brother's Keeper, whether  
4 it's through some of the opportunities to  
5 engage with school districts and even some of  
6 their identified staff that's really invested  
7 in this process.

8 So we can give you much more granular  
9 detail on the whole DEI focus.

10 The second issue that you raised is we  
11 also have some extensive information on  
12 science and the information that you would  
13 want to see. And again, we're more than glad  
14 to share the importance of and how we  
15 continue to work in the area of technology  
16 and science and how it gets embedded and  
17 integrated into the regular curriculum.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner. We're very happy you're there.  
20 You do a great job.

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.  
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very

1 much. I think I'm going to take my questions  
2 now. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for  
3 all that you and your team do every day.

4 My first question is actually from a  
5 colleague who isn't on the committee, so  
6 asked me to follow up about Native American  
7 schools and that there are three, but only  
8 two saw significant funding in the Governor's  
9 budget and not the one in I believe the  
10 Oneida Nation.

11 So I'm just trying to get a  
12 clarification for her why there seems to be  
13 unequal treatment for that school.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So just to  
15 give you the -- the Oneida school got  
16 \$6.1 million. So it was St. Regis Mohawk got  
17 17, almost 18. Tuscarora got 11.7. So they  
18 all did receive.

19 They may be speaking to the issue of  
20 the additional staffing, because I think it  
21 was raised earlier about the two. And we  
22 will look at why -- because it's so  
23 widespread -- about the third position. So  
24 that may be the specific concern.



1           But the Regents' request was actually  
2 met. And we got the information directly  
3 from them.

4           So Jim, I think you may want to --

5           SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yeah,  
6 the capital needs that are reflected here  
7 came directly from the schools and the school  
8 districts that support them.

9           So the capital needs that were  
10 documented are fully met in the Executive  
11 Budget request and reflect what the Board of  
12 Regents requested.

13           The issue of staffing, there were two  
14 additional staff provided to the department.  
15 I think that there may be some concern that  
16 there should be a third person in order to  
17 have one person assigned to each of the  
18 schools.

19           Beyond the immediate capital needs,  
20 looking over the long haul we need to ensure  
21 that the Native American schools are treated  
22 the same way that other schools are treated.  
23 And because they are in this special  
24 classification, they're often not the

1 recipients of increases in aid, for any  
2 number of different reasons over time. That  
3 relates both to the instructional side and to  
4 the capital side.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So just  
6 for clarification that -- I believe that the  
7 Onondaga school requested 20 million and got  
8 6.1 million.

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think -- I  
10 think there was a -- we worked very closely  
11 with them. There were numbers that were used  
12 initially, and we circled back to clarify  
13 those numbers. And so the numbers we  
14 submitted were the numbers that we did  
15 receive directly from the schools.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'm going to  
17 encourage you offline to have a chat with  
18 both Senator Mannion and Senator May, who are  
19 both very concerned and don't believe that  
20 the schools' requests were met and that  
21 they're very concerned about that.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'll leave it  
24 to all of you to talk about after the

1           hearing. Thank you.

2                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I appreciate it.

4                   So we're hearing a lot about the  
5           mental health concerns going on with the  
6           young people in our schools, and that's a  
7           universal. But it also seems clear to me  
8           that so much of it is correlated to the  
9           pandemic and what we did and didn't do.

10                   Now, I'm not blaming any of us,  
11           because this was all, you know, "surprise,"  
12           and then "surprise" again, and then  
13           "surprise" again. But since we are now  
14           almost seeing pandemic and the possibility of  
15           more variations as perhaps some of the new  
16           normal for our kids and for our schools, is  
17           there a way for the Department of Education  
18           to attempt to plan, to facilitate for what  
19           happens next, even though we're not  
20           100 percent sure what exactly that next will  
21           look like?

22                   So I'm talking about the ideas where  
23           there are plans set up in advance about, you  
24           know, at what point in a pandemic do you have

1 to shift to virtual learning, and will all  
2 the school districts know what that means,  
3 and how quickly they can then get those kids  
4 back into the classrooms when it's safe and  
5 making sure that there are clear thresholds  
6 for safety purposes for the kids going to  
7 school, for the staff working in the schools,  
8 you know, for planning to have the right  
9 equipment in storage and ready, including  
10 kid-size masks?

11 You know, I just feel like we jumped  
12 from crisis to crisis and we had no choice --  
13 and again I'm certainly not blaming anyone in  
14 education or anyone in government. But now  
15 we've got a couple of years under our belt  
16 and I'm quite convinced that because of  
17 climate change and other factors, this isn't  
18 going to be a tale that we really put behind  
19 us. So do you think we can as a state come  
20 up with sort of a safety and education model  
21 that could work as we're dealing with the  
22 next version?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So first and  
24 foremost, just so you know, even at different

1 points we've taken lessons learned in having  
2 conversations with our stakeholders. We did,  
3 and we will share with you, we absolutely  
4 spoke to the Big 5, the superintendents,  
5 teachers. We've held virtual conversations  
6 about the critical issues of how to respond  
7 in a pandemic but even beyond that.

8 So, you know, in terms of readiness,  
9 in terms of being -- you know, prework in  
10 some of these issues: What do you need in  
11 place? What were the lessons learned? By  
12 the way, not just for students but for  
13 teachers and the adults in the school. And  
14 leadership, you know, wellness for leadership  
15 as well.

16 So looking at that whole conversation,  
17 we've done a great deal of work in terms of  
18 capturing -- because we do agree with you,  
19 this is a moment that we can't look back and  
20 not have learned what are some of the  
21 positive lessons, what are some of the  
22 specific needs in terms of talk about health  
23 and wellness, but also what are some of the  
24 things that we have to put in place.

1           And even with the issue of how we  
2           structure our time and lessons. We've  
3           learned an incredible lesson about the  
4           platform of extended -- the virtual,  
5           utilizing time, checking on students who, for  
6           example, may not be feeling well. How do you  
7           use that as a way of incorporating the  
8           student into that day so that they don't have  
9           to miss the lesson? How do you record?

10           I mean, there are so many incredible  
11           lessons learned, through the pandemic, of use  
12           of the technology but also use of connecting  
13           that we need to advance, to your point. We  
14           need to move forward into making it part of  
15           what we would call the new generation of  
16           schooling. And those lessons are extremely  
17           valuable. And we have been making sure that  
18           not only do we capture them, but we look at  
19           what has worked, what hasn't worked, and  
20           holding onto making sure that we reassess and  
21           take stock of what has not worked, so that,  
22           you know, we do create a readiness, if you  
23           will, platform.

24           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. And I'll

1 just recommend -- the State Senate just  
2 confirmed a new head of Division of Homeland  
3 Security & Emergency Services, a woman named  
4 Jackie Bray, who those of us from New York  
5 City know from her previous position in the  
6 City of New York where she was basically the  
7 secret weapon to get COVID response and test  
8 and trace and the items that were needed  
9 distributed citywide. And while there  
10 certainly are plenty of examples of how  
11 New York City also didn't get it all together  
12 in time, I really encourage SED to work with  
13 new Commissioner Bray, because I think she  
14 has a lot of great ideas to bring to the  
15 table for our school systems throughout the  
16 state. So that's just a recommendation.

17 A couple of my colleagues raised  
18 concerns around the evaluations of the  
19 yeshivas that flunk the tests, so to speak,  
20 but nothing's been done. I just want to add  
21 my voice to someone saying we all have to do  
22 better.

23 And maybe it's not just a group of  
24 yeshivas, maybe it is other schools in other

1 communities as well. But I know, as a Jewish  
2 American, when I see young Jewish children  
3 whose own communities are failing to make  
4 sure they get the quality education that they  
5 need, it actually angers me. And I have a  
6 secular Jewish district, but I hear from my  
7 constituents all the time how angry they are  
8 also that this is not being addressed.

9 So I am hoping that you and the  
10 Regents can come up with an appropriate  
11 answer, that we have so much respect for you  
12 and what you are doing for the state's  
13 education system.

14 With that, thank you very much,  
15 Commissioner Rosa.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

17 And just to assure you that we've been  
18 working very closely with CAC, the nonpubs,  
19 and we have had tremendous feedback from them  
20 in terms of developing our substantial  
21 equivalency materials. So -- and we're more  
22 than glad to share with you as well.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Assemblywoman.



1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we --

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I believe that  
3 the Senate -- oh, no, we have a second round  
4 later. Sorry.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So --  
6 well, we have quite a few Assemblymembers --

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, you do.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- on their  
9 first round. There are more of us.

10 Assemblywoman Lunsford.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Thank you  
12 very much.

13 Commissioner, I'm going to ask a few  
14 issues right up front and then give you an  
15 opportunity to respond.

16 I want to express my thanks for you  
17 highlighting in your testimony the need for  
18 Library Construction Aid. Obviously that is  
19 an enormous cut, and our libraries have been  
20 essential in our COVID recovery. So I think  
21 that is a very important investment,  
22 particularly because we do see a 7 to 1  
23 return on our investment in our libraries.  
24 So thank you for highlighting that.

1           And I want to add my voice to the  
2 chorus of my colleagues who are asking to  
3 ensure that we see parity in our budget for  
4 our 853 schools and our other schools that  
5 are providing very specialized services to  
6 our most complex and vulnerable students.

7           I now want to just touch on our school  
8 libraries. You know, many of our school  
9 libraries are the only place students have  
10 access to a library. And so many of our  
11 elementary schools don't have a library. So  
12 I'd like to hear what you have to say about  
13 putting money towards the construction of  
14 school libraries where we do not have any.

15           And to that extent, also the rate at  
16 which school libraries purchase materials is  
17 based on a 15-year-old rate that even at that  
18 time was based on a 1990s pricing structure.  
19 So I'd like to see an increase in that rate  
20 so our schools can meet the needs of our  
21 existing students.

22           I also want to go back to what Ranker  
23 Jensen was talking about with regards to  
24 adult literacy. The ELL funding, which was

1 in the budget and we don't have to fight  
2 for -- very exciting -- fails to capture tens  
3 of thousands of residents who are not  
4 workforce-ready: Stay-at-home parents,  
5 retirees, new Americans who need adult  
6 literacy services. And I'd like to hear if  
7 you have any thoughts on the need for  
8 additional lines of funding to capture that  
9 audience.

10 Thank you.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So first let  
12 me speak to the library issue as somebody  
13 that really put just about a library in every  
14 single one of my schools. Now, at some of  
15 them I did do through Robin Hood.

16 But I do have to tell you, it is  
17 essential. It is something that I absolutely  
18 would submit and say we need in every one of  
19 our schools. Very challenging financially,  
20 but it is an investment that we all have to  
21 get around to make sure that we support that.

22 You're right in terms of the upgrade.  
23 You know, I've been to Syracuse and different  
24 places where the library and the librarian

1 will say to me, or the media specialist, will  
2 say it is very, very challenging to restore.  
3 I mean, Jim and I visited a library that --  
4 the place in Whitehall that the school lost  
5 their entire -- they preserved some books and  
6 we are, you know, donating and -- it is a  
7 major challenge.

8 So I know we're short on time. Jim,  
9 if you want to add anything else about the  
10 adult component.

11 But I will share with you some of my  
12 key concerns and perhaps proposals when it  
13 comes to libraries.

14 Jim.

15 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yeah,  
16 I mean we're -- I know the time is a factor.  
17 We're happy to work with you to provide you  
18 with information in terms of the adult  
19 learning piece.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes. We  
21 have specific information about adult  
22 learning. And creative ways that we can  
23 support that.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right. So

1 now, if you don't mind, I'll give it to our  
2 chair of Education, Shelley Mayer, for  
3 three-minute second round. And then I  
4 believe the Senate will be done.

5 Oh, I'm seeing another Senator's hand  
6 up. Excuse me. Let's shift to Senator  
7 Oberacker. Did not see that hand till right  
8 now.

9 Senator Oberacker, are you there?

10 SENATOR OBERACKER: I am here. And  
11 thank you. Can everybody hear me okay?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

13 SENATOR OBERACKER: Dr. Rosa, thank  
14 you for your -- making things very clear  
15 today. I appreciate that. And, you know, I  
16 guess the thing with being the tail here,  
17 all -- most of the questions that I had have  
18 been answered and answered quite well.

19 What I would like to say to you and to  
20 ask is this. My district is very rural.  
21 And, you know, the rural challenges for  
22 schools we all -- have been laid out. I was  
23 glad to see funding levels have been  
24 increased for those schools in my district.

1 But one of the things I just ask is this.

2 You know, as a businessman I'm used to  
3 numbers, I'm used to formulas to calculate  
4 and stuff. But, you know, when I look at the  
5 way that we calculate Foundation Aid, I have  
6 to say I think I would need to be a NASA  
7 rocket scientist to figure it out.

8 So my plea to you is, is there a way  
9 that we on the education side can actually  
10 make this easier to understand? My  
11 superintendents that I speak to, you know, on  
12 this are at times very confused and -- you  
13 know, I have two school districts that come  
14 to mind that are so close in all areas, yet  
15 the Foundation Aid is so different.

16 So if there's anything that we can do  
17 to simplify it, I would be forever -- and I'm  
18 sure my superintendents and most -- would be  
19 forever in your debt. Just to make it so  
20 that we understand it, you know -- understand  
21 it better.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I  
23 think the idea that we want to absolutely  
24 address this issue in the -- having an

1 investment to really change it is a start.

2 And then to your point, as my staff  
3 often hears me say, I want everything to be  
4 7/11 and just simple. And, you know, let's  
5 not make it complicated. Let's make sure  
6 that everybody understands what it means when  
7 you say an allocation, an additional  
8 allocation, a weighted -- what does that  
9 mean? So absolutely to your point, we have  
10 to not only address the system itself,  
11 because the system is not helpful and it's  
12 old and it's based on old information, but  
13 more importantly, to really create a system  
14 that is transparent and that is, to your  
15 point, simple and transparent. That's what I  
16 would say.

17 SENATOR OBERACKER: Those are  
18 reassuring. And I'll use the words "music to  
19 my ears," Dr. Rosa.

20 So again, I thank you for your effort,  
21 I thank you for your job that you're doing.  
22 And I look forward to having that new formula  
23 in my hands here soon. Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you

1 very much.

2 Assembly?

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to

4 Assemblywoman Jackson.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Good

6 afternoon, Chairs. Good afternoon, Madam

7 Commissioner. And thank you to your staff.

8 As young as I may look and seem, I've

9 spent 16 years working in high schools,

10 lastly as a high school social worker. So my

11 passion lies of course in mental health. But

12 I also want to ask, is there anything that

13 we're doing specifically for school social

14 workers with help with their continuing ed

15 education credits?

16 I'm just going to ask all my questions

17 really quickly and then you can go through

18 them.

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: And I know

21 that when I was in schools, we did implicit

22 bias training. I'm just wondering, is that

23 something that is statewide, that is required

24 statewide? And if not, what are your



1 thoughts on that?

2 I missed the part about the ag and the  
3 school food -- school meals, so I just want  
4 to know why that was switched and who made  
5 that decision.

6 And then what are we doing to properly  
7 detect and provide services for students with  
8 autism? I heard a lot about dyslexia, but as  
9 a proud aunt of a child with autism, I would  
10 love to hear what steps we are talking in  
11 that direction. There's a lot of complaints  
12 that our D75 schools are not prepared to deal  
13 with, you know, students who have autism. So  
14 I would like to hear of anything on that  
15 front.

16 And then I know you touched this a  
17 little bit, but I just need to know if there  
18 are specifics. And even if you can't answer  
19 it now, maybe we can meet later at a  
20 different time and talk about this. But what  
21 are we doing to recruit teachers of color,  
22 specifically Black male teachers, to look  
23 like our Black boys, because we are failing  
24 them. They are first to be expelled,

1       suspended, drop out, less likely to take  
2       advanced placement classes or IB classes. So  
3       I would love to hear what are we doing to  
4       recruit Black males specifically, teachers of  
5       color. And if we can't talk about that now,  
6       feel free to -- we can talk about it at any  
7       point. And thank you.

8                NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I know  
9       that I have staff taking notes.

10               On the recruitment I'm going to tie  
11       the recruitment to looking at  
12       African-American males. And you're  
13       absolutely right, it's one of those studies  
14       that's been done, you know, for young men of  
15       color and how they are overrepresented in  
16       suspensions and in other ways.

17               So what I would say is the major  
18       investment all of you have made is in My  
19       Brother's Keeper. Right? And that is an  
20       incredible, powerful way to take young men --  
21       and young women now, they've joined -- and to  
22       really help them not only believe in  
23       themselves, but also they have mentors, we do  
24       all kinds of -- you know, whether it's

1 situations that we engage them in, in really  
2 finding their voice and being very much a  
3 part of civic agreement in a very positive  
4 kind of way. And we're hoping many of those  
5 will become our future teachers. So that is  
6 a pipeline that we're very much excited  
7 about.

8 Some of your other questions -- again,  
9 I know we're out of time. More than glad to  
10 be specific about the issue of social workers  
11 and the kind of training we support them  
12 with, and also the issue of beyond  
13 recruitment.

14 Autism. That is something that we as  
15 a department, we're working very closely  
16 with, you know, our school districts on how  
17 to support our young people, particularly to  
18 stay in less-restrictive environments and  
19 more-restrictive environments.

20 So more than glad to take all your  
21 questions and follow up.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And  
23 Commissioner Rosa, when you do that, if you  
24 could share that also with the Assembly Ways

1           and Means and Senator Krueger's office, so we  
2           can have those answers out to all of --

3                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:  Oh,  
4           absolutely.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  -- the members  
6           for these important questions.  Thank you.

7                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:  Okay.  I  
8           know our staff is taking notes to make sure  
9           that all my promises get delivered.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Great.  Okay,  
11          we're now going to go to the Senate.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  Thank you.  Okay,  
13          now I believe, to close for the Senate,  
14          second round, Shelley Mayer.

15                  SENATOR MAYER:  Thank you.

16                  Thank you, Commissioner.  Quickly on  
17          two issues that have not been raised yet.

18                  The Governor, I think we're all very  
19          pleased to see, included a provision on  
20          Building and Transportation Aid forgiveness,  
21          which has been a longstanding bone of  
22          contention between the Legislature and the  
23          prior Governor, and we're very happy to see  
24          that.  She was vague in her description of

1 exactly which ones would be covered and which  
2 ones would not, and she used inadvertent  
3 error as I think the language.

4 Have you done an estimate of  
5 approximately how many districts would  
6 benefit by this and what the cost would be?

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Phyllis is  
8 working on this.

9 But can I just clarify a key point in  
10 this? One of the concerns that we've had  
11 extensive conversations on is that we  
12 currently -- and as you know, we have the  
13 forgiveness, we're thrilled. The problem is  
14 is that, you know, there's no money in the  
15 queue. So how do you pay people back, right,  
16 in terms of -- you know, there are  
17 approximately -- we have made an analysis of  
18 the money. Approximately \$288 million in  
19 claims in the queue -- and we can share this  
20 with you, Senator -- in the queue. Which  
21 means that over 17 years we have not -- we  
22 would have to back -- you know, we need  
23 extensive studying and staff to back-pay  
24 17 years worth of payment.

1           Now, the good news is this year we  
2           didn't take anybody's money, you know, like  
3           Syracuse and some other places. So we don't  
4           have to deal with that, that's good news.  
5           We're ecstatic about it.

6           But, you know, our biggest issue is  
7           going to be if there's no money in the queue,  
8           how do you pay back?

9           SENATOR MAYER: I understand. So you  
10          need more money to do it, but you're  
11          supportive of the concept --

12          NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.  
13          Absolutely.

14          SENATOR MAYER: The second thing is  
15          Career and Technical Education. We didn't  
16          speak about that. Very important, I think,  
17          to many of us in the Legislature. There's  
18          not been a significant increase in many  
19          years.

20          What is your position on Career and  
21          Technical Education generally, and how much  
22          money should be added to ensure that we  
23          maximize CTE in every district throughout the  
24          state?

1           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   Okay.   So  
2           again, I'm now going to turn to Jim, but I'm  
3           going to tell you this.   Very supportive of  
4           CTE.   It is -- as a matter of fact, you know  
5           our Teacher of the Year is a CTE person.  
6           It's something our BOCES and our department  
7           is extremely committed to.

8           So Jim.

9           SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN:   All  
10          right thank you.

11          The Board of Regents had recommended  
12          that Special Services Aid be increased in  
13          order to support additional CTE.   That was  
14          not included in the Executive Budget.   The  
15          Board of Regents recommended that the salary  
16          cap that has been in place on BOCES  
17          instructional salaries for years be increased  
18          over a period of three years from its current  
19          \$30,000 to \$60,000.   That was not included in  
20          the Executive Budget.

21          If we are serious about the  
22          availability of Career/Technical Education,  
23          those two items must be addressed in this  
24          budget.

1           In addition to that, we need to be  
2           considering the vehicles through which we're  
3           providing Career/Technical Education.  
4           Currently we leave it up to individual school  
5           districts to decide whether or not a student  
6           will be able to enroll in a Career/Technical  
7           Education program. We have ample evidence  
8           that there are many situations where parents  
9           and students are desirous of enrolling in  
10          these programs and they are not enrolling in  
11          them, they're not able to enroll in them.

12           SENATOR MAYER: I understand. And we  
13          look forward to working with you collectively  
14          on increasing CTE in many of these ways  
15          you've described. Thank you.

16           SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Right,  
17          thank you.

18           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

19           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20           And now it's back to you,  
21          Assemblymember, for the remainder of your  
22          members.

23           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, we go to  
24          Assemblywoman Buttenschon, three minutes.



1           ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you  
2           very much, Chairs, for this opportunity, as  
3           well as Commissioner, I appreciate the  
4           support that you and your team provide as  
5           you're readily available during these  
6           challenging times.

7           I want to reconfirm many of the  
8           concerns that my colleagues have discussed --  
9           mental health; a clear, appropriate plan of  
10          the transfer of the new child nutrition  
11          programs; special education needs, including  
12          the Rome School of the Deaf, which is in my  
13          district; career and tech, that was  
14          discussed; the hiring and training of your  
15          staff for the purpose of certifications; as  
16          well as I would appreciate all follow-up  
17          information that has been requested.

18          I have three questions. One is  
19          regarding the expanded opportunities that you  
20          testified regarding, or better known as  
21          after-school programs that are so much  
22          needed, as they interrelate with many of the  
23          issues we see. And I want to know if you  
24          feel these are appropriately funded, as my

1 districts are willing to take part in this  
2 and ensure the expansion could occur.

3 I have also heard from many of my  
4 school districts regarding unfunded mandates  
5 for -- the example they provide, due process  
6 in regards to the overlap of many federal  
7 mandates. And does SED have a strategic plan  
8 to look at these overlaps and how to overcome  
9 them for our districts?

10 Thank you.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

12 So I'm going to start with OATH,  
13 because nobody has raised the issue and it's  
14 something we've been working on now for a  
15 couple of years. And as you know, the two  
16 bills, the IHO bill and the OATH bill were  
17 very essential, not only just for New York  
18 City, who's moving forward in terms of hiring  
19 full-time -- remember, a lot of the impartial  
20 hearing officers have been part-time. So  
21 this is -- we met with the commissioner of  
22 OATH to really advance the notion that we're  
23 going to have 45, 50 in order to clean up the  
24 backlog. So that's number one.

1           In terms of -- you're absolutely  
2           right, the funding that sometimes is needed  
3           in these particular situations and the due  
4           process proceeding, you know, one of the  
5           requests that's been made, even as simple as  
6           the burden of proof -- you know, I'm sure  
7           you've heard that as well, the shifting of  
8           the burden of proof and the fact that it's  
9           had -- what kind of an impact it has.

10           So, you know, I'd love to spend more  
11           time with you on sharing about OATH, sharing  
12           about that. And then your other one about  
13           extended -- the extended platform is  
14           something that major lesson learned with the  
15           pandemic. But I have to tell you while the  
16           federal funding is helping in that arena,  
17           we've got to do a better job in thinking of  
18           how we create a sustainability long-term for  
19           that kind of a response to the needs of our  
20           children.

21           While it's -- right now we're leaning  
22           on the federal funds and school districts are  
23           using that, we've got to really do a better  
24           job in how we integrate it and build it into

1           that process.

2                     We're even having a conversation with  
3           the Commissioner of Health about the current  
4           guidance has a bit of an issue on page 3 -- I  
5           can tell you the exact page of the guidance  
6           -- and we are working with her, and she's  
7           very committed, which has been wonderful,  
8           very committed to working with us on the  
9           importance of our kids staying in school and  
10          having the opportunities of extended-day.

11                    So we've -- you know, as I said, this  
12          is a very long-term issue for us, not just  
13          pandemic or not just being paid for by  
14          federal dollars. So thank you for the  
15          question.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you  
17          for the opportunity.

18                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We'll go now to  
19          Assemblyman Bronson.

20                    ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you,  
21          Chair Weinstein.

22                    And Commissioner, great to see you,  
23          and thank you for all the work you and your  
24          team are doing for our students, especially

1 in these difficult and ever-changing times.  
2 You know, and I especially want to thank you  
3 for being so very accessible and willing to  
4 talk, especially as we work to improve the  
5 Rochester City School District.

6 I'm going to make a couple of points,  
7 then I'm going to ask you two questions about  
8 the Rochester City School District.

9 First of all, I join the chorus on  
10 parity for our special-needs schools, and  
11 hopefully we can do something similar to the  
12 bill that got vetoed at the end of last year.

13 Second of all, capital funding has  
14 been instrumental in two of my libraries in  
15 the towns of Henrietta and Chili, and we need  
16 that to continue so other areas can benefit  
17 from improving their library facilities.

18 Regarding Rochester City School  
19 District, the first question -- I'll ask  
20 both, and then you can answer.

21 The first question relates to mental  
22 health. You know, we've received  
23 \$197 million in ARPA funds, \$39 million in  
24 additional Foundation Aid last year, another

1       \$29 million coming up this year. And our  
2       students are not immune from the level of  
3       violence that's happening in our city  
4       streets -- indeed, they're tremendously  
5       impacted by that. Added is the adverse  
6       impact of COVID, the ongoing trauma of  
7       poverty, and much more.

8                You know, with this unprecedented  
9       level of funding -- and I know part of it's  
10      going to end -- the district still has made  
11      position eliminations, including social  
12      workers, and has reduced the RocRestorative  
13      team.

14              So my first question is, how can we  
15      get mental health professionals in our school  
16      buildings throughout the Rochester City  
17      School District? And how can SED partner  
18      with us to help focus on social and emotional  
19      well-being of our students, our staff people,  
20      and our families?

21              The second question -- and I don't  
22      want to put you on the spot here. But the  
23      second question is you and I and our  
24      community and our school district and NYSUT

1           and RTA, we've all been working very hard  
2           under the monitoring system, a system that I  
3           supported strongly and I continue to support.  
4           And you and I have spoken repeatedly. We've  
5           got to get this right for our kids. So my  
6           second question is, what lessons have we  
7           learned and what changes can we make?

8                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

9           So let me start with the last one,  
10          because I think the first one we can  
11          definitely speak offline. Because as you  
12          know, in your budget, the department -- we  
13          have guardrails in terms of the federal  
14          funding, just because of the nature of some  
15          of the issues with Rochester and the  
16          spending. So, I mean, I think you know  
17          that's specific to Rochester.

18          I think with the lessons learned, to  
19          the monitor, since, you know, that's the  
20          one -- you put me on the spot -- I'm going to  
21          answer, I think the one lesson I learned I  
22          would attribute to East Ramapo. Meaning that  
23          they have a finance -- they have two  
24          monitors. And while they have the veto

1 power, because they've been at this longer,  
2 they have a monitor for finance and a monitor  
3 for instruction. You know, sometimes when  
4 you try to just have one person be everything  
5 to everyone, it does become challenging and  
6 difficult.

7 So that would be one of the lessons  
8 that I would have a discussion with you  
9 about.

10 And then the second one I do believe  
11 that we have to really -- besides having the  
12 two monitors, I think Rochester, given the  
13 complexity and the needs and the size and  
14 everything else, I think that would be --  
15 because that monitor with the finance would  
16 also deal with capital improvement,  
17 operational, you know. And it would really  
18 allow the current monitor, whose strength is  
19 really instruction, to really, truly focus on  
20 instruction.

21 So that would be the first lesson  
22 learned. And I can go into some of the other  
23 ones with you. And you and I have constant  
24 conversations even on weekends, so I'm more



1           than glad to --

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   Okay, so --

3                   ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON:   Thank you,

4           Commissioner.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   There won't be

6           a clock on the weekend.

7                   (Laughter.)

8                   NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA:   This is

9           true.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   We go next to

11           Assemblywoman Seawright.

12                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT:   Thank you.

13           And thank you to our very dedicated Chairs

14           Krueger and Weinstein.

15                  Commissioner, as you know from your

16           experience, it can be indeed essential for

17           children to have access to mentoring.   Given

18           the vast talents of New York City private

19           colleges and our CUNY and SUNY students, what

20           can be done to ramp up the mentor/mentee

21           programs beyond the teacher education

22           programs that currently exist?

23                  And then also I'd like to echo Senator

24           Krueger in talking about the Hasidic yeshivas

1 and calling on the State Education Department  
2 to make it a top priority in getting a basic  
3 education.

4 So what can be done to ramp up the  
5 mentor and mentee programs?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm going to  
7 take half a second and answer the second one,  
8 because we do -- we can provide you with the  
9 work that we've been doing for the last two  
10 years on changing, you know, what was  
11 originally submitted for the substantial  
12 equivalency and share that with you. Because  
13 that's been work that we've done with the  
14 CAC, which is our team that performs that  
15 work, along with the involvement of looking  
16 at ways of evaluating and independent  
17 evaluations.

18 So there's a lot in that, in the  
19 document. So we will make that available to  
20 you, because a great deal of work has gone  
21 into that.

22 The second one, in terms of mentoring,  
23 Jim, go ahead. Because I think you're  
24 talking about from the higher ed perspective,

1 if I'm hearing you correctly.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Well,  
3 besides the current teacher education  
4 programs that exist --

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, the  
6 higher ed.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: -- and using  
8 CUNY, SUNY and our private college students  
9 to be mentor and mentees, yes.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, that's  
11 higher ed.

12 Jim?

13 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: I  
14 think that really what it entails is taking a  
15 look at our system from a P-20 continuum.

16 We have a tendency to look at our  
17 educational system in silos, and one of the  
18 policy objectives of the commissioner and the  
19 Board of Regents is to begin looking at our  
20 educational system from pre-K, where the  
21 Legislature has made some very significant  
22 investments, through elementary, middle  
23 school and then into college, and building  
24 partnerships between those institutions of

1 higher education and our various school  
2 districts -- both the private side of higher  
3 education and the public side of higher  
4 education -- to enable us to tap into the  
5 resources that are available in those higher  
6 education institutions and to make them  
7 available to the pre-K through 12 system, and  
8 vice versa.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Okay, thank  
10 you.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We'll share  
12 with you the substantial -- that we are going  
13 to be advancing -- and by the way, we share  
14 those with the various groups, like Agudath  
15 Israel, we share them with PEARLS, we've  
16 shared them with -- I think you recently met  
17 with Yaffed, right, Jim?

18 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yes.

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So we have  
20 been sharing the information, you know,  
21 pretty extensively. So more than glad to  
22 make that available to you.

23 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: We  
24 have made significant progress in terms of

1 the development of a recommendation that will  
2 go to the Board of Regents in March.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 We go now to Assemblywoman Bichotte  
5 Hermelyn, to be followed by Assemblyman  
6 Byrne, to be followed by Assemblywoman Simon.

7 (Pause.)

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Chair  
9 Weinstein, after the next person, is it  
10 possible --

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, would you  
12 like a -- why don't you take a break now,  
13 because we're trying to find Assemblywoman --

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, thank  
15 you. Appreciate it.

16 (Discussion off the record; brief  
17 recess taken.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're just  
19 taking a stretch-our-legs break.

20 Is Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn  
21 here? She may have gone to -- so we'll  
22 continue with Assemblyman Byrne. Are you  
23 with us? Yeah, there you are, Kevin.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: Give me one

1 second, please. I don't see this clock. I'm  
2 always like nervous about the time. There we  
3 go.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If you go to  
5 the gallery view, you'll see it.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: All right.

7 Thank you, Commissioner. I have long  
8 supported the concept of local control  
9 because I believe our smallest level of  
10 government has the most direct impact, the  
11 most access to our constituents, where we can  
12 really have a meaningful exchange of ideas.  
13 And I think that extends for our county  
14 governments, our villages, our town boards  
15 but also our school districts and school  
16 boards.

17 And there's a lot of concern that we  
18 hear about from concerned parents, but also  
19 in the news, about respecting that local  
20 control. You know, we hear about  
21 controversial and/or costly mandates, whether  
22 it's pandemic-related, like mandatory mask  
23 wearing. Or if it's about controversial  
24 curriculums, policies or frameworks.

1           You know, I do want to thank your  
2           office for responding back to a letter that I  
3           sent from colleagues and myself regarding  
4           several of the policy statements pertaining  
5           to DEI, because there is specific language  
6           that some of us have concerns about and  
7           object to. And you clarified, or your office  
8           clarified that there is no mandate for that  
9           in schools, which is very important, because  
10          I think previous statements and reports were  
11          perceived by others that there could have  
12          been. So clarifying that there is no mandate  
13          is important.

14                 But this brings me to my larger point.  
15          There are issues that are inherently local,  
16          inherently local. And your office, it was  
17          recently reported, stated that it could  
18          withhold state aid for a specific school  
19          district that did not change or remove the  
20          mascot or the name. In Cambridge, it's the  
21          Indian.

22                 Now, I don't represent Cambridge, but  
23          I live in Mahopac, or Ma-ho-pac. And I went  
24          to Carmel High School, which is in the same

1 town of Carmel. They're actually rivals with  
2 Mahopac. But I'm a homeowner in Mahopac now,  
3 or Ma-ho-pac. We are very proud of our  
4 history, the indigenous people that live  
5 there, and it's the Mahopac Indians. We  
6 don't even have an Indian mascot anymore;  
7 it's an M with an arrow through it.

8 And there are proposals that could  
9 have -- threaten that aid. I think that  
10 needs to be a locally decided decision. The  
11 people in that community, we have Indians on  
12 our fire trucks, it is part of the essence of  
13 the people that live there.

14 So I just want to ask, really simply,  
15 will you respect that local control and allow  
16 the school boards to keep those names?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I will  
18 always respect local control. But at the  
19 same time, this was a 310, so I -- I think  
20 you know this came to us.

21 There's been a history. For 20 years,  
22 this department has talked about some of the  
23 indigenous, you know, issues and things that  
24 have been used that really create, in many



1 situations, challenges and difficulty to the  
2 entire process of looking at -- as you know,  
3 many people have talked about what is used in  
4 terms of symbolism. Ball players, you know,  
5 franchises have looked at the issues of many  
6 situations that are considered and border on  
7 some racism and some issues of concern of the  
8 mascots that are used.

9 Now, while you say, you know, there  
10 are those that are very proud of some --  
11 there are others that are not that have  
12 concerns about those. Which is why it came  
13 to me as a 310, which is a conversation.

14 We truly believe as a department that  
15 yes, there are local decisions. But, you  
16 know, in government we also have to make  
17 decisions that are -- you know, to your mask  
18 question, we have to maintain the integrity  
19 and sustaining -- let me just --

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: Commissioner, I'm  
21 sorry to interrupt. I know I'm out of  
22 time --

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- let me  
24 just -- let me just answer --

1 (Overtalk.)

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: -- Mahopac stands  
3 for the Lake of the Great Serpent, and there  
4 are indigenous people that live in this  
5 community that want to keep that name. It is  
6 important to them. It's not just people that  
7 look like me, it's people that live there.

8 So I want to make sure that's  
9 considered. And that's extremely important  
10 to the people that live there and their  
11 history.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Right. And  
13 there are indigenous people who also have  
14 concerns. As you know, it's like the mask  
15 debate. You have people on both sides of the  
16 issue. But what we have to listen to is the  
17 science. The science is very clear. We have  
18 a commissioner who is an expert in the -- the  
19 Department of Health was established, and  
20 they have expertise in this area.

21 So I think that we have a  
22 responsibility to ensure that our districts  
23 are making decisions, even at the local level  
24 using the science and using -- making sure

1           that we have -- you know, we have the proper  
2           information to make those kinds of decisions.

3           Our issue of health and safety is so  
4           important that we want to ensure that it's  
5           done with fidelity and it's done with the  
6           experts. And we can hold a debate on the  
7           difference of whether to mask or not mask,  
8           but I would say that I rely on the Department  
9           of Health and I rely on the expert and I rely  
10          on the science as my partners to support my  
11          landscape, which is education, to ensure that  
12          what is happening is keeping our kids healthy  
13          and safe. And if mask -- which it is -- is  
14          an indicator of that process, then I will be  
15          an advocate for strongly supporting that.

16          ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: Thank you,  
17          Commissioner. I believe we all want what's  
18          best for our kids --

19          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're -- I'm  
20          sorry, we're out of time.

21          ASSEMBLYMAN BYRNE: Thank you, Chair.

22          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. We're  
23          going to go to Assemblywoman Simon.

24          ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

1           And thank you, Commissioner, for your  
2           fine work. And I'm very appreciative of your  
3           stamina, if nothing else today, and -- as  
4           well as the fine work that you're doing.

5           So I have a couple of points I wanted  
6           to make and ask you to address. First, you  
7           know, we heard from Senator Hoylman, we heard  
8           from Assemblymember Niou, we know Senator  
9           Brooks, the late diagnosis, the late catching  
10          of kids' special needs in one way or another.  
11          And that goes to early identification,  
12          whether it's a particular screening tool or  
13          something else. Because once we do that,  
14          then we will better be able to identify how  
15          children are learning and where their needs  
16          are.

17          Our fourth graders, 38 percent of our  
18          fourth graders are reading proficiently;  
19          62 percent are not. We're missing the boat.  
20          They're not all dyslexic. So this goes to  
21          that issue of education, our teachers knowing  
22          what to look for, how they're trained, our  
23          professional development.

24          What pots of money do you have to look

1 at professional development, which is really  
2 more the kind of thing that you would fund,  
3 as opposed to, you know, within our schools  
4 of higher education?

5 The other thing is the 4201 schools  
6 capital funding. As you know, I  
7 student-taught at a 4201 school, so they're  
8 close to my heart. One of them is near me in  
9 Brooklyn, the School for the Deaf,  
10 St. Francis de Sales. When that money was  
11 allocated, it seemed to be very uneven in the  
12 distribution, and the Executive Budget  
13 continues that pattern.

14 I'd like to sort of put a pin in the  
15 need for the fact that St. Francis de Sales'  
16 building is 100 years old and so is their  
17 boiler. And we need help better allocating  
18 the funds for the schools who are in really  
19 dire straits for that.

20 And then just a quick pin, and that is  
21 the OATH situation. I think I disagree with  
22 you on that. I do lay the blame for the  
23 entire fiasco, really, on the city schools.  
24 And I'm not going to bore you with that.

1           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I will  
2           share -- so let me start with the OATH. I  
3           will share the latest, because we have -- the  
4           commitment of the OATH is really the  
5           full-time process versus the part-time  
6           process. And we'll share with you -- we'll  
7           share with you and have the conversation  
8           offline to -- you know, I welcome -- I  
9           welcome not only your thoughts on this and  
10          your experience on the OATH conversation.

11          The early screening, totally I agree  
12          with you that we have to do a better job, not  
13          only using screening and identification but  
14          also doing professional development, to your  
15          point. That without the professional  
16          development for teachers and for those who  
17          have the contact with our children for early  
18          recognition, that is essential.

19          You are -- you and I have talked about  
20          this. That is absolutely the work that has  
21          to dovetail. You've got to have the  
22          screening process, but you also have to  
23          have -- even before the -- you know, before  
24          the screening, the teachers and the

1 individuals that touch the lives of our  
2 children have to know what they're looking  
3 at, what they're looking for, and those key  
4 signals that signal that something needs to  
5 be addressed.

6 But also the fourth partner in this is  
7 the resources to do prevention, intervention,  
8 and clearly respond to the specific needs.  
9 And we will continue the conversation on the  
10 other issues.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. I  
12 appreciate that.

13 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
15 Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:  
17 Hello, Commissioner. Thank you for being  
18 here. Education remains one of the most  
19 important topics nationwide, especially as  
20 we're dealing with the pandemic.

21 As a former public school math  
22 teacher, I know how it is very important to  
23 be in a classroom with minimal resources, as  
24 well as a former special ed student with

1 English as a second language, from a Black  
2 and Caribbean immigrant household, there are  
3 issues again in the public school system  
4 regarding resources.

5 So with that said, I wanted to get a  
6 sense of community schools. I know the  
7 budget will maintain the level of funding; I  
8 think I saw \$250 million. Are there any  
9 plans to expand community schools?

10 Also, I know there were talks about  
11 the Holocaust education, which I supported.  
12 I wanted to know if there were also any talks  
13 around Black history education being part of  
14 the curriculum, mandatory. So that.

15 And then lastly, I wanted to talk  
16 about the \$5 million increase to -- that goes  
17 towards diversity, teacher diversity, and  
18 wanted to get a sense in terms of, you know,  
19 how many teachers of color do we have in the  
20 system, how will the program expand in terms  
21 of getting more teachers of color, and what's  
22 the overall percentage.

23 That's my question. Thank you.

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So let me



1 start with TOC, which is the one you're  
2 speaking about, the 5 million. I will get  
3 you the specifics of how many teachers have  
4 been a part of the program.

5 And the other part with TOC is, you  
6 know, it's not just looking at increasing the  
7 diversity but also increasing the  
8 diversity -- because my understanding is, and  
9 I'm just going to give you a general number,  
10 currently there are about, in TOC, 594,  
11 somewhere in there. We've graduated  
12 somewhere about 600. So you can see that  
13 there's a nice growth to TOC.

14 Just so you know, we did not get that  
15 funding. So we are asking to support that  
16 funding because we really do believe it's a  
17 successful program. The funding was I think  
18 distributed elsewhere. And we're hoping that  
19 this -- you know, this issue of expansion  
20 gets addressed. Because as you can see from  
21 the numbers, it is -- you know, it's a  
22 successful program.

23 Your other question about the issue of  
24 community schools, as somebody who was a

1 principal of a community school, I will speak  
2 to you offline. It is something I support  
3 because it has that extended day. And  
4 community schools are truly localized with  
5 health services, including mental health  
6 services. They have dental clinics, they  
7 have mental health services. So it's a model  
8 that I know firsthand, as a former principal  
9 of a community school in Washington  
10 Heights -- that not only works because it's  
11 open six days a week, with extended day, with  
12 clinics, with mental health services. So it  
13 is an incredible model that we really need to  
14 look as a model to invest in.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 We're going to move to --

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: And  
18 we'll see -- I think we had the Black history  
19 with --

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman,  
21 the time has expired. The commissioner can  
22 send us answers to some of the other  
23 questions you haven't had an opportunity to  
24 respond to yet, and we'll share it with both

1 Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn and the rest  
2 of the members who also would like to know  
3 the answers to those questions.

4 We next go to Assemblywoman Mitaynes.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you.

6 I just want to echo what Senator Sue  
7 Serino said earlier about the families with  
8 special education children feeling that  
9 they're much more behind and feeling that  
10 they're an afterthought.

11 And also just want to chime in about  
12 Senator Liu and Assemblymembers Niou and Kim.  
13 I have a large, growing, vibrant Asian  
14 community in my district as well.

15 But so my question. The Governor's  
16 budget proposed to extend mayoral control for  
17 four years in New York City. The prior  
18 mayor's refusal to provide a remote option  
19 throughout last summer and the fall, even in  
20 the face of significant parent concern and  
21 the spread of Omicron, showed that there are  
22 instances where mayoral decisions overlook  
23 the unique needs of certain parents and  
24 families.

1           Do you believe in the long term  
2           parents and CECs should have an increased  
3           role in the governance process to address  
4           needs in a more localized, inclusive way that  
5           can accommodate different needs and different  
6           communities?

7           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So that  
8           answer is absolutely. And I -- just so you  
9           know, with the prior administration, the  
10          remote model, I never removed it. I asked  
11          everybody in their plans, because -- you  
12          know, I said the pandemic is not over and you  
13          have communities that have been highly  
14          impacted by COVID-19 and now Omicron, so you  
15          have to have these opportunities to have  
16          conversations and localize some of these  
17          decisions.

18          So I truly do believe that, you know,  
19          parental voice and community voice has to be  
20          a part of the conversation.

21          ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: What are some  
22          ways in which we can start empowering our  
23          CECs to be more involved in governance and  
24          decision-making processes?

1           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Again,  
2           that's -- you know, that is a local decision.  
3           And the way that we've been working -- and we  
4           do have conversations, we invite the parents  
5           of New York City -- we just did a Bronx and a  
6           Manhattan recently on grad measures, and they  
7           were all -- you know, they were all very  
8           actively involved. The CECs, many of them  
9           participated.

10          So I would say that, you know, we have  
11          to continue to work -- and again, New York  
12          City has its own design because of mayoral  
13          control and the DOE, but we're more than glad  
14          to discuss with you ways that we can support  
15          and help to -- maybe in the new phase and  
16          this new mayor and this new -- which we've  
17          had recently, I will tell you, an incredible  
18          relationship -- ways of empowering and  
19          creating opportunities to hear their voices.

20          We would be more than glad to be there  
21          with you, shoulder to shoulder.

22          ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you.

23          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24          We go now to Assemblywoman Walsh.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Hi, thank you.

2 Good afternoon, Commissioner.

3 So I've been trying to listen -- this  
4 was scheduled at the same time as session, so  
5 I've been kind of listening as best I can,  
6 and I hope that my question is not going to  
7 be repetitive.

8 From what I could hear today, we had a  
9 very far-ranging conversation about things  
10 like equity and diversity, mental health, the  
11 digital divide, teacher shortages, dyslexia,  
12 special education -- an issue that's very  
13 close and dear to my heart -- early  
14 screening, zero emission buses were in the  
15 budget -- you know, all of these are  
16 important issues, no question, in a normal  
17 year. But this is not a normal year. Last  
18 year was not a normal year. 2020 was  
19 certainly not a normal year.

20 My number-one concern, number-one  
21 priority, is learning loss. And not just  
22 because of the digital divide, but -- but  
23 just learning loss. Our kids -- has it been  
24 measured, can it be measured how far back our

1 kids have fallen back? And what is the plan  
2 for catching kids up? And what's in the  
3 budget to address that specifically?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. So  
5 the biggest, I would say, connection to  
6 learning loss is the federal dollars. And,  
7 you know, we've seen that with ARP. That is  
8 enormous. That is one of their -- like it's  
9 your priority? That is the federal's  
10 priority, the whole developing a plan. And  
11 by the way, these plans are developed at the  
12 local level. Developing these plans with  
13 communities' involvement about ways that the  
14 superintendents and the schools are  
15 addressing the issue of learning loss or  
16 academic and mental health and wellness  
17 recovery, which is part of the conversation  
18 we've been having.

19 So these conversations have been going  
20 on with our stakeholders, with our  
21 superintendents. It's the federal dollars  
22 that are being used to address those.

23 My biggest concern is that those  
24 dollars will fall off the cliff by

1       September 30, 2024, and we have to begin to  
2       think about what are the kinds of things that  
3       we embed into our extended day to ensure that  
4       this is part of the learning platform of  
5       schooling and not just to address the  
6       learning loss process.

7               ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Commissioner, so  
8       it's federal dollars, it's local control as  
9       far as solution creation. Has the state been  
10      able to measure, through study, in terms of  
11      grade-level difference or anything to be able  
12      to quantify the degree of learning loss?

13             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, we --  
14      you know, we have not even given, as you  
15      know -- we didn't give -- last year we did,  
16      but we didn't give the tests in 20 -- you  
17      know, as you recall, we've gone through --

18             ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Right.

19             NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And that's  
20      just one aspect of it.

21             The other aspect of it, as you know,  
22      is localized, the measurements that are used  
23      at the local level to assess not only the  
24      different grade bands but also as children



1 move through the system. As you know, some  
2 of our kids for the first time -- this was  
3 the first year attending school. And they  
4 didn't even have some of the earlier -- what  
5 we call earlier experiences getting ready for  
6 school.

7 So the -- but as far as study, no, we  
8 have no funding at this point to even think  
9 of -- so the data that we have, we're more  
10 than glad to share with you because it's data  
11 that's provided to us by the school  
12 districts, and it's data that we internally,  
13 because of our own interests, dissect, to  
14 inform our decision making and our work.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: I see my time  
16 has expired. Thank you, Commissioner.

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19 We go to Assemblywoman Dickens, three  
20 minutes.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you,  
22 Chairs Weinstein and Krueger, and thank you,  
23 Commissioner, for your dedication and for  
24 staying here to listen to 90 people ask you

1 150 questions.

2 Mine is last week Advocates for  
3 Children released a report that said that in  
4 New York City preschool students with  
5 disabilities are being underserved by 3-K and  
6 pre-K for all and are being denied access to  
7 special education programs and services for  
8 which they supposedly are entitled to. More  
9 than 30,000 New York City preschoolers had  
10 IEPs during the 2019-'20 school year, but  
11 roughly a third of these students did not  
12 receive all the services that were mandated.

13 I'd like to know, because it's  
14 relative to the enrollment -- and the  
15 disparity seems to be based upon color, in  
16 receiving these special education services --  
17 I'd like to know what are we going to do to  
18 change that. And about mental health. My  
19 colleagues had brought this up, but I really  
20 did not hear a concrete answer, if there is  
21 one, about addressing that.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

23 So I'm going to ask Jim to jump in as  
24 well, because we've been doing a lot of work

1 with New York City in terms of the CAP.  
2 There is a CAP in New York City for special  
3 education in terms of compliance. We're more  
4 than glad to share that with you, because  
5 this has been -- this is our -- from an  
6 accountability perspective, this is how we  
7 monitor, we have ongoing conversations with  
8 New York City constantly to address the very  
9 issue that you raise about our students with  
10 special needs.

11 Jim?

12 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Sure.

13 Thank you, Commissioner.

14 Assemblywoman, we're really  
15 approaching the New York City Compliance  
16 Assurance Plan in three major areas. The  
17 first deals with preschool provision of  
18 public education. And in that case, we are  
19 working with the city to increase the number  
20 of evaluations and to make sure that they  
21 have -- that students and parents have access  
22 to those preschool special ed evaluation  
23 processes.

24 We have seen some progress made in

1           that respect in terms of the number of  
2           resources that have been made available for  
3           that preschool evaluation. There's been a  
4           lot of conversation here about early  
5           detection, and that's why we have an emphasis  
6           there.

7                     We also have taken a look at  
8           school-age provision of free and appropriate  
9           public education. And here again, what it  
10          comes down to is availability of services.  
11          The New York City Department of Education is  
12          well aware of the fact that there needs to be  
13          expansion of those services on the ground so  
14          that they can be accessed by families and by  
15          students and that teachers working with  
16          families having have the appropriate kinds of  
17          supports available to them.

18                    And then finally, we have the due  
19          process issues, which the commissioner has  
20          addressed throughout this hearing, where in  
21          effect the denial of due process over a  
22          period of years has been addressed with the  
23          recent memorandum of understanding that the  
24          commissioner has spearheaded with the

1 New York City Department of Education.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you so  
3 much. My time is up. I'll get in touch with  
4 you individually. Thank you.

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. I  
7 have -- Commissioner, I have a question for  
8 you, and one that Assemblywoman Niou wasn't  
9 able to -- didn't have time to ask.

10 I wanted to know whether you think  
11 school districts are going to be in a  
12 position to deal with the Governor's -- or to  
13 meet the Governor's proposed mandate to move  
14 to zero-emission school buses by 2035 and  
15 what we in the Legislature need to -- should  
16 be doing to help get to that goal.

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So again,  
18 one of those conversations we already  
19 started. Obviously we know it's 2027-2035.  
20 Obviously we know that there's an issue of  
21 it's much more expensive. You know, the  
22 buses are almost like three times as much.  
23 We know that there are issues of distance,  
24 right, for the rural schools.

1           We have been dissecting and analyzing  
2           this issue very, very closely in terms of  
3           what we believe -- you know, SED in  
4           principle, we think it's -- low-emission  
5           vehicles obviously is critical. Any  
6           legislation should recognize that the battery  
7           technology is -- you know, we've done some of  
8           this work, and it's got limitations. The  
9           range, it's got limitations. We clearly are  
10          very, very supportive.

11          But as I said, there's a great deal of  
12          work that has to be looked at in terms of  
13          the -- you know, the principle is good but  
14          once again, we've got to look at the details  
15          of what it implies. Especially when we come  
16          to my -- you know, my transportation person,  
17          Christina Coughlin, has really done a deep,  
18          really deep dive into this. And one of the  
19          concerns -- again, as we talked about, the  
20          cost is significant. The purchase, as we  
21          look at the aid, the aid ratio will require  
22          investments in electrical infrastructure.

23          So all I'm saying, all of these issues  
24          that we're looking at, we all collectively

1           need to fully understand as we move forward  
2           in this direction.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
4           that, and look forward to continuing to work  
5           with you on that.

6                   Speaking of energy and infrastructure,  
7           one of the things that COVID has taught us is  
8           some of the dangers of our older school  
9           buildings -- the lack of air flow, spaces not  
10          large enough, the ventilation systems are old  
11          and costly, energy-wise.

12                  Do you think we should be -- I assume  
13          you do feel that we should be trying to  
14          update and modernize this infrastructure.  
15          Are there plans that SED has done? Have you  
16          worked with school districts to try and  
17          assist them in how we move forward in this  
18          direction?

19                  NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes. And  
20          I'm going to turn to Jim, because again this  
21          is another conversation we're having. As a  
22          matter of fact we had yesterday an extensive  
23          conversation about use of federal dollars --  
24          which are allowed by the way, to support this

1 kind of work.

2 We're also looking at ventilations and  
3 materials that are used and how the  
4 Department of Health approves.

5 So we are very much intimately  
6 involved in this kind of work in looking at  
7 the fact that, to your point, the -- you  
8 know, the need for modernization is  
9 extensive, it's expensive, and it's one that  
10 we, you know, through Christina's shop --  
11 which, by the way, has need of extensive  
12 support in terms of staffing -- has been  
13 doing an incredible job.

14 Jim?

15 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Sure,  
16 I think that, you know, there has certainly  
17 been a focus in terms of the joint school  
18 construction boards to provide resources to  
19 the Big 5, some of the Big 5 cities, in terms  
20 of updating their facilities. The state's  
21 building aid ratios provide support to school  
22 districts generally in terms of those needs.

23 What we have seen is that many  
24 districts have made the decision to use some



1 of the federal funds that have been made  
2 available to them to undertake construction  
3 projects. The issue there is that those  
4 projects need to be completed by the end of  
5 September in 2024.

6 So there's no question that there are  
7 any variety of capital needs for school  
8 facilities. Some of them relate to  
9 technology. And I think, you know, one of  
10 the things we want to point out here is that  
11 there has been millions of dollars spent in  
12 terms of investments in technology platforms.  
13 The one thing that the commissioner and the  
14 Board of Regents wanted to make clear to  
15 school districts is that those investments  
16 need to be sustained. And when we issue  
17 guidance in terms of the capacity of school  
18 districts, they need to maintain the capacity  
19 to go remote if that's necessary. They need  
20 to be able to take advantage of the expanded  
21 capacity that those technology platforms  
22 provide in terms of extending opportunities  
23 to students.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you very

1 much. I think that is -- those are the only  
2 questions I have.

3 I want to just recognize Assemblyman  
4 Benedetto for three minutes, second round, to  
5 close up this portion of the hearing.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,  
7 Madam Chairman.

8 Commissioner, I applaud you for your  
9 stamina. You have been through an ordeal,  
10 and we're coming on four hours here. But  
11 just a couple of other questions I would like  
12 to ask and maybe clear up a few  
13 misconceptions that might be out there.

14 Much has been said in regards to a  
15 bill in the Assembly which has to do with the  
16 teaching of the Holocaust. Is this not the  
17 state law right now?

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And do you  
20 believe that the teachers of the State of  
21 New York are currently teaching about the  
22 Holocaust?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I believe  
24 that since it is -- you know, it definitely

1 is embedded in our standards work.

2 And we are very -- I mean, one of the  
3 things -- you know, I don't have, again --  
4 and this is what I was talking about, the  
5 survey. I can't tell you that I have a  
6 universal sense that in fact it's being  
7 taught, other than I know that it's legally  
8 required, superintendents know this. It is  
9 understood that -- and that is not the  
10 only -- as you know.

11 But the fact of the matter is that  
12 we've done -- since our last conversation  
13 last year, we've done some informal  
14 inspections, kind of, to find out. And I do  
15 have to say -- and we will encourage -- we  
16 even sent out, as you know, we sent out  
17 materials, we put it out -- you know, we have  
18 the resources available. We will continue to  
19 encourage our school districts because this  
20 is -- to your point, it is required, it is in  
21 law. It must be taught. This is a  
22 nonnegotiable issue.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes. And  
24 under normal circumstances, Commissioner, who

1 would be empowered, who is supposed to check  
2 up to make sure that this is being done?

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Again, this  
4 is the whole debate about local control. You  
5 have a superintendent. Right? You have  
6 school boards. You have -- the locals are --  
7 curricula is at the local level. We have a  
8 law in place that says this must be taught.  
9 And we absolutely hold the districts  
10 accountable to make sure that this is taught.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And lastly, to  
12 conclude here, if we pass a bill saying you  
13 must do this, could you consider that to be a  
14 costly mandate? And do you have the  
15 resources to do it?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: When you say  
17 a bill to pass -- but this is already in law.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Right. Okay.

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm not  
20 sure -- I would have to see --

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To pass and  
22 check up on it all.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: In all  
24 things, I would have to see what the bill

1 entails. It's very hard to answer --

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay. We  
3 won't dwell on it. Commissioner, thank you.

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So,  
6 Commissioner, we got you out before  
7 Tisha B'Av.

8 (Laughter.)

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I just  
10 corrected somebody on -- I'm trying to think  
11 during the Regents -- my husband, who's  
12 Jewish, called me up and said -- I forgot  
13 what the term was that it was used. And so,  
14 you know, one of our Regents used -- it  
15 wasn't bubbe-meise, it wasn't -- I'm trying  
16 to think of the -- it wasn't shvitzing, which  
17 probably that's how I'm feeling right now.

18 But at the end of the day, I said to  
19 my husband, What's the translation, you know,  
20 for the word? And he did. And I didn't let  
21 on. I said, My highest authority, sure that  
22 this is what it means.

23 But thank you.

24 (Laughter.)

1           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for  
2           spending so much time with us and for all the  
3           work that you do in this role and the Regents  
4           do for the students in New York State.

5           NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

6           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we are  
7           appropriately going to dismiss you, and our  
8           next witness is going to be Chancellor David  
9           Banks, the chancellor of the New York City  
10          Department of Education.

11          It will just take a moment till he'll  
12          be -- oh, I just see him floating around  
13          the -- there he is.

14          NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Do you see  
15          me?

16          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Good to  
17          see you again.

18          NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see  
19          you as well.

20          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And you have up  
21          to 10 minutes for a presentation, and then we  
22          will move on to questions from the members of  
23          the Education and Libraries Committees.

24          So the floor is yours.

1                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.  
2                   Thank you. So I'll say good afternoon,  
3                   Senate and Assembly committee members. My  
4                   name is David Banks, and I serve as the  
5                   chancellor of the New York City Department of  
6                   Education.

7                   I want to thank you for the  
8                   opportunity to testify today. And joining me  
9                   today is Chief Financial Officer Lindsey  
10                  Oates and other members of my leadership  
11                  team, First Deputy Chancellor Dan Weisberg  
12                  and Chief School Operations Officer Kevin  
13                  Moran.

14                 I come before you today on behalf of  
15                 New York City's public schools and our  
16                 students and their families.

17                 Before I begin, I would like to  
18                 acknowledge the chairs and your colleagues in  
19                 the New York State Legislature for your  
20                 leadership during the pandemic and your  
21                 commitment to building a better future for  
22                 New York's children. The increased resources  
23                 you have provided to our schools as  
24                 Mayor Adams and I begin our new roles will

1 greatly strengthen our capacity to elevate  
2 New York City public schools.

3 Specifically, your advocacy when we  
4 needed it the most is leading to an increase  
5 in Foundation Aid of over a billion dollars  
6 to New York City alone, funding that will go  
7 directly to schools and benefit our students  
8 now and in the years to come. So thank you.

9 You also were instrumental in securing  
10 funding through the American Rescue Plan Act  
11 that will greatly help our school communities  
12 rebound from all the disruptions caused by  
13 the pandemic.

14 Both the Foundation Aid increase and  
15 American Rescue Plan resources are enabling  
16 our new administration to hit the ground  
17 running. So again, we thank you for your  
18 help and your leadership on behalf of all of  
19 our students, families, teachers and staff.

20 Additionally, I'd like to publicly  
21 thank our extraordinary school communities,  
22 including our school leadership and support  
23 teams, families, parent and student leaders,  
24 early childhood providers, and school safety



1           officers. They have all performed incredible  
2           work supporting our students and  
3           operationalizing evolving plans to keep our  
4           schools open and safe. This continues to be  
5           a herculean effort during a global pandemic,  
6           and we are all grateful for their efforts.  
7           Our theme is to Stay Safe and Stay Open.

8                       So my first three weeks as schools  
9           chancellor have been a whirlwind to say the  
10          least -- inspiring, exhilarating, and moving  
11          all at the same time. We've faced an upsurge  
12          in COVID cases with the Omicron variant, a  
13          snowstorm -- which, by the way, that did not  
14          close our doors -- and then the horrific fire  
15          in the Bronx that took the lives of eight  
16          young people. And throughout this period I  
17          have seen firsthand in schools across all  
18          five boroughs, including those that our lost  
19          children in the Bronx attended, how heroic  
20          our students, families and staff have been in  
21          facing up to these huge difficulties.

22                      With respect to the Omicron surge, we  
23          understood that we needed to be both  
24          thoughtful and aggressive with our Stay Safe,

1 Stay Open plan to protect our students and  
2 staff while ensuring that our school  
3 buildings and classrooms would remain open.  
4 That effort included increasing in-school  
5 testing, distributing over 7 million rapid  
6 tests to students and staff -- including  
7 1 million from the state, thanks to Governor  
8 Hochul's leadership -- providing KN95 masks  
9 to staff members, and changing our policies  
10 to more quickly respond to positive cases.

11 Because of our policy changes, when a  
12 positive case appears in a community, we  
13 immediately provide two rapid tests to every  
14 close contact with no delays, allowing us to  
15 safely stay open and isolate cases. That is  
16 in addition to our existing measures such as  
17 mandated vaccination for all staff; required  
18 daily health screenings for students, staff,  
19 and visitors; universal indoor masking;  
20 physical distancing; and ventilation  
21 maintenance and improvements, including two  
22 air purifiers in every classroom.

23 Opening our schools for in-person  
24 instruction this year was a critical task for

1 all the students who find sanctuary in our  
2 schools daily and for those who experience  
3 remote instruction to be a significant  
4 barrier to learning, especially our  
5 multilingual learners and our students with  
6 disabilities. Stay Safe, Stay Open is  
7 working. Our attendance rates have climbed  
8 from 65 percent when I took office to  
9 87 percent this week; our staffing has  
10 stabilized; and the data continues to show  
11 that our schools remain the safest places to  
12 be in New York City.

13 So let me take a moment to say a few  
14 words about my own background and my vision  
15 for getting New York City schools to soar to  
16 a higher level.

17 First, as the son and brother of  
18 police officers, I want to acknowledge the  
19 officers who were fatally shot in Harlem last  
20 week, both of whom were products of our  
21 public schools. My heart breaks for them and  
22 their families, and I know deep down the pain  
23 that their families must be feeling.

24 I was born in Brooklyn and I grew up

1 attending New York City public schools and am  
2 proud to say that two of my adult children  
3 are teachers. Many educators had a profound  
4 impact on my life, and two in particular from  
5 my elementary school at P.S. 161 in Brooklyn  
6 especially shaped who I am today.

7 Mrs. Mertz, who was my fourth-grade teacher,  
8 showed her faith in me by writing on one of  
9 my composition papers that she fully expected  
10 I would author a book someday -- which turned  
11 out to be true. And Mrs. Mildred Scott, who  
12 taught me in the fourth and fifth grade, and  
13 she raised my consciousness and she inspired  
14 me with her lessons about Black history.

15 After graduating from Hillcrest High  
16 School in Queens, and then college, I worked  
17 as a school safety officer -- a lot of people  
18 don't know that. I was a school safety  
19 officer at Clara Barton High School in  
20 Brooklyn before becoming a teacher and then  
21 an assistant principal. After that I was the  
22 founding principal of two schools: the Bronx  
23 School for Law, Government, and Justice,  
24 where I actually recruited my predecessor as

1           chancellor, Meisha Ross Porter. I hired her  
2           as a teacher, and she worked for me for  
3           several years.

4                     And then, together with the civic  
5           organization 100 Black Men, we launched the  
6           Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx.  
7           Eagle Academy was the first all-boys public  
8           school, public high school in New York City  
9           in almost 30 years when we opened our doors  
10          back in 2004. And we opened that school  
11          because we were examining the deep negative  
12          indicators -- the attendance, low graduation  
13          rates, high disciplinary rates, particularly  
14          for Black and Latinx boys.

15                    And while a lot of people were writing  
16          articles about it and analyzing data, there  
17          wasn't a lot that was being done, and we  
18          decided to do something about that. And we  
19          were able to demonstrate that high-quality  
20          preparatory education for young men of color  
21          can in fact be provided in a public school  
22          setting.

23                    Following the success of the Bronx  
24          school, I left to lead the Eagle Academy

1 Foundation, where we opened an Eagle Academy  
2 in every borough of New York City and one in  
3 Newark, New Jersey.

4 As an educator and a parent of four  
5 thriving adults, I believe with every fiber  
6 of my being that every young person is filled  
7 with brilliance, promise, and gifts. All  
8 children deserve a strong academic foundation  
9 that prepares them to graduate with an  
10 employable skill set. And equally important,  
11 they deserve the tools and support that's  
12 needed to be physically and emotionally  
13 healthy.

14 So to deliver on that mission for our  
15 students by creating and sustaining  
16 innovative, high-quality schools requires  
17 that we fully engage with the entire school  
18 community. The answers to how we improve the  
19 system can be found in the hearts and minds  
20 of our teachers, principals, children,  
21 families, elected officials, community  
22 partners and other stakeholders, including  
23 all of you. And with your partnership, we  
24 will ensure that the nation's largest school

1 system becomes the nation's best.

2 So let me briefly share with you what  
3 I consider to be the four pillars to  
4 improving our school system. Number one,  
5 scaling, sustaining, and restoring what  
6 works. That entails recognizing and raising  
7 awareness of excellence throughout the system  
8 while building the capacity of educators to  
9 share and expand the most promising and  
10 effective practices. So for example, I saw a  
11 phenomenal Career and Technical Education  
12 program recently at Thomas Edison High School  
13 in Queens. That school should serve as a  
14 model for other schools.

15 In the close to four weeks that I've  
16 been in office now, I have visited several  
17 schools. I visited P.S. 60 on Staten Island.  
18 You should see what they are doing with  
19 respect to social-emotional learning.  
20 They've got a sensory hallway that takes  
21 young people who are going through difficult  
22 and challenging emotional experiences and in  
23 real time are able to really help those young  
24 people solve for the issues that they're

1           dealing with.

2                     And as I visited that school, I said  
3           every school in New York City should be aware  
4           of what this school is doing. And I intend  
5           to make that happen.

6                     I visited Concourse Village Academy in  
7           the Bronx. And again, the social-emotional  
8           things that they're doing -- mindfulness,  
9           meditation, teaching young people how to  
10          center themselves at very young ages. It's  
11          the kind of thing that when we say what are  
12          we going to do in the midst of this pandemic,  
13          how do we find our way forward -- some of the  
14          best answers that we could hope for are  
15          actually happening already in some of our  
16          schools.

17                    The second thing that I want to do is  
18          help our schools to reimagine how our  
19          students are learning in the first place.  
20          That includes providing a more holistic  
21          educational experience that centers on  
22          project-based learning and career readiness  
23          while incorporating a multicultural approach  
24          to teaching history, inspiring civic



1 engagement, and collaborating with community  
2 and corporate partners.

3 We should be using our experience with  
4 remote learning as a springboard to truly  
5 develop transformative ways of educating our  
6 children. This is a special moment in time.  
7 And if we use our technological tools the  
8 right way, I believe that we can fully  
9 transform how our teachers and how our  
10 children are experiencing school in the first  
11 place. And so it's right for a lot of  
12 workforce to do, and I can't wait to get at  
13 it.

14 The third thing is prioritizing  
15 wellness and its link to student success.  
16 That includes access to green spaces,  
17 high-quality nutrition, and comprehensive  
18 whole-child support for a broad range of each  
19 student's needs.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Chancellor, you  
21 know, I see that the 10 minutes is up. Could  
22 you just summarize? Because I know we have a  
23 number of members who have questions. Can  
24 you summarize some of the issues in your

1 prepared remarks on the state budget so that  
2 we can --

3 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yup. Yup.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- so that our  
5 anxious members could start talking to you.

6 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.  
7 I'm sorry.

8 And so now just sort of very briefly  
9 to Governor Hochul's proposed budget, which I  
10 believe will greatly help us to achieve the  
11 goals I've described in New York City.

12 First, this budget upholds the state's  
13 previous commitment to continue the phase-in  
14 of the Foundation Aid formula, the state's  
15 largest education fund source. And this  
16 commitment enables us to maintain our school  
17 allocation formula, Fair Student Funding, at  
18 100 percent for all schools. And we are  
19 extremely grateful that the Governor and the  
20 state are poised to continue sustaining this  
21 critical investment that will bring hundreds  
22 of millions of dollars more directly to our  
23 schools.

24 Thanks in large part to this State

1       Legislature, schools have historic levels of  
2       funding that have allowed for every school to  
3       have access to mental health support through  
4       a full-time social worker or a school-based  
5       mental health clinic, and for every high  
6       school to have access to PSAL athletic  
7       programming for the first time in the city's  
8       history.

9               Even more importantly, this budget  
10       extends mayoral accountability through 2026.  
11       And we are enormously appreciative of the  
12       leadership and advocacy of Governor Hochul  
13       and the entire State Legislature on this  
14       issue. For over 30 years I have served as an  
15       educator in the New York City school system  
16       in various capacities, including as a teacher  
17       and a principal, and I remember the previous  
18       system. And I can unequivocally say to you  
19       that mayoral accountability, while it's not  
20       perfect, it's the most successful and  
21       effective system of school governance that we  
22       can provide our students.

23               You need to look no further than our  
24       ability to fully open schools this month.

1       Because of mayoral accountability, we were  
2       able to act quickly and put in place the  
3       safety measures that were needed to safely  
4       open schools and welcome students back. We  
5       kept schools open because it's where children  
6       are safest and the best place for them to  
7       learn. This was the mayor's commitment from  
8       Day 1, and we were able to live up to it for  
9       the children of New York City.

10           The Governor's also announced, as part  
11       of this budget, that 4410 programs, which  
12       serve pre-K students with disabilities and  
13       whose rates are set by the state, will see a  
14       rate increase of 11 percent. And this sector  
15       has been a critical component of our early  
16       childhood education expansions, and this rate  
17       increase will strengthen our early childhood  
18       system in the long term. This investment  
19       goes a long way towards making our early  
20       childhood education programs truly universal,  
21       allowing children from every zip code to have  
22       a seat in a quality program. It is more than  
23       just a legal obligation, it's a moral one as  
24       well.

1           So finally, we know how devastating  
2           this pandemic has been to the mental health  
3           of our students. We're gratified to see a  
4           recognition in the Governor's budget of the  
5           need for greater investment in this area,  
6           requiring the New York State Education  
7           Department to create a grant program for  
8           student well-being and learning loss. A  
9           permanent state grant program would help to  
10          sustain this essential work in the years to  
11          come and keep resources directed toward  
12          supporting the whole child.

13           And so in conclusion, as we continue  
14          to navigate the countless challenges posed by  
15          COVID-19, the crisis has already clarified  
16          what needs to be done now and going forward  
17          to greatly improve how we serve our children.  
18          In many ways, areas of longstanding  
19          disagreement between the state and city are  
20          clearly giving way to a powerful consensus  
21          that I believe will make an enormous  
22          difference. So thank you.

23           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
24          Chancellor. Thank you for being here. This

1 is the first time you're with us and  
2 hopefully we'll be seeing you not only at the  
3 hearings, but I know we'll be seeing you  
4 other times, as you've mentioned.

5 We're going to go to our Education  
6 chair, Assemblyman Benedetto, for 10 minutes.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO:  
8 Mr. Chancellor, thank you very much for being  
9 here. And -- (audio muted).

10 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I can't  
11 hear you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Mike, you have  
13 to --

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Unmute.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Unmute  
16 yourself, correct.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I thought I  
18 did. I'm so sorry.

19 So at any rate, Mr. Chancellor, you've  
20 got a monster job ahead of you. It's not an  
21 envious position you're in, but I wish you  
22 well. And our job is to try to help you to  
23 the fullest extent possible, and we will try  
24 to do that.

1           Let me just tell you, one of the  
2           criticisms that I've heard in regards to  
3           school governance, mayoral control in  
4           particular, is about parental involvement and  
5           reaching out to parents and the importance of  
6           it. And maybe, under the school governance  
7           we have now, parents aren't properly  
8           addressed and heard. A quick comment on  
9           that.

10           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well,  
11           Chair Benedetto, I would say that you will  
12           not find any chancellor who is more committed  
13           to engaging parents than me.

14           It is part of my DNA. It is part of  
15           the work that I have done in my 30-plus years  
16           working in the system. I have done some  
17           transformative things even at the schools  
18           that I have worked at in terms of how we  
19           engage parents. I believe that that is one  
20           of my four pillars, is to be very intentional  
21           in engaging parents as true partners.

22           I don't believe in, you know,  
23           decisions being made and then we bring  
24           parents in as a photo op. I want parents

1           there at the beginning, helping us to  
2           co-construct policy for the DOE. And I'd ask  
3           that you hold me personally accountable for  
4           that, because that is how I have always led  
5           as a leader. That is what I will continue to  
6           do as a leader in my role here as chancellor.

7                     I know there have been some things  
8           that have been done here at the department, I  
9           think to try to shore up our ability to work  
10          with parents and to give parent voices a  
11          greater impact. And you can rest assured  
12          that that is something that I will be doing.  
13          I have already been meeting with many of the  
14          parent groups to gain their best thoughts  
15          around what we should be doing, and I will  
16          continue to do that and expand on that for  
17          certain.

18                    ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.  
19          We've talked today, when Commissioner Rosa  
20          was here, in regards to early learning and  
21          before kids -- or as they're coming into the  
22          system, to do proper screenings on these  
23          children. And in particular, screening to  
24          see what their learning problems might be.



1 Your thoughts on that, sir.

2 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Oh,  
3 absolutely.

4 Mayor Adams, as you know, has made  
5 this a major priority around -- particularly  
6 around dyslexia, but not simply dyslexia  
7 screening. But that was an issue that he  
8 talked about all throughout the campaign.  
9 And as he appointed me, he said, "I want that  
10 to be one of our major areas of focus."

11 And so I have met with many leaders in  
12 this space. Assemblymember Bobby Carroll,  
13 who is really one of the major voices and  
14 advocacy around dyslexia, he arranged for a  
15 trip for me to go to the Windward School.  
16 And it's a private school, but it's really  
17 the gold standard on how to address and deal  
18 with issues of dyslexia.

19 I've met with many other advocates  
20 around New York City. We're working very  
21 closely around the creation of a school  
22 specifically -- a public school that will be  
23 dedicated specifically for kids with  
24 dyslexia. Be the first time that we've had

1           it in New York City. And so you will hear,  
2           in the coming weeks, more about that new  
3           school where we're going to take our best and  
4           brightest, the most promising practices of  
5           how do we do diagnose and then how do we  
6           implement best practices for engaging young  
7           people in that space.

8                     So it will be a new space for us.  
9           We're going to make some investments there.  
10          And it's one that I'm very, very excited  
11          about because they're so many of our young  
12          people.

13                    And as the mayor always talks about,  
14          so many of the young folks who find  
15          themselves caught up in the criminal justice  
16          system were never diagnosed with dyslexia.  
17          And if we can identify that early and provide  
18          the proper interventions that they need, I  
19          think we can make a huge difference in  
20          helping those young people to have a  
21          promising future instead of just pushing them  
22          along in the school system and then they find  
23          themselves caught up in the criminal justice  
24          system.

1                   ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

2                   Listen, you've got -- no matter what  
3 happens here, you've got a short term to make  
4 an impact on the educational system in  
5 New York City. It might be four years, it  
6 might be eight years, who knows what it's  
7 going to be. But it's a limited amount of  
8 time. Do you really believe you can make  
9 changes and get results in the educational  
10 system that's going to convince people that  
11 boy, oh, boy, this guy did the job?

12                  NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: With all  
13 due respect, I wouldn't be here if I didn't  
14 believe that. I've never done any job in my  
15 life that I didn't believe that I could  
16 accomplish the job.

17                  And, you know, when we started out to  
18 do this work to try to help young men of  
19 color, many of them had given up on their own  
20 selves in a system that very often does not  
21 deliver for them, people said: Are you sure  
22 you can deliver on this? And as I sit here  
23 now, there's thousands of lives that we have  
24 so positively impacted.

1           And I absolutely believe that as big  
2           as the New York City public school system is,  
3           and often as unwieldy as it seems, I truly  
4           believe that we can turn it around. I  
5           believe that deeply. But I know that I can't  
6           do it by myself. That will happen because we  
7           are engaging in partnership with community  
8           leaders, parents, families, the students  
9           themselves.

10           You know, last week we had students  
11           from a host of schools around the city who  
12           walked out because they're just so concerned  
13           about issues of remote learning and just not  
14           feeling safe. I met with those student  
15           leaders. And they were surprised that, you  
16           know, three days later I actually convened  
17           them to meet with them. Because I want to  
18           hear what they have to say, and I want to  
19           take all that into consideration as we try to  
20           make the best decisions that we can make for  
21           the system.

22           And many of you even on this call,  
23           I've reached out to many of you because I'm  
24           trying to build relationships because you all

1 have your hand on the pulse of what's going  
2 on in your own districts and in your schools.  
3 We need to know that. And that's how I  
4 intend to continue to lead, in earnest and  
5 real and authentic partnership with leaders  
6 across the city. This is not a one-man show.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

8 And in conclusion here, my final  
9 question -- and I'm sure you're going to get  
10 it several times today. But let's talk about  
11 the mental health of our students as a result  
12 of the pandemic and as a result of just life  
13 in general. This was certainly an issue that  
14 was prime in people's minds more than two  
15 years ago. And it was prime in mine, in my  
16 mind, and I wanted to do something about it,  
17 and then the pandemic hit. And now it's even  
18 worse.

19 Do you have any specific mental health  
20 suggestions that the schools should be doing?

21 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, first  
22 of all, over 75,000 educators have already  
23 been trained in trauma-responsive education.  
24 So there have been some efforts that have

1       already taken place to first of all make sure  
2       that our educators themselves are fully  
3       prepared to respond to the needs of our young  
4       people.

5               And we've already hired over  
6       500 social workers this year, where every  
7       student now has access to social workers,  
8       counselors, or a school-based mental health  
9       clinic. Those are efforts which I think are  
10      going to make a huge difference.

11             But I will tell you, as somebody who  
12      was a school principal for 11 years, the most  
13      important thing that we can do is engaging  
14      our kids in positive relationships. That's  
15      how they respond the most. That teacher --  
16      when you've got Mr. Benedetto or Ms. Jackson  
17      or Mr. Williams in the school, you know,  
18      they're not just teachers of content. They  
19      are very important people in the lives of our  
20      kids. That's what we mean when we say it's  
21      important for our kids to be back in school.  
22      Because the way that our kids are socialized  
23      and the way that they grow up naturally and  
24      normally, they need to be around their

1 friends and they need to be around caring  
2 adults.

3 So we're going to continue to do all  
4 that we need to do to fortify those kinds of  
5 relationships, number one.

6 But number two, as I also mentioned,  
7 as I've been visiting these schools around  
8 the city, you would be blown away by some of  
9 the innovation that the schools are doing  
10 themselves. Amazing work, even around  
11 social-emotional learning, how they're  
12 engaging their students.

13 What I want to do as chancellor is to  
14 create this office as an ecosystem of  
15 support. It's not enough for -- you know, if  
16 you've got one set of kids who are going to a  
17 great school that have figured out how to  
18 engage them from a social-emotional learning  
19 standpoint, that's great for those kids. But  
20 what about everybody else? I want to lift up  
21 those promising practices.

22 So if you think about this, Mr. Chair,  
23 you can -- we're going to build a system here  
24 where every teacher and every principal

1 across New York City can see the promising  
2 practices that everybody else is doing. So  
3 you're not working in isolation. Far too  
4 many of our schools work in isolation. And  
5 the answers that they're grappling with, some  
6 school has already figured that out on the  
7 other side of town, but they don't know.

8 And so that's how I see my role, is to  
9 lift up the work so that everybody -- you're  
10 going to be able to pick up your phone -- if  
11 you want to see the best practices for  
12 social-emotional learning, we will have a  
13 caption, and you can pick it up and you can  
14 follow it with those individual schools.  
15 That's where I'm spending my time, to try to  
16 build capacity for success.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
18 Chancellor.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you and  
20 good luck, Chancellor Banks.

21 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you  
22 so much.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to  
24 turn it over to the Senate and Senator



1 Krueger.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Good afternoon, Chancellor Banks.

4 Welcome to your first Albany hearing.

5 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So the Senate  
7 thought the New York City school system was  
8 so important we created our own committee to  
9 deal with it. And Senator John Liu is the  
10 chair of the New York City Education  
11 Committee, and he will be the first  
12 questioner of you.

13 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Finance  
14 Chair. And you're right, New York City  
15 public schools are pretty darn important, and  
16 in fact it's the largest system in the entire  
17 country, so we have to give it a lot of  
18 attention.

19 I share Chair Benedetto's  
20 congratulations to you, Chancellor Banks. I  
21 think he wished you well in some form of  
22 expressing sympathies as well. So if he did  
23 that, I share those sympathies also, because  
24 it's a big job that you have jumped into and

1           fully embraced. And it's going to be a tough  
2           job, no question.

3                     I appreciate the many conversations  
4           you and I have had long before you were even  
5           thinking of becoming chancellor, and of  
6           course since named schools chancellor for  
7           New York City. I also appreciate the  
8           tremendous amount of outreach that you and  
9           Mayor Adams have engaged in with the public  
10          as well as with many of my colleagues in  
11          government, both state, city and federal. So  
12          you hit the ground running on a number of  
13          issues.

14                    We all have a limited amount of time,  
15          and I do have a few areas that I wanted to  
16          ask you some things about.

17                    First, thank you for thanking us for  
18          the increase in Foundation Aid. It is  
19          something that we committed to last year.  
20          We're making the second installment this  
21          year. And I have every expectation that  
22          we'll follow through on the completion of the  
23          increase in annual school aid by next fiscal  
24          year.

1                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

2                   SENATOR LIU: As part of that,  
3                   though -- and always happy to see the  
4                   fantabulous Lindsey Oates there. You know  
5                   what I'm going to ask you, Lindsey and  
6                   Mr. Chancellor. Where is the Department of  
7                   Education on the Fair Student Funding  
8                   formula? That is now four years behind  
9                   schedule. So we're sending you all this  
10                  money, but we also expect that you be held  
11                  accountable for that, and the money goes to  
12                  the schools in New York City that need it the  
13                  most.

14                 So what's going on with the Fair  
15                  Student Funding formula?

16                 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, since  
17                  you called for our chief financial officer,  
18                  who has been grappling with this for quite  
19                  some time, I'm going to invoke her at this  
20                  moment to lean in. You know, again, on some  
21                  of this, I just got here, Senator, and I'm  
22                  still getting my arms around a whole host of  
23                  issues here at the department. But we're in  
24                  good hands with our chief financial officer,

1 Lindsey Oates, and just ask that you don't --

2 SENATOR LIU: Thank you. Thank you,  
3 Chancellor Banks. I don't need a whole lot  
4 of detail here, I just need a date. A date.

5 NYC DOE CFO OATES: Good afternoon,  
6 Senator Liu. Nice to speak with you again.

7 So we used every penny of the  
8 Foundation Aid increase to raise the Fair  
9 Student Funding floor to 100 percent for all  
10 schools this past school year. So now for  
11 the first time ever, we are proud to say that  
12 all schools are 100 percent funded. This was  
13 an average increase of about \$400,000 per  
14 school --

15 SENATOR LIU: We already went through  
16 that, Lindsey.

17 NYC DOE CFO OATES: I know.

18 SENATOR LIU: My question is, it's  
19 all -- all the schools are at 100 percent  
20 FSF. The problem is that the FSF formula is  
21 way obsolete, it's outdated. And it's not  
22 directing the funding appropriately to all  
23 the public schools. So the question is --  
24 you know, this was supposed to have been done

1 in 2019. It's now 2022. When is that  
2 formula going to be updated?

3 NYC DOE CFO OATES: So as you know,  
4 our first priority was to fully fund the  
5 formula, and we're grateful to have the  
6 resources to do that.

7 We now have a brand-new leadership  
8 team here, obviously, and a new mayor, and we  
9 have started having conversations about that.  
10 It takes a while to do this well. And we  
11 want to be thoughtful about the engagement --

12 SENATOR LIU: No time frame in mind.

13 NYC DOE CFO OATES: We want to be  
14 thoughtful about engagement with all the  
15 advocates, parents, teachers --

16 SENATOR LIU: Let's start engaging all  
17 of them.

18 And a related question here. You  
19 know, for many years now, for an untold  
20 number of years, the New York State  
21 Department of Education, as backed by  
22 City Hall, has always been opposed to the  
23 Contract for Excellence. And nonetheless,  
24 the State Legislature has continued to push

1           this important priority.

2           So, you know, when the Campaign for  
3           Fiscal Equity lawsuit was determined by the  
4           courts, they did indicate that class sizes in  
5           New York City were a problem that was  
6           contributing to the lack of the state  
7           fulfilling its educational mandate for all  
8           schoolkids. And it doesn't seem like the  
9           Campaign for Fiscal Equity or the concept of  
10          smaller class sizes is being reflected in the  
11          Fair Student Funding formula. Or it doesn't  
12          seem like the Department of Education has  
13          made headway towards that goal of reducing  
14          class sizes even though, you know, we've been  
15          calling for it.

16          So is the DOE -- and maybe this is for  
17          Chancellor Banks. We need you to prioritize  
18          lowering class --

19          NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Got it.  
20          Got it. No, listen. Again -- and I wish --  
21          and I don't like to do a dance to questions  
22          asked of me. But what I will say to you is  
23          that these are the first two items, and I'm  
24          sure there are going to be more that are

1 coming, that my response will have to be that  
2 I will absolutely get back to you, I'm going  
3 to delve into these and in short order.

4 SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

5 And related to that additional  
6 funding, you know, is the question of mayoral  
7 control. Congratulations to you and our new  
8 mayor for the Governor including a four-year  
9 extension in her budget. You know, what  
10 ultimately happens over the next few months  
11 remains to be seen because I know many of my  
12 colleagues in the State Legislature have  
13 concerns about what mayoral control has been  
14 about and the possibility of a four-year  
15 extension, which is, you know, longer than it  
16 has been for a long time.

17 I am very appreciative, Chancellor  
18 Banks, of you not even using the words  
19 "mayoral control." You used the term  
20 "mayoral accountability," which always, when  
21 Robert Jackson and I and many others were in  
22 the City Council back when Bloomberg first  
23 became mayor, he called it mayoral control,  
24 we always called it mayoral accountability.

1           But unfortunately in recent years it  
2           does seem much more like mayoral control, in  
3           the absence of anybody being able to provide  
4           input, especially schoolkid parents. And so  
5           we need more engagement -- you know, it's --  
6           the last couple of years, even during the  
7           COVID crisis -- especially during the COVID  
8           crisis, we have had all of these Zoom  
9           meetings with hundreds of parents, 90-minute  
10          meetings, borough-wide, sometimes  
11          district-wide, the DOE comes on and for  
12          60 minutes DOE officials pontificate. And  
13          then there's 30 minutes remaining for parents  
14          to ask maybe half a dozen questions, and then  
15          the other 200 parents waiting to speak or ask  
16          questions are hung up on.

17                NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
18                right.

19                SENATOR LIU: So I hope that you will  
20                turn the page on this playbook straight out  
21                of George Orwell that the previous  
22                administration had been following and really  
23                engage the parents in what is needed for our  
24                kids.



1           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Senator, I  
2           thank you so much for that. And you will see  
3           a very different approach to how we work. I  
4           didn't come here to be a DOE bureaucrat and  
5           to give a bunch of pat answers and to meet  
6           with parents and do a lot of talking but  
7           actually say nothing.

8           That is not who I am. I don't move  
9           that way, I don't lead that way. I lead in a  
10          very authentic way, and I cut to the chase.  
11          And I want the parents to know that I hear  
12          them, I see them, I respect them. Truly, I  
13          am one of them. I'm a product of this New  
14          York State public school system. And I don't  
15          see myself as sitting in control over  
16          anybody. I want to do this with them.  
17          That's why I call it -- but like I said,  
18          there's no system that is a perfect system.

19          But having been a teacher and an AP  
20          and a principal over the years, and having  
21          seen what the old system looked like, where  
22          no one was held accountable because everybody  
23          -- every borough president, everybody had a  
24          stake. The mayor didn't have enough sway so

1           when you needed to make real hard decisions,  
2           the public couldn't hold anybody accountable.

3                       So while I think this system certainly  
4           has its own flaws, I think it's the best that  
5           I've seen. And I just want you to know,  
6           working with me, you're going to have a very  
7           different approach.

8                       SENATOR LIU: Thank you. And to your  
9           comments, which I truly appreciate, they  
10          suggest that perhaps some changes are  
11          actually necessary in the current system of  
12          mayoral accountability to make sure that  
13          there is more accountability and that parents  
14          have more input.

15                      So I look forward to figuring out what  
16          changes can be made if mayoral  
17          accountability, as under the current system,  
18          is extended.

19                      NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Certainly  
20          open to those conversations for sure. Thank  
21          you.

22                      SENATOR LIU: I've got one more  
23          minute, and then I'll get you with a second  
24          round later.

1           But speaking of parental input, we  
2           have been getting a huge amount of input from  
3           parents, as legislators. And a very big  
4           question that's been asked by a lot of  
5           parents out there is what's happening with  
6           the G&T programs. De Blasio thought that he  
7           got rid of it, we never believed it, Mayor  
8           Adams spoke about increasing and expanding  
9           G&T programs, and now the deadline has been  
10          passed. Parents are wondering what's going  
11          on.

12                 So I think, you know, I've made it  
13          very clear that I believe there is a place  
14          for accelerated learning in New York City  
15          public schools. It's been there for decades,  
16          for generations. I feel like you believe the  
17          same thing. But my question is what's going  
18          on with accelerated learning in New York City  
19          and the G&T programs?

20                 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely  
21          looking at this.

22                 Well, first of all, the mayor -- and  
23          I, right -- are fully committed to expanding  
24          opportunities for accelerated learning. So

1           you should just know that. So the details of  
2           what we have to do or put in place will be  
3           coming in the coming days. So we came in  
4           already stating to everyone that we are not  
5           cutting back on Gifted and Talented, we  
6           intend to expand Gifted and Talented  
7           programming.

8                     And when I ask the question, Is there  
9           some reason why we don't have more Gifted and  
10          Talented seats, what's the -- what am I  
11          missing, there was no clear answer to that  
12          question. So we have this scarcity model  
13          where there are a handful of seats and we've  
14          got our parents at each other's throats  
15          over -- fighting over a handful of seats.

16                    My goal -- and I've spoken to, you  
17          know, elected officials and community members  
18          all across the city who have said, you know,  
19          We want Gifted and Talented in our district.  
20          And --

21                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Chancellor, I  
22          have to cut you off. I think more people  
23          will ask you about Gifted and Talented and  
24          you'll have a second shot at that. But we

1 have to focus on the clock, unfortunately.

2 And the Assemblymember has asked me to  
3 call on Assemblymembers as she ran to another  
4 meeting briefly. And so the next  
5 Assemblymember is Ranker Ra for five minutes.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,  
7 Chair Krueger.

8 Good afternoon, Chancellor.  
9 Congratulations. Welcome on behalf of a  
10 fellow St. John's Law grad. So --

11 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Heyyy. All  
12 right.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Nice win the other  
14 night for the basketball team, so I'm happy  
15 about that.

16 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
17 right. That's right.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So I'm from the east  
19 side of the Nassau-Queens border, but I'm in  
20 Western Nassau and Franklin Square, so not  
21 too far from the city. But I did want to ask  
22 about an issue that has impacted an academic  
23 institution that does border within my  
24 district. That's the Henry Viscardi School,

1           which is a 4201 school for both physically  
2           disabled individuals.

3                     And the last couple of school years,  
4           back with the reopening in 2020 and then this  
5           past fall, there was a delay in providing  
6           transportation to these students. And I know  
7           that, you know, this all predates you, but I  
8           do want to ask, you know, what planning is  
9           going on to ensure this isn't a problem as we  
10          get into the next school year.

11                    There was, to my understanding, a  
12          delay in providing busing for these students  
13          for about the first two weeks of the school  
14          year. There was, you know, some  
15          accommodation that was attempted to be made  
16          through, you know, MetroCards and maybe  
17          Uber-type arrangements, but many of these  
18          children are disabled, have medical needs,  
19          and that is not really a viable option to  
20          getting them to school. And as a result, you  
21          know, they were missing instruction.

22                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah.  
23          Yeah. First of all, I appreciate the  
24          question. And I don't -- this is the first

1 I'm hearing of it. I'm not so familiar with  
2 the school per se. But we do have our  
3 director of operations here, Kevin Moran, and  
4 I'd like to ask Kevin if he can be unmuted so  
5 that he can -- you know, to the extent that  
6 he's aware -- respond to that question.

7 CHIEF SCHOOL OPS OFFICER MORAN: Yes.  
8 Very much appreciate the question and an  
9 opportunity to provide clarity here.

10 This summer, like none other, was a  
11 challenge to restart the busing industry  
12 proper. And so we had to adhere to one day,  
13 one start day. So the couple of hundred  
14 schools that started early knew in advance  
15 that if they started early, we wouldn't be  
16 ready to deliver transportation on that set  
17 day.

18 We service 3,000 schools and programs  
19 across the city and the surrounding counties  
20 and states. We let folks know early going  
21 into April/May that our calendar system was  
22 locked, but we had to start in unison as a  
23 system for operability purposes on the first  
24 day of the DOE schedule.

1           That will not happen this year. We've  
2           taken a lot of efforts to help recruit and  
3           work with companies on staffing models to  
4           make sure we have the full fleet running. On  
5           a daily basis we run over 99 percent of our  
6           routes effectively. And we're definitely  
7           going to stay on top of this to make sure  
8           those private schools that start prior to the  
9           school year for the DOE, that we get those  
10          services delivered.

11           I'm happy to follow up with you on any  
12          specific concerns offline.

13           ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Great. Thank  
14          you, Mr. Moran. Thank you, Chancellor. And  
15          all the best to you as you begin your tenure.

16           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you  
17          so much. I appreciate that.

18           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And  
19          our next questioner will be Senator Shelley  
20          Mayer, the chair of our Education Committee.

21           SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

22           Nice to see you, Chancellor.  
23          Congratulations again.

24           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see



1           you.

2                   SENATOR MAYER:  It's nice to reconnect  
3           after 30 years.

4                   One subject that Senator Liu and I  
5           heard a great deal about for the last year  
6           and a half from New York City parents was  
7           parents of special ed kids whose IEPs were  
8           frankly not complied with during COVID.

9                   Recognizing the challenges, I wonder  
10          what is your approach to -- as we move  
11          forward still in COVID, how are we going to  
12          ensure that these IEPs for individual kids,  
13          as you know, with individualized issues, are  
14          addressed by the district -- by the city and  
15          DOE?

16                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS:  So I will  
17          tell you, one of the things that as I came  
18          here, Senator Mayer, that was expressed to me  
19          in a huge way was just how fundamentally  
20          broken the special education system here has  
21          been.  The first person that really brought  
22          it to my attention was the head of UFT,  
23          Michael Mulgrew, who I talk to on a regular  
24          basis, who said:  You'd better get your arms

1 around this thing or you're just going to get  
2 taken over and have a federal monitor put on  
3 it.

4 And so, you know, I'm a firm believer  
5 that all of our students with disabilities  
6 deserve a high-quality education. Again,  
7 this is a source of focus also from the  
8 mayor. But we have been meeting with a whole  
9 host of people around how to fix this. We  
10 just recently met with Dr. Rosa, as well as  
11 Chancellor Young.

12 We have hired a host of new attorneys  
13 who are helping us, first of all, just to  
14 deal with the backlog of cases. And together  
15 with what we're doing over at OATH, we think  
16 the combination is really going to help us  
17 just, first of all, try to catch up, number  
18 one.

19 And so I think we're on a very  
20 significant path in doing that. I think  
21 Dr. Rosa in her earlier testimony also  
22 alluded to the fact that we've already made  
23 very significant progress in doing that.

24 What my direction has been to our team

1           here is that I'm not interested in just  
2           figuring out how to catch up. I want to make  
3           sure that we get out in front of this issue  
4           and that we are providing the kinds of  
5           services that our young people need and  
6           deserve and we are supposed to deliver to  
7           them, by law.

8                     And so if you just give me a little  
9           bit more time to get out in front of this.  
10          But we're engaging all of the right people  
11          who are asking all the right questions, and  
12          it's becoming a lot clearer to me. But the  
13          system here has been broken, to be very  
14          clear, and it is my intention certainly to  
15          get out in front of it and then fix it.

16                    SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Very good  
17          to hear. And, you know, very much appreciate  
18          your sense of urgency and intensity about  
19          fixing these problems.

20                    Secondly, on sort of your approach to  
21          a longer school day -- and not necessarily  
22          solely academic, but schools being open a  
23          longer period of time, with wraparound and  
24          other services. I mean, I think my New York

1 City colleagues can attest that those either  
2 community schools or longer-school-day  
3 schools provide a range of opportunities for  
4 our kids that they don't have otherwise.

5 And I wonder if you have plans to  
6 expand that model.

7 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, so I  
8 think that first of all, you know, expanding  
9 some of the community school work is  
10 something that is a priority for us. Those  
11 wraparound services are built into the model.

12 But even for those schools that don't  
13 get the designation as community schools,  
14 we're certainly going to be looking at how do  
15 we expand on these investments to create, you  
16 know, more opportunities for young people  
17 after school. You know, when I was at Eagle  
18 Academy, we had Saturday school. How do we  
19 use our time more wisely in the summer?

20 In fact, these are things that we have  
21 to do when people ask us the question around  
22 learning loss. Well, the way we're going to  
23 catch up is by making better use of all of  
24 the time that we have. But that doesn't

1 necessarily mean -- in fact that doesn't mean  
2 that we're looking for all of our teachers to  
3 work until 6 or 7 o'clock. We want to engage  
4 the community-based organizations. And there  
5 are hundreds of CBOs all across New York  
6 City, if not thousands, who are anxious to be  
7 involved and to be more engaged in our  
8 schools. Many of them are already in our  
9 schools providing all kinds of services.

10 And we think that if we are strategic  
11 in how we bring them all together for maximum  
12 impact -- so what does that mean? That means  
13 that there are some districts that have an  
14 even greater need than others, where our kids  
15 have fallen behind further than others. If  
16 you look at some of the districts in  
17 East New York, in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, I  
18 mean, they're crying out for real help.

19 So we want to target our resources and  
20 investments to those kids who are the  
21 furthest behind as a result of this pandemic.  
22 And it will mean engaging, as I like to call  
23 it, the village. You know, there's lots of  
24 other groups who have been working for

1 decades with young people who bring a very  
2 different context and relationship to kids  
3 than their teachers do in school. And so we  
4 want to make sure that all of that is in  
5 place, Senator.

6 So that's a huge part of the  
7 announcements that you'll see. Some of these  
8 will be things that you hear from the mayor  
9 as part of his 100-Day Plan. There will be a  
10 whole host of announcements that relate to  
11 the Department of Education and the work that  
12 we're doing. So I don't want to get out in  
13 front of the mayor, but just to say that it  
14 is a priority for us. We see it, we  
15 recognize it, we understand that if we don't  
16 make better use of our time, our kids will  
17 never catch up -- and we don't intend to see  
18 that happen.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

20 Lastly, and it's not to be answered  
21 today, but we did have a hearing earlier this  
22 year on how districts across the state,  
23 including the City of New York, were using  
24 their ARP and additional Foundation Aid

1 money.

2 At some point could we get a breakdown  
3 of the -- like you mentioned 500 social  
4 workers were hired, which is fantastic. You  
5 know, if you and Lindsey and your team can  
6 provide us a detailed breakdown of who was  
7 hired, what -- where they are being placed,  
8 that will be very helpful, I think, to our  
9 overall analysis of how --

10 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.  
11 Will do. We've got a pretty comprehensive  
12 breakdown already. We may have to fine-tune  
13 a couple of things and we'll get that out to  
14 you and the other members in short order.

15 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. And thank  
16 you for -- you know, I mean Senator Liu is  
17 fantastic, and Senator Jackson, my New York  
18 City colleagues leading the charge here. I'm  
19 just sort of from the sidelines here,  
20 weighing in on their behalf.

21 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, I  
22 appreciate you and I appreciate your  
23 leadership. And thank you on a personal  
24 level for when I was a young attorney working

1 at the Attorney General's office and the kind  
2 of leadership that you provided in that  
3 office, and I thank you.

4 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 And everyone who knows Shelley Mayer  
7 knows that she doesn't really just sit on the  
8 sidelines, just FYI.

9 (Laughter.)

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So next to  
11 Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, chair of the  
12 Higher Ed Committee.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Good afternoon,  
14 chancellor. It's good to see you again.

15 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.  
16 Good to see you as well.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: A couple of  
18 questions.

19 Around the high school application, it  
20 was a very complicated and challenging  
21 process and I often said that if my parents  
22 had to deal with that, I'm not sure I would  
23 have gone to high school.

24 (Laughter.)



1           ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: So I'm wondering  
2           what changes or what information can you  
3           provide to parents ahead of time to make that  
4           an easier process. And the follow-up to that  
5           is, at the time we were told that people had  
6           to select any -- up to 12 schools and that  
7           they would likely get, you know, in one of  
8           their top three or four. And I asked what  
9           the percentage was of students who got into  
10          their top six choices or their lower six  
11          choices. I never got an answer.

12                 But I'd like to understand what you're  
13          going to do about making that a more -- just  
14          improving the process for our families, and  
15          what do you envision in terms of making  
16          choices and how -- you know, I was told an  
17          algorithm, you know, runs things. Which is  
18          fine if you're trying to be blind on some  
19          screens, but it doesn't work if nobody is  
20          getting into the schools of their choices.

21                 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.  
22          Right.

23                 Well, you know what that -- this  
24          office itself offers a prime example of how

1 we should be engaging parents. And so I will  
2 make sure that this is one of the -- and I'm  
3 glad you raise it, because in the last  
4 several months that I've actually been  
5 talking to parents and families and elected  
6 officials, no one has raised this as a  
7 particular issue, but I think you are  
8 absolutely right.

9           It's a complex, convoluted process.  
10 It needs to be made much more user-friendly.  
11 And it's one that I can certainly engage with  
12 parents in doing. And so I will certainly  
13 take that up and try to learn more about how  
14 are parents experiencing this process and try  
15 to hear it directly from them, even  
16 suggestions on what we could do to improve.

17           So I will certainly make sure that  
18 will be on my to-do list.

19           ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And I guess I  
20 would like to get from someone what did  
21 happen in the last round in terms of what  
22 percentage of students got into the top six  
23 of their choices or the bottom six. Because  
24 I think that might help us understand whether

1           or not families are actually being served  
2           well in terms of where they want their kids  
3           to go to school.

4           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's a  
5           very interesting notion. And my team is  
6           taking note of every one of these requests  
7           that are coming in, and we will certainly get  
8           back to you.

9           ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Obviously kids  
10          need a safe space in which to learn. And we  
11          have a relatively new middle school in my  
12          district -- beautiful. It's a beautiful  
13          school. And the School Construction  
14          Authority under then -- now First Deputy  
15          Mayor Lorraine Grillo did an unbelievable  
16          job.

17          But I've heard from some folks that  
18          that school has a number of problems in terms  
19          of, you know, regular issues with -- I don't  
20          want to term it violence, but some sort of  
21          disruptions.

22          And so I guess that is a key concern  
23          that even in a -- you know, I went to a  
24          school in Queens that -- my middle school, my

1        junior high was an old wreck, so you could  
2        understand why kids might not feel like they  
3        were valued. But this is a beautiful school,  
4        and still there are problems. So it's not  
5        only the environment. Something's happening.

6                NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: You know  
7        what, you're so on point with that, Madam  
8        Chair, because one of the things we don't  
9        talk a lot about that happened during this  
10       pandemic, you know, we say that there's  
11       social-emotional issues that we need to deal  
12       with. But what I have found in talking to  
13       principals all over the city, they said our  
14       kids came back different when they got back  
15       to school. There was loss at a level that I  
16       don't think many of the school personnel were  
17       fully prepared to deal with.

18               The organization of school and being  
19        in school with your friends, being around  
20        those teachers, as I said earlier, who matter  
21        to you, who give you a hug when you need it,  
22        who give you the encouragement when you need  
23        it, who admonish you when you need it -- all  
24        of these things are critically important to

1           their overall development. And when you  
2           suspend that for a year, a year and a half,  
3           two years that so many of our kids have  
4           actually been out of that process -- it's not  
5           like they were just at home. They were also  
6           subjected to a lot of other negative  
7           influences that have played out. That's the  
8           reason why we've seen, as the kids came back  
9           to school, a rash of bad behavior, kids  
10          bringing weapons to school who had never  
11          brought weapons to school before. There was  
12          a loss that happened, and a lot of negative  
13          stuff got there to take its place.

14                 So it's going to take us a little  
15          while to turn that around. That's why we  
16          keep saying the best thing that could  
17          possibly happen for our kids is for them to  
18          be back in school, to get used to the  
19          organization of school, to get used to  
20          building on those relationships again. They  
21          matter. They matter deeply. And I know  
22          that, as somebody who was in the school for  
23          so many years.

24                 And so these are things that it's hard

1 to navigate this from the chancellor's seat.  
2 What we have to do is make sure at the school  
3 level that we're giving them all the help and  
4 the support that they need to provide  
5 everything that our kids need.

6 And so we'll continue to push on that.  
7 I think you're going to continue to see  
8 things getting better.

9 The day before Christmas, the  
10 holidays, we had 63 percent attendance.  
11 Yesterday we had almost 87 percent. Our kids  
12 are coming back. A lot of our teachers who  
13 have been out, they're coming back. There's  
14 been a steady upward climb that would -- you  
15 know, as we're seeing a lot of the cases, the  
16 Omicron, I think we're -- you know, fingers  
17 crossed, I think we're starting to move to  
18 the other side. And there's nothing better  
19 that could happen for our kids than to see  
20 this steady pace moving and we're seeing them  
21 steadily coming back and getting back into  
22 the normalization process that they so richly  
23 need.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: You mentioned

1 the school that would focus on dyslexia. I  
2 believe it's the school that we fought for in  
3 my district just off of Houston Street. So I  
4 hope that there is a commitment, because NYU,  
5 which has the property but out of the ULURP  
6 is required to turn it over, has asked or  
7 offered that they -- the School Construction  
8 Authority an extension.

9 So I'm concerned (a) about the school  
10 not getting shunted aside and (b) NYU  
11 absolving itself of its responsibility to  
12 relocate the supermarket that's there. So  
13 it's a neighborhood thing, and we don't want  
14 people fighting over schools and  
15 supermarkets, we want both. And the school  
16 is really important. So I hope that you'll  
17 be talking with the School Construction  
18 Authority to ensure that they -- they may  
19 have signed off on the extension, but that  
20 they will not take that as a back-burner  
21 issue.

22 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I agree.  
23 And we're all over that. I can certainly be  
24 back in touch with you around the status of

1           that. And -- but just know that I don't --  
2           the mayor -- this is a priority for the  
3           mayor. He wants to see a school that would  
4           help kids who are suffering from dyslexia,  
5           that we would have that in every borough in  
6           New York City.

7                     And so that is the goal. That's where  
8           we ultimately hope to be. Again, as I said,  
9           I don't want to preempt some of his  
10          announcements, but just you all know that  
11          he's on record as saying this is critically  
12          important to him and to his administration,  
13          and I'm doing everything that I can to make  
14          sure that we implement. So stay tuned in the  
15          coming weeks and months ahead.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: My last comment  
17          is about community schools. I think that's  
18          what they're called now, but when I was  
19          growing up in Queens Village, the high school  
20          across the street was just open at night and  
21          they did all sorts of things. So it was a  
22          lot of enrichment, kids could play in the  
23          gym. I took a class in the gym. My sister  
24          took a painting class with a neighbor.



1           With that I think we have a hard  
2           asset, and we really need to make better use  
3           of them.

4           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.  
5           Right. Right.

6           So I will tell you that, first of all,  
7           community schools is a proven, effective  
8           model for supporting students in need and  
9           improved academic outcomes for students.

10          Last year we were able to announce an  
11          expansion of community schools programming  
12          directly targeting neighborhoods most  
13          significantly impacted by COVID. And thanks  
14          to further resources we received from the  
15          federal government, we're able to expand even  
16          further and are in the process of creating  
17          over 100 new community schools across the  
18          city.

19          So we recognize the critical  
20          importance of community schools and the  
21          wraparound services that they provide,  
22          particularly in moments like this. And so  
23          the work is still happening, we're still  
24          moving on it, we're doing everything we can

1 to deliver as many as we can.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
3 Chancellor.

4 Next up is Senator Robert Jackson. If  
5 you don't know him, you haven't really been  
6 working on schools in New York. Right?

7 (Laughter.)

8 SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor, let me  
9 welcome you and your staff. Unfortunately, I  
10 only have three minutes, so I'm going to move  
11 pretty quickly and I hope that you can  
12 respond as quickly so I can ask as many  
13 questions as I can within the three minutes.

14 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, sir.

15 SENATOR JACKSON: And the first one  
16 is, is it correct that New York City spends  
17 an average of about \$200 million more per  
18 year on charter schools? Can you speak to  
19 the growing costs? Are there any actions  
20 that the state can take to help curb the  
21 ballooning costs to publicly funded,  
22 privately managed charter schools?

23 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, I  
24 will tell you that that is one that I'm

1           probably going to have to get back to you on,  
2           Senator. I've got some recent reports in  
3           terms of, you know, what those numbers  
4           actually look like. And there's been some  
5           concerns from a host of elected officials who  
6           have reached out.

7                     So if you give me a couple of days,  
8           I'll be able to get back to you for sure.

9                     SENATOR JACKSON: Sure. Thank you.

10                    And so DOE holds its Contract for  
11           Excellence public input sessions, which are  
12           required by the law, after the school year  
13           has begun in the fall or the winter, not  
14           submitting its CFE for approval until late  
15           winter/early spring, long after these funds  
16           have already been allocated and spent.

17                    Will you commit to holding Contract  
18           for Excellence hearings and asking for public  
19           comments on your proposed plans before the  
20           DOE and school budgets have been finalized?  
21           And in fact --

22                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

23                    SENATOR JACKSON: -- there's  
24           legislation -- thank you, I heard you say

1 "absolutely." There is legislation that I'm  
2 sponsoring, along with an Assemblymember, and  
3 unfortunately the name is not listed here  
4 right now.

5 So I appreciate you saying  
6 "absolutely," because that's important  
7 overall.

8 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, it is.

9 SENATOR JACKSON: And then, to move  
10 on, Commissioner Rosa, Dr. Betty Rosa said  
11 that you and the Mayor Adams administration  
12 have been engaging with the State Education  
13 Department, when asked about mayoral control.  
14 And John is right, we figure it's mayoral  
15 accountability, that's what it is. We don't  
16 want anyone to control us, let me just say  
17 that.

18 Yet school communities are not happy.  
19 You've heard that earlier, with a former  
20 colleague saying that.

21 Would you support a restructuring of  
22 the Panel for Educational Policy so parents  
23 have a legitimate say in the policies  
24 affecting their students?

1           And there's a bill on that, and so we  
2           will get you the bill, S4466 -- I am the  
3           sponsor -- which talks about who has the  
4           authority to place certain people in certain  
5           capacities on the Panel for Educational  
6           Policy.

7           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Senator,  
8           listen, I'm always open to having  
9           conversations on all of these issues. And if  
10          you want to help to convene a group that we  
11          can certainly talk about this, I'm certainly  
12          open to doing that.

13          But just please know that  
14          fundamentally I do believe that mayoral  
15          accountability -- and we can talk about what  
16          the tweaks might look like. But anything  
17          that I think that removes the teeth from it,  
18          where it says mayoral accountability but you  
19          really don't have the authority to move  
20          things, is something that does concern me.

21          And you know, you and I have been  
22          around a long time and seen what the old  
23          system looked like. And I would want to do  
24          anything that I could not to go back to the

1 old system where no one was really in charge  
2 and we saw a level of corruption. Which was  
3 what actually sparked the pendulum to move to  
4 the other side.

5 And so I'm certainly open to having  
6 these conversations, but I stand firmly with  
7 the mayor on really giving the mayor --  
8 holding the mayor ultimately accountable, and  
9 through his chancellor to help to deliver.

10 Now, that being said, you know, as I  
11 said earlier, I'm a person who absolutely  
12 firmly engages with community. That's who I  
13 am. And I would want to continue to do that.  
14 And so -- but certainly look forward to  
15 engaging with anybody that you would convene.  
16 Count me -- I'll be there.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you,  
18 Chancellor.

19 And then the state allocates money  
20 yearly for reimbursing private school  
21 tuitions for higher-need students with severe  
22 developmental and intellectual disabilities  
23 from public schools that cannot be served.  
24 The slow reimbursement process has had many

1 schools on the verge of closing their doors.  
2 Will you commit to addressing the slow  
3 release of funds to schools supporting  
4 families that cannot be served by DOE?

5 And I know, you know, based on  
6 everything that I know, your response will be  
7 to -- it's yes, is that correct?

8 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, my  
9 response is yes, I'm going to do everything I  
10 can. That's part of what I said earlier,  
11 that that system has been broken  
12 fundamentally. And I'm going to do  
13 everything I can to try and fix it. And the  
14 issue you raise is one of the biggest parts  
15 around how it is in fact broken.

16 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you,  
17 Chancellor. I have two more questions, but  
18 my time is up.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nope. Sorry,  
20 your time is up, Robert Jackson, and I'm  
21 passing it back to the Assembly.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
23 Assemblywoman Rozic now.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROZIC: Thank you so

1 much, Chancellor, for being here. I really  
2 appreciate you being accessible. I respect  
3 your expansive experience and especially your  
4 authenticity.

5 As you know, I represent Districts 25  
6 and 26 in Eastern Queens. I loved your shout  
7 out to Hillcrest High School and Thomas  
8 Edison. I went to Townsend Harris High  
9 School, not so far down Parsons Boulevard.  
10 And I sincerely appreciate your commitment to  
11 restoring what works, as a pillar. I think  
12 that's really important to do that.

13 And I have a specific question about  
14 restoring an essential program in my  
15 district. The Townsend Harris High  
16 School-Queens College Bridge Program is a  
17 34-year program that places seniors in a  
18 year-long humanities course, along with two  
19 elective classes at Queens College. It  
20 allows students to experience a portion of  
21 their senior year in a college setting and  
22 earn 12 free credits. This is crucial for a  
23 school where a majority of the students are  
24 economically disadvantaged.



1           I'm a product of this program, so we  
2           know that it works. But thousands of others  
3           have gone through it as well. The  
4           perspective administration ended the contract  
5           for one reason or another -- I'm not sure --  
6           but prior to that, it was renewed every five  
7           years in five-year increments. Last year --  
8           or I guess this year it's continued without  
9           DOE's financial support after the school  
10          pooled its internal funding. And the  
11          State Legislature, through the leadership of  
12          Chair Weinstein, provided emergency school  
13          aid.

14                 The school will be unable to sustain  
15          the program beyond this year. Would you  
16          commit to restoring the program and the  
17          contract?

18                 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I will  
19          certainly commit to meeting with you to  
20          discuss it in further detail. I would like  
21          to do that sooner rather than later, so I  
22          learn more about it, what it actually is. It  
23          sounds like an amazing program. Why it went  
24          away I have no idea, other than the fact that

1 I know politically, when you get a new mayor,  
2 you get a new chancellor, a lot of times the  
3 baby gets thrown out with the bathwater.

4 That's one of the reasons why the  
5 mayor and I have said that we are committed  
6 to what works, whether we created it or not.  
7 If it's good programming for kids and  
8 families, we want to continue good  
9 programming. And so that's what our  
10 commitment is toward.

11 But the specifics on this individual  
12 program, love to learn more. It probably  
13 goes without saying to my staff, but I'm sure  
14 they're keeping a record of all of these  
15 requests, because it is my intention to get  
16 back to you timely, to follow up, and I want  
17 to talk to you directly so I understand a  
18 little bit more about what it is, and perhaps  
19 even do a visit and walk it with you so I can  
20 even learn more deeply about the success of  
21 the program.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROZIC: We'll have you  
23 anytime. Thanks.

24 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I look

1 forward to it. Thank you again.

2 And, you know, you mentioned Hillcrest  
3 High School. I'm going to visit Hillcrest  
4 High School tomorrow morning, where I  
5 graduated from, the Class of 1980. I have  
6 not stepped foot back in that building in  
7 42 years. I'm terribly excited to go back.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROZIC: Well, we love to  
9 have you in Queens, so --

10 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROZIC: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go back  
13 to the Senate.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
15 much.

16 And we are joined by  
17 Senator Gounardes.

18 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you,  
19 Chair Krueger.

20 Hello, Chancellor Banks. Good to see  
21 you again.

22 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see  
23 you as well.

24 SENATOR GOUNARDES: You know, with all

1       this talk of high school, I'd just be remiss  
2       to say, you know, Fort Hamilton High School  
3       in Bay Ridge, where not only our Attorney  
4       General and Treasury Secretary but yours  
5       truly also graduated from -- phenomenal  
6       educational institution.

7               I have two questions. Number one, you  
8       spoke quite a bit about mental health in some  
9       of your earlier exchanges with other members,  
10      and I know this has been a big focus,  
11      especially in the pandemic. We're talking  
12      about money being allocated to mental health,  
13      counselors, social workers, et cetera.

14             I'd like to drill down with you a  
15      little bit more about specific training to  
16      address about student suicides. It's an  
17      issue that I think it doesn't -- it probably  
18      gets caught up in the larger mental health  
19      space. I had a family in my district whose  
20      child unfortunately took their own life, from  
21      a public school.

22             It seems like, from the little I've  
23      been able to kind of piece together, there's  
24      some inconsistency in terms of the types of

1 support services and trainings we offer to  
2 faculty, to staff, to administrators  
3 specifically around identifying suicide  
4 awareness and trying to intervene in those  
5 instances. So this goes beyond just general  
6 trauma training and general mental health  
7 awareness.

8 I don't know if you have any thoughts  
9 or things you can say about that  
10 specifically, but I'd love to spend some more  
11 time with you after this hearing as well to  
12 drill down on student suicide prevention,  
13 which I think is a very important problem.

14 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I would  
15 love to follow up with you more and learn  
16 more about that as well.

17 You know, that's a critically  
18 important issue, and not one that I've had a  
19 lot of experience with. You know, over my  
20 years as being a principal in the school  
21 system, I actually had one of the students --  
22 I still think about it, in a way. But we  
23 have a picture and plaque of him up still at  
24 the Eagle Academy. And I never saw it

1 coming. I never saw it coming.

2 And so a level of training that raises  
3 awareness on those signs are critically  
4 important. And I believe we've got people  
5 here at the DOE who are activated in that  
6 space. So I want to take some time to learn  
7 a little bit more myself and would love to  
8 meet with you and discuss it in more detail.

9 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Great. And I  
10 think your reaction is exactly the reaction  
11 that many of us have. We never see it  
12 coming. But the science and the research  
13 actually shows that we can see it coming in a  
14 lot of ways, we're just not trained and  
15 conditioned to spot those things. So we  
16 should definitely talk more about it.

17 I want to switch gears a little bit.  
18 There was a lot of discussion with the  
19 previous panelist about the issues with the  
20 New York City special education. You touched  
21 on special ed briefly in your comments as  
22 well.

23 One of the big challenges that we have  
24 with families in my district is they are

1        waiting years to get their reimbursements  
2        from the city. I'm talking two, three, four  
3        years. I have one family that is in personal  
4        debt, \$400,000, because they have not gotten  
5        responses from the city three and a half  
6        years going in terms of what they are owed by  
7        the DOE for their child's special ed  
8        placement.

9                So you've inherited a mess. I'm not  
10       going to hold you accountable to that right  
11       now. But to have a working family have to  
12       take out personal loans, nearly \$400,000,  
13       just to be able to provide for their child's  
14       individualized education is a crime. And I  
15       hope and I earnestly hope that we can  
16       actually make some headway here, because no  
17       family should have to live through that type  
18       of trauma.

19               NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
20       right. I completely agree. And this is one  
21       of the priorities that we have here. Walking  
22       in the door, I was told that this system was  
23       kind of broken top to bottom. And so it's  
24       got to be fully revamped.

1           My goal is that, you know, parents  
2           ought not have to go out and take major loans  
3           to get the services that they need. That we  
4           should be in a position, as the Department of  
5           Education, to be in front of that curve and  
6           to be able to do the proper assessment up  
7           front and then to be able to provide those  
8           services.

9           And in the cases where we can't and  
10          we've got to make, you know, supplemental  
11          payments to help and support, people  
12          shouldn't have to wait years in order to do  
13          that. So that's -- those are just the  
14          vestiges of a broken system, and it's going  
15          to take us a little while to get out in front  
16          of it, but the signal has already been given  
17          here that this is a priority of mine. And  
18          I've heard it from so many people, various  
19          aspects of the special education initiative.

20          So for anybody that has more  
21          questions, just please know I'm working on  
22          it, I'm doing the best that I can. It's  
23          going to take a little while to get out in  
24          front of it. But that's what we intend to



1 do.

2 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you very  
3 much, Chancellor.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
5 Chancellor. Thank you, Senator.

6 Assembly, back to you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We are going  
8 next to Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn.

9 Are you here now?

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes,  
11 I am.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

14 Great. Thank you so much.

15 Thank you, Chancellor Banks, for being  
16 here. I'm really excited to see you, and  
17 thank you --

18 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you,  
19 Assemblyperson. Good to see you as well.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: And  
21 thank you for your testimony and being here  
22 answering all these questions.

23 You know, we all know your commitment  
24 in building and growing and investing in our

1 children's future. I like that you're  
2 expanding community schools, which is very  
3 important, with all the wraparound services  
4 that are needed in our community. Also  
5 reinstating and expanding Gifted and Talent  
6 is very important to me as well.

7 I know you talk about Brownsville and  
8 East New York, but don't forget Flatbush.  
9 Flatbush is the highest Caribbean Black  
10 immigrant population, and we have a lot of  
11 English language learners, with {inaudible}  
12 and Haitian Creole being the top language  
13 spoken. And we have a high poverty level as  
14 well.

15 My question -- I have two questions.  
16 The question is about childcare. Childcare  
17 is a major priority for the city's recovery,  
18 and the mayor has mentioned that this is a  
19 priority for his administration. Has the  
20 Department of Education developed any plans  
21 for expanding access to childcare? That's  
22 question number one.

23 And question number two is around  
24 MWBE. As you know, the Department of

1 Education has one of the largest procurement  
2 budgets for minority and women-owned business  
3 enterprises to certainly take advantage of.  
4 However, the threshold is very low. We've  
5 spent a lot of time passing bills, landmark  
6 bills that would help lift those barriers,  
7 but we're feeling that DOE is still putting  
8 some barriers there that's not allowing MWBEs  
9 to get their fair share of government  
10 contracts. So childcare.

11 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yup. So  
12 let me start with the second one first. That  
13 is a big priority of ours. You know, MWBEs  
14 in a -- DOE has a \$38 million budget when you  
15 include all the pensions and everything else.  
16 Six percent of what we do in spending goes to  
17 MWBEs. Just on its face, that's a shame. In  
18 fact, the amount of funding that is spent  
19 with Black-owned businesses is less than  
20 1 percent.

21 And so when you think about that, in a  
22 system with so many Black and brown children,  
23 but contracted dollars do not go to Black and  
24 brown businesses. And what we have found is

1           that there are some systematic things that  
2           are happening here that prevent that from  
3           happening. And I know you have all seen it  
4           as well, through your leadership.

5                     And so I have appointed a chief  
6           diversity officer here whose primary focus is  
7           going to be about uncovering why that is and  
8           helping to implement change in the system.  
9           And so, again, stay tuned for that. We've  
10          made that a priority of our work and our  
11          administration.

12                    And secondly, the issue around  
13          childcare. I'm going to ask that they would  
14          unmute Dan Weisberg. Dan is our first deputy  
15          chancellor and has his hand on a whole host  
16          of key issues for me, and spent some time  
17          here at the DOE before, several years, when  
18          Joel Klein was the chancellor, and I'm  
19          thrilled to have him here as my first deputy  
20          chancellor.

21                    Dan, if you could speak to the issue  
22          around childcare that the Assemblymember  
23          raised.

24                    FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:

1           Absolutely. Thank you so much, Chancellor.

2                     Thank you, Assemblymember. This is  
3 obviously --

4           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Dan?

5           FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,  
6 ma'am.

7           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Dan, just because  
8 the clock is out, I'm going to actually ask  
9 you to chat with the Assemblymember offline  
10 or hope that somebody else will ask you the  
11 same question, because I think there are a  
12 lot of people who do want to hear the answer.

13           FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,  
14 Madam Chair.

15           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But I've got to  
16 be the bad guy with the clock, sorry.

17                     And I'm going to call Senator Joe  
18 Addabbo next. (No response.)

19                     Are you there with us, Joe? See, it's  
20 always when they've just disappeared on you.

21           SENATOR ADDABBO: There we go. Hello,  
22 everyone.

23           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There you go.  
24 All right.

1               SENATOR ADDABBO: Madam Chair, thank  
2               you very much. I want to thank all my  
3               colleagues in both houses, obviously, for  
4               their time.

5               And Chancellor, again, thank you very  
6               much. And I do apologize because I'm trying  
7               to juggle here. But again, I want to thank  
8               you and I look forward to working with you.  
9               And I want to echo the sentiments of my  
10              colleagues.

11             I do have to apologize if I did miss  
12             this, because in your initial testimony you  
13             mentioned about career readiness. And I  
14             think just in the throes of the pandemic, as  
15             you look at a post-pandemic era, you know,  
16             looking at jobs, you're going to have to  
17             train individuals to have careers. So I am  
18             really interested in the budgetary process as  
19             it relates to possibly career opportunities  
20             in education, so technical education. If you  
21             can expand on that. And again, I apologize  
22             if it's already been touched on, but expand  
23             on technical education opportunities.

24             NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, I

1 appreciate that, Senator. Thank you so much.  
2 And it's very timely. I didn't delve into  
3 it, I just kind of mentioned it. So this  
4 gives me a different opportunity.

5 This is going to be a north star for  
6 this administration. Creating more career  
7 and technical education opportunities, more  
8 pathways to career success, is going to be a  
9 hallmark of our work here. We are graduating  
10 far too many of our kids who graduate with a  
11 high school diploma and don't know how to do  
12 a lot of stuff. They don't have industry  
13 certifications where they can go right into  
14 the workforce if they choose. And all the  
15 studies show us that if you provide those  
16 opportunities for kids when they're in high  
17 school, even those who go to college do  
18 better in college.

19 And we have a little feedback; I'm not  
20 sure where that's coming from. But I hope  
21 everybody can hear me.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: If everyone would  
23 mute other than Joe Addabbo and the  
24 chancellor.

1           NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: So I know  
2           the clock is running, so I'll keep going.

3           So just -- and we intend to engage  
4           corporate partners, philanthropists in this  
5           space as well. This is going to be a very  
6           big deal. You will hear the mayor making a  
7           major announcement about this in the coming  
8           months as we get geared up for the next  
9           school year. It is going to have  
10          implications not just for our kids but for  
11          our teachers as well.

12          For far too many of our teachers, they  
13          don't have a clear enough understanding of  
14          the workforce opportunities that we're  
15          supposed to be preparing our kids for. Many  
16          of them don't know what it means to work at  
17          Google or Microsoft or anything. And so  
18          we're looking at professional development  
19          opportunities for our teachers as well. I  
20          think it will be very exciting for them. As  
21          smart and as hardworking as our teachers are,  
22          this is an opportunity for them to expand  
23          their experiences so they can reinforce  
24          what's happening in our schools.



1           I mentioned that I visited Thomas  
2 Edison High School out in Queens. There's  
3 P-TECH in Brooklyn. There are so many  
4 amazing places. And so even if there are not  
5 more career and technical schools, which  
6 there will be, we want to bring more career  
7 and technical education experiences and  
8 opportunities to many more of our schools so  
9 our kids understand why they're going to  
10 school in the first place.

11           I like to say, Senator, that my job is  
12 to make sure that when they graduate, they  
13 can get off of Mommy and Daddy's payroll and  
14 take steps on a pathway to the middle class.  
15 That's what our schools ought to be  
16 producing.

17           That is what the corporate leaders are  
18 pleading with us -- they say, Give us kids  
19 who graduate from these schools in New York  
20 City who we can employ, who have an  
21 employable skill set and a real  
22 post-secondary plan. We've not done nearly  
23 as good a job in doing that. I intend to  
24 change that.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
2 much.

3                   And Assemblymember Weinstein has asked  
4 me to continue on her behalf with the  
5 Assembly call-out, and the next  
6 Assemblyperson is Yuh-Line Niou.

7                   Hi, Yuh-Line.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Hi. Hi, Liz.

9                   Thank you, Chancellor, for taking the  
10 time today to be with all of us. I know that  
11 I love going after Senator Jackson or  
12 Senator John Liu because they ask all of the  
13 questions I want to ask in quick succession.

14                  So I'm going to just follow up with a  
15 couple of things. I wanted to talk a little  
16 bit about the segregation within some of our  
17 schools and our school districts. And, you  
18 know, we have seen that school choice is  
19 often affected by after-school programming in  
20 some of our schools. You know, title schools  
21 have after-school programs.

22                  Is there -- would you support  
23 universal after-school?

24                  NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well,

1 listen. Conceptually I absolutely support  
2 it. But we're going to look at -- we're  
3 going to look at the budget more deeply and  
4 see where we can make it happen. Whether or  
5 not we'll be able to do that for every single  
6 school across the entire system, I'm not sure  
7 just yet.

8 But that was a huge part of the  
9 success of the work that I did before I came  
10 here. And I recognized it for what it means  
11 and the importance that it can have and the  
12 difference it can make in the lives of kids,  
13 and particularly in light of this pandemic,  
14 what we're dealing with. So addressing  
15 learning loss, but beyond learning loss just  
16 the expansion of opportunities for our kids.

17 So we're going to look at that very  
18 clearly.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: I think it would  
20 very clearly help with the learning loss that  
21 we've experienced throughout the city during  
22 this pandemic. Folks who have disabilities,  
23 people who, you know, have had a difficult  
24 time remote learning, I think it's very

1           crucial.

2                     We are also experiencing also a lot of  
3           teacher and staff shortages. What is your  
4           plan for recruitment?

5                     And also I wanted to kind of also talk  
6           really quickly about the fact that we have  
7           had, you know, a very difficult time, you  
8           know, with -- you mentioned that the students  
9           walked out, staff walked out, teachers have  
10          walked out. I just -- I wonder, you know,  
11          how you are responding to the concerns of our  
12          parents, teachers and students right now.

13                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah.

14           Yeah, yeah, yeah. So two parts, right?

15                    So the teacher staffing issue, first  
16          of all, just in the short term, there have  
17          been real challenges in our staffing. And  
18          since I've gotten here, I think we've been  
19          able to kind of hold the line. We staffed up  
20          with -- you know, increased our sub pool for  
21          teachers, as well as paraprofessionals,  
22          enough which allowed us to continue to keep  
23          our schools open. I'm very proud of all the  
24          work that went into doing that. So that's

1           one.

2                   But I think in the larger perspective,  
3           you know, we're hearing about lots of our  
4           teachers who may be retiring. A lot of  
5           teachers are feeling a sense of burnout. You  
6           know, and my job really is to bring a level  
7           of joy back to teaching. And teachers who  
8           came into this business because they really  
9           love -- they love kids and they love to  
10          teach, and have found far too often that it's  
11          not fun anymore, that their hands were tied,  
12          that we spend so much time just preparing  
13          kids to take standardized exams.

14                   I mean, these are the things that the  
15          teachers say to me. And that all the reasons  
16          why they wanted to be teachers, that the  
17          system has not fully supported that and  
18          helped to nurture that. And I want it to  
19          change. And so there's a lot of work that we  
20          have to do.

21                   And we've got to recruit more teachers  
22          and new teachers to come into the system, and  
23          we'll be working to do that as well. I'm  
24          still getting my hands around a lot of these

1 issues, and I think you'll see in the coming  
2 days announcements that come from us that  
3 speak to those kinds of issues. So that was  
4 the teacher recruitment.

5 And the other one is about, you know,  
6 the fears and concerns that people do have.  
7 And they've been legitimate concerns. And a  
8 lot of those concerns really happen as a  
9 result of, you know, what we see on a  
10 continual basis in the media. But what I  
11 have found is what the science is telling  
12 us -- and we said we need to follow the  
13 science -- is that our kids are actually  
14 safer in schools.

15 It seems counterintuitive. Right?  
16 "I'm concerned about this variant, I'm going  
17 to keep my child home." Well, the data is  
18 telling us that your child is more  
19 susceptible to getting it if he stays home  
20 than if he or she actually comes to school.  
21 And I'm sure that has a lot to do with the  
22 fact that -- you know, all of the things that  
23 we've put in place to mitigate for this  
24 issue, from the masks to the -- all our

1 teachers are vaccinated, to the air  
2 purifiers.

3 Because when parents say "I'm keeping  
4 my child home," a lot of times they're not  
5 just in the house all day, they're moving  
6 around the apartment building that they may  
7 be in, they've still got other people coming  
8 and going and visiting. Most of our students  
9 who are diagnosed as positive, it didn't  
10 happen in school.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Chancellor,  
12 again, I have to cut you off, I'm sorry.

13 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm sorry.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Keep one eye on  
15 that clock up there.

16 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm sorry,  
17 I didn't get a chance to fully answer the  
18 question.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I know. I know.  
20 This is a challenge to operate this way.

21 Our next Senator is Senator Leroy  
22 Comrie. Are you with us, Leroy?

23 SENATOR COMRIE: I am here. Thank  
24 you. Thank you, Madam Chair for making sure

1 I was on time. And I want to thank you and  
2 the chairs for putting these hearings  
3 together.

4 And I want to congratulate and  
5 acknowledge Chancellor Banks. I want to  
6 thank you for taking on this challenge, and I  
7 want to do everything I can to make sure that  
8 you're successful in your time and tenure as  
9 chancellor.

10 And I just wanted to just ask you a  
11 couple of questions regarding things that  
12 we've talked about over time. I'll just get  
13 right to it.

14 Teacher attendance. How are we doing  
15 with teacher attendance? And what can we do  
16 to increase the levels of teacher attendance?  
17 Because you were just talking about that  
18 children are safer in the buildings, but are  
19 the teachers reflecting that in their  
20 attendance, and do they feel safe coming into  
21 the building?

22 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: You know  
23 what, I'm going to -- thank you so much for  
24 that, Senator. And I appreciate the



1 relationship that we've had over the many  
2 years.

3 Let me pitch that to our first deputy,  
4 Dan Weisberg. He's been staying on top of  
5 those numbers, not only student attendance  
6 but how we're doing with respect to our  
7 teachers as well.

8 Dan?

9 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank  
10 you, Chancellor. And good to see you,  
11 Senator.

12 Just to give you a little bit of data,  
13 our teacher attendance at this point is just  
14 about back to where it typically is. Now, as  
15 the chancellor said, we were dealing with  
16 some very significant staff shortages. But  
17 just to give you a sense, it has dropped by  
18 about half.

19 The number of substitutes we needed  
20 has dropped by about half in the about last  
21 16 days or so. And the requests we get for  
22 teacher subs is just about -- it's just a  
23 couple of percentage points higher than it  
24 was before Omicron. So it was a very

1 significant challenge for us in keeping the  
2 schools open. Teachers and principals and  
3 support staff did an amazing, heroic job to  
4 make that possible. But we are back to close  
5 to where we were before Omicron in terms of  
6 staffing at this point.

7 SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. And I  
8 would want to follow up on that.

9 But I just -- my second question is  
10 wraparound programs. You talked earlier  
11 about the fact that dyslexia is a real issue.  
12 But we also know that with a lot of our  
13 children, a lot of them have never been  
14 tested, their eyes have never been tested,  
15 their blood pressure's never been tested.

16 With wraparound programs, what are we  
17 going to do to not just test for dyslexia,  
18 but to make sure that all of our children,  
19 once they're entering the public school  
20 system, can get a thorough check for the  
21 basics to make sure that they can actually  
22 see, that they can hear, and that they are  
23 physically able to get through a class day?

24 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

1       We're looking at that as -- not only looking  
2       at that, we're engaging in that as we speak.  
3       There are a whole host of screeners that will  
4       cover multiple issues. And so we've got a  
5       team of folks here who are exploring all of  
6       those right now.

7               Our goal is as we go into the next  
8       school year, Senator, to be able to have a  
9       whole host of these things addressed,  
10      announced, and to begin the implementation  
11      on. So that is certainly one.

12             SENATOR COMRIE: I look forward to  
13      working with you on both of those issues on  
14      -- with wraparound programs.

15             And I just want to mention really  
16      quickly that school districts like 29, which  
17      has one of the longest commute times in the  
18      city, a la Staten Island, used to have  
19      mandatory after-school programs in each  
20      school. And I want to see that happen in  
21      this budget.

22             And it used to happen back in -- back,  
23      you know, 10 years ago when I was 23. But we  
24      need to make sure that it happens on a

1 citywide basis for the longest commute times  
2 in the city, where we can have our programs  
3 in all of the schools that last until at  
4 least 8 o'clock at night. Some of the  
5 schools need to be open late.

6 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Senator,  
7 I'm a big believer in --

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm going to cut  
9 you off before you even get to answer,  
10 Chancellor.

11 Although if Senator Leroy Comrie just  
12 said "10 years ago when I was 23," I think we  
13 should --

14 (Overtalk.)

15 SENATOR COMRIE: Oh, you heard that?

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I did hear that.  
17 So thank you.

18 Assembly.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Let's see that  
20 birth certificate.

21 (Laughter.)

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
23 Assemblywoman Dickens now.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you so

1 much, Chair.

2 And thank you so much, Chancellor, for  
3 coming and reintroducing yourself.

4 As you know, I've been a strong  
5 supporter of the Eagle Academy, and as such I  
6 have -- my observation has been that part of  
7 its success has been mentorship and a  
8 standard learning curve by grade, neither of  
9 which we really have in New York City  
10 schools.

11 Do you think that that is true? And  
12 if so, can it be implemented?

13 The second question is about the  
14 behavioral health crisis that our children  
15 are in. It can't be overstated. Families  
16 are facing challenging times and landscapes  
17 to access behavioral health services. Is  
18 there going to be a line in the budget that  
19 will reinstitute and bring about behavioral  
20 health services that after this pandemic we  
21 need so bad?

22 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, thank  
23 you so much. And you know, you and I go back  
24 many, many years, and I appreciate your --

1                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Don't tell  
2                   them. Don't tell them.

3                   (Laughter.)

4                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: But I thank  
5                   you. And yes, you know, we are going to be  
6                   committed to a very holistic level of support  
7                   for our kids, you know, from mentoring. And  
8                   a lot of our teachers need continued training  
9                   into these behavioral supports.

10                  But we're going to engage community  
11                  organizations. There are many community  
12                  organizations that have been doing amazing  
13                  work -- small ones, even, who have not  
14                  received much in the way of support to expand  
15                  on that work. And those are the things that  
16                  we're looking at as well.

17                  So we're going to be committed to  
18                  getting these things right. And part of the  
19                  way in which we're going to do it is I intend  
20                  to reorganize this Department of Education.  
21                  And so you'll be hearing about how we're  
22                  going to be doing business very differently  
23                  here. And the goal, the overarching goal is  
24                  to streamline, essentially, and to ensure

1           that we're pushing more of our resources  
2           closer to where the action is. And that's in  
3           our schools, between our teachers and our  
4           kids and our principals.

5                       So every move that I'm making here is  
6           really about how to make sure that that is  
7           where the resources are actually going. We  
8           will not transform the Department of  
9           Education from the top down. It won't  
10          happen. We'll only play around on the  
11          margins. If we're going to really reform it  
12          and transform it -- which is why I'm here --  
13          it is going to happen from the bottom up.  
14          And so all the efforts that I'm making are  
15          meant to do that.

16                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Pardon me,  
17          Chancellor, but does that include the  
18          behavioral health services that are badly  
19          needed?

20                     NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
21          exactly what I'm trying to get at.  
22          Absolutely, that's right. Yup.

23                     And so what that means is I'm not  
24          necessarily saying I'm going to pick one

1 organization and say we're going to do this  
2 for every school across the city. The best  
3 ideas of how to address even the behavioral  
4 issues come from the schools themselves.  
5 They're the ones that know the kids best.  
6 And our job here is to provide the resources  
7 and the supports for them to make that  
8 happen.

9 So that is one of many issues that are  
10 going to be part of the new way in which  
11 we're moving.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you. My  
13 time is up. And thank you so much,  
14 Chancellor.

15 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the  
17 Senate then.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
19 much.

20 And our next Senator is Diane Savino.

21 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator  
22 Krueger.

23 Chancellor Banks, good to see you.  
24 Congratulations on your new role. I am



1           incredibly pleased by your choice as  
2           chancellor. I'm happy to see the team you're  
3           putting together. I'm thrilled that you've  
4           brought on board the team that's with you and  
5           you've also brought on board former  
6           Councilman Mark Treyger, the chair of the  
7           Education Committee. He will be an  
8           invaluable asset to the team. As you know,  
9           he was instrumental in making sure that there  
10          will be a social worker in every school as  
11          the city rolls them out. That will be part  
12          of the mental health services.

13                 I'm not going to ask you to repeat a  
14          lot of the things that you've already been  
15          asked. Your commitment to reforming the DOE  
16          from the bottom up I think is incredibly  
17          important, because we all know we spend an  
18          extraordinary amount of money and it's not  
19          all finding its way to the classroom and to  
20          the children. So I think it's really  
21          important that we do a deep dive.

22                 I want to plug a couple of things.  
23          You're going to hear later from the UFT.  
24          There are two models I think that have been

1 really important in helping children: The  
2 community learning schools and the Positive  
3 Learning Collaborative. In certain schools  
4 they are incredibly important in helping  
5 reform some of the student behavioral  
6 problems.

7 So let's work with them, they work.  
8 Community learning schools have been  
9 game-changing just the way the Eagle Academy  
10 has been for young men on Staten Island.

11 And I want to talk a little bit about  
12 something that I think Assemblywoman Rodneyse  
13 Bichotte Hermelyn talked about, early  
14 childhood.

15 Where are we with the expansion of  
16 3-K? UPK has been amazing, the 3-K would  
17 help close the gap for access to childcare  
18 for a lot of parents. Where are we with  
19 that?

20 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, first  
21 of all, I just named a new deputy chancellor  
22 in charge of early childhood education.  
23 That's exactly what they're looking at right  
24 now. That's also an area that is in need of

1           very significant change, and that's why I  
2           brought her here, to help us to do that.

3                     But the expansion of UPK is one that  
4           we're looking at. We know it's an expensive  
5           proposition, that's for sure, but it's one  
6           that we're looking at. And certainly  
7           hopefully in the coming weeks I'll have a lot  
8           more information to say than I'm just looking  
9           into these things.

10                    SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you.

11                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: But again,  
12           I've just gotten here for a very short period  
13           of time. But it is on our agenda.

14                    SENATOR SAVINO: And finally, on the  
15           issue of the extension of school governance,  
16           I support the four-year extension. I don't  
17           think we should be holding it hostage the way  
18           it's been done in the past.

19                    However, one issue does come up every  
20           time we consider the extension of mayoral  
21           control. It is parental involvement.  
22           Parents don't feel that they have sufficient  
23           input into the way the New York City school  
24           system operates. So I would strongly urge

1           that we find a way to expand parental  
2           involvement, whether it's through the Panel  
3           for Educational Policy, whether it's more  
4           through the CECs, or just listening to  
5           parents. They have been through a lot.

6                     I don't -- you know, I sometimes say I  
7           am my own constituent. I don't have any  
8           children, but I hear from parents all the  
9           time that they don't feel that they have a  
10          say in their children's education in as  
11          meaningful a way as they would like.

12                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I agree. I  
13          agree.

14                    SENATOR SAVINO: I'd take that to  
15          heart.

16                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I am taking  
17          it to heart, and I intend to move on that. I  
18          certainly don't expect the people to say that  
19          while I'm here. I'm not going to make policy  
20          decisions unless parents are involved and  
21          engaged. I don't want to be the one that  
22          says I made a decision, now we're going to  
23          have a community tour to find out what  
24          parents think, after you've already made the

1 decision. That's not what we're going to do  
2 here.

3 SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you. And good  
4 luck.

5 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to  
8 Assemblyman Kim, Ron Kim now.

9 (No response.)

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Ron, are you  
11 here? Why don't we skip him, then, for the  
12 moment.

13 I see Jo Anne Simon, who is next. why  
14 don't you go now, Jo Anne, while we find Ron.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay, great.

16 Well, thank you, Chancellor.  
17 Hopefully you will not be here as long as the  
18 state commissioner. We hope. But thank you,  
19 and best of luck. I'm looking forward to  
20 working with you closely.

21 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: You know, I read  
23 your testimony and I noticed you testified  
24 about the four pillars to improving our

1 school system, and I would say among those  
2 needs to be the five pillars of reading. As  
3 a former president of New York's Dyslexia  
4 Association and a special educator myself,  
5 this is very important. I was a teacher of  
6 the deaf, which is a very low-incidence  
7 disability. Dyslexia, as you know, is much  
8 more high-incidence. But it really goes to  
9 the way we teach our teachers how to teach  
10 reading.

11 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
12 right.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: The ability of  
14 our teachers to even know what it is that  
15 they're looking at when students are  
16 struggling, and the fact that we're missing  
17 so many students. I just passed today my  
18 bill to screen people who are going into  
19 institutions -- incarceration institutions,  
20 for reading. And hopefully we'll get that  
21 through the Senate.

22 I would love to chat with you at some  
23 point about some conversations I had with  
24 Frank Macchiarola, who was the chancellor

1           when the Education for All Handicapped  
2           Children Act was passed in 1975, about how it  
3           is they messed it up. So I think that might  
4           be helpful to you in looking at repairing the  
5           special education system.

6                     I want to -- I'm very glad to hear  
7           about your talking about changing of teaching  
8           kids how to read. And I want to know how  
9           you're planning to use the influx of funding  
10          to ensure that every classroom is using a  
11          literacy curriculum that's culturally  
12          responsive and grounded in the science of  
13          reading.

14                    So I ask that question, but I also  
15          want to just point out to you that there is a  
16          charter school for kids with dyslexia in  
17          Staten Island that I helped them get going a  
18          few years ago, and it's a charter school  
19          because DOE would not allow them to do a  
20          regular public school. But it's a great  
21          school, so I encourage you to take a look at  
22          that.

23                    And also, in your career and technical  
24          education, visit the Harbor School. It's a

1 great model as well.

2 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, let  
3 me just say on a couple of fronts, with your  
4 last point, the Harbor School, I have  
5 visited, I will go visit them again. They're  
6 part of the Urban Assembly network of  
7 schools. I was the original Urban Assembly  
8 principal at the school -- the Bronx School  
9 for Law, Government and Justice. I know the  
10 folks there, I know their leadership, and I  
11 know the great work that they do. I totally  
12 agree with you.

13 More fundamentally, the notion of the  
14 science of reading is something that we're  
15 looking at in a very significant way. That  
16 will be a huge part of what we do. And it  
17 should have been written into my pillars,  
18 because it's part of how I see the  
19 reimagining of the school experience, what we  
20 call Bright Starts. If you don't have the  
21 bright start, it's difficult to have the bold  
22 future.

23 And there's a reason why the mayor  
24 says 65 percent of Black and brown kids never



1       achieve proficiency in the Department of  
2       Education. That's because fundamentally the  
3       way we are teaching our kids to read is  
4       fundamentally flawed. And so they get behind  
5       from the very beginning, and they never catch  
6       up.

7               And so I would love to continue the  
8       conversation. I'd love to come and visit  
9       with you and learn so much from you. You  
10      know, Frank Macchiarola was one of my heroes  
11      as well. And I appreciate you invoking his  
12      name and all the great work that he did, even  
13      when he sat in this seat.

14             And so thank you, and we're going to  
15      continue to press forward in making sure that  
16      our kids know how to read by no later than  
17      the third grade. If we don't do that,  
18      everything else will just -- it's an uphill  
19      battle.

20             CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21             ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Can I just  
22      invite you to Dyslexia Awareness Day at the  
23      Capitol, May 10th. You're welcome to join  
24      us. Thank you.

1                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'd love  
2 to. Love to.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
4 Chancellor.

5                   We go now to Rebecca Seawright.  
6 Assemblywoman?

7                   Oh, wait, I'm sorry -- do you have --

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, that's okay.  
9 I'll just be left. Sorry.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I didn't  
11 realize you still had a Senator. So why  
12 don't we go to the Senate.

13                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14                  Hi, Chancellor. We already had a  
15 chance to chat the other night.

16                  I just wanted to follow through on a  
17 question that was asked by an Assemblywoman  
18 earlier and you were going to have Dan  
19 Weisberg answer, and I had to rudely cut him  
20 off before he could give us the answer. So  
21 can we rewind and let me use a little of my  
22 time to let him explain what you were going  
23 to ask him to explain.

24                  FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,

1 I'm happy to, Madam Chair. And I believe  
2 that we were talking childcare and 3-K.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes.

4 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: And  
5 as the chancellor said, as the mayor has  
6 said, this is a huge priority for us. And it  
7 is an interagency priority, I just want to  
8 point out. One of the mandates for the mayor  
9 and the chancellor is to do a really good job  
10 of coordinating between agencies. So we  
11 certainly don't want to pretend that the  
12 Department of Education is solely leading in  
13 this area, but we certainly do have an  
14 important role in 3-K.

15 And as I think probably everybody  
16 appearing knows, we've opened about  
17 45,000 3-K seats. There are 3-K seats in  
18 every district. And that's a really big  
19 accomplishment, but it is not universal as  
20 yet. And so one of the things we are  
21 grappling with now is how to create a  
22 universal and sustainable, financially  
23 sustainable program and a program -- as the  
24 chancellor said, we're working now with our

1 brand-new colleague, the deputy chancellor  
2 for early childhood education, Dr. Kara  
3 Ahmed, who is terrific. I hope you get a  
4 chance to meet with her as well -- but how to  
5 not just create a financially sustainable  
6 model but a model that is universally high  
7 quality, in a system where, as all of you  
8 know, we have many different providers.

9 And so we don't have that plan for you  
10 here, but please be assured that we've got a  
11 working group on that. We will be absolutely  
12 engaging, as the chancellor says, with all  
13 the community advocates and members and  
14 stakeholders on this, to figure out how to do  
15 this quickly but also to do it in a  
16 sustainable and high-quality --

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I applaud  
18 this goal, and I just want to emphasize how  
19 important I think it is that we don't get  
20 siloed into Department of Education is doing  
21 this, and the daycare world is over there  
22 doing that. Because what we found even with  
23 pre-K rolled out is that we actually lost  
24 daycare centers and the workers all moved to

1 SED because you were paying more -- and I'm  
2 always happy to see people being paid more  
3 and getting more training to be better  
4 educators. But especially as we move 3-K and  
5 we recognize that families need to have  
6 full-day programs otherwise it doesn't meet  
7 their need for quality childcare while they  
8 go to work, we really need not to get caught  
9 up in I'm the schools and I do this over  
10 here, you know, and you overlap with ACS over  
11 there or you might overlap with HRA over  
12 there if your childcare is being paid that  
13 way. And I know my Senate colleagues and I  
14 are very interested in exploring universal  
15 childcare models, and they have to be blended  
16 without any kind of siloing.

17 So I'm glad you have someone new  
18 coming on, Chancellor, to specialize in this,  
19 but I just urge you to coordinate citywide  
20 with everybody else who has a piece, so to  
21 speak, of early childcare.

22 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes. We  
23 will.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So that you're

1 not competing with each other, ironically,  
2 for the same funds, the same kids, the same  
3 teachers when everybody just wants a seamless  
4 system that will work for them.

5 You talked about, Chancellor, how the  
6 schools are the safest place and that's what  
7 families are learning. And yet I get issues  
8 raised all the time still from parents that  
9 their schools don't have the proper masks in  
10 child sizes for the kids when they come to  
11 school. And that even though the city did  
12 seem to spend a healthy amount of money on  
13 air purifiers, a bunch of them weren't even  
14 HEPA-filtered air purifiers.

15 So I'm wondering whether you are  
16 looking at whether the city perhaps didn't  
17 get the right equipment or are making sure  
18 that we've actually got the safer  
19 environments that we're promising parents.

20 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's a  
21 great point. And the person who's leading  
22 that effort for us, if you'd unmute him, is  
23 Kevin Moran. He's our lead here on all of  
24 our operations work.

1 Kevin, if you could please respond to  
2 that inquiry.

3 CHIEF SCHOOL OPS OFFICER MORAN:  
4 Absolutely. And thank you, Senator.

5 I do want to echo a previous point on  
6 your previously testimony about Commissioner  
7 Bray. It was -- one of the first calls I got  
8 leading into the school reopening process the  
9 weekend before January 3rd was from Jackie,  
10 to ensure that we had the test kits that we  
11 needed to reopen and stay open. Since then,  
12 myself and my team were on loading docks for  
13 three straight weeks, Saturdays, Sundays, New  
14 Year's Eve, New Year's Day. We got 7 million  
15 kits out to schools. And I thank her, and I  
16 thank our team, interagency team at DCAS,  
17 here, OEM and other partners here in the  
18 city.

19 As relates to the HEPA nomenclature,  
20 we have air purifiers in every single  
21 classroom. We have two, as the chancellor  
22 stated previously. But these units exceed  
23 the HEPA rating. And I want to be clear, it  
24 may be nomenclature, but I'm happy to meet

1 with you offline and kind of go through the  
2 product specs and all of the evaluative  
3 measures that went into those products and  
4 why we chose them.

5 For the duration of the pandemic, the  
6 end of December, beginning of January aside,  
7 our schools stayed less than 1 percent  
8 positive in terms of infections. So they  
9 were exceedingly safe.

10 As it relates to the last 28 days, you  
11 saw the city at 31 percent positivity, and  
12 the last seven days it's 12 percent  
13 positivity in our schools. Actually the  
14 seven days citywide was 12, and the last  
15 seven days was 2.4 in our schools.

16 And so the schools have always stayed  
17 less than. You know, we hit a peak in the  
18 beginning of January, on the 10th, where we  
19 had 14,000 cases called into our sit room.  
20 As of last night, it was 1,752 cases. So we  
21 did hit the Omicron surge. It hit my family,  
22 as I've got public school kids that got it,  
23 myself, a former public school teacher, had  
24 gotten it. But, you know, the city has



1           bounced back. We are in safe environments.  
2           The KN95 masks, we distributed 2 million of  
3           those. They are invaluable to schools.  
4           Custodians have a 30-day supply.

5                     K95 and N95, the most restrictive  
6           masks, do limit the amount of infectious  
7           aerosols that could get in, but they're also  
8           form-fitted. And they require a bit of due  
9           diligence, and so tolerability is at issue  
10          here, and if it fits perfectly over the nose,  
11          bent on the cheeks, so that it is  
12          form-fitted.

13                    We are looking with schools -- we do  
14          have kid-size surgical masks, which they  
15          certainly could double if necessary. Or if  
16          parents want the K95 -- again, more  
17          restrictive -- we can provide that to them.  
18          And we'll look to see if any school has a  
19          sizing issue; we can follow up directly with  
20          the school. But if you have any, happy to  
21          follow up.

22                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
23          much. I'm going to give back my minutes.

24                   Assemblywoman Weinstein.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. So now we  
2 will go to Assemblywoman Seawright.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you,  
4 Chairwoman.

5                   Chancellor, I've watched in the past  
6 your success with the Eagle Academy and the  
7 mentoring program. So my question, from your  
8 experience, you know, it can be indeed  
9 essential for children to have access to  
10 monitoring. Given the vast talents of our  
11 CUNY and SUNY college students and our  
12 private college students, what could we do to  
13 ramp up our mentor/mentee programs beyond the  
14 teacher education programs that currently  
15 exist?

16                  NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's a  
17 great, great question. I understand there  
18 are some efforts that have already been done  
19 in that space, in the relationship with CUNY.  
20 And so we're going to look at how we can  
21 expand on that.

22                  Some of it has been done through the  
23 My Brother's Keeper initiative that's been  
24 here. But even beyond MBK, just helping all

1 of our kids, right, to be able to have some  
2 college students who can intercede in their  
3 lives and help point them in the right  
4 direction, it's been a huge part of the  
5 success that we've had, and it's a big part  
6 of what I intend to do. And scaling up that  
7 initiative is something that we could do  
8 across the system.

9 So, you know, I spent so much of my  
10 time, as I got here, just really focused on  
11 COVID and keeping the schools open. We're  
12 just now starting to be able to really lean  
13 into the bigger vision of why we're here and  
14 what we really want to try and do. So I  
15 think you'll continue to hear more about  
16 those efforts in the coming days and weeks.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: It looks  
18 like I have a little bit of time left. Thank  
19 you. I just have one quick question.

20 How is attendance being recorded  
21 during COVID for middle and high school  
22 students since there's not a remote option?

23 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Dan can  
24 probably speak to that. He stays on top of

1 all of that attendance stuff on a daily  
2 basis. Dan?

3 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yes,  
4 thanks, Chancellor. And thanks,  
5 Assemblywoman.

6 We are taking attendance in our  
7 schools, in our middle and high schools, the  
8 same methods as pre-pandemic. Some have  
9 online systems that are digital systems they  
10 use. Some are still doing it with bubble  
11 sheets and so forth. They get recorded at  
12 the school level.

13 We do, just to point out, for students  
14 who have to be at home because they test  
15 positive and are participating remotely, they  
16 can be marked present. There is a code for  
17 that. I don't know if that's where your  
18 question was going, Assemblymember, but that  
19 does exist.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

21 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the  
23 Senate.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1                   Senator John Liu for a three-minute  
2 second round.

3                   SENATOR LIU: Three? I thought it was  
4 five.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nope, three  
6 minutes. Talk fast.

7                   SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.  
8 I better not waste any more time.

9                   Chancellor Banks, see, I told you it  
10 was going to be a good party.

11                   (Laughter.)

12                   SENATOR LIU: You know, in the three  
13 minutes or less that I have with you, I want  
14 to talk a little bit about some choices you  
15 made in the past. Good choices, in my  
16 opinion. Like a quarter century ago, you  
17 started a school which then became a series  
18 of schools, the famed Eagle Academies.

19                   And I believe you started it because  
20 you saw that the public school system was  
21 failing a lot of the kids, particularly young  
22 Black men in communities throughout the city.  
23 And so you started this academy, and it has  
24 proven to be a tremendous success.

1           The choice that I want to ask you  
2           about, though, is that, you know, we have  
3           lots of charter schools who claim that public  
4           schools are failing kids, particularly in  
5           Black and brown communities, and therefore  
6           there have to be more charter schools. But  
7           my recollection is that you specifically  
8           chose not to pursue the charter school route.

9           Is there anything you can talk about  
10          to guide us in our decisions going forward?

11          NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: So, first  
12          of all, Eagle Academy was started by --  
13          together with myself and the 100 Black Men  
14          organization. It's an organization that was  
15          started by people like former Mayor David  
16          Dinkins and Congressman Charlie Rangel. They  
17          started it almost 60 years ago.

18          And probably the most important effort  
19          that they've ever undertaken was the creation  
20          of the Eagle Academies, to really respond to  
21          the needs of so many young men of color who  
22          find themselves all too often just hopeless  
23          and feeling like they're in a system that  
24          doesn't care about them. And we showed up to

1 say that we care and we're going to help you  
2 get to the finish line.

3 And I'm very, very proud of the work  
4 that we've done. Still a long way to go, but  
5 very proud of the work that we've done.

6 With respect to the reason why, you  
7 know, at the high school level charter  
8 schools really only represent I think a  
9 little more than 2 percent of the schools  
10 that we have. And yet -- and we said if --  
11 we wanted to make sure and to demonstrate  
12 that you can have innovation, creativity in  
13 the traditional public school system. It was  
14 not a knock on charter schools, it was simply  
15 to say that at the end of the day most of our  
16 students are still going to traditional  
17 public schools.

18 So if we're not lifting up models  
19 within the traditional public school system,  
20 we're missing the point. We cannot charter  
21 our way out of this educational morass. We  
22 cannot.

23 And so I am not against charter  
24 schools. You know, the mayor and I are all

1           about scaling excellence wherever it happens  
2           to be. That's what we are all about. But  
3           when we made the decision to create Eagle, we  
4           made it intentionally because we wanted to  
5           show that you could make a difference with an  
6           innovative model that's a traditional public  
7           school. And that's what we've done.

8                     SENATOR LIU: Very interesting. Thank  
9           you so much, Mr. Chancellor.

10                    And thank you, Madam Chair.

11                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
12           Assembly.

13                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
14   Assemblywoman Hyndman first.

15                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
16   Chair Weinstein.

17                   Chancellor Banks, it's really good to  
18   see you in this role.

19                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see  
20   you.

21                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: It's been a  
22   long journey from Southeast Queens, and look  
23   where we both are. And -- {inaudible}

24                   (Laughter.)



1                   NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's  
2                   right.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So I  
4                   understand -- you know, when I came into  
5                   public schools, all I knew was the Bloomberg  
6                   model and mayoral control, and so I really --  
7                   it has a lot to do with who's in office.

8                   And the pledge that you and  
9                   Mayor Adams have made about community first  
10                  and working from the ground up really  
11                  resonates with a lot of the constituents in  
12                  Southeast Queens. We have a lot of community  
13                  orgs that are really poised to make sure that  
14                  we realize that the education of the whole  
15                  child involves all of us. So thank you for  
16                  that.

17                  I understand that you are now  
18                  reinterviewing superintendents. I think  
19                  that's commendable. Because as you've said,  
20                  you've had all the jobs, from school safety  
21                  to where you are now, and a real perspective  
22                  of what you're looking for for the  
23                  superintendents to lead our schools.

24                  So to that question, is there

1 consideration of downsizing some of the  
2 administrative staff? And I'm specifically  
3 talking about the creation that the former  
4 chancellor made -- not Chancellor Porter, but  
5 the creation of the executive  
6 superintendents. The view from a lot of us  
7 is that we could really use some of those  
8 monies and some more leadership in our  
9 districts, as opposed to it being top down.  
10 What is the conversation around that?

11 And also when it comes to the ECF fund  
12 for the building of additional school sites,  
13 is that something that any of your deputies  
14 are siting for new school sites and working  
15 especially in some of our more crowded Queens  
16 communities, working with ECF to build  
17 schools, especially in those overcrowded  
18 areas that we have in Queens?

19 Thank you.

20 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, I  
21 certainly appreciate you and thank you for  
22 your support over the many years. And I'm  
23 absolutely a proud product of District 29 and  
24 Southeast Queens. So thank you for that.

1           So I would say that what I am  
2           committed to -- and there have been some  
3           things that have been reported in the papers  
4           that I have not formally announced. But what  
5           I am committed to is to streamlining the  
6           Department of Education with an emphasis on  
7           ensuring that the funds and the resources get  
8           to where they are needed most, and that is in  
9           our schools. That is what I'm committed to.

10           You will be hearing more about my  
11           plans to do just that. Again, in the coming  
12           days and weeks there will be significant  
13           announcements that will be made by me, there  
14           will be other announcements that will be  
15           jointly made between the mayor and myself.  
16           But just know that that's where we're going,  
17           is to a place that will provide a level of  
18           efficiency and to demonstrate our priorities  
19           through streamlined services and effective  
20           communication for our parents and our  
21           families.

22           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23           We now go to Assemblywoman Jackson.

24           ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Good

1           afternoon, Chancellor. I just want to say  
2           thank you for coming to my district at the  
3           beginning of the year as you started your new  
4           term. We visited Concourse Village  
5           Elementary.

6                     I guess you are aware that I want to  
7           plug CTE schools. Academy for Careers in  
8           Television and Film, that is a school that I  
9           was a social worker in. CTE schools work.  
10          community schools work. Okay? I just want  
11          to say that CS 55 is a community school and  
12          is doing amazing work in the Bronx.

13                    And just so you know, your former  
14          school is also in my district -- Law,  
15          Government and Justice -- so please come with  
16          me to visit and we'll make sure to make a  
17          great impact on those students.

18                    NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes.

19                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: I know you  
20          know that Black male teachers make a  
21          difference. And I just want to know from you  
22          how are we getting more male teachers, Black  
23          male teachers, into our schools, working with  
24          our young people? And what are we doing

1           about financial literacy?

2                       So those are my two things. Oh, and I  
3           know that you have your superintendents and  
4           your executive superintendents reapplying,  
5           but I have to say that executive  
6           Superintendent Tobias does an amazing job in  
7           the Bronx and the families are very  
8           appreciative -- myself included -- are very  
9           appreciative of the work that she has done.  
10          So I just want to say that.

11                     But financial literacy and Black male  
12          teachers.

13                     (Laughter.)

14                     NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I  
15          appreciate that, Assemblymember. Appreciate  
16          you and would love to go and visit my  
17          original school where I was a principal. The  
18          Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice  
19          is near and dear to my heart. Let's do that  
20          together. So we'll get that on the calendar.

21                     And when we visited Concourse Village,  
22          we also visited P17X, which is a District 75  
23          school. And they were extremely happy  
24          because they said that they're generally

1 overlooked. And in this administration we  
2 want to make sure that they're not  
3 overlooked. And so I want to continue to  
4 make sure that we lift them up as well.

5 Part of this whole reimagining of how  
6 we want to do school is about financial  
7 literacy. It's about making sure that our  
8 kids understand what the world of work looks  
9 like, how they can take care of themselves.  
10 We should be ashamed if we're graduating kids  
11 who don't even know how to open up a bank  
12 account. You know, we should be ashamed if  
13 we're graduating kids who -- and we're giving  
14 them a high school diploma from public  
15 schools and they have no idea what a State  
16 Senator does or an Assemblyperson does. And  
17 I will tell you, most of our students have no  
18 clue.

19 And yet we've made, in New York City,  
20 an over \$300,000 investment, from the time  
21 they were in pre-K all the way through 12th  
22 grade. They don't have skills to get a job  
23 and step into industry, which is crying out  
24 for them. Many of them -- many who we send

1 to college come back home within a year or  
2 two and don't even have the college degree to  
3 pay off the debt that they've accumulated.  
4 They're not actively engaged as citizens. We  
5 lament the fact that all across America so  
6 many Americans don't even get engaged and  
7 vote, they don't take their rightful place in  
8 this American society.

9 And I am a firm believer that that is  
10 because we don't -- we don't build that  
11 muscle in the pre-K to 12 space. There  
12 should be student government in every single  
13 school -- every elementary, middle and high  
14 school. If we want to have standardization  
15 in our schools, we should at least make sure  
16 that every one of our kids goes to one of  
17 your town halls before they graduate, to  
18 understand what it is that you do.

19 How does government work, and how does  
20 it affect their lives? I'm not talking about  
21 just a civics class, I'm talking about civic  
22 experiences that make a difference, workforce  
23 opportunities that make a difference.  
24 Otherwise what we're doing is we're playing

1           around at school. And we send kids to school  
2           and when it's all said and done, they don't  
3           know a whole lot.

4           I'm committed to doing much better in  
5           that space. That's the reason I came here.  
6           I didn't come here to play around to just be  
7           the chancellor. I came here to try to help  
8           kids have a much more meaningful impact and  
9           experience in school so they understand why  
10          do they go to school in the first place.

11          There's a reason why so many of our  
12          kids are disengaged, because we're not  
13          providing them with the right school  
14          experience that makes school meaningful and  
15          relevant in their lives. And that's on us.  
16          And I'm putting that on me. But I'm going to  
17          need all of you to help me to create a  
18          brand-new school experience for our kids.  
19          Otherwise we can just continue to play around  
20          in the margins, we get the math scores to go  
21          up a couple of points, ELA scores to go up a  
22          couple of points.

23          But that's not what I'm talking about.  
24          I'm talking about a transformational school



1 experience where young people come out very  
2 different and can take their rightful place  
3 in society. That's what I'm committed to.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
5 Chancellor. We have one last Assemblymember,  
6 because it's almost time for -- or past  
7 dismissal time. We have Mike Reilly,  
8 Assemblyman Mike Reilly will be the last  
9 questioner here.

10 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: My new  
11 friend.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Madam  
13 Chair.

14 Chancellor, great to see you again.  
15 It was a pleasure to talk to you earlier in  
16 the week.

17 I actually -- I wanted to talk about  
18 some of the things that we were just  
19 discussing by the other members. We  
20 mentioned behavioral health. And we had this  
21 conversation, but I wanted to once again put  
22 it on the radar about the OORS system, the  
23 Online Occurrence Reporting System, and the  
24 ability or the lack thereof of when students

1 move from elementary school to middle school  
2 to high school, where the administrators and  
3 the teachers in that new school don't have  
4 the information that they can give the  
5 supports for. So we're able to have that  
6 monitoring where we can offer the supports.

7 And I want to be clear, this isn't  
8 for -- necessarily for discipline actions,  
9 this is for us to provide supports for those  
10 students who need it. And that gap I think  
11 sometimes leaves too much open there, and  
12 that's where we might miss something where we  
13 could have offered that support.

14 So I'm hoping that -- you know, in the  
15 prior administration I mentioned it as well.  
16 But, you know, I'm very confident in our  
17 conversations, and hearing my fellow  
18 colleagues here talk about it, I think this  
19 is a chance where we can close that gap.

20 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I  
21 appreciate that. And based on the  
22 conversation we had a few days ago, I'm going  
23 to follow up on it -- we're already following  
24 up on those things and we're going to get

1 back to you on that.

2 But I just want to more  
3 comprehensively as well, Assemblyperson,  
4 here's where I'm trying to go. I want to  
5 create a very different experience -- we  
6 spend a lot of time talking about attendance.  
7 We spend a lot of time talking about  
8 disciplinary issues and how are we going to  
9 respond. If you create a very different  
10 school experience for kids and teachers, it'  
11 transforming. You don't have to spend so  
12 much time and money on attendance issues.  
13 You don't have to chase kids down and get  
14 them to come to school. They'll be running  
15 to school.

16 But if we continue to do what we do,  
17 which I call the routinization of school, if  
18 you sit next to an average middle school kid  
19 or a high school kid and say, What are you  
20 working on?, they say: I'm doing my work.  
21 "Doing my work" is code for I don't know,  
22 none of this stuff is impactful. I'm just  
23 going through the routine because I have to.  
24 I'm supposed to go to school and I've got

1 to -- the teachers say I'm supposed to follow  
2 the assignments. I have no idea what this  
3 means, I have no idea where it's supposed to  
4 lead, I have no idea why I'm doing it, but  
5 I'm just trying to be a good kid and do what  
6 I'm told. I want to --

7 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: You set them  
8 busywork.

9 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, I  
10 want to create a different experience. I  
11 want kids to know about the possibilities for  
12 themselves. And they see -- if the kids get  
13 a chance for it, it becomes an "aha" moment.  
14 And if they know why they're going to school,  
15 they move very differently.

16 That's where I'm trying to go. And  
17 I'm going to look to engage all of you in  
18 helping us to do that.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I love the point  
20 that you made about showing the students, you  
21 know, how to write a check, things like that,  
22 knowing their government -- you know, so many  
23 adults don't even know the representatives  
24 and what they do at the state level, city

1 level and federal level.

2 One thing I was thinking about as you  
3 were talking about that --

4 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: You're  
5 muted. You muted yourself.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You muted, and  
7 we didn't do it.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Okay. Thank you.  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay --

11 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: I  
12 appreciate you, Assemblyman. Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Time is up.

14 So, Chancellor, I want to thank you on  
15 behalf of Senator Krueger, myself, and all of  
16 the colleagues for the time you've been able  
17 to spend with us today. We know this is just  
18 part of the beginning or a continuation of  
19 the communications that we're going to have,  
20 working together to make sure our schools are  
21 the best -- the city schools are the best  
22 they can be.

23 NYC DOE CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for

1           being here.

2                     And for members, we are going to go to  
3           our third witness for today. We're going to  
4           go to Panel A: The United Federation of  
5           Teachers, UFT, Michael Mulgrew is here, and  
6           New York State United Teachers, NYSUT,  
7           Andrew Pallotta, president, is here. Michael  
8           we all know is the president of the UFT.

9                     So, gentlemen, I know you've been  
10          briefed, but it's been a while, so just if we  
11          can -- we've had your testimony, it was  
12          circulated to the members. If we can have  
13          you do a short presentation, three minutes,  
14          and then we will move on to the members, many  
15          of whom have questions they'd like to -- and  
16          issues to discuss with you.

17                    So Michael, if you want to begin.

18                    PRESIDENT MULGREW: Do you want me to  
19          start, or Andy?

20                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Well, you  
21          decide. Which one of you wants to go?

22                    PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: I'll start.

23                    Thank you, Michael.

24                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.

1           PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Thank you and  
2           good afternoon, almost good evening. So  
3           Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Weinstein,  
4           honorable members of the Legislature and  
5           distinguished staff, I'm Andy Pallotta,  
6           president of New York State United Teachers.  
7           thank you for the opportunity to testify  
8           before you today. My written testimony, you  
9           have it, and it details NYSUT's priorities  
10          for this year and our response to the  
11          Executive Budget.

12                 With my short time today I will  
13          discuss what schools truly need. We had a  
14          NYSUT Future Forward Task Force last summer  
15          to explore how to support our schools, our  
16          public schools, and keep them as the center  
17          of every community. We heard stories from  
18          the folks that were on this task force of how  
19          A-plus students withered under the stress of  
20          remote learning. How our youngest students  
21          struggled to grasp the skills needed for  
22          in-person learning. How mental health  
23          professionals, burdened by the heavy load of  
24          so many folks in their responsibility areas,

1        didn't have the capacity to do any proactive  
2        work necessary during this crisis.

3                We also heard about long-standing  
4        issues. Too many students coming to school  
5        hungry but aren't eligible for school meals.  
6        We heard about families with the stigma of  
7        having to apply for meal assistance. Some  
8        older siblings juggled the academics with the  
9        family responsibilities. And of course  
10       everyone looking at the looming threat of  
11       receivership and the overemphasis on flawed  
12       standardized testing that drives some schools  
13       to excess over boosting test scores rather  
14       than students' needs.

15               But we also heard many stories of  
16       hope. And this is the first year that I've  
17       been testifying where we don't have a dark  
18       cloud over us. I want to thank you for the  
19       work you did to begin the phase-in of the  
20       Foundation Aid formula. And this year we  
21       need to further do transformation for our  
22       schools. We dedicate funding to expand the  
23       number of community schools, and that is  
24       crucial. We need new laws to set minimum



1 staffing levels so there's a social worker, a  
2 school psychologist, a counselor, a nurse in  
3 every school. We heard that earlier this  
4 morning from Commissioner Rosa.

5 We want funding, funding to support  
6 prospective teachers, particularly teachers  
7 of color. And let's return to the joy of  
8 learning by repealing that receivership and  
9 removing the punitive consequences of the  
10 standardized tests.

11 I just want to be on record with one  
12 more ask this year: To help us make sure  
13 that all school staff, from teachers to  
14 nurses to bus drivers, receive the respect  
15 that they deserve. It's been a hard two  
16 years -- and, as we all know, a hard decade  
17 before that. But our educators do what they  
18 do best, and of course respect is more than  
19 just saying thank you; we have some real  
20 solutions. So I think we can all agree they  
21 have earned it.

22 With that, I'll turn it over to  
23 Michael Mulgrew.

24 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Well, thank you,

1           Andy. And excuse me if there's a little  
2           noise in the background.

3                   (Ongoing dog barking.)

4           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No problem.

5           PRESIDENT MULGREW: I want to thank  
6           you all, first and foremost, for supporting  
7           us throughout these last two years. It's  
8           been very difficult, to say the least. And I  
9           want to again applaud all the school  
10          communities -- the staff, the teachers, the  
11          guidance counselors and all the phenomenal  
12          work they have done in New York City. We  
13          have led the way on how to keep schools safe.

14                   But as we're hopefully getting to the  
15          end of this pandemic, we know that there's  
16          been -- an untold amount of damage has been  
17          done, not just to the adults but, more  
18          importantly, to all of the students in our  
19          school system. We applaud what the Executive  
20          has put forth in terms of funding for our  
21          schools because we need it. We need a lot of  
22          funding because there's a lot of work now  
23          that has to be done, more than ever before.

24                   Support -- and as you heard Andrew

1 Pallotta say, nurses, guidance counselors,  
2 social workers in every school would  
3 absolutely be something that would be pivotal  
4 to help us in what we're dealing with at this  
5 moment.

6 In terms of our programs, United  
7 Community Schools and Teacher Centers, I want  
8 to thank the members of both the Assembly and  
9 the Senate who have been going to the  
10 community schools of the United Federation of  
11 Teachers, as well as the Teacher Centers.  
12 Let's just say every year we talk about  
13 Teacher Centers, but now actually seeing what  
14 is going on in so many of our schools I think  
15 is so important for the Legislature to  
16 understand that this is a pivotal role that  
17 gets played inside of our schools.

18 Career and Technical Education. I  
19 know now in all of the conversations I've had  
20 with both the Governor and both houses of the  
21 Legislature, it is time for New York State to  
22 really put together a comprehensive, holistic  
23 plan on how to do economic development,  
24 workforce development and career and

1 technical education. And we look forward to  
2 doing those things.

3 On charter schools, all I'm going to  
4 say is can we please finally have some  
5 transparency and equity. That's what we've  
6 been asking for for years. Enough of the  
7 game playing. Many of the school districts,  
8 with the formula that was passed years ago,  
9 are about to get slammed in terms of aid that  
10 will be taken away from the public schools  
11 and given to the charter schools.

12 Mayoral control, I know I'm going to  
13 get asked this question. The position of  
14 this union is very simple: We do not support  
15 going back to school boards. We do support  
16 mayoral control, but not the version we have.  
17 I think it is clear now that we have  
18 irrefutable evidence that a system that gives  
19 absolute power leads to bad results for the  
20 children. And we've seen this over and over,  
21 this is not new for us. We've been doing our  
22 testimony up here for years, telling you all  
23 the same thing.

24 And parents have continually -- no

1 matter how many promises have been made,  
2 every year in this testimony the parents of  
3 New York City have been cut out. They do not  
4 have a voice. Yet every year we hear about  
5 these promises.

6 But overall it really has to be about  
7 what we've all been trying to do is getting  
8 through this pandemic. And the money that is  
9 sent from you needs to get to the schools.  
10 The money needs to get to the classroom. I  
11 cannot emphasize this enough. You do your  
12 jobs and you send money to the school  
13 districts, and I know you want to make sure  
14 that that money actually lands up inside of  
15 classrooms, inside of school buildings.  
16 That's where the funding should be. That's  
17 where the work happens.

18 So I look forward with working with  
19 all three branches of our New York State  
20 government this year in the legislative  
21 process.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 So we're going to go for questions  
24 first to our Education chair, Assemblyman

1 Benedetto. There he is. Three minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Gentlemen,

3 thank you very much for being here.

4 Certainly we appreciate it. And

5 congratulations to you, and more so to your

6 members, okay, for what they've done over

7 these last years. They have performed

8 underneath very difficult circumstances, and

9 it's truly appreciated by the Assembly. And

10 we acknowledge everything they've done.

11 Just quickly, a couple of questions.

12 A lot of talk has been given over the last

13 several years about diversity in education

14 and diversity of teaching. Can you both just

15 speak on that, and what have your unions done

16 to actually help that along?

17 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Andy, you can

18 start.

19 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Okay. So at

20 NYSUT we have a fantastic program called Take

21 a Look at Teaching, where we encourage our

22 locals around the state to grow their own --

23 so having students that are already in the

24 schools get interested in teaching, and bring

1           them in.

2                   I was recently in Yonkers and the  
3           superintendent brought us to classrooms in a  
4           local high school, and almost every teacher  
5           that he introduced us to was from Yonkers.  
6           Right? Even the principal was from Yonkers  
7           and had gone through the system. So we see  
8           it around the state.

9                   We're also talking about the residency  
10          programs, just trying to encourage folks to  
11          get into the profession -- it is a great  
12          profession. We know that the alternative  
13          teacher certification programs can also help.  
14          So there are a lot of ways of doing this.

15                   A friend of mine who was a  
16          paraprofessional in the Bronx for many years  
17          just became a teacher. It took a long time.  
18          The classes were not available to him in the  
19          school that he was going to, so it took a  
20          long time. We would love to see ways of  
21          making that happen faster.

22                   And a lot of the folks that were in  
23          here were diverse, they were from diverse  
24          backgrounds, and it was encouraging to see

1           that.

2                   ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very  
3 much, Mr. Pallotta.

4                   I only have a few seconds left. Very  
5 quickly, I have a lot of confidence in you  
6 guys and in your teachers and so on. You  
7 know the law in the State of New York. I  
8 presume the teachers know the law in the  
9 State of New York. Do your teachers teach  
10 what is written in the law?

11                  PRESIDENT MULGREW: In terms of the  
12 curriculum?

13                  ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: In terms of  
14 the curriculum, sure. And what should be  
15 taught in the schools.

16                  PRESIDENT MULGREW: In the curriculum  
17 that the school supplies them, New York City  
18 has been teaching cultural awareness,  
19 cultural sensitivity for years. We didn't  
20 need a political movement. We take great  
21 pride in the fact that we are the most  
22 diverse school system in the entire country,  
23 we believe probably in the entire world.

24                  And the way to engage students is to



1           actually engage them in what they know, which  
2           is their culture. And that means a lot of  
3           training for the teachers, and we have had no  
4           issues whatsoever in terms of getting our  
5           teachers open to all sorts of different  
6           training. And these are programs we have  
7           been doing for years. As well as --

8           ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. Mulgrew,  
9           thank you. That's basically what I wanted to  
10          know.

11          PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thank you.

12          ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

13          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

14          We're going to go to the Senate.  
15          Senator Krueger?

16          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
17          much, and good afternoon, gentlemen.

18          We're going to start with Senator  
19          Shelley Mayer, the chair of our Education  
20          Committee.

21          SENATOR MAYER: Thank you both for  
22          being here, and thank you to your members.  
23          And I hope you convey I think the collective  
24          sense of all of us in the Legislature that in

1 an incredible time, they have really done  
2 extraordinarily well. I'm glad you talked  
3 about respect. And I'm hopeful with this  
4 Governor we're going to see increased respect  
5 for all in the school world.

6 One question for you, Mr. Mulgrew.  
7 You made the point, and I think we share it,  
8 that the money we fought for needs to get to  
9 the classroom. We tried to build in some  
10 accounting mechanisms, both for Foundation  
11 Aid and for American Rescue Plan. Frankly, I  
12 don't think we got quite as good as we  
13 wanted.

14 What would be your proposal to make us  
15 have some confidence that all this money we  
16 fought for is actually getting into a  
17 classroom?

18 PRESIDENT MULGREW: It's a tough --  
19 it's tough because usually when the state  
20 sends the money they like to send the money  
21 in a block to the school district. It's more  
22 difficult to send it to specifically target  
23 for program. But if you target for program,  
24 then you can -- it's much easier to audit to

1           see that the money was actually being used  
2           for what you -- what the intent, when you  
3           voted for the budget, is.

4                     And that's really the way this  
5           thing -- that's a better way to do it. It's  
6           more difficult where the school district will  
7           always say, Just send us the money.

8                     But at the same time, and especially  
9           here in New York City, we see billions of  
10          dollars -- and I'm very happy with the new  
11          mayor and the new chancellor saying enough is  
12          enough, the money has to get into the  
13          classroom. So what we're looking forward to  
14          is to seeing the more we can do with that,  
15          and the better off we will all be if the  
16          money actually -- the majority of the money  
17          goes into the classroom. That is the  
18          purpose.

19                    SENATOR MAYER: Well, that was our  
20          intent and we've built in more than just  
21          sending the money to the district. We wanted  
22          to know how many social workers, how many  
23          guidance counselors.

24                    And we look forward to continuing to

1 push districts to get that money into those  
2 places where we know it will benefit kids.

3 So in my limited time I want to ask  
4 about receivership, Andy, generally. What is  
5 the -- you know, this receivership is a  
6 long-standing problem that we have  
7 institutionalized in law. Do you have a view  
8 about whether we should just sort of start  
9 again on the concept of schools that need  
10 particular help and get out of the  
11 receivership model?

12 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Right. The whole  
13 concept behind receivership was punitive.  
14 Right? So it was punishing schools that were  
15 going through difficult times. So yes, a  
16 repeal of this law would make a lot of sense.  
17 And then to turn it around to providing the  
18 helps that are needed in those schools.

19 So yes, doing away with this, starting  
20 over again and providing the necessary tools,  
21 like community schools. We have been yelling  
22 from the rooftops about providing community  
23 schools throughout the state. And yes, there  
24 is money in the budget for community schools;

1 we're asking for more so that we can  
2 replicate what has been working, like in  
3 New York City, like in Albany, like in Rome,  
4 New York.

5 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you  
6 very much. Thank you for your --

7 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thank you.

8 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go back to  
11 the Assembly, and next we have Assemblywoman  
12 Jackson.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Thank you,  
14 Madam Chair. To Andy and to Michael, thank  
15 you both for your work. It's been a while  
16 since I've seen you both. I am a former UFT  
17 member, paid my dues regularly. Grateful to  
18 be here and represent social workers and  
19 teachers alike.

20 And I just want to know -- I have a  
21 few questions. I just want to know how can  
22 we at the state assist with the United  
23 Community Schools?

24 I want to know what have you guys done

1 to help social workers obtain their  
2 continuing ed credits, either it be financial  
3 or bring the trainings to the schools, like  
4 whatever it is.

5 And then how can we like encourage  
6 more teachers and staff to get involved  
7 politically? Because their voice needs to be  
8 heard. Like you guys know I understand what  
9 it means to be one of them, because I was.  
10 But a lot of the members may not. So I would  
11 love to see more engagement from them.

12 So how can we help you with the United  
13 Community Schools? What are we doing to help  
14 social workers with their continuing ed  
15 credits? And how can we get more people  
16 involved?

17 And community schools work, work, and  
18 they work. Just so you guys --

19 PRESIDENT MULGREW: They work. We're  
20 very proud of our United Community Schools.  
21 You know, I was out in Queens on Saturday.  
22 Why? Because when we do a vaccination clinic  
23 at a United Community School, we get  
24 300 students. That's not normal. Most times

1       you see -- I won't name other agencies --  
2       they put up their vaccination clinics and  
3       they get nowhere near that number. Why?  
4       Because we're part of the community, and we  
5       do outreach and we talk to the parents and we  
6       do all of those things.

7               That's the whole basis of everything  
8       we do with United Community Schools. It's  
9       not what you would call a normal community  
10      school model. We want to be part of the  
11      community.

12             So now the UFT's United Community  
13      Schools is now working with a school in  
14      Albany. So we're now -- we have a school in  
15      Albany that we're working with, and we're  
16      seeing great results already. And it's  
17      really been quite -- a lot of fun and a lot  
18      of energy.

19             But that takes work. So what we  
20      really need to do is that's a program we know  
21      that works. So how do you take that program  
22      and make it available to the entire state?  
23      Now, we'd be more than happy to help people  
24      learn how to do that work, to train what is

1 known as a school facilitator, to get that  
2 person in place, and then to really work at  
3 digging in and becoming part of the actual  
4 community.

5 In terms of the social workers, as you  
6 know, this is a constant challenge. Last  
7 year we had funding from the state and the  
8 City Council. We had a really hard time just  
9 filling the slots that we were able to get  
10 both entities to fund.

11 So now it comes down to, all right,  
12 now it's more to me about how do we  
13 streamline the process for people who want to  
14 become social workers, people who may already  
15 be teachers or be in an another role inside  
16 of a school system. We should be able to  
17 streamline the process, working with higher  
18 ed, and say you don't have to start all over  
19 again -- they already do not have to. But  
20 there should be an easier way to do this,  
21 because there's a need there. There's a real  
22 need there.

23 And in terms of political activity,  
24 there's a difference between political



1 activity for political purposes, ideological  
2 purposes, and political activity for the  
3 profession of public education. And, you  
4 know, we have a lot of political activity but  
5 a lot of it -- you know, a lot of our allowed  
6 political activity is ideological.

7 But the thing is, the same thing  
8 you're talking about is what we struggle  
9 with. We want folks to understand that when  
10 teachers talk about testing, then they were  
11 out in droves and fought back against testing  
12 that was being used wrongly. Things that  
13 they know are actually going to be wrong  
14 inside of a school, or things they're going  
15 to do. But that takes an education process.  
16 And it's really about having folks like you  
17 talk about how you now can make a difference,  
18 because you do. And it's really important.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

20 Senator, do you have anybody else?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We do indeed. We  
22 have Senator Liu, the New York City Education  
23 Committee chair.

24 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

1           Thank you, Michael, and thank you,  
2           Andrew, for joining us every year,  
3           faithfully. And thank you for all your  
4           members doing the great work they do.

5           You're well aware that last year in  
6           New York City and in parts of the state, as  
7           the new school year rolled around in  
8           September, that there was no remote option in  
9           New York City and some parts of New York  
10          State. And notwithstanding the de Blasio  
11          administration's refusal to provide that  
12          remote option, many of us felt that it was  
13          needed, if only because large proportions of  
14          parents were keeping their kids out of  
15          school.

16          And then of course we saw the same  
17          thing happen again after the Christmas break  
18          last -- earlier this month with the rise of  
19          Omicron.

20          So you're aware that I have  
21          legislation pending in the Senate that would  
22          require at least New York City, if not other  
23          major cities, to provide this remote option  
24          in times of emergency pandemics.

1           My question is would your members be  
2       ready, willing and able to engage in this  
3       remote learning option as a mandate when  
4       there is an ongoing pandemic?

5           PRESIDENT MULGREW: Yes. We already  
6       have mandates in New York City where  
7       people -- there's remote learning happening  
8       every day in New York City. But not a  
9       remote -- but there's no remote option.

10          So we do remote because of students  
11       that are in quarantine or in isolation, so  
12       there is remote teaching going on each and  
13       every day. And every teacher in New York  
14       City this year at the beginning of the school  
15       year had to set up their entire digital  
16       classroom for whenever they need to go  
17       remote.

18          I think we have to stop thinking of it  
19       as a pandemic issue and start thinking of it  
20       as how do you build better system, really,  
21       into the school system as a whole. That will  
22       take more long-term planning.

23          So in terms of your question, we do  
24       this already. Some of it's mandated if a

1 student has -- is in quarantine. We have  
2 other options for students who are not coming  
3 to school. We're working on some things  
4 right now with the new chancellor. But I  
5 think, long term, I think it's important,  
6 especially for large school systems like  
7 ours, that we do have some sort of a digital  
8 school, a digital academy. Not online,  
9 because most people think of this as a higher  
10 ed issue. It's not that type of education,  
11 it really isn't. We've learned so much about  
12 this.

13 But I think it's important if we try  
14 to build those things, because there was a  
15 subset of students who were not doing well  
16 before the pandemic but then did well during  
17 the pandemic because it was remote. So I  
18 think that we have to look at this.

19 And I do agree with you, we pushed  
20 really hard that we would set up a remote  
21 system for this school year, with criteria to  
22 keep it limited. Because the one thing that  
23 people have to realize is the only way we're  
24 going to fix the problems we're facing with

1 the majority of our children is when they  
2 actually come to school. The writing  
3 deficiencies are through the roof. First  
4 graders have never had formal education.  
5 Ninth graders, this is the first time they've  
6 been in school since sixth grade. Just think  
7 of the complexity of these challenges.

8 So right now we need to have some  
9 flexibility for remote, but at the same time  
10 the only way to fix this problem is bringing  
11 them in.

12 SENATOR LIU: I appreciate that, thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: John and Michael,  
15 I need to cut this off.

16 SENATOR LIU: Yeah, I understand,  
17 Madam Chair. I just want to say in  
18 10 seconds that I appreciate Michael's  
19 comments about mayoral control, that the UFT  
20 does not oppose mayoral control but there  
21 needs to be strict mechanisms for input and  
22 it can't be a dictatorship.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

1               PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thank you.

2               CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assemblymember.

3               CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to  
4 Assemblyman Ed Ra.

5               ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

6               Michael, Andy, good to see you guys.

7               PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Good to see you.

8               ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I just wanted to get  
9 a little bit further into something, you  
10 know, that's kind of in the same area as what  
11 Chair Mayer was talking to you about in that  
12 same section of Future Forward, and that's  
13 about the alternative assessment and  
14 graduation requirements.

15              I mean, I know this is not a new  
16 topic, it's one we've discussed for many  
17 years. But if you could kind of elaborate  
18 on -- I mean, maybe this is an opportunity --  
19 I know a lot of people have talked about, you  
20 know, this being an opportunity to look at  
21 new things. And I hope people are realizing  
22 that, you know, canceling high-stakes tests  
23 when we've needed to the last couple of  
24 years, the sky hasn't fallen. Maybe we're --

1        maybe we can realize that there are other  
2        assessments and better-quality assessments  
3        that we can come up with that provide more  
4        opportunity for our students.

5                PRESIDENT MULGREW:  Andy, you want to  
6        start that?

7                PRESIDENT PALLOTTA:  Yeah.

8                One hundred percent agree with you:  
9        The high-stakes testing takes the educators'  
10       eyes off of what needs to be done, which is  
11       meeting the needs of the children.  Right?  
12       So that's why the repeal of receivership is  
13       so important.

14               Having in-person education of course  
15       is the best way.  And a part of that is  
16       bridging the digital divide.  We've had --  
17       folks have all kinds of experiences when we  
18       spoke about the remote learning.  Throughout  
19       the state, everyone is having different  
20       experiences, some of them not good, right,  
21       because they couldn't even sign on, the  
22       students.  So we know what needs to be done.

23               We also want to say when it comes to  
24       things like charter schools, that the SUNY

1 Charter Institute okaying charters when  
2 communities are fighting them fully is  
3 ludicrous. When the commissioner says no and  
4 the SUNY Institute says yes, we have to  
5 address that this year. And we fully support  
6 your bill, Senator Liu.

7 So we have a lot of work ahead of us.  
8 We also know that the emphasis on high-stakes  
9 testing is a waste of time, especially now.

10 Michael?

11 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Well, for us  
12 the -- we're having conversations now, and  
13 I'm very happy that the State Education  
14 commissioner, Betty Rosa, is having a task  
15 force to look at what we want to do for  
16 graduation requirements.

17 The key here is everyone has to  
18 remember what we need to do is come up with a  
19 system where a student can demonstrate  
20 mastery of a subject. Now, is the best way  
21 to do that sitting for a Regents, or is there  
22 another way that a student can demonstrate  
23 mastery? And that's really the question that  
24 we are now debating and discussing as



1           educators, because we know there are other  
2           ways for students to demonstrate mastery.  
3           And that's really what our goal is, is to try  
4           to actually give every student the ability or  
5           the chance to show us that they completely  
6           understand the subject they have been taught.  
7           And there should be more ways to do that than  
8           just sitting for a test.

9                     ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, gentlemen.

10                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
11           go to the Senate.

12                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry, the Senate  
13           is here, and we have Senator Leroy Comrie.

14                    SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you, Madam  
15           Chair.

16                    Good afternoon, gentlemen.

17                    PRESIDENT MULGREW: Good afternoon.

18                    PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Afternoon.

19                    SENATOR COMRIE: Happy New Year.

20                    I want to ask you the same two  
21           questions I asked the chancellor and  
22           Commissioner Rosa.

23                    Number one, on teacher attendance, how  
24           can we improve teacher attendance and teacher

1           retention? What do you think the tools are  
2           to make that happen?

3           PRESIDENT MULGREW: On the attendance?  
4           Get rid of the pandemic. That's been the  
5           biggest driver --

6           SENATOR COMRIE: In light of the fact  
7           that we will never get rid of the pandemic,  
8           what do you think --

9           PRESIDENT MULGREW: Well, I hope  
10          that's not true.

11          SENATOR COMRIE: I'm being pessimistic  
12          only because I think that we're going to have  
13          to deal with some kind of crisis or medical  
14          issue or unfortunately --

15          PRESIDENT MULGREW: That's fair.

16          SENATOR COMRIE: And I think  
17          pre-preparation is key to that.

18          PRESIDENT MULGREW: So overall teacher  
19          attendance right now in the City of New York  
20          is above 90 percent, especially if you take  
21          the COVID issues out of it. Remember, a lot  
22          of our attendance now is forced absence,  
23          which is our problem.

24          But let's say we get past that. The

1 real issue becomes about how do you make a  
2 school a supportive environment. For me, in  
3 New York City one of our big issues has  
4 always been that the Department of Education  
5 is not there to help us, it's there to hinder  
6 us. And that adds to the stress levels and  
7 the frustration, which then adds to  
8 attendance issues.

9 But I'm hoping with the new chancellor  
10 and the new mayor -- we're hearing a lot of  
11 things about the Department of Education is  
12 supposed to be there to help the people doing  
13 the work with the children. So to me, that  
14 will be a big issue.

15 But Andy, you can really talk about  
16 the retention issues we're having, not just  
17 in New York City but across the entire state.

18 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: There has been a  
19 shortage of people going into this profession  
20 for years. And if you remember, the previous  
21 administration in the Governor's office used  
22 to just talk about what was wrong with  
23 education in this state. So he had started  
24 the whole movement away from people saying,

1           okay, you know what would be a great thing,  
2           my child going into teaching. So we lost a  
3           lot of good people because of that narrative.

4                     This Governor has taken a whole  
5           different tack towards that, so it's much  
6           more positive. And there's a lot of  
7           competition for folks that are in this world  
8           right now; why should they go into teaching?  
9           Well, it's the best profession that there is.  
10          I did it for almost 25 years. And I'll go  
11          back to what the Assemblymember spoke about  
12          before about social workers. I worked in a  
13          school where when we hired the social workers  
14          that were needed, it turned the school  
15          around.

16                    So we know from our own facts that  
17          schools can turn around and that social  
18          workers and meeting the needs of the students  
19          right then and there is most important.

20                   SENATOR COMRIE: I've got 10 seconds  
21          and I got another question, I'm sorry.

22                   PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Okay.

23                   SENATOR COMRIE: The need for  
24          wraparound programs and pretesting for

1 children have become more important than  
2 ever. Can you tell us what you're going to  
3 do to help make sure that the Department of  
4 Education can do the wraparound programs for  
5 students to do their pretesting and also to  
6 make sure that there are schools that are  
7 open late at night in the long-distance  
8 neighborhoods such as the Northern Bronx and  
9 Staten Island and Queens where --

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Answer quickly,  
11 please, because we're at zero.

12 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Okay. We support,  
13 both at the state level and the city level,  
14 extending, opening the school at all times  
15 for children to have access to it. It's  
16 clear -- there's no argument, there's no  
17 debate -- the school now is the center of the  
18 community and the center of what we need to  
19 do in terms of developing the children to be  
20 what we all want, which is successful in  
21 life.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank  
23 you for being concise.

24 Assembly.

1 (Pause.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Helene, you have  
3 the next one. Let me see who's on your list.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I thought I --  
5 okay, I must have been muted.

6 Alicia Hyndman.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
8 Chair Weinstein.

9 Michael and Andrew, it's really great  
10 to see you. And please --

11 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Ditto.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- convey to  
13 your members thank you for showing up for  
14 work, thank you for navigating our children  
15 through this pandemic. My daughter is a  
16 sixth grader; her teachers show up. I ask  
17 her every day, and she's like, They're all  
18 there. And I know it's been tough, but  
19 please relay that to your members.

20 I tried teaching in Bushwick high  
21 school and I didn't last long. It's a really  
22 tough task, and I commend you all.

23 So I don't have any community schools  
24 in District 29 so, Michael, I would really

1 love your assistance in making sure --

2 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Let's go!

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- we get one  
4 for those wraparound services. I know all  
5 about community schools, I know the work that  
6 Karen has done on behalf of UFT for our  
7 community schools, and would really like to  
8 see one land successfully in Southeast  
9 Queens, particularly in my district.

10 To -- for the Teacher Centers, I know  
11 that we have a couple that opened up. I know  
12 it's a real bonus to have and to support our  
13 teachers while they navigate this pandemic,  
14 but I also want to say when it comes to the  
15 CTE schools, with the technology and the  
16 requirements of CTEs, we know that \$3900 per  
17 pupil is not enough.

18 PRESIDENT MULGREW: No.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: If we're  
20 talking about college and career readiness,  
21 we're not talking enough about the career  
22 readiness. So for the State of New York we  
23 need to make sure that's increased.

24 I know that Betty Rosa has done a lot

1 of work around that, particularly in New York  
2 City, but we always, I think, sometimes  
3 forget about the Big 5 school districts. I  
4 know Andrew can speak to that.

5 So my question is, how many more  
6 Teacher Centers do you feel you need in order  
7 for the city to be whole, Michael, as far as  
8 the city is concerned and our boroughs?

9 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Our goal would be  
10 to give every school access to a Teacher  
11 Center. We don't need to actually have a  
12 Teacher Center in every school. We would  
13 like that, but right now our goal is that we  
14 would hope that we would put one Teacher  
15 Center in a building and maybe have three or  
16 four buildings coordinate around it.

17 So at that point you would need  
18 basically somewhere around 600 Teacher  
19 Centers total, so we'd need approximately  
20 400 more.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.

22 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Listen, it's a lot  
23 of work. But you see the importance of it  
24 when you go into the school and you're seeing



1 more and more.

2 We've had so many Teacher Centers get  
3 opened this year because they want to embed  
4 the professional development at the school.  
5 Remember, it's not just about professional  
6 development for the teacher. We do so much  
7 work now with the community. We teach the  
8 parents. We train the parents on all sorts  
9 of different things that they need, and how  
10 to help their child.

11 So there's a -- you know, we're very  
12 happy that Teacher Centers are starting to  
13 expand in New York City once again. But as  
14 we're expanding, we're seeing more and more  
15 that there's more schools who keep asking us  
16 that they want them, and there's only so far  
17 we can go with the funding we currently get  
18 from the State of New York.

19 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: And at least this  
20 year we have a place where we're starting  
21 with funding. We don't have to start from  
22 zero again like we have so many other years.

23 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Exactly.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank

1           you, that's my time. Thank you, Chair.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3                   Back to the Senate.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
5 much.

6                   And Senator Robert Jackson.

7                   SENATOR JACKSON: Good afternoon. How  
8 you doing, Mike and Andy.

9                   PRESIDENT MULGREW: How you doing,  
10 Robert.

11                  SENATOR JACKSON: I'm doing well,  
12 thank you. I'm here with Senator Cordell  
13 Cleare, and we are making sure that we have  
14 the opportunity to hear what you have to say  
15 and ask a couple of questions before we drive  
16 down to the 32nd Precinct for a vigil about  
17 6:30. So we're going to be moving pretty  
18 quick.

19                  I got three quick questions. The  
20 Executive is proposing \$2 million to school  
21 districts to support programs designed to  
22 improve school climate. If this investment  
23 is included in the enacted budget, will you  
24 support my and Assemblymember Nolan's

1           legislation, the School Solutions, Not  
2           Suspensions, to help to end the  
3           school-to-prison pipeline in New York? And I  
4           assume that the answer is yes, but I need --

5           MR. MULGREW: Right. But we already  
6           do a lot -- I know you're aware of our  
7           Positive Learning Collaborative, which is  
8           exactly what -- it was designed for the same  
9           reason. And we already run that in a couple  
10          of hundred schools right now.

11          So we'll support anything that's going  
12          to help us change school climate as long as  
13          it's embedded and it's -- there's a one-time  
14          up-front investment, but then can be  
15          sustained at a minimal cost. So that's the  
16          criteria for us. When we're in a budget like  
17          we are right now, we keep telling folks:  
18          Look at something that has an up-front cost  
19          but then minimal investment to keep it going.  
20          That is the criteria we're looking at.

21          SENATOR JACKSON: So, Andrew, I assume  
22          your answer is similar to that. Mike was  
23          speaking for both you and him, is that  
24          correct?

1           MR. PALLOTTA: Right. We are working  
2           with our coalition partners throughout the  
3           state to work on school climate. So this has  
4           been something coming for a very long time,  
5           and working with folks from around the state  
6           to improve that in every corner of the  
7           state -- New York City, Buffalo, Long Island.

8           SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

9           I have another bill -- but we ask, do  
10          you know how many public schools hired social  
11          workers, school psychologists as a result of  
12          the additional funding so far? Have you seen  
13          an increase in that? I believe the answer is  
14          yes, but I want to know --

15          PRESIDENT MULGREW: Yes.

16          SENATOR JACKSON: -- as the leader of,  
17          one, the New York City union and then  
18          obviously Andrew for the statewide union.  
19          Because there's a bill that would require  
20          every school to have a social worker, a  
21          psychologist, a nurse in order to meet the  
22          needs of our students.

23          PRESIDENT MULGREW: We -- but this is  
24          where I'm going to tell you we're running

1           into the problem of staffing. We need a  
2           better way to get people a social worker's  
3           license or certificate.

4           There are people who want to do it,  
5           but it's going to take a while. So they  
6           should be able to -- I completely support  
7           that bill. But what we've seen now in  
8           New York City -- because it was both the  
9           state and the City Council who invested  
10          heavily into social workers. And we have not  
11          filled all of the funded slots that we have.  
12          And it's not because we haven't been trying.  
13          It's just that there is -- we need to come up  
14          with a program that might incentivize people  
15          but also make it easier for them to get into  
16          the -- a critical element of what we're all  
17          dealing with right now in schools, which is  
18          the need for social workers.

19          MR. PALLOTTA: And along the same  
20          lines, Senator, last year we thanked you for  
21          the million dollars that the Legislature  
22          provided for NYSUT to do implicit bias  
23          training. And we have trained hundreds of  
24          our local leaders throughout the state on

1           this. So of course we have another ask in  
2           this year's budget for that.

3           It has been powerful the things that  
4           people see and the change that's brought  
5           about by the union itself doing this  
6           training.

7           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8           SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. I know  
9           my time is up. Michael, I went to the  
10          Teacher Center at 133rd Street and Amsterdam  
11          Avenue. Teacher Center all the way.

12          MR. MULGREW: Thank you so much.

13          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I  
14          think we were just planning one in your  
15          district right now, so.

16          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. So  
17          we go to Assemblyman Lawler.

18          ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Thank you,  
19          Chairwoman.

20          Mike and Andy, good to see you again.  
21          Thank you for the work that you're doing on  
22          behalf of your members.

23          My sister-in-law is a teacher in one  
24          of my local school districts. She's also in

1           the union leadership there. So I know how  
2           hard all of your members work and the impact  
3           that they have on the lives of our students  
4           every day. So I thank you for that.

5                     MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

6                     ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Obviously we're  
7           all happy to see, you know, the continued  
8           increase in Foundation Aid for our districts.  
9           I brought it up last year: I do have a bill,  
10          A4648, that I hope, Andy, you certainly will  
11          look at and support. It would increase the  
12          Regional Cost Index for Rockland and  
13          Westchester counties to match Long Island and  
14          New York City to ensure that our schools in  
15          Rockland County and Westchester are fully  
16          funded and getting the support that they  
17          deserve for the Regional Cost Index and our  
18          labor costs, which are significant at times,  
19          given our region. So that's something that I  
20          just want to bring to your attention.

21                    East Ramapo, I had a discussion  
22          earlier today with Commissioner Rosa on that.  
23          The reality is there's going to be 4100 new  
24          students attending private schools next year,

1           and that is going to have, you know,  
2           significant growth in the district again.

3                     And it's something that we have to be  
4           realistic about, that nearly 75 percent of  
5           the students attending East Ramapo are  
6           attending private schools, and the current  
7           construct is not working. And there are  
8           significant challenges. And the objective  
9           needs to be to ensure that all students,  
10          regardless of whether they attend a public or  
11          private school, are getting the services they  
12          need. But obviously it can't be at the  
13          expense of the public schools.

14                    And so I've proposed legislation to  
15          have SED take over mandated services for the  
16          private schools in East Ramapo specifically.  
17          And I would strongly encourage you to look at  
18          that legislation. And I'd be happy to  
19          discuss it with you offline.

20                    The thing that I do want to ask you a  
21          question about, both of you, if you could, is  
22          really just the role of parents in their  
23          children's education. Obviously there's been  
24          so much back and forth nationwide with



1       respect to curriculum, with respect to mask  
2       mandates, with respect to vaccine mandates.  
3       I'm just curious really how you both view the  
4       role of parents in education and what  
5       abilities they should have when it comes to  
6       issues of curriculum and/or, you know,  
7       mandates on their children.

8               Obviously I represent an area where  
9       it's controlled by school boards, not mayoral  
10      control, so there is a little bit of a  
11      difference. But just curious your take on  
12      that.

13             PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Well, right off  
14      the bat, when it came to the mask mandate, we  
15      supported the mask mandate.

16             We also want to know when things will  
17      change, so we put out a statement just the  
18      other day saying we are happy with the  
19      mandate in effect now, but we would love to  
20      see from the health experts when we can get  
21      on the off ramp from these mask mandates.

22             And of course we support having  
23      parents involved in their children's  
24      education the entire time that they are in

1 school. It is crucial. The partnership --  
2 and Michael spoke about it throughout  
3 New York City too -- it's crucial throughout  
4 the state that the parents are a big partner  
5 with the educators, with the students.

6 So -- and I appreciate your support  
7 for our members. Thank you.

8 MR. MULGREW: In terms of the role of  
9 parents itself, it's a crucial partnership,  
10 as Andy has said. But I think what we're all  
11 dealing with right now on the political  
12 spectrum is so many things have become  
13 politicized, especially around the schools.  
14 Is that healthy for a school? Probably not.

15 Curriculum. Let's just take  
16 curriculum. New York State is a standard  
17 state. That means we set standards and then  
18 each school system, each school district, is  
19 responsible for supplying the teacher with  
20 the curriculum that meet the standards. But  
21 inside of these standards there has to be a  
22 sensitivity towards all cultures. And we've  
23 done that without turning it into what we've  
24 seen in different parts of the country. And

1 I'm hoping New York State and New York City  
2 can continue to do that.

3 But, you know, for Andy and I, we've  
4 lived through the teacher-bashing years and  
5 everything else, and the testing and the  
6 standardized tests, and we've seen everything  
7 in our industry try to -- we've seen it from  
8 the angles where people have politicized it.  
9 Now as we're in the pandemic, once again  
10 we're in the middle of all of so many of the  
11 political fights where we just always say:  
12 We talk to our independent medical experts,  
13 we let them guide us, and we're trying to  
14 stay out of the craziness that goes around  
15 all of this. But at the same time, we cannot  
16 educate the children of this state without  
17 the parents as partners.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN LAWLER: Thank you for  
20 your answers.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
22 go to Assemblywoman Niou.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Hello,  
24 Mr. Mulgrew.

1                   PRESIDENT MULGREW: How are you?

2                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: I'm good. Thank  
3 you so much for being here today and spending  
4 so much time with us.

5                   I had a question for you about -- you  
6 know, I'm assuming, since you were listening  
7 and you had referred to it, what our new  
8 chancellor was talking about when I had asked  
9 him a question about teacher retention. I  
10 was wondering -- you know, I'm sure you have  
11 some ideas about what would actually be  
12 successful in helping with teacher  
13 recruitment and retention on top of the  
14 Teacher Centers.

15                  MR. MULGREW: Yeah, this is -- you  
16 know it's an issue that the whole country now  
17 has to grapple with. It's just -- there's no  
18 way around it. You think about, as I just  
19 said before, there was years of teacher  
20 bashing. Then we went into complete  
21 accountability, which meant test scores and  
22 more paperwork and not actual time spent with  
23 students. And then we get hit with a  
24 pandemic. You couldn't get -- you know, it's

1 a trifecta of horrible things that affect our  
2 profession.

3 So it's really now time to say, All  
4 right, let's break glass. What do we need to  
5 do? It's got to be about how we train  
6 teachers. That's in higher ed. We're going  
7 to have to get everybody comfortable with  
8 that, how we look at how we compensate  
9 teachers. And then at the same time make  
10 sure that all school systems, that the  
11 bureaucracy of the school system is there --  
12 because bureaucracy is not always a bad word.  
13 It becomes a bad word when it stops things  
14 from happening. But the bureaucracy's focus  
15 at all times must be on supporting the  
16 teacher.

17 And those first three to five years  
18 are pivotal. And you see it -- we have  
19 certain schools in New York City where the  
20 retention is so high, you walk into the  
21 school and you know why. Because --

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Harbor School.

23 (Laughter.)

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Our Harbor

1 School.

2 MR. MULGREW: All right. And there's  
3 other schools. Because it's a complete  
4 support system that the school has built for  
5 people coming into our profession. But  
6 that's not -- we don't have that everywhere.

7 So really it's about reimagining the  
8 whole profession from when you're training  
9 them all the way through their inception and  
10 then throughout their careers.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: We also saw that,  
12 you know, at the Harbor School, for example,  
13 the principal actually gave up his own office  
14 for a Teacher Center. That was really  
15 awesome. But we shouldn't be making that --  
16 that's not the norm, right.

17 So our state definitely needs to  
18 really fund Teacher Centers because it really  
19 is a huge valuable asset to making it so that  
20 we can get teachers to want to stay, and have  
21 the support that they need. It's an all  
22 around, wraparound service.

23 You know, you had mentioned also, you  
24 know, the imbalance with charter school

1 funding and -- versus our public school  
2 funding. And I wanted to kind of see your  
3 thoughts on -- I guess give you the rest of  
4 the time to really kind of talk about why  
5 this disparity is so important to not have.

6 MR. MULGREW: Because everyone likes  
7 to use the word "equity." Well, where's the  
8 equity? Let's stop playing with the numbers  
9 and let's just say -- you know, put the  
10 actual things down there.

11 New York City, in the charter formula  
12 per student, there's already a facilities  
13 number inside of it. In New York City the  
14 charter schools are getting that number and  
15 then getting an additional facilities number  
16 on top of that. And then there's a thousand  
17 dollars per pupil for tuition assistance.  
18 These are ridiculous numbers.

19 And now, this year, look at the  
20 formula -- it's not just affecting New York  
21 but so many -- New York City, but so many of  
22 the other districts in our state. They're --  
23 you know, the local school district has to  
24 pick up so much more of the funding for the

1 charter school. And it's just got to stop.  
2 You know, enough is enough already. We had  
3 years of games being played with this, and it  
4 was all because of political influence and  
5 not based off of if you truly want equity,  
6 let's do it the right way. Everyone gets the  
7 same amount per student, period, end of  
8 story, and there's transparency.

9 I mean, you know, everyone says yes  
10 when I say these things, but then it never  
11 gets done.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you.

13 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thank you.

14 MR. PALLOTTA: And that's why there's  
15 a John Liu bill right there to fight this.  
16 This is a great bill. Because in Central  
17 Islip, when the community fought back against  
18 the charter school, SUNY didn't listen to  
19 them. In Wyandanch, they didn't listen to  
20 them. And there was no respect for SED or  
21 the commissioner.

22 So it's ludicrous that they don't have  
23 the same transparency requirements as a  
24 public school. And I hope this year we can



1 take care of that.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And  
3 we're going to move on. We still have a  
4 number of Assemblymembers, and then we only  
5 have 34 more witnesses after you finish.

6 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Okay.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman --

8 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Hold us to 90  
9 seconds.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: It's an  
11 all-nighter we're doing.

12 Assemblyman Bronson.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you, Chair  
14 Weinstein.

15 And Andy and Michael, thank you and  
16 all of your members for what you've done over  
17 these difficult almost two years now.

18 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: You know, we owe  
20 you a debt of gratitude, and all of the  
21 teachers that you represent.

22 You know, I want to focus a little bit  
23 on Rochester and the city school district in  
24 Rochester, but put it in terms of your Future

1 Forward, Andy, where you talked about public  
2 schools being the center of communities, you  
3 talked about making sure we focus on  
4 students' social and emotional needs and  
5 racial justice.

6 And, you know, frankly we're in a  
7 moment of time right now, a moment of time  
8 where we have additional funding that we can  
9 use for education. We have a society and  
10 communities that are truly facing racial  
11 injustice. And we have COVID. With all the  
12 bad things, it's forced us to reevaluate  
13 what's really important to us.

14 So my question is this. Given that  
15 moment of time -- we have the additional  
16 funding, et cetera -- given that moment of  
17 time, how do we scale up community schools in  
18 the Rochester City School District? You  
19 know, we have a couple of good ones but, you  
20 know, those wraparound services through  
21 community schools and the sense of  
22 neighborhood and the sense of community is so  
23 vitally important. How do we do that in  
24 Rochester?

1           MR. PALLOTTA: First off, I want to  
2           thank you for the work that you did as dean  
3           of the delegation in Rochester. It was  
4           fantastic working with you and everyone from  
5           the region.

6           We did get some good things done, and  
7           it brought the community together. It was a  
8           very enjoyable experience. But we also know  
9           that Rochester now doesn't have an austerity  
10          problem, they have a problem where they have  
11          so much in the bank they have to spend it.  
12          So the social workers -- there are hundreds  
13          of millions of dollars sitting there and we  
14          fought for it, you fought for it, and I'm  
15          hoping that they're spending that money on  
16          the social workers fighting the racial  
17          injustice in the schools.

18          And how do we get more community  
19          schools? Well, part of our program this year  
20          is to get a hundred million more into  
21          community schools. I know there's money in  
22          the budget. But what we're saying is it has  
23          worked in certain places like New York, like  
24          in Rome, New York. So replicate it. Put the

1 money in so we can have folks that are  
2 knowledgeable on how to run a community  
3 school, and have them all over the place.  
4 This seems to be a model that will change a  
5 system. And Rochester is the one that really  
6 needs to have an infusion of great minds that  
7 can really move that city school system.

8 So yes, the teachers are working hard,  
9 the administrators are working hard. I saw a  
10 lot of cooperation when we were there for  
11 some of the meetings. And we also saw the  
12 students with broken hearts when they lost  
13 their teachers and administrators and  
14 paraprofessionals not too long ago. I mean,  
15 it brought you to tears to see what they were  
16 going through.

17 Now there's money. Let's make sure  
18 that we put even more into the community  
19 school model. And the united schools that  
20 Michael is talking about, if that's the way  
21 to do it, let's get them to bring this model  
22 not just to Albany but to Rochester too and  
23 any other region of the state that needs  
24 this.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2                   Thank you, Andy.

3                   We'll go now to Assemblywoman Rodneyse  
4                   Bichotte Hermelyn.

5                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

6                   Hello. Hi, Michael. Hi, Andy. It's good to  
7                   see you guys here. Thank you again so much  
8                   for all that you're doing and all your  
9                   members are doing for us, for our children.

10                  I did have a couple of questions. For  
11                  one, I know you talked about the -- your  
12                  charter school issue regarding that the aid  
13                  went from 51.5 million to 100 million and the  
14                  increase of per-pupil funding was increased  
15                  by 4.7 percent. So I agree with you, I do  
16                  feel that it's unjust, particularly for many  
17                  reasons. Obviously one is the transparency  
18                  and accountability.

19                  However, I am disappointed that UFT  
20                  has not been adopting the Bichotte-Jackson  
21                  bill, which is also a transparency and  
22                  accountability bill. We've had this before  
23                  the other bill was introduced. So I will  
24                  reiterate, it's A3598, S1972. And that is

1 the original transparency and accountability  
2 charter school bill, Bichotte-Jackson. So  
3 please take a look at it --

4 PRESIDENT MULGREW: We'll take a look  
5 at it.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: --  
7 and help promote it.

8 I also want to just make the point  
9 that even with, you know, some of these  
10 schools that are just acquiring real estate  
11 for like 105 million -- I think Success  
12 Academy acquired about \$105 million in  
13 South Bronx -- you have a lot of the smaller  
14 ones that are not even being included in this  
15 whole mix. And the smaller ones are  
16 typically run by Black and brown-run charter  
17 schools. And there's an issue -- there's an  
18 issue even within the umbrella of charter  
19 schools of disparity. So that's something  
20 that, you know, we need to talk about as  
21 well.

22 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Yeah. Yeah.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: But  
24 my question really revolves around what you

1           talked about around mayoral control. You  
2           wanted to see some changes -- and I was in  
3           and out, so I don't know if you actually  
4           stated what kind of changes that you would  
5           like to see within the four-year interim of  
6           mayoral control, and how would you like  
7           parents to be more involved in the education  
8           system.

9           MR. MULGREW: Well, so to deal with  
10          the parent issue -- because you hear the same  
11          thing I hear about parents have always been  
12          shut out, despite year after year of  
13          testimony up here by mayors and chancellors  
14          that they're going to do it different and  
15          they're going to keep the parents in and  
16          they're going to let the parents in. It  
17          doesn't happen.

18          That's because of the basic structure  
19          that we're the only school system that has a  
20          mayoral control system that's absolute power.  
21          The only one. The other school systems that  
22          have mayoral control do not have that.

23          So this whole argument that if we  
24          change it's no longer mayoral control is

1           ridiculous. Because there's many school  
2           systems across the country that have mayoral  
3           control, but nobody has gone as far as to  
4           give absolute power to one office -- and  
5           that's what we have in New York City. So for  
6           the parents, it could be something as simple  
7           as adding two more seats to the PEP, the  
8           Panel for Educational -- PEP. I can't  
9           remember. The PEP. We call it the PEP.

10           MR. PALLOTTA: Policy.

11           MR. MULGREW: Policy, educational  
12           policy, right. The PEP.

13           So if you add two seats and you say  
14           that those two seats must be filled from  
15           elected CEC representatives, right at that  
16           point they're independent.

17           The fact that, you know, we've been  
18           against this mayoral control for as long as  
19           I've been president. The two mayors before  
20           this one, every time that anybody voted  
21           against them, they removed them from the  
22           panel. It wasn't just the first one, it's  
23           the second one did the same thing. So it  
24           really gets to be a little bit ridiculous.



1           And we're really working really well  
2           with this mayor, and the chancellor. But  
3           I've heard them say that, you know, if we  
4           can't convince people that we have a really  
5           good idea, then maybe we shouldn't do it.  
6           And that's really what we're looking for. We  
7           do not -- nobody wants to go back to the  
8           school boards. That I talked to. Nobody.

9           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
10          Thank you, Michael.

11          ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:  
12          Thank you.

13          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have two  
14          more Assemblymembers. First, Assemblywoman  
15          Jo Anne Simon, and then our Higher Ed chair  
16          Deborah Glick will close out this panel.

17          ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Well, thank you.  
18          And thank you both, Andy and Mike, for all of  
19          the work you're doing and for your members.  
20          It's so critical.

21          And I do want to say, you know, I was  
22          one of those people who sent the letter  
23          saying we need to look at the possibility of  
24          doing some things remotely in order to figure

1 out which end is up kind of thing. But like  
2 my granddaughter went back to school, and it  
3 was like life-altering for her to go back to  
4 school, it was just so important.

5 So a couple of things. You talked  
6 about testing and demonstrating mastery of  
7 subject matter. And, you know, I'm a  
8 Performance Standards Consortium fan myself,  
9 so I always like to raise that. But I'm  
10 concerned because, you know, the reason we do  
11 annual testing is the federal No Child Left  
12 Behind, which then became ESSA. And how are  
13 we going to try and strategize around not  
14 having a federal mandate to give these tests?  
15 Because that is really the problem. It makes  
16 everybody crazy at the state level, but the  
17 fact that we have to give certain tests is a  
18 federal mandate.

19 And then just one thing I want to just  
20 mention, I don't know -- it's not necessarily  
21 your -- it's not under your control,  
22 certainly. But I was pleased to see that the  
23 new chancellor did not at least overtly lump  
24 special ed in with ELL students. Because

1           those students have often very, very  
2           different needs. Although students may have  
3           both of those needs.

4                     But, you know, the students are  
5           shortchanged when you try and lump them  
6           together. So that's -- I don't know if you  
7           agree with that or not.

8                     MR. MULGREW: Yes, I agree with that.  
9           The last statement, absolutely agree with it.  
10          New York City has more languages inside of it  
11          than any other school system. And just the  
12          basic things you have to start with is when a  
13          child -- when we have a newcomer, it's did  
14          they receive formal education in their  
15          country. You know, we have to start with  
16          that basic.

17                    And everybody makes assumptions, and  
18          they're just not true. And there's no  
19          assumption to be made about a country,  
20          because it depends on what part of the  
21          country you were raised in.

22                    And then if a child did not have  
23          access to formal education and, say, they're  
24          a teenager, are we going to mislabel them as

1       being special needs when we don't -- because  
2       they haven't had any formal education? It's  
3       quite complicated, the work that we do with  
4       the ELL population. And New York City is  
5       constantly struggling with it because of the  
6       challenge of the numbers and the different  
7       countries that we bring all of our students  
8       from.

9               So, I mean, we have a lot of people  
10       who are working on this. But, you know,  
11       there needs to be -- something different has  
12       to go -- we can't do the "one size fits all"  
13       that a lot of school systems can do. We  
14       can't do that.

15              And the special needs population --  
16       New York City is under a corrective action  
17       plan from the State Education Department.  
18       And it should be under a corrective action  
19       plan. But things need to get better. And  
20       they did not get better up until the end of  
21       December, they were actually getting worse.  
22       Just basic compliance as well as the backlog  
23       of cases and all the other things. And the  
24       Department of Education felt that it was

1           their job to hide compliance issues rather  
2           than just -- there's a very simple question  
3           with compliance: Is the child getting their  
4           service? It's really that simple.

5                     Is the child getting the service? If  
6           the answer is yes, you're in compliance. If  
7           the answer is no, you're not in compliance.  
8           And it's not supposed to be, oh, here's a  
9           rationalization why we're not in compliance.  
10          It's supposed to be no, it's your  
11          responsibility to do something now to get  
12          that child their services.

13                    It really gets ridiculous when you  
14          think about all of the stuff that has gone on  
15          over there. But we've been working with the  
16          State Education Department, and the new  
17          chancellor and mayor have spoken about this  
18          publicly. So we are hopeful.

19                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And the testing  
20          issue with the feds, any plans to deal with  
21          that?

22                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. So  
23          we're going to send it back to the Senate, to  
24          Senator Krueger.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I was just  
2                   writing you a note that I'd be happy to go  
3                   after all the Assemblymembers. But now that  
4                   you've called on me --

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I called on  
6                   you.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's okay.  
8                   thank you very much, Helene.

9                   I just really want to thank both of  
10                  you. You know, everybody does understand, no  
11                  matter where you're elected, pretty much the  
12                  most important issue that constituents bring  
13                  to you over and over again is the quality of  
14                  education for their children, because that's  
15                  what they care about. And so, you know,  
16                  people get hot under the collar, everybody  
17                  likes to point fingers and blame somebody  
18                  else. And I just want to say I think one of  
19                  the lessons all of us have learned during  
20                  COVID -- we've all of us made mistakes  
21                  because we didn't know what we were doing and  
22                  we were trying to come up with answers  
23                  literally day by day -- was how  
24                  extraordinarily hard the work is that

1 teachers in our schools, and principals, and  
2 everyone else who works in our schools does.

3 And even though there are lots of  
4 things that fell by the wayside and we  
5 haven't really figured out totally, I think  
6 that this was an extraordinary opportunity  
7 where people started to think through more  
8 new innovative things that can work when  
9 you're not under the pressure of 25 percent  
10 COVID rates.

11 And so I am hoping that you will work  
12 with us as we move forward to understand,  
13 one, how we all need to be better prepared  
14 for the next time -- because I fear there  
15 will be a next time -- but then also that  
16 there were new opportunities, I think, for us  
17 to make our schools even better and address  
18 the needs of the teachers and principals and  
19 parents and children by actually using some  
20 of the new technology and some of the new  
21 ideas that we never would have even imagined  
22 trying.

23 So I'm hoping that to some degree we  
24 can all think-tank that together statewide as

1           we move forward. And I think that the new  
2           Regents actually are very interested in doing  
3           that. And we heard from the chancellor of  
4           New York City earlier who seems basically to  
5           be open to the things that work. And I think  
6           that's exactly what both of you gentlemen, on  
7           behalf of your members, want also. We want  
8           models that work for our kids.

9                     So I'm not asking you to answer  
10           necessarily now, I'm just asking you, you  
11           know, to help everyone think through what  
12           were the good and bad lessons learned and how  
13           do we take the good from it going forward.

14                    MR. MULGREW: Thank you. We  
15           appreciate that. We're actually quite  
16           excited. If we can finally get through the  
17           damn thing, we're quite excited about some of  
18           the things that we've learned. And there was  
19           some good that came out of this in terms of  
20           really looking at different ways of engaging  
21           students.

22                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think so too.

23                    MR. PALLOTTA: We saw it throughout  
24           the state when we went to certain districts,



1           and I'll highlight White Plains was one of  
2           the districts we went to, where the  
3           superintendent, the union, the parents,  
4           students, all on the same page. And doing  
5           great things.

6                     So we know that in those difficult  
7           times, people were able to come together.  
8           Right? And this is what we've seen pretty  
9           much all over the state.

10                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you both.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Now  
12           we go to Assemblywoman Glick.

13                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. It's  
14           good to see you both.

15                    PRESIDENT MULGREW: Nice to see you.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And thank you on  
17           behalf of all of the teachers and school  
18           staff for everything that you've done through  
19           this extraordinary time.

20                    Let me just ask you quickly, we've  
21           talked about the social-emotional learning.  
22           The flip side of that is disruptions and  
23           disruptive behavior. And, you know, I'm very  
24           concerned about -- and have been -- about

1 safety in the schools. It used to be  
2 bullying. Sort of, you know, it's expanded  
3 into actually, you know, more acting out.

4 And I'm wondering what the experience  
5 has been of teachers in dealing with this and  
6 what other supports they may have or need  
7 that we should be thinking about as we go  
8 forward with the budget.

9 MR. MULGREW: I'm going to do this  
10 quick because I know Andy wants to talk about  
11 that statewide.

12 The first couple of weeks of September  
13 were good and then we started to see the  
14 manifestation of the bad behavior, of acting  
15 out and different things of that nature.

16 Our Member Assistance Program at the  
17 union, we had to add more personnel into it  
18 and it's still completely overwhelmed.  
19 Thankfully we have a lot of people who  
20 volunteer, psychologists and social workers  
21 who volunteer and do groups, group counseling  
22 for the teachers.

23 It's tough what everyone's going  
24 through. And when you go into a school, you

1       have the adults and the children all in one  
2       place, being greatly affected, and now being  
3       put back into a school where they're rigidly  
4       following all of the rules of COVID still.  
5       So it's not the best scenario in terms of  
6       trying to work through the social-emotional  
7       aspects. Challenges, really. They're  
8       challenges, because there's been so much harm  
9       that has been done.

10               So the teachers are -- this is going  
11       to -- we're going to need to put more  
12       supports in for teachers. And whether that's  
13       an expansion of member assistance programs  
14       for teachers, that would be one way to do it.  
15       But we have to do something.

16               But I know Andy would like to speak  
17       about that, to what's gone on throughout the  
18       state.

19               MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you, Michael.

20               So we're working on creating at NYSUT  
21       a member assistance program which I believe  
22       will have a great impact.

23               We've seen the behaviors that you're  
24       talking about. We also know that during this

1           time the critical shortage in staffing has  
2           created even more problems. Right? So in  
3           some districts you couldn't get bus drivers,  
4           right, because they were out sick. And then  
5           if you got the bus drivers you didn't have  
6           the paraprofessionals, or you had the  
7           teachers absent and you couldn't get  
8           substitutes. So we had one crisis after  
9           another with getting enough staff to actually  
10          run a school.

11                 So we saw it during the height of  
12          COVID, and we also now look forward to these  
13          numbers -- we're seeing them drop, we're  
14          encouraged by that drop, but we also know  
15          that we could be back there again.

16                 So we appreciate what the Governor has  
17          done with some of the streamlining, the money  
18          that's in the budget on training for bus  
19          drivers. It was a really critical time  
20          during this last surge that there were  
21          shortages everywhere.

22                 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

23                 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

24                 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have one

1 Assemblymember left to close out,  
2 Mike Reilly, who seems to be our finisher on  
3 this hearing.

4 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Reilly, you're the  
5 finisher.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Madam  
7 Chair. I'm sorry, I had to pull over and  
8 make sure that I got into a good spot before  
9 I hit my button.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: I actually wanted  
12 to -- you know, I was listening to the entire  
13 testimony. And Michael and Andrew, thank you  
14 so much for doing this and sharing.

15 But mayoral control is something that  
16 when -- Michael, when you brought it up, it  
17 really struck home. Because as you know, as  
18 a former member of the CEC 31, I advocated  
19 for several years on this front.

20 One issue that you mentioned that  
21 really strikes a nerve with me every time is  
22 being able to remove a member at any time,  
23 the appointing authority. And, you know, I  
24 understand my colleagues in the

1           Legislature -- I spoke about this last year  
2           when they tried to add the letter that they  
3           have to send saying why they removed a  
4           member.

5                     I think it doesn't go far enough to  
6           have a checks and balances, because you can  
7           still remove them regardless of sending the  
8           letter. I think there has to be a point  
9           where we say they can only be removed for  
10          good cause. Or just cause.

11                    And, you know, one of the things that  
12          I speak about -- and I have legislation on  
13          it. But it's about having the PEP vote on  
14          the member being removed. And I think that  
15          could be a chance. And especially adding  
16          that extra parent that some have been  
17          advocating about for over a decade.

18                    So I appreciate the take on that. But  
19          what do you think about that, about adding  
20          more accountability on removing a --

21                    MR. MULGREW: Yeah, I think that's  
22          something that has to be looked at because  
23          whether you do a fixed term and then say once  
24          someone is appointed, unless there's just

1           cause, that member cannot be removed from the  
2           panel by the person or the entity that  
3           appointed them. Something along those lines.

4                    Because -- and in New York City, and  
5           at the state level, everybody keeps saying,  
6           well, if you change anything, it's not  
7           mayoral control. It's just not true.  
8           People, I'll give you the book. It's just  
9           not true. There's all different versions of  
10          mayoral control. We're the only city who  
11          gave absolute power to one office. The only  
12          city that did it this way.

13                   So it's just -- and the parents -- and  
14          I don't believe any of the mayors have went  
15          out and said, I'm going to silence parents'  
16          voice. But it happened. And it happens over  
17          and over. Why? Because in the end you're  
18          running a city, there's all sorts of other  
19          things going on. The Department of Education  
20          has parents all the time. They have this  
21          huge bureaucracy. In the end, it's just easy  
22          to say, all right, I'll have a meeting but  
23          I'm not going to do anything for you.  
24          Therefore, you're silencing the parents'

1 voice.

2 So just put in something that changes  
3 that dynamic. And I think, you know, fixed  
4 terms with only a just cause for removal  
5 would help that.

6 And also I think it's time that we put  
7 two parent members on the panel that are  
8 voted for by the parents. You would have  
9 been eligible to be one of the parents who  
10 could have been put on the panel, voted on.  
11 I think it's time that we do that. Because  
12 that's the way that people will stop ignoring  
13 the parents. So there will be parents who  
14 are there because they're elected  
15 representatives of the parents of New York  
16 City, not a parent who's been appointed by a  
17 political -- or an elected official.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,  
19 Michael. Thank you, guys.

20 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Get home safe.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you, Madam  
22 Chair. Thank you.

23 (Pause.)

24 PRESIDENT MULGREW: I guess we're



1 done?

2 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Thank you.

3 PRESIDENT MULGREW: Thanks, bye.

4 (Overtalk.)

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No, don't go  
6 yet. Don't go. I believe we have a late  
7 starter, Assemblyman Smith, our ranker on  
8 Education, for three minutes.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I've been with the  
10 hearing the entire time. I had some tech  
11 issues up in Albany, and then I had to run  
12 back to Long Island -- but it may shock  
13 everybody, I made it back to Long Island, to  
14 my desk before I had to --

15 (Overtalk.)

16 PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: That's  
17 impressive.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: So thank you for  
19 the time. I've been listening the entire  
20 time, so I appreciate a lot of the comments.  
21 And I like asking questions last because a  
22 lot of the issues have already been  
23 addressed.

24 So two issues that I wanted to see if

1           you could weigh in on, both of you. And  
2           again, thank you for joining us.

3           Obviously we're looking at the  
4           possibility -- well, the very real  
5           possibility of a teacher shortage crisis.  
6           This is something that I've been talking to  
7           Betty Rosa about, Dr. Betty Rosa. She's  
8           done, I think, a good job trying to address  
9           this.

10          What do you think we could be doing to  
11          engage people to -- you know, we've had an  
12          issue of burnout, as you mentioned, for the  
13          anti-teacher sentiment and then the  
14          accountability, or over-accountability, and  
15          now we have this pandemic -- to get people to  
16          take this on as their second career?

17          And I speak as somebody who was in the  
18          classroom. You know, I think we need to get  
19          people as that second career.

20          PRESIDENT MULGREW: Andy?

21          PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Assemblymember,  
22          I'll tell you my story. I worked for Chase  
23          Manhattan Bank and was looking to make a  
24          difference. Right? And at 25 years old,

1 left the bank, became a teacher, and loved it  
2 all along.

3 So this is something where there is a  
4 great need. And there is so much that can be  
5 done by a teacher in this society. So we  
6 need to get that message out there. And I  
7 believe that now, with the Governor that we  
8 have and the Legislature that we have, the  
9 commissioner, the chancellors, we have all  
10 positive emotions about being a teacher now.  
11 It's not what it used to be when we had the  
12 previous Governor. So that in itself turns  
13 things around.

14 And then we have to take off from  
15 their plates the busywork, things that are  
16 meaningless. And the waste of time preparing  
17 for tests that don't adequately assess  
18 children. So I think -- I want to give time  
19 to Michael so I'm going to pass it off to  
20 him. Go ahead, Michael.

21 PRESIDENT MULGREW: The intrinsic  
22 value or intrinsic compensation that you get  
23 from teaching is immeasurable. I still  
24 believe that there are many people in our

1           society who have those same values. But the  
2           profession itself has gone through some --  
3           quite a bit of turmoil, and a lot of people  
4           who even try to get into the profession, they  
5           leave very quickly because they say, This is  
6           not what I ever thought it was going to be.

7           Number one exit interview -- the  
8           number one issues on the exit interview are,  
9           one, it's a much more difficult profession  
10          than I thought. Two, there's no one here to  
11          support me, all they do is keep making me do  
12          busywork. That's the piece that has to  
13          change. So in terms of how we train and then  
14          what we're asking our schools to do.

15          Just think about every time there's  
16          another accountability measure passed,  
17          whether it's at the federal level, the state  
18          level, or even at a school district level.  
19          It's just added on paperwork to a teacher.  
20          That's all it ever becomes, added-on  
21          paperwork --

22          ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you both,  
23          and thank you for joining us on that. I  
24          agree with you all heartily.

1                   PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Thank you.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I believe we  
3 are finished with this panel.

4                   PRESIDENT MULGREW: Are we finished?  
5 Thank you so much.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Now everybody  
7 could wave goodbye.

8                   MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

9                   MR. MULGREW: Thank you. Have a good  
10 rest of the session.

11                  PRESIDENT PALLOTTA: Have a great  
12 evening. Appreciate all you're doing.

13                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15                  As the sun starts to set in Albany, we  
16 go on to Panel B, which is the Conference of  
17 Big 5 School Districts, actually along with  
18 Mount Vernon. So we have the Conference of  
19 Big 5 School Districts, Jennifer Pyle,  
20 executive director; Syracuse City School  
21 District, Jaime Alicia, superintendent;  
22 Kriner Cash, superintendent, Buffalo Public  
23 Schools; Lesli Myers-Small, superintendent,  
24 Rochester City School District; Yonkers

1 Public Schools, Edwin Quezada,  
2 superintendent; Albany City School District,  
3 Kaweeda Adams, superintendent; Mount Vernon  
4 City School District, Kenneth Hamilton,  
5 superintendent.

6 So each of these witnesses will have  
7 three minutes. I really encourage you to  
8 please stay to the three-minute mark. The  
9 clock should be in the upper left-hand  
10 corner. And once you have all presented, we  
11 will then call on some Assemblymembers to ask  
12 questions.

13 But if you can go in that order, that  
14 would be best.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We might even be  
16 willing to call in a few Senators also.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, of course.  
18 I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry too,  
20 I'm just --

21 (Laughter.)

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Legislators  
23 will be --

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You know, this is

1 Day 2, and it's another long one.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The legislators  
3 will be asking questions.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
5 Assemblywoman Weinstein.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So Jennifer,  
7 are you here to start?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: Sure. Sure.  
9 Yes, sorry about that.

10 So as you all know, I serve as  
11 executive director of the Conference of Big 5  
12 School Districts. We actually represent  
13 Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse,  
14 Yonkers, Albany, Mount Vernon, and Utica city  
15 school districts. Thank you for allowing us  
16 to testify today and for your steadfast  
17 commitment to serving the needs of urban  
18 education in New York State.

19 I also want to take a moment to thank  
20 you for your extraordinary efforts resulting  
21 in the Foundation Aid phase-in and receipt of  
22 the federal resources necessary to enable our  
23 school districts to meet pressing  
24 COVID-related needs.

1           We're pleased that the Executive  
2           Budget maintains the Foundation Aid phase-in  
3           and provides full funding for expense-based  
4           aids. We're also grateful for the inclusion  
5           of the \$100 million in funding under the  
6           proposed Recover from School program to  
7           support critical social-emotional issues and  
8           learning loss.

9           We continue to have serious concerns  
10          with regard to the current charter school  
11          funding system. Charter school expansion in  
12          saturated school districts must be limited,  
13          and enhanced accountability measures applied  
14          to ensure that enrollment accurately reflects  
15          district-pupil demographics.

16          Furthermore, the New York State Board  
17          of Regents must be given the final say when  
18          it comes to approval of new or expansion of  
19          existing charter schools. All too often SUNY  
20          has failed to adequately review applications  
21          and continues to exploit loopholes in the  
22          current statute.

23          Our school districts operate some of  
24          the most innovative and successful CTE



1 programs in the state, and we're continuing  
2 to grow these programs. We ask you to  
3 increase the Special Services Aid per-pupil  
4 formula-based funding cap and to expand it to  
5 capture students beginning in Grade 9.

6 The Big 5 school districts appreciate  
7 the Governor's ongoing commitment to funding  
8 pre-kindergarten programs. However, the  
9 funding levels have not been adjusted to  
10 reflect the actual costs. The state must  
11 commit to fully funding pre-kindergarten for  
12 high-need urban school districts.

13 Each of our school districts provide  
14 valuable health services to their students.  
15 Unfortunately, funding for these services has  
16 been frozen for many years. We urge you to  
17 provide additional targeted school health  
18 funding for all member districts to assist  
19 them with increased demands.

20 We support the Governor's inclusion of  
21 the retiree earning waiver extension and ask  
22 you to ensure this is incorporated in the  
23 final budget. This will provide school  
24 districts with another avenue by which to

1       pursue filling vacancies in many shortage  
2       areas.

3               We applaud the Governor for proposing  
4       the long-overdue comprehensive solution to  
5       Building Aid and Transportation Aid  
6       penalties. School districts should not be  
7       penalized for clerical errors.

8               I'd like to take a moment to thank the  
9       New York State Education Department,  
10      Chancellor Young and Commissioner Rosa for  
11      their unwavering commitment to supporting our  
12      school districts throughout the pandemic. We  
13      urge you to reject the Governor's proposal to  
14      shift the responsibility for the child  
15      nutrition programs from the State Education  
16      Department to Agriculture and Markets. This  
17      change would up-end a program that's  
18      exceptionally well run and create unnecessary  
19      confusion and strain for school districts.

20              Thank you again for this opportunity.  
21      We look forward to working with you in the  
22      coming weeks, and remain available to answer  
23      any questions.

24              CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1           If you can just go on in order. So  
2       Syracuse, can we go next?

3           SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT ALICEA: Thank  
4       you. Good afternoon, everyone. I am Jaime  
5       Alicea. I have the privilege of serving the  
6       students, families and staff in the City of  
7       Syracuse. And I appreciate the opportunity  
8       to be here today to discuss the Executive  
9       Budget and the potential impact it will have  
10      on the students in the Big 5 school  
11      districts, and especially on the students in  
12      Syracuse.

13          First, I want to say thank you. I  
14      want to take a moment to really commend you  
15      and thank you for securing over \$150  
16      million in federal stimulus funding for  
17      Syracuse and for your statutory commitment to  
18      fully fund Foundation Aid. The Legislature  
19      deserves tremendous credit for your efforts  
20      to deliver and allocate unprecedented  
21      financial support to schools during the  
22      pandemic.

23          I can tell you that in Syracuse we  
24      have used this funding to add counselors at

1 all the elementary schools. We added more  
2 social workers and social worker assistants.  
3 We also hired teachers and teacher assistants  
4 and open reading and math intervention  
5 classrooms in all our elementary and middle  
6 schools.

7 As a result of your commitment to fund  
8 public education, the children of the  
9 Syracuse city school district are underway to  
10 academic recovery and success. So thank you  
11 for believing in our kids and showing your  
12 support with financial resources long term.

13 Please understand that the increased  
14 needs of children post-pandemic will continue  
15 long after the stimulus funds have expired.  
16 Therefore, your continued financial support  
17 is crucial and needed.

18 There's some areas that I would like  
19 to talk to you about. One is the funding  
20 cliff. I remain deeply concerned about the  
21 funding cliff looming once the federal  
22 stimulus funds have been exhausted. Syracuse  
23 has no ability to generate local revenue,  
24 given our fiscal dependency on the city.

1 Student needs for academic and  
2 social-emotional supports will not dwindle  
3 when funds expire. Again, thank you for  
4 putting students first.

5 I would like for you to use the  
6 funding formula to provide aid to our  
7 students with special needs, ELL students,  
8 and our students living in extreme poverty by  
9 utilizing updated census data and poverty  
10 measures, weighting ELL students and  
11 increasing weighting on special-needs  
12 students.

13 Also, in the area of healthcare,  
14 nurses are essential to the daily operation  
15 of our schools and should be properly funded  
16 as an expense-based aid. The current funding  
17 rate has been flat for more than a decade. I  
18 recommend a student-to-nurse ratio of 300 to  
19 1, which will double the amount of nurses in  
20 our schools.

21 I know my time is running out. And  
22 for Career and Technical Education, we have  
23 talked in the past about including funding  
24 for ninth-grade students participating in our

1 CTE program.

2 So thank you for the opportunity of  
3 sharing this information with you today.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 Now we'll hear from Buffalo.

6 BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: Yes,  
7 good afternoon, colleagues. Thank you for  
8 taking the time to hear our testimonies from  
9 the Big 5 school districts.

10 We certainly support, applaud and  
11 appreciate the Governor's budget proposals.  
12 I want to echo what my colleague from  
13 Syracuse said; the Buffalo city school  
14 district is pleased to support Governor  
15 Hochul's signature education proposals,  
16 including and especially the 2.1 billion  
17 increase in education funding, the continued  
18 phase-in of the Foundation Aid, full funding  
19 of current statutory formulas,  
20 pandemic-related responses, and several new  
21 or expanded grant programs. Those will  
22 assist the Buffalo City School District  
23 tremendously.

24 Our health services grant was

1           mentioned by Jennifer Pyle. We would like to  
2           see a specific \$3 million increase in our  
3           health services allocation, bringing the  
4           total to \$8.3 million. This of course will  
5           help us with the escalating costs of  
6           health-related services, which were climbing  
7           before pandemic and now are really at a level  
8           that is compromising services for our  
9           students.

10                   Our Special Services Aid -- this is  
11           important, I'll succinctly state it --  
12           increase the per-pupil cap under Special  
13           Services Aid and expand the funding to cover  
14           ninth-grade students participating in CTE  
15           programs. Ninth grade. We have some  
16           extraordinary and innovative CTE programs.  
17           We want to include this cost to reach  
18           ninth-grade students.

19                   Pre-kindergarten programs, increase  
20           funding for pre-kindergarten programs to  
21           reduce the local share cost and allow us to  
22           expeditiously expand to 3-year-old  
23           programming. We're really getting into what  
24           we call prenatal to post-secondary education.

1       We see that whole continuum as our  
2       responsibility, and we want to now expand to  
3       3-year-old programming.

4               Jennifer Pyle explained the charter  
5       school tuition and charter school requests  
6       that we have and that we share with our other  
7       Big 5 colleagues. These requests are already  
8       being championed by many of our legislators,  
9       and so I won't need to go into those deeply  
10      with you. But simply, the charter school  
11      reimbursement fund at 100 percent in the  
12      current year -- the proliferation of startup  
13      charters in Buffalo, for example, are mainly  
14      in the pre-K or K-8 space, and we don't need  
15      them here. There's no evidence of need here.  
16      So we want the Board of Regents to authorize  
17      the charter schools going forward.

18              And then we want to make sure that  
19      when a school does close, that an independent  
20      receiver comes in and makes sure that all the  
21      assets come back to the public school  
22      district so that we can continue to support  
23      re-enrolled children.

24              Thank you.



1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2                   So now we will go to Rochester.

3                   ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: I am  
4                   Dr. Lesli Myers-Small, superintendent of the  
5                   Rochester City School District. It's an  
6                   honor to have the opportunity to discuss the  
7                   impact of the Executive Budget on our  
8                   district.

9                   Rochester is one of the highest-needs  
10                  school districts in New York State. We serve  
11                  almost 24,000 students, of which 22 percent  
12                  are students with disabilities and 4,000 are  
13                  English language learners.

14                 We have been actively working to  
15                  address concerns around school safety and  
16                  social-emotional health, as we have  
17                  experienced an increase in acts of school  
18                  violence. Sadly, 11 students died as a  
19                  result of gun violence, and far too many of  
20                  our students experience trauma.

21                 As we continue to grapple with this,  
22                  we are addressing academic achievement. We  
23                  are working with multiple stakeholders in our  
24                  efforts to become a high-performing school

1 district. Indicators of success indicate  
2 greater access to diverse programming,  
3 increasing graduation rates and improving  
4 school performance indicators.

5 I am proud to report that our fiscal  
6 strength is improving. We were able to  
7 forego the need for our revenue anticipation  
8 note in '21-'22. The district's Moody's and  
9 S&P ratings moved from negative to stable.

10 Despite this, the Fitch rating for  
11 Monroe County was reduced, given the  
12 saturation of charter schools. Which brings  
13 me to the district's priorities relative to  
14 the Executive Budget.

15 Moratorium on charter schools. That's  
16 been mentioned. We found approximately  
17 \$105 million to support nearly 7,000 students  
18 in 14 charter schools. Three additional  
19 schools will be opening next year. We ask  
20 that the state act in saturated school  
21 districts such as ours.

22 Targeting funds for mental health and  
23 school climate. The district's school health  
24 services funding has not kept pace with

1 students' mental health needs and  
2 social-emotional needs. Additionally, we are  
3 asking for school health services  
4 reimbursements to meet the needs created by  
5 COVID.

6 Addressing teacher, nurse and  
7 certificated staff shortages. One way to  
8 mitigate this issue is to extend the waiver  
9 of the \$35,000 retiree earning cap.

10 We are asking the state to fund  
11 full-day pre-K programs at 100 percent for  
12 high-needs school districts. We cannot  
13 afford to shoulder the unplanned expenditure  
14 of preschool special education students at a  
15 cost of \$20,000 per student.

16 We are also requesting additional  
17 funding that is equitable for our ELL  
18 students, as they have significant academic  
19 and emotional needs.

20 The impact of the proposal to amend  
21 Transportation Aid from actual expenditures  
22 to formula-based aid will have significant  
23 fiscal implications for our district. It is  
24 vital that this remains aligned to actual

1 expenditures.

2 In closing, I want to express my  
3 sincere gratitude for your support of the  
4 Rochester City School District. I value our  
5 partnership as we work together to ensure our  
6 scholars receive the best opportunities for a  
7 high-quality education.

8 Thank you.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Rochester, we  
10 thank you.

11 I have taken over ever so briefly for  
12 our chairwoman. And so we will go on to  
13 Yonkers.

14 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: Good  
15 afternoon, distinguished legislators. Thank  
16 you for the opportunity to share with you  
17 part of my testimony respectfully submitted  
18 on behalf of the Yonkers Public Schools.

19 Let me begin by expressing my  
20 gratitude to you for the tremendous support  
21 that you have provided throughout the years  
22 for the City of Yonkers and the Yonkers  
23 Public Schools. This support is perhaps best  
24 reflected in the chart found on page 1 of my

1 testimony. From 2014 to today, the  
2 Legislature has increased Yonkers'  
3 Foundation Aid by 78.5 million. During that  
4 same period, our students' on-time graduation  
5 rate has soared to 90.7 percent, an increase  
6 of 15 percentage points since 2014.

7 With your support and the support  
8 received from the American Rescue Plan, the  
9 district has not only enhanced our community  
10 school model, but also exponentially  
11 increased the wraparound services that we  
12 offer to our students and their families.  
13 Clearly investment matters, consistency in  
14 leadership matters, and we thank you.

15 Since 2014, I have been speaking to  
16 you about sustainable solutions for student  
17 success. This is the year to set the  
18 conditions for sustainable recurring revenue  
19 to be allocated to our schools. To that end,  
20 Yonkers is asking you to consider some  
21 salient recommendations to address the  
22 structural fiscal challenge impacting the  
23 school district. If these recommendations  
24 are adopted, your investment will produce

1 sustainable solutions for Yonkers student  
2 access next year and for decades to come.

3 Please consider increasing Yonkers'  
4 pre-K universal allocation from 20 million to  
5 30 million, as well as increasing the numbers  
6 of seats for 3-year-olds from 136 to 225;  
7 guaranteeing free access to internet for all  
8 children living in poverty across our state;  
9 increasing Yonkers' Textbook, Software and  
10 Library materials allocation to \$5 million.  
11 Increasing our health services allocation  
12 from 1.2 to 7.8 million dollars, and  
13 including Grade 9 students statewide in the  
14 CTE allocation. Yonkers has 1300 Grade 9  
15 students taking CTE courses. Increasing  
16 Yonkers' VLT allocation from 19.6 million to  
17 25 million. Increasing Yonkers Academic  
18 Enhancements Aid from 17 million to  
19 22 million, and increasing funding  
20 allocations for multilingual learners and  
21 students with disabilities.

22 These recommendations have the  
23 potential to generate over 30 million in  
24 recurrent sustainable revenue for Yonkers

1 public schools.

2 And finally, allow me to underscore  
3 the importance of addressing Yonkers'  
4 critical infrastructure needs. This is the  
5 year to appropriate equitable funding to  
6 address our aging infrastructure: Change  
7 Yonkers' reimbursement from 73.5 to  
8 90 percent, and appropriate a block grant of  
9 100 million to rectify the safety concerns in  
10 our schools and to begin constructing two  
11 additional new schools.

12 I thank you for your time, and have a  
13 good evening.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, and  
15 now we move on to Albany.

16 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT ADAMS: Good  
17 evening. My name is Kaweeda Adams, and I'm  
18 the superintendent for the City School  
19 District of Albany.

20 I begin by saying thank you for your  
21 advocacy, support and follow-through  
22 regarding the continued phase-in of our  
23 Foundation Aid funding. This increase in  
24 Foundation Aid enables us to fulfill our

1 commitment to the social and emotional mental  
2 health supports that our students need and  
3 deserve. We know that this work is critical,  
4 as was evident through our stakeholder survey  
5 conducted last spring. Our Foundation Aid is  
6 enabling us to increase our social and  
7 emotional staffing positions, approximately  
8 18 positions, within two years, this year and  
9 next year, to include school nurses, social  
10 workers, school psychologists, behavioral  
11 specialists, and guidance counselors.

12 In addition, we thank you for your  
13 continued support of our community schools  
14 model so that we are able to meet the needs  
15 of our at-risk communities with the built-in  
16 clinics and on-site wraparound services for  
17 our families.

18 As you know, Albany is a resettlement  
19 city, and our community and our school  
20 district experienced significant growth in  
21 our refugee and immigrant population.  
22 Through October of this current school year,  
23 we welcomed 230 new ELL students to our  
24 district, 100 more than the previous year.



1 Your continued support and commitment to  
2 Foundation Aid funding in part supports our  
3 ELL population, and it enables us to restore  
4 and expand our Albany International Center,  
5 designed to meet the needs of our ELL  
6 students in Grades 6 through 12 and now  
7 Grades K through 5.

8 We would be remiss if we did not take  
9 the time to acknowledge the work of  
10 Assemblymember Pat Fahy and Senator Robert  
11 Jackson regarding their sponsorship of the  
12 child safety zone legislation. We are so  
13 appreciative of the legislators and Governor  
14 Hochul for supporting this state's  
15 Transportation Law, which expands the  
16 criteria for child safety zones.

17 Finally, we will continue our advocacy  
18 for the state to address the charter school  
19 concerns already shared by my colleagues. In  
20 addition, we continue our advocacy for the  
21 state to update the funding formula for  
22 pre-kindergarten in a more equitable manner.  
23 This is incredibly important for Albany and  
24 districts like Albany, who were early

1        adopters of full-day pre-kindergarten. Our  
2        district invests over a million dollars from  
3        our local budget to bridge that gap.

4                Currently we experience about a  
5        39 percent staffing turnover rate, which has  
6        been consistent over the last three years.  
7        Districts have challenges delivering early  
8        childhood curriculum respectful of culturally  
9        responsive teaching and learning best  
10       practices, certification of faculty and  
11       staff, facilitating comprehensive salaries,  
12       providing summer programs, and offering  
13       training opportunities to address the  
14       social-emotional learning of our pre-K  
15       students.

16               We strongly advocate for raising the  
17       pre-K funding for school districts that were  
18       early implementers of the full-day  
19       kindergarten, in order to align with more  
20       recent funding streams in order to support  
21       the foundation of our youngest learners.

22               Again, we thank you for your unending  
23       support and advocacy for equitable  
24       opportunities for all of our students.

1                   Thank you.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3                   So Mount Vernon, Kenneth Hamilton.

4                   THE MODERATOR: We seem to be missing  
5 Superintendent Hamilton. If --

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, so --

7                   THE MODERATOR: -- they come back, we  
8 will certainly let you know.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So then  
10 we're ready to go to member questions. And I  
11 think we'd like to actually start with the  
12 Senate, Senator Krueger, and your Education  
13 chair.

14                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Very good. Happy  
15 to do that.

16                   Shelley Mayer, our Education chair.

17                   SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Senator  
18 Krueger. And thank you to these fantastic  
19 leaders of the Big 5 and beyond for making it  
20 through an incredibly challenging time. A  
21 special shout out to my own superintendent,  
22 Dr. Quezada, on behalf of myself and the  
23 Majority Leader, who is on her way driving  
24 back from Albany.

1           But, you know, Yonkers has managed to  
2           stay open for a good deal of this time, which  
3           is one of my questions. I only have a little  
4           bit of time. Let me direct them to you,  
5           Dr. Quezada first.

6           What are the things that schools like  
7           Yonkers or your colleagues need in order to  
8           stay open during these challenging times,  
9           presuming we're going to have more challenges  
10          in the days ahead?

11          YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: Well,  
12          first of all, thank you, Senator. You have  
13          been a champion of this work and you know  
14          that we love you here in Yonkers.

15          And for us to remain open, first of  
16          all, we need consistency as it relates to the  
17          message that is given to us as  
18          superintendents. We certainly need the  
19          continuous support that came from the  
20          Governor with additional testing. And we  
21          just need the commitment of everyone. This  
22          is about creating conditions for students and  
23          believing that it is the best place for them  
24          to be in school, there is no choice as it

1 relates to being in school.

2 So it is about consistency, it's about  
3 financial support, it's about having the  
4 right message at all times.

5 SENATOR MAYER: Secondly -- and a  
6 number of your colleagues have mentioned  
7 this -- for those of you who adopted full-day  
8 pre-K before our expansion of it last year,  
9 and it was previously a grant-funded program  
10 which you applied for and there was a limited  
11 pool of money, how has it been inadequate to  
12 meet the needs of your 4-year-olds?

13 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: Well,  
14 here in Yonkers, we have a full-day pre-K for  
15 every student that chooses to come to our  
16 school in pre-K. The total cost is about  
17 \$21 million. Right now the appropriation is  
18 only about \$13 million. So the district is  
19 absorbing about \$8 million, and it's very  
20 similar to my sister district here.

21 So certainly fully funding universal  
22 pre-K and 3-year-olds in our CBO is the way  
23 to go with our young people.

24 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Yeah,

1 we're very supportive of that.

2 None of you mentioned, I don't think,  
3 the lack of internet capacity for all your  
4 students, which we know -- maybe to  
5 Dr. Quezada -- during the height of COVID has  
6 been a really substantial challenge.

7 Do you have specific  
8 recommendations -- I know there are products  
9 out there, a number of districts have made  
10 arrangements with providers. What is your  
11 view about how we can solve this problem so  
12 that every one of your kids has access in the  
13 event there's remote learning?

14 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: Well,  
15 access to the internet for all families  
16 living below the poverty level must be a  
17 responsibility of the State of New York.

18 And in addition to that, it's about  
19 establishing very strong relationships with  
20 the companies that are supposed to provide  
21 the services and ensuring that they create  
22 the conditions for internet access to come to  
23 all parts of our cities.

24 We know that they know how to do it.

1 With 4G and 5G, there's no reason why --  
2 every place in all of our big cities should  
3 have access to internet right now.

4 So our state delegation, our Governor,  
5 should come together with the companies  
6 responsible for providing internet and saying  
7 this is a prerequisite of being in our public  
8 schools.

9 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much.

10 And thank you to all of you. I'm  
11 sorry I didn't get more time with each of  
12 you, but thank you so much.

13 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT ALICEA: Can I  
14 just make one quick comment? I would like  
15 for the Smart Schools Bond Act to be  
16 considered for one more round. That was the  
17 funding that we used to provide our students  
18 with the technology and with the hotspots for  
19 them to be connected.

20 So it would be great if there's  
21 another round for the smart schools bond act  
22 so we can continue to buy more technology for  
23 our students.

24 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you,

1 Superintendent Alicea. Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 So now we go to the Assembly Education  
4 chair, Assemblyman Benedetto.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO:

6 Superintendents, thank you all for being here  
7 today. Thank you for waiting such a long  
8 time. It's just a long day, and you are to  
9 be commended just for sitting around so long.  
10 But you don't have to sit around up in  
11 Albany, you can be back in your own  
12 districts, and that's a good thing.

13 Listen, I'll ask you all your opinion.  
14 I do have a bill before me, and this bill  
15 basically it calls on amending the  
16 Education Law for requiring a psychologist in  
17 elementary, intermediate, middle, junior high  
18 schools and senior high schools. And I think  
19 that also goes for social workers. I want  
20 your opinion. Is this workable?

21 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT ADAMS: I'll  
22 jump in, because that's one of the things  
23 that we've looked at here in the City School  
24 District of Albany.



1           We recognize that there's a lot of  
2           social-emotional needs of our children, and  
3           so we have invested in our school  
4           psychologists and all of those wraparound  
5           services because we realize that, number one,  
6           even pre-COVID there was a need in all of our  
7           schools for those services. COVID has only  
8           exacerbated some of the issues that our  
9           students are facing, which means that while  
10          we may have been, you know, one-to-one at  
11          every school, it's not enough to have only  
12          one school psychologist or one school nurse  
13          or one counselor or one social worker,  
14          because the needs are so great.

15          And so we also know that we have to  
16          assist our families. And so I think that  
17          absolutely that is the way to go. Because  
18          yes, we can consequence the behavior so when  
19          we see all of these different behaviors that  
20          are happening, we can consequence the  
21          behavior. But if we don't have the  
22          wraparound services from our school  
23          psychologists, social workers, behavioral  
24          specialists to get to the root cause of that

1 behavior, that behavior will never change.

2 And so --

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I'm going to  
4 cut you off. I understand.

5 Other superintendents, you got  
6 something for me?

7 UNIDENTIFIED PANEL MEMBER: Answer,  
8 yes.

9 SEVERAL PANELISTS: Yes.

10 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT ALICEA: We  
11 need to work closely with the colleges and  
12 universities. It is hard to find  
13 psychologists in Central New York, so we need  
14 to do something with the colleges so they can  
15 provide more incentive to get more people in  
16 the field.

17 BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: And in  
18 addition to that --

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: So basically  
20 you're telling me that you would love to do  
21 this, maybe it might be done, but we need  
22 some assistance here from the higher ed  
23 sector.

24 SEVERAL PANELISTS: Yes, absolutely.

1           BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: We also  
2           need the financial support to be able to have  
3           these psychologists in our schools. And in  
4           addition to that, there are phenomenal  
5           community-based organizations providing  
6           support in social-emotional. We need to take  
7           advantage of their services, because they  
8           also understand the community very well.

9           ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: That's not  
10          what this bill is talking about, but I  
11          appreciate what you're saying. Thank you.  
12          Thank you.

13          ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: I just  
14          want to add that absolutely any type of  
15          additional mental health support is  
16          important, but I would be remiss if I didn't  
17          add the importance of these practitioners  
18          being culturally relevant serving the  
19          students that we are responsible for in our  
20          respective districts.

21          ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Point well  
22          taken.

23          Thank you, Madam Chairman.

24          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1                   We go back to the Senate.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's me, hi.

3                   We're going to now go to Senator John  
4           Liu.

5                   SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

6                   I just have a question for Jennifer,  
7           actually. In your testimony you mentioned  
8           that SUNY exploits certain loopholes in the  
9           chartering of -- or in the approval of  
10          charter school applications. What does that  
11          mean?

12                  EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: First, we're  
13          wholly supportive of your bill and grateful  
14          that you've advanced it.

15                  Second, we're concerned that they've  
16          provided extensions that we believe go far  
17          and above what the law allows. They've done  
18          so with little notice, as you know. In fact,  
19          last year in the middle of the pandemic, it  
20          was two days before Christmas, they held some  
21          sort of emergency meeting.

22                  And furthermore, we don't believe that  
23          they give the proper consideration and, you  
24          know, take the time to review applicants to

1           the extent the Board of Regents does. We  
2           know the Board of Regents' hands are tied  
3           with regard to disallowing some of the  
4           schools that we think should be under further  
5           consideration. But again, we don't believe  
6           SUNY should be in the business of authorizing  
7           charter schools for K-12.

8           SENATOR LIU: Well, Jennifer, as you  
9           may know, there are major editorial boards in  
10          New York who cite the New York State charter  
11          school application approval process as being  
12          a model for the nation to follow. And that  
13          model would be this kind of a duopoly of  
14          charter authorization entities, that being  
15          the Regents as well as the SUNY board.

16          What do you say to them who -- what do  
17          you say to the supporters of the SUNY  
18          chartering process that say this is a model  
19          for the rest of the country to emulate?

20          EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: We would  
21          strongly disagree. And we've -- and I'm sure  
22          my superintendents could speak to this as  
23          well. We have longstanding concerns, and  
24          we've expressed them repeatedly with regard

1 to the process they follow. Frankly, when  
2 we've done our analysis and looked at who  
3 they've turned down, they are few and far  
4 between. And so clearly we don't think they  
5 should be in the business.

6 And frankly I don't -- I would  
7 question the literature out there that would  
8 indicate that they have the expertise or  
9 knowledge to be approving charter schools,  
10 again, for K-12 in New York State.

11 SENATOR LIU: And explain briefly why  
12 these charter schools -- and I think a couple  
13 of your superintendents referred to this.  
14 How does that direct money away from the  
15 schools that your superintendents are  
16 responsible for running?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: So I mean  
18 again, even when you've reached a saturation  
19 point, as several of our school districts  
20 have, and some schools outside of our  
21 districts, they're still -- you're having  
22 them pulling kids from a few classrooms here,  
23 there, different buildings. You can't reduce  
24 your overhead costs. At this point in time

1           it's doing serious damage to the traditional  
2           public schools.

3                     And again, we are fully supportive of  
4           school choice and providing parents with  
5           those options. But in districts such as  
6           Buffalo, Albany, Rochester, Syracuse, the  
7           saturation point has been reached, and we  
8           believe someone needs to intervene before  
9           further damage is done. And in many cases  
10          these schools are not outperforming the  
11          traditional public schools. And furthermore,  
12          they're not under the scrutiny and they don't  
13          have to exist under the same rules that the  
14          traditional public schools do.

15                    SENATOR LIU: All right, thanks very  
16          much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

17                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18                    Assemblyman Bronson.

19                    ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you,  
20          Chair Weinstein.

21                    And thank you, all of the  
22          superintendents and Jennifer, for all the  
23          work you've been doing in these very, very  
24          difficult times with COVID and the

1           manifestation of mental health problems and  
2           trauma and other things that our students and  
3           their families are facing.

4                   I'm going to direct my questions to  
5           Dr. Lesli Myers-Small. Superintendent  
6           Myers-Small, thank you for being here. Great  
7           seeing you. I know we speak on a regular  
8           basis. I'm going to ask you three questions,  
9           so let's try to get through them quickly.

10                   Charter schools. What's the real  
11           impact on the Rochester public school system  
12           because of the saturation of charter schools  
13           in Rochester?

14                   ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: Thank  
15           you, Assemblyman Bronson, and very good to  
16           see you.

17                   As I mentioned in my testimony,  
18           105 million of our budget goes towards  
19           charter schools, approximately, so that takes  
20           away from expenses and things that we could  
21           do with our schools.

22                   Additionally, as I mentioned, 7,000  
23           students right now participate in charter  
24           schools, and we have another three that are



1 starting in September, so that just continues  
2 to add to the declining enrollment that is in  
3 the Rochester City School District --  
4 certainly not completely contributes, but it  
5 does contribute. Our district would be over  
6 30,000 students without having charter  
7 schools. So it impacts enrollment and our  
8 budget.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. Great,  
10 thank you.

11 Second question, you mentioned  
12 targeted funds for mental health and school  
13 climate, and we just had a discussion  
14 regarding more psychologists in schools,  
15 social workers, other mental and behavioral  
16 health professionals in our school buildings.

17 Some folks have testified today, not  
18 only in this panel but in other areas, about  
19 the utilization of the additional  
20 Foundation Aid to help them hire mental  
21 health professionals in their schools.  
22 What's the barrier in having the City of  
23 Rochester School District do the same?

24 ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: So I do

1 want to share that in Cursa we have about  
2 2.1 million dedicated to social-emotional,  
3 which is certainly curriculum and additional  
4 special staffing, and then another  
5 22 million, which represents 10 percent of  
6 ARP, to have additional counselors, Pathways  
7 to Peace, which is a youth intervention  
8 program, social workers, increasing  
9 RocRestorative.

10 The issue is that we're in a staffing  
11 shortage and a staffing crisis. And so we  
12 are grateful to New York State Education  
13 Department for approving our ARP, so we will  
14 go out and look. But we are competing with  
15 every other single district in Monroe County,  
16 certainly probably Syracuse and Buffalo as  
17 well.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Okay. I have  
19 some mental health bills that will hopefully  
20 help that shortage.

21 Last question -- and we only have  
22 10 seconds -- just really briefly, how can we  
23 scale up community schools in the city school  
24 district?

1           ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: Oh.  
2           Certainly being -- a couple of things. We've  
3           got to look at the transportation, because  
4           that often becomes problematic, and  
5           rearranging that.

6           We also need to look at school zones  
7           and being able to configure not only  
8           elementary but secondary schools so we can  
9           loop that together and then align the  
10          appropriate resources in the City of  
11          Rochester and the county.

12          ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Thank you,  
13          Dr. Myers-Small. Greatly appreciate it.

14          ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: And just  
15          quickly, thank you, to you and Senator Cooney  
16          and the delegation for our third phase of  
17          facilities modernization. We appreciate  
18          that.

19          ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: You're welcome.

20          ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: And your  
21          advocacy, significant advocacy.

22          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator  
23          Krueger, do you have any --

24          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We do, we have a

1 couple more Senators.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, so to the  
3 Senate now.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Senator Sean Ryan. Sean? I see you,  
6 but I don't hear you. Oh, there you are.

7 SENATOR RYAN: It took a while, but I  
8 did come off.

9 Thank you, each of the  
10 superintendents, for the tremendous  
11 challenges that you've faced during the  
12 pandemic and that you continue to face. And  
13 while we're fighting the pandemic, we also  
14 have an influx of refugee and immigrant  
15 children. You know, that's a challenge. Yet  
16 we know that's how we grow our communities.

17 And hopefully, with the infusion of  
18 Foundation Aid and federal money, that we're  
19 able to meet those challenges head-on. No  
20 one's saying it's easy, but I'm very happy  
21 with how the districts are handling this.  
22 But I did want to acknowledge your very, very  
23 hard positions that each of you have been in  
24 over the last two years.

1           And to go to my home district,  
2           Superintendent Cash, very good to see you.  
3           Happy to work with you on some of the charter  
4           school issues that you discussed. You know,  
5           we've got some problems there, but we are  
6           going to fix them. I think there's a mood  
7           now to fix them, especially the receiver  
8           bill. It seems like something that we just  
9           have to get done.

10           So I wanted to ask you, you know,  
11           three quick questions, or three questions --  
12           and if we can keep it quick, because we're on  
13           a timeline. Are most kids who have special  
14           education services, are they back into the  
15           schools in Buffalo?

16           BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: In  
17           person?

18           SENATOR RYAN: Yes.

19           BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: Yes.  
20           The majority are.

21           SENATOR RYAN: Is everything on track  
22           at School 84, which is a very special place?  
23           Are the kids all back there?

24           BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: Yes.

1           SENATOR RYAN: Okay, that's very good  
2           to hear.

3           And then, you know, attendance has  
4           always been something of concern to me before  
5           the pandemic, and now since the pandemic it's  
6           even gotten tougher. And the numbers aren't  
7           really that encouraging. But can you tell me  
8           quickly the efforts you're making to try to  
9           get the attendance back up during this time  
10          period?

11          BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: Yes.

12          I do want to say that in Black and  
13          brown communities, which we are a majority  
14          minority district, there is this incredible  
15          challenge of many of our families not  
16          trusting the safety of schools to fight the  
17          COVID virus effectively. So they're afraid  
18          to send their children in. They say that  
19          they don't intend to send their children in  
20          as long as there is this rapidly spreading  
21          virus, Omicron in particular.

22          So that's a challenge for us. It's  
23          not just neglect, this is a position. So  
24          what we're trying to do is to continue to do

1 outreach services, we hold vaccination  
2 clinics every week in our community schools,  
3 and we've been able to gradually get hundreds  
4 and hundreds more people from our communities  
5 vaccinated. Because there's a resistance to  
6 get vaccinated as well in communities of  
7 color.

8 So with all of our efforts to  
9 vaccinate, to test, to use the rapid tests  
10 that have been distributed to our districts  
11 from the Governor, we're trying to continue  
12 to keep the narrative that, look, school is  
13 the best place to be. Send your child to us,  
14 they need our services, and we need to have  
15 our eyes on them every day. So we just  
16 continue to try to message it and get it out  
17 through all media and communication vehicles  
18 that we have available to us.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 I'm going to have to cut you off  
21 there, Sean.

22 SENATOR RYAN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Back to the Assembly.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Right. We go  
2 to Assemblywoman Septimo.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEPTIMO: Hi, there. I  
4 will be brief. Thank you all so much for  
5 being here and for waiting and for being  
6 patient with us in this long process.

7                   My question is also for Jennifer.  
8 Just about charter schools, you've mentioned  
9 wanting to see increased accountability.  
10 You'd also mentioned that charter schools get  
11 to -- don't exist in the same set of rules  
12 and without the same level of scrutiny.

13                  So I'd love to hear some of your  
14 ideas, with as much specificity as you have  
15 available, in how we sort of create more of a  
16 balance to make sure that we're maintaining  
17 school choice but also sort of working to  
18 balance the scales some.

19                  EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: I mean, two  
20 areas in particular I would point to would be  
21 the demographic issue, that the law is very  
22 weak in the area with regard to ensuring that  
23 their pupil demographics adequately mirror  
24 the traditional public schools in the



1 district of location.

2 The second piece that I think was  
3 mentioned by Senator Ryan a bit ago relates  
4 to the dissolution -- and I know Senator Liu  
5 referenced this as well. The process that's  
6 currently in existence does not adequately  
7 ensure that the resources go back to where  
8 they belong, which is to where the kids are  
9 going.

10 And when the law was changed several  
11 years ago we were confident that we had  
12 addressed that so that these funds wouldn't  
13 be distributed -- in some cases they were  
14 going to other charter schools and, you know,  
15 golden parachutes.

16 But it's incredibly problematic that  
17 they have again exploited loopholes with  
18 regard to what they do with their funds when  
19 they're moving toward dissolution. And  
20 frankly there is no teeth in the law so that  
21 the State Education Department has any  
22 ability to adequately manage those resources.

23 So those would be two pieces that we  
24 would hope could be addressed this session to

1 address some of the disparities that  
2 currently exist. Because -- and the third  
3 thing I would point to that's somewhat linked  
4 to the dissolution issue is the fact that  
5 they have no caps on reserves. And in some  
6 cases we have charter schools that have 50,  
7 100, 150 percent of their annual operating  
8 budget sitting in reserves.

9 We understand in certain cases they're  
10 more vulnerable or they may be planning for  
11 major capital construction, but we think it's  
12 unreasonable that we continue to siphon  
13 public funds off and send them on when you're  
14 sitting on 100 percent, when you know full  
15 well if any of our districts came anywhere  
16 close to that, there would be severe  
17 consequences. So ...

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEPTIMO: Thank you so  
19 much.

20 And there's 25 seconds if anybody else  
21 wants to pipe in. But if not, thank you.  
22 All right. I'll pass it back to you, Helene.  
23 thank you.

24 BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: Let me

1           just say -- I want to be clear. We're not  
2           against charter schools. I'm for good  
3           schools. And we really support good charter  
4           schools. But they're not all good --

5                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEPTIMO: No, a hundred  
6           percent.

7                     BUFFALO SUPERINTENDENT CASH: And  
8           until they have something to do, we need to  
9           do something about that.

10                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEPTIMO: No, thank you.  
11           And that's why the question is really how do  
12           we strike the balance between the two,  
13           fairness and school choice.

14                    So thank you so much.

15                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                    Turn it back to the Senate.

17                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18                    Senator Samra Brouk.

19                    SENATOR BROUK: Thank you so much. My  
20           question is for of course my superintendent  
21           here, Dr. Lesli Myers-Small. It's so good to  
22           see you again. Thank you for always  
23           representing Rochester and our city school  
24           district so well.

1           I want to share -- no one will be  
2           surprised, as chair of Mental Health, that  
3           this is about mental health again. I want to  
4           share with you a letter that I received, it's  
5           sitting on my desk right now, from a high  
6           school student talking to me about how he's  
7           not sure how to help his friends who have now  
8           taken to drinking almost every day just to  
9           get through the day because it's been so hard  
10          for the last two years. And he somehow found  
11          my name to reach out to as a plea for help.

12                 And I think this is not unlike what we  
13          hear -- we heard you talk about it,  
14          Superintendent, about the uptick in violence  
15          in our schools here in Rochester and across  
16          the state. I truly believe that those are a  
17          direct result of unmet mental health needs in  
18          our students, and that is where we should be  
19          putting not just school resources but  
20          citywide and statewide resources as well.

21                 So you mentioned, because my colleague  
22          Assemblyman Bronson asked, you mentioned that  
23          you did get approval for federal funding to  
24          be used on mental health providers to

1 properly meet the needs of your students --  
2 of our students. Can you tell me, how many  
3 openings do you still need to fill? You  
4 mentioned that you haven't been able to fill  
5 all these openings. How many have you  
6 filled, and how many have yet to be filled?

7 ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: I just  
8 want to make sure, Senator Brouk, that you're  
9 just solely referring to mental health.  
10 Correct?

11 SENATOR BROUK: Yes. Yes.

12 ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: So we  
13 currently -- of our current staffing, we have  
14 two school counselor openings, two social  
15 worker openings, and six school  
16 psychologists. And, I'll just add, 77  
17 classroom teachers. So even though they're  
18 not mental health providers, they do provide  
19 supports of consistency for our scholars.  
20 But within the ARP that was just approved, we  
21 need 16 additional school counselors, five  
22 additional social workers, and 11 full-time  
23 youth intervention aides through Pathways or  
24 something similar like that.

1           So we do have a lot of openings. I am  
2           reaching out to our local colleges and  
3           universities -- Roberts, St. John Fisher,  
4           U of R, et cetera -- but so are all the other  
5           Monroe County districts.

6           SENATOR BROUK: And how many do we  
7           currently employ for RCSD? How many social  
8           workers.

9           ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: For  
10          social workers? Let me just -- 31 seconds or  
11          less. I can send that to you. I do have  
12          that, but --

13          SENATOR BROUK: Okay. Wonderful, you  
14          can follow up on that.

15          And then the last question, in your 18  
16          seconds, is we know that there's a shortage  
17          of staff for social workers all over the  
18          state and the country. What can the state do  
19          to help with this?

20          ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: The  
21          shortage of social workers? A few things. I  
22          think certainly it comes back to us really  
23          encouraging that pipeline and getting  
24          students to consider that to be a viable

1 option and an important option.

2 Also just working very closely with  
3 our higher education partners to really find  
4 out who is involved and who is participating  
5 in those programs, so that we can make that  
6 information more quickly and more readily  
7 available for school districts.

8 And even in the case of school  
9 psychologists, they have an opportunity to do  
10 that school internship, that school  
11 psychologist internship to encourage them to  
12 consider an urban environment. But I find  
13 sometimes that some of our recent graduates  
14 shy away from urban education because of  
15 certainly some of the unique challenges. So  
16 really helping to normalize and encouraging  
17 or even giving incentives for recent  
18 graduates to consider working in an urban  
19 environment. Because our scholars, as the  
20 rest of the Big 5 would chime in, are  
21 incredible, amazing and resilient.

22 And I do have that sheet, Senator  
23 Brouk, so I can send that to you by school.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We now call

1           upon Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon.

2                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you,  
3           Chairs. Thank you to all the  
4           superintendents, Executive Director Pyle.

5                     I have the honor to represent the  
6           Utica School District within my Assembly  
7           district, and most recently we've had many  
8           meetings with community partners which  
9           enthusiastically -- the Utica superintendent,  
10          as well as his leadership teams -- have  
11          attended the meetings. This morning  
12          Commissioner Rosa discussed opportunity  
13          programs, which I better define -- obviously,  
14          with my age -- as after-school programs.

15                    So I would ask what you see as far as  
16          the funding, is there enough funding that we  
17          are placing within the budgets to ensure that  
18          those after-school programs can be clearly  
19          supported? I know that education has taken  
20          on so many roles, and I sincerely appreciate  
21          those. And after-school has become a  
22          must-have with the various situations that we  
23          are seeing within our communities, to ensure  
24          that our children not only can enhance their



1 education but be in a safe environment, which  
2 you always provide. So I would just ask if  
3 that's being considered.

4 And secondly, many of my colleagues --  
5 I just want to reconfirm the mental health  
6 concerns that I applaud all the hard efforts  
7 that you have put forward, as well as the  
8 various programs in diversity that support  
9 our students. Thank you.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PYLE: Would one of  
11 our superintendents like to address the  
12 challenges and the successes of after-school?  
13 I know there are some unique situations this  
14 year.

15 ROCHESTER SUPT. MYERS-SMALL: I can  
16 start from Rochester.

17 Certainly transportation, as you know,  
18 has been problematic in the shortage of  
19 having drivers for our respective districts.  
20 And so we have been working hard just to  
21 ensure that school is covered. And so when  
22 you add just the extra layer of having  
23 transportation for either before- or  
24 after-school programming, it's just become

1           problematic.

2                     But we know that extending the day and  
3           providing additional opportunities for our  
4           young people is certainly important, and we  
5           think all of the efforts that have been made  
6           to help to mitigate transportation -- but in  
7           Rochester, that really is the largest barrier  
8           for us as far as being able to transport  
9           scholars home before or after school.

10                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you.

11                    YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: And  
12           the other concern is also associated with  
13           staffing for the after-school programs. You  
14           know, our teachers, our administrators, they  
15           are also experiencing the same  
16           social-emotional challenges that our students  
17           are experiencing, so at the end of the day  
18           they are -- there are responsibilities that  
19           they need to address, and that includes their  
20           own self-care.

21                    So to stay an extra hour to provide  
22           support might not be something that they want  
23           to do. So certainly we have to spend a great  
24           deal of time supporting our staff, supporting

1           our teachers, and creating conditions for  
2           them to want to be in school further to  
3           support our students.

4                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you  
5           so much.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
7           That concludes the number of questions.

8                   Just to people to note that Kenneth  
9           Hamilton, superintendent of Mount Vernon  
10          School District, had to leave, so he will not  
11          be testifying as part of this. He will not  
12          be testifying, but he did submit written  
13          testimony that has been shared with the  
14          members.

15                   So we're going to move on to the next  
16          panel. First I just want to thank all of you  
17          for the work you do in your respective school  
18          districts. We know this past time with COVID  
19          has been difficult and continues, and by  
20          being virtual we've not taken too much of  
21          your day away from all the good work that  
22          you're doing in your home cities. Thank you.

23                   MULTIPLE PANELISTS: Thank you.

24                   YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT QUEZADA: Thank

1           you for giving us the opportunity.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
3 much.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next is  
5 Panel C, the 4201 Schools Association,  
6 Dr. Bernadette Kappen, cochair, and the  
7 Coalition of Special Act Schools, Stephen  
8 Beovich, vice president.

9                   The 853 Schools Coalition is not  
10 testifying at this hearing, so they've been  
11 removed from the panel.

12                  So we have the two panelists here. So  
13 if you can begin, Dr. Kappen.

14                  DR. KAPPEN: Thank you so much. I  
15 really appreciate the opportunity to present  
16 on behalf of the 4201 Schools Association,  
17 and we'll start off by thanking the  
18 Legislature and the Executive for all of the  
19 support they give us all the time.

20                  As you know, in the Governor's budget  
21 we were level-funded this year, and we were  
22 appreciative of that. In looking at what we  
23 need going forward, looking at the  
24 Foundation Aid that will be going to the

1 school districts and other monies for other  
2 special ed, we would be respectfully asking  
3 for a 5.8 percent increase.

4 I would say, just so you know, our  
5 schools were open during the pandemic. We  
6 met our COVID needs for the students, and the  
7 staff were there every day to help the  
8 students. So I think that in order to  
9 continue in that vein, we definitely need  
10 that kind of support to be able to grow our  
11 programs and meet the needs of the children  
12 and their families.

13 The Executive Budget also included  
14 another \$30 million for the Capital Grant  
15 Program, and we're extremely appreciative of  
16 that. And I just have to let you know how  
17 important that is -- so many schools are  
18 struggling, one of our schools right now is  
19 really in a desperate situation for a boiler,  
20 so these monies are really needed for the  
21 future.

22 We also ask for approval for a fiscal  
23 reserve fund that we might be able to use for  
24 emergencies, planning, and also for adapting

1 to the needs of the students. Certainly the  
2 extra support and the fiscal reserve would  
3 help us with unmet needs.

4 We currently know that there are unmet  
5 needs for children that are deaf/blind that  
6 need intervenors in the schools as well as  
7 children that are blind and children that are  
8 deaf, they're medically fragile, that need  
9 additional services in order to participate  
10 in school. And this is truly an unmet need,  
11 that the 4201 schools -- we can meet those  
12 needs if there was adequate funding for the  
13 schools who would support that.

14 We also are asking for your support  
15 with the workforce investment. Our kids are  
16 appropriately meeting their needs because of  
17 the wonderful teachers that we have. We're  
18 in direct competition with the local school  
19 districts, and we often lose our teachers  
20 because our salaries are so much lower. So  
21 we would be asking for \$30 million over a  
22 three-year period of time to have some equity  
23 in the salaries for our staff.

24 And finally, continuing support for

1 reliable transportation. And I know that  
2 many of you have supported us in the past two  
3 years in making sure that the DOE has  
4 provided transportation for the students --  
5 the problem being that sometimes they want us  
6 to follow their schedule rather than ours.  
7 So we hope that that can happen.

8 And just a quick closing. I always  
9 like to leave with you a quote. This is from  
10 Matty Stepanik {ph}, a 13-year-old child who  
11 had muscular dystrophy, and he said "Unity is  
12 strength. When there is teamwork and  
13 collaboration, wonderful things can be  
14 achieved." And that is what I see with the  
15 4201 Association with the Legislature and  
16 with the schools, that we work together to  
17 meet the needs of the students.

18 So thank you very much.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

20 Stephen?

21 MR. BEOVICH: Hi, and good evening.

22 First of all, I just want to thank the  
23 Senate and Assembly for including the ability  
24 for our schools to have the fiscal reserve

1 fund in last year's budget. Giving us the  
2 ability to now have a level of fiscal  
3 security going forward is going to make a  
4 huge difference. So thank you again.

5 I would also like to thank  
6 Governor Hochul for including the 11 percent  
7 growth rate in tuition for special education  
8 providers in this year's budget. However, I  
9 did want to make the Legislature aware that  
10 currently, due to rate-setting methodology,  
11 no special education provider will see their  
12 growth rate in tuition at the beginning of  
13 the next fiscal year, and very few will see  
14 the growth rate at all.

15 As a matter of fact, no special  
16 education provider has received the 4 percent  
17 promised in this year's budget because, as of  
18 today, the rate-setting methodology for the  
19 current fiscal year has not been released.

20 Annually the State Education  
21 Department proposes to the Division of Budget  
22 the inclusion of an interim-plus rate which  
23 would ensure that approved growth rates are  
24 being applied to tuition rates at the



1       beginning of fiscal year. Every year this is  
2       rejected and schools do not receive the funds  
3       they desperately need that have already been  
4       approved in the budget.

5               There are schools that have not  
6       received any growth -- speaking for  
7       Special Acts, any growth dating back to 2011,  
8       because of complications with the rate  
9       reconciliation process. But the Governor is  
10      ready to invest \$240 million in special  
11      education programs next year.

12             I am asking that there is an assurance  
13      that all providers receive their funds by  
14      having the 11 percent tuition growth  
15      automatically added to the tuition rate on  
16      July 1st. Without this being put in place,  
17      many of the schools that serve the state's  
18      neediest and most vulnerable students will  
19      not see any additional funds next year.

20             If \$240 million is approved,  
21      \$240 million should be disbursed. Please  
22      help stop technicalities from keeping funds  
23      from these schools, which directly affects  
24      the services that we can provide our

1 students.

2 I also must ask that the 18.42 percent  
3 state share for CFC placements outside of the  
4 New York City not be eliminated as proposed  
5 by the Governor. The school districts rely  
6 on these funds to send their neediest  
7 students to our programs. The enrollment in  
8 our programs over the past two years, when  
9 the state share was temporarily eliminated,  
10 has dropped. Students are getting to our  
11 programs later, which delays getting them the  
12 intensive services they need.

13 Please do not include the Governor's  
14 proposal in your final budget. Thank you for  
15 your time and consideration.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, and  
17 thank you both for staying within your time  
18 limits.

19 We'll start with the chair of the  
20 Assembly's Education Committee, Assemblyman  
21 Benedetto.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very  
23 much, Chairwoman Weinstein.

24 Listen, we made an attempt this year

1 to get a bill passed. It was vetoed. But,  
2 if nothing else, we have raised a dialogue, a  
3 very important dialogue here that we seem to  
4 have a commitment from this Governor to work  
5 things out. And for first time since I have  
6 been around, I see hope coming down the  
7 tunnel.

8 If you want to talk, if so -- that's  
9 all I'm going to say on this. I will  
10 continue to work on solutions to having a  
11 funding stream that is equitable and -- it's  
12 bad to everybody.

13 And, like I say, I'm glad we've begun  
14 the dialogue. Good luck, everyone.

15 DR. KAPPEN: Thank you.

16 MR. BEOVICH: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Shelley  
18 Mayer.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Thanks.

20 And it's a pleasure to see you,  
21 Dr. Kappen, and to see you, Mr. Beovich. And  
22 I agree with my colleague here: We moved the  
23 ball down the field, or whatever the sports  
24 analogy is, last year, but we're not quite

1           there yet.

2                       Two questions for each of you. First  
3 place, on the Special Act issue that you did  
4 not see the 4 percent, which was already  
5 approved theoretically by DOB, but you used  
6 the words "it was not released." Is that  
7 true for all the Special Acts, that none of  
8 you have seen the 4 percent --  
9 notwithstanding the additional 7 percent,  
10 which is great, but you haven't seen  
11 anything? You have seen no rate increase?

12                   MR. BEOVICH: No. And that's not only  
13 for Special Acts, it's probably for all  
14 special education providers, because the  
15 rate-setting methodology hasn't been released  
16 for this year yet. So no.

17                   And the issue that brings us -- we  
18 might get that money in April or May, for the  
19 ones who do get a rate. And then if we don't  
20 spend all of that money by June, then the  
21 money goes away. And it really -- you know,  
22 being as -- trying to be fiscally responsible  
23 for our district, I'm not spending that money  
24 until we know that we're going to get that

1 money. So it really does cause an issue.

2 SENATOR MAYER: Yes. Okay.

3 The second thing is the reduction in  
4 referrals to your school and others, you're  
5 suggesting in your testimony, is somewhat  
6 related to the shifting of the state share  
7 back to the municipalities. And I think a  
8 lot of your students come from the City of  
9 New York.

10 Is it your experience that the City of  
11 New York referred fewer students to your  
12 school, notwithstanding what they might need  
13 individually, because of their having to pick  
14 up a greater percentage of the cost?

15 MR. BEOVICH: Well, I could say a lot  
16 of our students in my district are  
17 residential. We do have a small share of day  
18 students. And we're down probably about  
19 15 percent in our day student population,  
20 so -- and that seems across the board, where  
21 I can't say that the hit is crippling, but  
22 it's definitely noticeable.

23 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. But you're  
24 suggesting that that hit is in part due to

1           this change in reimbursement obligations?

2                   MR. BEOVICH: That's -- yes.

3                   SENATOR MAYER: Okay.

4                   MR. BEOVICH: That's what we have been  
5           told by other districts, that it's at least a  
6           factor when they are making the decision.

7                   SENATOR MAYER: Okay. And then,  
8           Dr. Kappen, I very much appreciate your note  
9           about the incremental salary increase that's  
10          needed for your school -- that I know, having  
11          been to your school and seen it firsthand,  
12          you're great teachers.

13                   What's the approximate difference in  
14          salary between someone that you hire for one  
15          of your classes and what they would get in  
16          the New York City public schools?

17                   DR. KAPPEN: I think it varies on the  
18          salary scale between entry and exit. But we  
19          know what happens in the past. You could  
20          walk out of our school and someone could make  
21          \$15,000 to \$20,000 more than we pay them.

22                   And they have to leave for certain  
23          life circumstances. I can think of a really  
24          wonderful teacher we had here that got

1 divorced, she was on her own, and she's  
2 someone who's continued to be connected to  
3 us. And even when we have activities here,  
4 she comes. But she had to make that decision  
5 for herself.

6 SENATOR MAYER: Yes, understood. And  
7 something we actually have to address.

8 But thank you very much, both of you.  
9 And thank you for your work with these kids  
10 that we all care deeply about.

11 DR. KAPPEN: Thanks so much.

12 MR. BEOVICH: Thank you, Senator  
13 Mayer.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
15 Assemblyman Ra.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

17 Dr. Kappen, great to see you, as  
18 always. And good to see you, Mr. Beovich.  
19 It's kind of cool for me -- me and  
20 Mr. Beovich go way back to our youth.

21 (Laughter.)

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So it's cool to see  
23 you on here. Thanks for being here.

24 MR. BEOVICH: You too.

1           ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So earlier during the  
2           State Education Department's presentation,  
3           they made that exact point with regard to the  
4           reconciliation process and the fact that  
5           getting those funds later on are -- you know,  
6           it's going to be a challenge to spend them,  
7           and obviously that compounds a problem.

8           And they suggested that they have a  
9           proposal to potentially kind of put the  
10          reconciliation process aside for the next --  
11          for at least this year, but potentially for  
12          five years while we finally actually fix the  
13          structural problem. I assume that would be  
14          something that your association would be  
15          supportive of?

16          MR. BEOVICH: Yeah, it's 100 percent.  
17          They have talked to us about how it would be  
18          a five-year time period instead of one year,  
19          and that would be definitely helpful for us.

20          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great. Thank you.

21          And Dr. Kappan, you stated it well,  
22          some of the continuing issues, and certainly,  
23          you know, I remain very supportive of getting  
24          you guys parity, just like the 853s and the



1 Special Acts, with the increases that are  
2 given to our public schools.

3 I had an opportunity earlier today to  
4 do a virtual meeting with the new president  
5 from Viscardi and a student named Hunter who  
6 is a senior who's planning to go into  
7 mechanical engineering. It's just always  
8 great to hear about the students' experiences  
9 at the 4201 schools.

10 But one of the main points they were  
11 making to me is exactly what you were -- what  
12 you concluded with, which is, you know, staff  
13 retention. And if there's not that increase  
14 in resources, you know, the inability to be  
15 on par with surrounding educational  
16 institutions.

17 But through this time, have -- I mean,  
18 has that been exacerbated by the pandemic, or  
19 have you guys been kind of -- I know you said  
20 students have been in. So has it been stable  
21 or has it gone up or down in terms of losing  
22 staff?

23 DR. KAPPEN: We've lost a few people,  
24 really related to the mandates for the

1 vaccine, two folks that chose not to be  
2 vaccinated. But we've been fairly stable.

3 I think the real plus at our schools,  
4 the people that work with us, they love the  
5 children. And they go above and beyond  
6 what's needed. And that's wonderful, but  
7 they should also be compensated for that. I  
8 think that that's what happens, that they  
9 stay on, and then like this woman I was  
10 mentioning, maybe something occurs in their  
11 life and they have to move.

12 But we have wonderful people that work  
13 with the children, and that's why they're  
14 successful.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: You absolutely do.  
16 Thank you.

17 DR. KAPPEN: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Sue  
19 Serino.

20 SENATOR SERINO: Thank you,  
21 Madam Chair.

22 And thank you, Dr. Kappen, and  
23 Mr. Beovich, for being here today. You know,  
24 your teachers do God's work. And I have to

1 tell you, I was on the phone with a parent  
2 today -- and, Mr. Beovich, you spoke about  
3 this, the CSE placement. And if they go  
4 away, like I don't know what some of these  
5 parents will do. So it's just devastating.

6 MR. BEOVICH: I'll say I probably  
7 understated it when -- you know, with Senator  
8 Mayer. But the more -- maybe my district was  
9 only 10 to 15 percent, but there are other  
10 districts that are hitting -- that it's  
11 hitting a lot more, and they know a lot more  
12 of -- their sense is a lot further down, and  
13 the CSEs are telling them that it is because  
14 of, you know, that they're -- of the cost  
15 share going away.

16 SENATOR SERINO: Well, we definitely  
17 need that program. So we will advocate for  
18 it, too.

19 But I just had a question for you.  
20 Because in addition to, you know, salaries,  
21 of course -- you know, it is always about  
22 money -- what else can we do like to help  
23 recruit and retain teachers? Are there other  
24 things that you can suggest to us that maybe

1 we are not doing?

2 DR. KAPPEN: I was thinking in the  
3 Governor's State of the State she talked  
4 about, you know, retention and recruitment  
5 and working with paraprofessionals. I do  
6 think that that's one way to really help  
7 there.

8 Again, we have people that have worked  
9 with us for a number of years that are  
10 paraprofessionals, and I think if we can try  
11 encourage folks to move ahead in those areas,  
12 it would be helpful.

13 And again, I think for the colleges  
14 and the universities to keep these programs,  
15 this is not necessarily a New York State  
16 problem. Because we are fortunate here, in  
17 the area of blindness, that there is  
18 Dominican College and Hunter College that  
19 provides teacher prep. But across the  
20 country, this has been a huge issue for  
21 organizations that are looking for staff,  
22 that the colleges and the universities don't  
23 provide the programs because they feel there  
24 aren't enough children to be served.

1           And this is something -- there are a  
2           group of us that are working on this right  
3           now. It is called the Cogswell Macy Act, and  
4           one of the areas there is looking at getting  
5           the proper child count by state and by  
6           nation, because we know that there are many  
7           ways the children are being counted, and we  
8           are not having the proper count.

9           So if you can't show a university or  
10          state that there are these many children who  
11          are deaf and blind, then you are not going to  
12          have universities serving them. So that's  
13          one issue.

14          I think the other is also reciprocity  
15          with the states. That if you live in  
16          Pennsylvania and you move to New York, and  
17          you are fully certified to be a teacher of  
18          the blind and visually impaired, you  
19          shouldn't have to take all of these classes  
20          over again and pay huge amounts of money for  
21          these tests, that people just don't want to  
22          do that. And I think that's a barrier as  
23          well.

24          SENATOR SERINO: That was some great

1 points.

2 I'm sorry, Mr. Beovich.

3 MR. BEOVICH: I just want to add to  
4 her point, just a specific story. We have a  
5 teacher -- a substitute teacher right now --  
6 who is certified to teach special education  
7 in Connecticut, and she is doing great with  
8 our students. We can't right now -- she is  
9 not able to get her New York certification,  
10 and we are not going to be able to continue  
11 her next year because she is not properly  
12 certified.

13 And it is just -- it is just a shame,  
14 like you said, that there is not a better way  
15 for reciprocity.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Sorry  
17 to interrupt.

18 SENATOR SERINO: Okay. Thank you very  
19 much, both of you. Thank you.

20 DR. KAPPEN: Thank you.

21 MR. BEOVICH: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 We go to Assemblywoman Niou.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you so much

1           for taking the time today.

2                     And, you know, I used to actually  
3           volunteer in the Vancouver Deaf School when I  
4           was in high school. And -- yup, and I am  
5           fluent in sign language.

6                     But I wanted to say thank you so much  
7           for all of your work, first and foremost.  
8           But I know that working in some of the  
9           classrooms that I did, that a lot of the  
10          important teaching goes on with smaller class  
11          sizes. I was just wondering what the effects  
12          of the current levels of funding have been,  
13          you know.

14                    And, you know, I know there was  
15          testimony that it was insufficient, so I  
16          wanted to see what effect it had on class  
17          sizes and the quality of care for so many of  
18          the students.

19                    DR. KAPPEN: For our students in the  
20          4201 Association -- and I can speak directly  
21          for the Institute -- we have a class size  
22          that's determined by the State of New York.  
23          It could be that you would have six children,  
24          one teacher, one aide. Some classes may be

1           12 children, a teacher, and four aides -- I  
2           know in some of the special-needs classes and  
3           other schools.

4                     So we have been able to maintain that,  
5           and the funding has not had us change that  
6           because it is a requirement that we would do  
7           that.

8                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU:   So what has the  
9           funding then changed for the students?  
10          Because there was testimony that there was  
11          insufficient funding.   So what were the  
12          biggest changes, then?

13                    DR. KAPPEN:   I think some -- the  
14          funding definitely through COVID would be  
15          extra expenses that we had in order to open  
16          our schools.

17                    I could say for our situation, you  
18          know, they talk about everyone should be  
19          six feet in the hall.   Well, that's fine if  
20          you can see, but if you have no vision -- so  
21          we had to figure out, what are you going to  
22          do.   So we had to run a very thin wire down  
23          the center of the hall, cover it with floor  
24          tape, so that when the child's cane hit it,



1           they knew they had to move to the wall.

2                     Working on, you know, just the whole  
3           cleaning -- I mean, we had to have additional  
4           people for cleaning. Our kids touch  
5           everything, that's part of their life.

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Right.

7                     DR. KAPPEN: So at 12:00 every day we  
8           had to have someone wipe down the walls and  
9           wipe down -- so that helps.

10                    And I think sometimes we can't maybe  
11           attract the best person you would want  
12           because of some of those salary types of  
13           issues, and definitely the funding I  
14           mentioned before. There are things that the  
15           children need, as I mentioned earlier.

16                    We know there are a number of children  
17           that are deaf and blind that are in one of  
18           our schools, and it goes up to the  
19           eighth grade. They need, then, services for  
20           high-school types of activity. They would  
21           like to blend together these two schools  
22           working on that. But in order to have a  
23           quality education for those children, they  
24           need to have an intervenor. And this is

1 something other than an interpreter.

2 The intervenor is someone who is  
3 bringing that child into the environment so  
4 that they are knowing what's happening. If I  
5 were deaf-blind, for example, and I had an  
6 intervenor, the intervenor would be  
7 explaining to me everything that we were  
8 seeing on the screen here so that I know  
9 what's happening -- letting me know if  
10 someone is laughing or if, you know,  
11 something's happening in the room.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Right.

13 DR. KAPPEN: And there are many  
14 children that have blindness or deafness that  
15 have other disabilities that require medical  
16 intervention. So some of those children  
17 maybe need a nurse to be able to monitor  
18 that. And for the 4201 group, there has not  
19 been funding in their certificate of approval  
20 to allow them to do that.

21 So those are some of the things  
22 generically for our association that could  
23 really help the schools -- could help the  
24 schools help the state service these

1 children. Because we do have the skills and  
2 the knowledge to be able to provide these  
3 things.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you so  
5 much.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

7 We go back to the Senate now.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 Senator Sean Ryan.

10 SENATOR RYAN: Thank you. Thanks for  
11 your testimony today and, Dr. Kappen, thanks  
12 for your hard work.

13 I represent the area where St. Mary's  
14 School for the Deaf is, and I do a lot of  
15 work with Mike Kelly and his crew. And I  
16 visited several times during COVID. I was  
17 very impressed with all of the steps being  
18 taken, you know, in a very challenging  
19 environment to keep the kids coming into  
20 school, to keep everybody active and engaged,  
21 but also to keep a super-high level of  
22 academic learning going on at St. Mary's.

23 So I just want to give a shout out to  
24 the good work that you do. And if you ever

1           need anything that you need to reach out to  
2           me on, you know, please do.

3           DR. KAPPEN:   Thank you so much.

4           SENATOR RYAN:  You're welcome.

5           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  And we have  
6           Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon.

7           ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON:  Thank you.  And  
8           thank you all for your testimony and for  
9           staying with us this long.  And I appreciated  
10          your testimony and the issues you raised with  
11          regard to the needs for this population.

12          One of the real challenges in the  
13          field is that there are -- it's not a  
14          high-incidence population, and that is a  
15          challenge for higher education and training.  
16          And it actually puts a little bit more  
17          pressure on the need for, you know,  
18          paraprofessionals to provide some of those  
19          services.

20          You know, I have sort of adopted the  
21          St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf, as  
22          you may have heard, who really has tremendous  
23          physical plant needs, including their  
24          auditorium, which I was focusing on until the

1 boiler went. And so I appreciate very much  
2 your advocacy for getting some funding for  
3 them, and I would be happy to continue to  
4 work with you on that in any way that I can.

5 MR. BEOVICH: Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all  
7 for both for being here and with us. We  
8 appreciate it, and we appreciate all of the  
9 good work that you do, your organizations do.

10 DR. KAPPEN: Thanks for having us.

11 MR. BEOVICH: Thank you, and thank you  
12 for all of your support.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: The next panel,  
14 New York State Council of School  
15 Superintendents, Robert Lowry, deputy  
16 director; Council of School Supervisors and  
17 Administrators, Mark Cannizzaro, president;  
18 School Administrators Association of New York  
19 State, Cynthia Gallagher, director of  
20 government relations; New York State School  
21 Boards Association, Brian Fessler, director  
22 of government relations; ASBO New York, Brian  
23 Cechnicki, executive director; New York State  
24 Parent Teacher Association, Kyle

1 Belokopitsky, executive director. Hopefully  
2 I got most of those names pronounced  
3 correctly.

4 If we could start with School  
5 Superintendents, Robert Lowry.

6 MR. LOWRY: Thank you very much,  
7 Senator Krueger, Assemblywoman Weinstein.  
8 And thank you for all of your efforts to  
9 assure that the promise of the Foundation Aid  
10 formula will finally be fulfilled.

11 It is also a fact that the proposed  
12 increases in Foundation Aid and total school  
13 aid under the Governor's budget are stronger  
14 than any we have seen in many, many years.  
15 And so is the guarantee of a 3 percent  
16 increase in Foundation Aid for every  
17 district; 94 percent of the districts helped  
18 by this provision are average- or high-need  
19 districts.

20 And we also appreciate that the  
21 Governor's budget avoids cuts in  
22 expense-based and other aids, the kind of  
23 cuts that have been proposed in the past and  
24 have been routinely rejected by you.

1           One disappointment is that the  
2           proposal would not provide an increase in  
3           funding for Career and Technical Education.  
4           We hope that's something you will address.

5           There are some other facts we want you  
6           to be mindful of. We are in a period of high  
7           inflation. The Division of Budget projects  
8           the CPI will rise by 4.1 percent next year.  
9           The property tax cap for the coming year will  
10          be 2 percent before exemptions and exclusions  
11          are applied. This puts pressure on all  
12          districts to rely more heavily on state aid,  
13          and the pressure is especially great for the  
14          poorest districts.

15          For the high-need districts a  
16          2 percent increase in the property tax levy  
17          would support only a 0.7 percent increase in  
18          total spending, and nearly half these  
19          districts rely on -- would receive only the  
20          3 percent minimum Foundation Aid increase.

21          You have heard a lot today about  
22          concerns about student mental health, and  
23          that's another set of facts to bear in mind.  
24          Every year between 2011 and 2019 we did

1 surveys of superintendents on finance and  
2 policy issues, and the last three years the  
3 most widely noted findings were on the  
4 mounting alarm among superintendents about  
5 student mental health.

6 We did another survey in November, and  
7 my submitted testimony includes some details.  
8 As you would guess, the concerns about  
9 student mental health and well-being in  
10 general have grown. But there is some  
11 positive news. In the nine prior surveys,  
12 only twice had a majority of superintendents  
13 said any area of student services would be  
14 improved by their district's budget. One of  
15 those was school security in the year after  
16 the Parkland tragedy in Florida. This year  
17 in the survey we found 80 percent of  
18 superintendents said that student mental  
19 health services will be improved, and  
20 78 percent said that extra academic help for  
21 students who need it will be improved. And  
22 yet those are still the two areas that are  
23 identified as the most widely cited  
24 priorities for new funding despite that.



1           Also, in open-ended comments in our  
2           survey, superintendents over and over again  
3           expressed concerns -- they expressed  
4           gratitude and appreciation for what the  
5           federal aid and Foundation Aid has made  
6           possible, but they also expressed worry about  
7           what happens when that federal money is gone.

8           I have been involved with state  
9           budgets for 40 years now. The overall  
10          outlook for the state is unlike anything I  
11          have seen, extraordinarily promising. So  
12          it's a good time to think about the future.  
13          And as part of that, we do think it is wise  
14          for the state to attempt to build its  
15          reserves. We also ask that districts be  
16          provided more options to set aside funds in  
17          preparation for a time when the federal  
18          resources are gone but student needs remain  
19          and the state aid may not be so strong.

20          Also, we are now on verge of achieving  
21          full funding of Foundation Aid, so we think  
22          it is good time to begin a process to  
23          identify shortcomings in the formula and try  
24          to develop consensus on changes. Among the

1 issues we are prioritizing are reviewing how  
2 student needs are accounted for and how the  
3 Regional Cost Index is constructed.

4 Finally, our commissioner, Betty Rosa,  
5 has proven to be a truly ardent champion of  
6 improving her department's capacity for  
7 customer service. We are encouraged that  
8 Executive Budget at last proposes increased  
9 funding for SED's operating budget. But we  
10 oppose the recommendation to move  
11 administration of the child nutrition  
12 programs to the Department of Agriculture and  
13 Markets.

14 Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You can just go  
16 in the order of -- Mark Cannizzaro, next?

17 MR. CANNIZZARO: Good evening,  
18 everyone. And it's nice to see everyone, and  
19 thank you for having me.

20 And I echo everyone else's statements  
21 with a thank you for ensuring that the  
22 Foundation Aid is getting to the schools. I  
23 have been going to Albany or testifying  
24 online here for seven or eight years in a

1 row, and every year I am asking for more  
2 Foundation Aid, and this year it is nice to  
3 not have to ask for an increase in  
4 Foundation Aid.

5 And just as a point of clarification  
6 for New York City schools -- and it was  
7 testified to by Lindsey Oates earlier -- all  
8 of the additional Foundation Aid that came to  
9 New York City was placed into the Fair  
10 Student Funding formula just to bring it to  
11 100 percent for every school. So a lot of  
12 the additional things that folks are talking  
13 about, Foundation Aid is not going to cover  
14 unless New York City does a better job at  
15 managing some of their other finances.

16 Also I spent a long time -- you know,  
17 you have my testimony, so I'm not going to  
18 read it to you, but I spent a long time  
19 listening today and I heard talks of, you  
20 know, the importance of some very important  
21 things: Early childhood, community schools,  
22 social workers in schools, special education  
23 issues, keeping buildings open, and staff  
24 attendance. And I urge you to check

1 supervisor attendance, principal and  
2 assistant principal attendance, because that  
3 didn't drop a tick. You know, COVID issues  
4 with social and emotional learning and  
5 student behaviors, more CTE programs,  
6 dyslexia, teacher retention -- and there was  
7 talk of school climate having a lot to do  
8 with teacher retention -- remote learning,  
9 different ideas about what needs to be in a  
10 curriculum, parent engagement, and equity.

11 All of those things, and I think  
12 sometimes -- this is not lost on you, but  
13 sometimes not in the forefront of your mind.  
14 None of those things happen in a school or  
15 for children without the school leaders and  
16 the administrators. And why do I say all of  
17 that? Because there has been very little  
18 support for them in terms of professional  
19 development and having, you know, enough  
20 staff to handle what needs to be handled in  
21 the schools, especially at this time.

22 At CSSA we have a program for -- a  
23 professional development program. We call it  
24 the Educational Leaders Institute --

1 Executive Leader Institute, I'm sorry, and we  
2 focus on retention and recruitment of school  
3 leaders. And good school leaders are going  
4 to focus on retention and recruitment of  
5 teachers. Okay, we have a program designed  
6 especially for assistant principals who are  
7 interested in becoming principals. We have  
8 mentorships for our brand new assistant  
9 principals and principals, which is sorely  
10 needed. Okay?

11 And we are requesting some funding, as  
12 we always do, and we hope that the  
13 Legislature will support us in that funding  
14 this year.

15 And we also have some issues with the  
16 assistant principal in every school, and we  
17 are hoping we get some support there also.  
18 You know, the assistant principals are the  
19 ones that ensure safety. They ensure good  
20 school climate. They ensure a succession  
21 plan for when the principal does leave or  
22 retire or go elsewhere. And when we talk  
23 about shortages with cafeteria staff,  
24 guidance staff, social workers, teachers, the

1 people that -- it is the assistant principals  
2 that step right up and fill in in those spots  
3 and take on those critical roles.

4 So I urge you to consider, especially  
5 during this time of COVID, the fact that a  
6 recent NASSP report says that 44 percent of  
7 school leaders feel that they are going to  
8 accelerate their exit plan, whether it is  
9 through retirement or another way, from this  
10 system. We need not only quality support for  
11 these people, but we need more of them. And  
12 we need people to understand that they are  
13 completely overworked and they need the help.

14 So like I said, my remarks are in  
15 writing, but I just wanted to share that  
16 today. Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18 Next, the School Administrators  
19 Association, Cynthia Gallagher.

20 MS. GALLAGHER: Yes. Good evening,  
21 and thank you for the opportunity to present  
22 testimony. Regardless of the format or the  
23 platform, we are always privileged to feel  
24 that we have input into this process.

1           My name is Cindy Gallagher, and I am  
2           the director of government relations for  
3           SAANYS, which is the School Administrators  
4           Association of New York State -- about 8,000  
5           members and about 428 school districts.

6           Part of my written testimony you will  
7           see and be very familiar with in terms of  
8           hearing points about this evening as well as  
9           earlier in testimony. I'd like to focus  
10          right on the building administrators and  
11          program directors. Their jobs have increased  
12          tenfold this year, and it is complex and it  
13          is challenging. We hear from all of them  
14          that they are contract tracers, COVID  
15          reporters, and COVID police.

16          From our Rochester colleagues we know  
17          that they have become supply distributors for  
18          masks and test kits. For our Long Island  
19          principals, we know that they are translators  
20          of health policies that come out very late on  
21          Friday evening. For our Central New York  
22          supervisors, they have become the supervisors  
23          for the pool of new substitute teachers who  
24          do not know the protocols very well. And in

1       our smaller districts, such as Herkimer, our  
2       principals have become classroom teachers --  
3       not just for a period, not for a day, but  
4       sometimes a couple of days or a week.

5               So they are exhausted. So from their  
6       perspective, this increase in state aid and  
7       Foundation Aid, at 7 percent and 8 percent  
8       respectively, is like an anchor in quicksand,  
9       if that could be such a thing. They are  
10      extremely supportive and grateful that you  
11      have lifted a piece of their burden from  
12      them.

13             Very supportive of the use of the  
14      Foundation Aid formula, the statutory  
15      formula. It begins to provide a stability  
16      again in a very unpredictable context. So in  
17      that regard, they have now a tool that they  
18      could at least use for planning and budgeting  
19      the fiscal end of things.

20             Some of the issues that are very  
21      important to our members, of course, are  
22      mental health. Mark indicated a survey --  
23      the same one, the same piece of that survey  
24      indicates that 58 percent of our principals



1        feel that the mental health supports to  
2        students is the highest priority, except that  
3        only 20 percent think that the services  
4        provided are sufficient. So the 100 million  
5        for the Recovery from COVID Fund, the  
6        2 million for the positive climates are all  
7        excellent directions to move in, but it does  
8        not strengthen -- state initiatives show.

9                So we would urge us to think as a  
10       state on how we can help direct funding  
11       streams to really encourage agency  
12       collaboration as opposed to agency collision  
13       that might have happened this year off and  
14       on.

15               Other areas that are important to us  
16       are professional development, as well as the  
17       waiving of the salary cap for retired workers  
18       who wish to come into the workforce. We also  
19       would support the idea that school districts  
20       be provided the same kind of ability for a  
21       15 percent reserve fund as did Dr. Mujica in  
22       his comments regarding state agencies.

23               So we thank you very much for this  
24       opportunity to talk with you tonight. We

1 know that you've heard a tremendous amount of  
2 information today. And of course we will  
3 always be participants in any which way we  
4 can to support you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
6 Right on time.

7 New York State School Boards  
8 Association.

9 MR. FESSLER: Sure. Good evening. My  
10 name is Brian Fessler, and I appreciate the  
11 opportunity to offer our response and  
12 reactions to the Executive Budget proposal  
13 with you all, on behalf of the 671 member  
14 school boards that we serve here at the  
15 New York State School Boards Association.

16 I think it is important to start with  
17 a thank you. As you heard from many who have  
18 testified so far today, there is much to be  
19 encouraged by in this budget, and certainly a  
20 significant part of that is due to you and  
21 your colleagues enacting the Foundation Aid  
22 phase-in plan in last year's budget. We are  
23 very pleased to see Year 2 of that plan  
24 included in this year's proposal.

1           And we are also strongly supportive of  
2           the proposal to ensure that all districts  
3           would receive a minimum increase in  
4           Foundation Aid, recognizing that all  
5           districts face cost increases each year,  
6           especially in the current inflationary  
7           environment.

8           NYSSBA's also pleased to see the  
9           Governor's proposal to further expand access  
10          to broadband through the ConnectALL plan.  
11          Addressing the digital divide is an issue of  
12          equity that our members have recognized for  
13          years, which has only become more profound in  
14          this time of remote and hybrid learning.

15          We further encourage state leaders to  
16          add to ConnectALL initiative by moving  
17          minimum internet speed requirements to  
18          100 upload/100 download, which is more in  
19          line with the needs of a 21st-century world.

20          In addition to being supportive of  
21          other proposals, including the recovery fund  
22          to support school district efforts to address  
23          student well-being and learning gaps, and  
24          funding to allow districts to make and

1       implement decisions in the best interests of  
2       the global environment, NYSSBA is also  
3       particularly pleased to finally see a plan to  
4       authorize forgiveness for districts who are  
5       facing aid loss for building and  
6       transportation expenses that were properly  
7       expended but were subject to penalty for late  
8       filing of forms due to inadvertent  
9       administrative or ministerial oversights.

10               Now, as you consider the Executive  
11       Budget, there are three items that I wanted  
12       to mention specifically in hopes of seeing  
13       their inclusion in the final budget. First,  
14       we ask for the current BOCES instructor  
15       aidable salary cap, now 30 years old, to be  
16       raised, in conjunction with an increase in  
17       special services aid for noncomponent  
18       districts. This is critical, as the interest  
19       in and importance of Career and Technical  
20       Education grows.

21               Second, at a minimum, we ask for the  
22       \$20 million allocation for prior-year aid  
23       claims to be restored in this budget. This  
24       is even more important given the Governor's

1 aid forgiveness proposal that I mentioned  
2 previously.

3 And last, we think it is important  
4 that the discussion about the future of the  
5 Foundation Aid formula updates and  
6 adjustments begin in earnest. Starting that  
7 process now, rather than when the formula is  
8 fully funded in '23-'24, would allow for a  
9 better understanding as well as appropriate  
10 and responsible transitions.

11 Again, thank you for the opportunity  
12 to offer NYSSBA's reaction to the budget  
13 proposal, and we look forward to our  
14 continued work together. Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16 ASBO New York?

17 MR. CECHNICKI: Thank you. Good  
18 evening. Thank you to the chairs and members  
19 of the committees for providing the  
20 opportunity today to speak with you,  
21 especially with these honored panelists  
22 joining me.

23 My name is Brian Cechnicki, and I am  
24 the executive director of ASBO New York, the

1 Association of School Business Officials.

2 You have our written testimony, and I  
3 would like to highlight a few items of what  
4 is in and not in the Executive Budget  
5 proposal.

6 Overall, Governor Hochul's '22-'23  
7 Executive Budget provides the greatest level  
8 of optimism in the education finance space in  
9 a long time. The longstanding promise of  
10 achieving the full phase-in of the Foundation  
11 Aid formula, thanks to the efforts made by  
12 this Legislature last year, is finally within  
13 reach. We fully support the Governor's  
14 commitment to funding the second year of this  
15 three-year plan.

16 In our testimony we do highlight that  
17 despite this investment there are a number of  
18 school districts who are considered already  
19 fully phased-in due to a number of different  
20 factors, but they will receive a 3 percent  
21 increase. This is an important feature,  
22 especially in light of current inflationary  
23 trends driving up costs across the spectrum.

24 We are heartened by the fact that the

1 Governor has proposed fully funding the  
2 expense-based aid categories in hope that the  
3 Legislature will accept that recommendation.  
4 The Governor has also proposed forgiving aid  
5 penalties associated with inadvertent filing  
6 errors for both transportation and building  
7 aid. We have long supported these provisions  
8 and welcome their inclusion in her proposal.

9         There are other provisions that we  
10 have some questions and concerns about,  
11 though, before we are able to provide our  
12 support. First, with respect to the RECOVS  
13 mental health fund, we think that it is  
14 important to ensure that the grant  
15 application process is not so burdensome as  
16 to prevent districts from seeking these  
17 funds.

18         Second, while laudable in its goal,  
19 the conversion to all-electric school buses  
20 will require a careful review of the  
21 transition costs. Using the existing  
22 transportation need construct and funding  
23 these costs is an important first step, but  
24 the possibility of increased aggregate local

1 costs must first be clarified.

2 Moving beyond the proposal, there are  
3 a few items that were not included in the  
4 budget that are described in detail in our  
5 written testimony, and I'd like to highlight  
6 a few of those items.

7 First, the budget does not include an  
8 appropriation for the payment of prior-year  
9 adjustments, which would hold in limbo nearly  
10 \$300 million in aid that is currently owed to  
11 school districts. In addition, the  
12 forgiveness provisions that we support are  
13 paid out of this fund, and that funding would  
14 also be withheld. We ask that this funding  
15 be restored as a permanent line item, not one  
16 subject to the annual renewal process through  
17 the budget.

18 Second, we believe that the current  
19 inflationary period has highlighted the need  
20 for the tax cap to grow with inflation when  
21 it rises above the current 2 percent limit.

22 Third, the Governor spoke to the need  
23 for the state to maintain a 15 percent fund  
24 balance. School districts are currently



1 limited to a 4 percent fund balance, and we  
2 support increasing that to 10 percent over a  
3 three-year period.

4 And finally, with the full  
5 implementation of the federal ESSA financial  
6 transparency requirement, the duplicative and  
7 burdensome state requirement should also be  
8 repealed.

9 Thank you again for this opportunity,  
10 and I look forward to your questions.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 And now, New York State Parent Teacher  
13 Association, Kyle Belokopitsky.

14 Good evening.

15 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: Good evening. I'm  
16 Kyle Belokopitsky, executive director for the  
17 New York State PTA. And on behalf of our  
18 president, Dana Platin, we are proud to  
19 represent our 250,000 members and the  
20 families of our 2.6 million schoolchildren.

21 In the past immediate years we have  
22 watched in awe as dedicated, outstanding  
23 educators, teachers, and school-related  
24 professionals and school leaders do all they

1 can do to serve our children. We sincerely  
2 thank them.

3 Families have been now combating this  
4 pandemic for two years, far longer than we  
5 can ever have imagined, dealing with  
6 underemployment and unemployment, food  
7 insecurity, homelessness, trauma, sickness,  
8 and mental health concerns. They are  
9 juggling work, family, childcare, and  
10 quarantine while at the same time trying to  
11 figure out how to access Wifi for learning,  
12 how to keep their children fed, and how to  
13 keep lights on and the heat on.

14 Public education is our nation's  
15 greatest hope. It is a promise that all  
16 children, regardless of ethnicity, gender and  
17 gender identity, learning abilities, or  
18 spoken words, have the right to a free,  
19 appropriate, high quality and diverse  
20 education -- one that will meet our  
21 children's needs and support them in our  
22 global economy.

23 We thank you, the Legislature and  
24 Governor Hochul, for your commitment to all

1 children, their families, and our schools.

2 Overall, we are highly supportive of the  
3 Executive Budget: The full commitment to  
4 Foundation Aid and expense-based aids,  
5 after-school programs, early high school,  
6 PTECH and community schools. We also  
7 appreciate the increase for our Special Act  
8 schools and many programs to support our  
9 great teachers, SUNY, CUNY, and the expansion  
10 of TAP.

11 There is a legislative opportunity,  
12 however, to support expansion of CTE and STEM  
13 and support BOCES programs through an  
14 increase of the aidable salary cap and  
15 special services aid.

16 On pre-K and childcare there is a  
17 great opportunity, and we look to the  
18 Legislature for meaningful increases for  
19 high-quality, school-based pre-K programs and  
20 childcare for families.

21 On the school lunch program, we  
22 strongly oppose the transfer from SED to  
23 Ag and Markets.

24 While we support the Recover fund,

1           there is a meaningful opportunity for the  
2           Legislature to increase support for  
3           school-based mental health initiatives for  
4           our children.

5                 We also appreciate the investment in  
6           broadband and support the expansion of  
7           high-quality, low- or no-cost broadband for  
8           families, and strongly support  
9           Senator Mayer's E-Learn proposal.

10                We fully support the expansion of  
11           school-and-community-based arts and music  
12           instruction -- as I sit here reflecting on my  
13           son's unicorn painting over my shoulder and  
14           him playing the saxophone in the other room.

15                See, every parent and family has a  
16           dream for their child. It is our job to be  
17           dream makers, ensuring every child -- no  
18           matter their zip code, no matter their  
19           ethnicity, their gender identity, their  
20           income, their immigration status -- has the  
21           highest-quality 21st-century education to  
22           lead them to success in college, career or  
23           life.

24                We humbly ask that you continue to

1           infuse our schools with the tools and  
2           resources necessary to accelerate the success  
3           of our children. Together we can shine a  
4           light on every child and make every child's  
5           potential a reality. There is no more other  
6           important work.

7                     Thank you very much.

8                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9                     So now we are going to go to some  
10           questions. And we will start with our  
11           Education chair in the Assembly,  
12           Assemblyman Benedetto.

13                    ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Good evening,  
14           everyone. And yes, it is evening now.

15                    I thank you for being with us here  
16           today and for your comments that you made.  
17           They were informative and good and kindly and  
18           important and well-taken.

19                    And in particular, I want to say hello  
20           to my friend Mark Cannizzaro for being here.  
21           And to you and to all the people who are  
22           directly involved in education under these  
23           times, you have acted under difficult times  
24           and shown just wonderful leadership,

1 leadership by example.

2 But the supervisors, the principals in  
3 those schools have always done that. And  
4 just being a teacher for so many years in my  
5 life, I certainly knew and witnessed  
6 firsthand that if you had a good school, you  
7 generally had good administrators and good  
8 supervision outside. And that is still the  
9 case, and we thank you for that. And may you  
10 continue that, and we will at the same time  
11 continue to support you all.

12 Thank you for listening.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

14 We go to the Senate.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
16 much. And for the Senate opening, Shelley  
17 Mayer, our chair of Education.

18 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, and it is  
19 really a pleasure to see all of you and to  
20 acknowledge your leadership and your  
21 partnership.

22 I mean, we didn't get to this much  
23 better place than we have ever been in before  
24 without your collective work, and I want to

1           thank you all for being really wonderful  
2           partners. And also during COVID, putting  
3           kids first. So thank you.

4                     Two things. One, it was nice to hear  
5           so many of you speak about the importance of  
6           full-day pre-K as sort of institutional thing  
7           we should do statewide. We know the City of  
8           New York was far ahead of the state, frankly,  
9           in making it a universal given. I hope that  
10          we can count on you all to work with us to  
11          ensure that the funding is there.

12                    And it would be useful for you,  
13          particularly Mark and Cynthia, to talk about  
14          how your members feel about the impact, the  
15          educational and social impact, of having a  
16          full-day program for 4-year-olds. So I think  
17          that would be helpful going forward, because  
18          that's part of the case. It is not just  
19          the -- it is a value education, and -- well,  
20          maybe Mark could speak to that for a second,  
21          if you would.

22                    MR. CANNIZZARO: Sure, I would love  
23          to.

24                    When you speak to the principal of an

1 elementary school and children or a  
2 kindergarten teacher, they can tell without  
3 asking, within, you know, half a day, which  
4 students have been in 3-K and pre-K and which  
5 students have not. And they are far advanced  
6 and much more ready to tackle, you know,  
7 school and everyday schooling when they have  
8 had that opportunity. So we strongly support  
9 it.

10 The one issue that we're going to ask  
11 for support back on is about two-thirds of  
12 3-K and pre-K students are in CBO preschools,  
13 and those folks make 50 percent -- the  
14 leaders and directors there make 50 percent  
15 of what a school assistant principal earns,  
16 which is about a \$60,000 difference. And it  
17 is almost impossible to retain these folks in  
18 those CBO centers when they have the  
19 opportunity to move on.

20 So we really need some help there. We  
21 have actually -- we're actually in the  
22 position where we have sued to try to correct  
23 this.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MAYER: Thank you.



1           Just two other things. One, Brian  
2           talking about the ConnectALL program and  
3           increasing high-speed broadband to a really  
4           more reasonable rate, thank you for that. I  
5           hope we can count on your support. I think  
6           last year's broadband speed was inadequate,  
7           and it is interesting that you see that from  
8           your perspective.

9           One thing, Bob Lowry, you didn't  
10          mention -- I know it is a budget hearing, but  
11          superintendents have had to deal with  
12          inconsistent health guidance, particularly  
13          under the prior governor, and it has been  
14          real challenge.

15          Can you just speak to the need for  
16          more clarity and more communication to  
17          superintendents, if that's an issue?

18          You are muted. I am sorry, you're  
19          muted.

20          MR. LOWRY: It absolutely is a  
21          concern. It has been a frustration. I would  
22          say that we feel that the tenor of the  
23          relationship with the administration, the  
24          Health Department, has improved. But we

1 still continue to have concerns about some of  
2 the rules and also just the varied approaches  
3 across counties.

4 We have asked for statewide rules on  
5 some issues because school districts cross  
6 county lines. Over a third of school  
7 districts cross county lines. You take out  
8 Long Island -- upstate, it is over  
9 40 percent. And school employees don't have  
10 to live where they work. So the issue of,  
11 you know, different rules across counties has  
12 been a point of frustration.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MAYER: I am going to  
14 stop you. I am going to run out of time, and  
15 I apologize. Thank you for that.

16 And I also wanted to thank Kyle for  
17 support of e-learning and the collective  
18 support for a better broadband policy. I  
19 didn't mean to cut you off. I am worried  
20 they are going to shut me down.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
22 Shelley.

23 Next?

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to

1 Assemblyman Ra.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair, and  
3 thank you all. This is a very experienced  
4 and knowledgeable panel. So it's always  
5 great to hear from all of you, and thank you  
6 for the work you all do.

7 I just had a question. Kyle mentioned  
8 it a little bit, but, you know, if anybody  
9 else wants to give a little more detail as to  
10 what this transition to the zero-emission  
11 school buses -- really, the burden that it  
12 has the potential to bring. Because, you  
13 know, certainly making it aidable is helpful,  
14 but absent, you know, full funding for it,  
15 between the infrastructure and the costs of  
16 the buses themselves, it is going to be quite  
17 an undertaking to make this conversion -- and  
18 to start to do it this soon.

19 MR. CECHNICKI: I am happy to give  
20 some thoughts from the business side. You  
21 know, we have been talking with some of the  
22 transportation folks to better understand  
23 this as well, and I think you are right, the  
24 Transportation Aid that would fund some of

1           these costs is helpful.

2           The scale that we are talking about,  
3           though, both in terms of the production  
4           capacity of the industry to provide the buses  
5           but also the ability of districts and the  
6           third-party providers to scale up their own  
7           garages, personnel, equipment, and all of  
8           those things -- you know, even with the aid,  
9           even on Transportation Aid being a year  
10          lagging, there definitely is some concern  
11          about the scale there.

12          So I think those are some details that  
13          we want to dive into. But I think it is  
14          worth looking into a little more, just the  
15          exact timeframe to make all of that happen,  
16          because again, I think on the bus side, I  
17          think there's about 55,000 buses statewide.  
18          That's a lot of buses to convert over in a  
19          short period of time. And I think we need to  
20          take a close look at that.

21          MR. LOWRY: And if I could, I would  
22          add it is not only the buses, it is also  
23          things like replacing gasoline storage tanks  
24          with charging stations.

1 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: Assemblyman, from a  
2 parents' perspective, we are worried about  
3 that proposal as well. While we of course  
4 support green initiatives, parents are  
5 worried there's not going to be buses to  
6 actually transport their children because of  
7 timeline and cost issues and supply/demand  
8 issues.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes. And I mean,  
10 Bob, to your point, I would think, you know,  
11 you are going to have districts that are  
12 going to have some interim period where they  
13 are starting to roll out some electric but  
14 still have traditional buses. That's how you  
15 make those two things work, needing the space  
16 for the charging and all that. It's going to  
17 be a challenge.

18 All right. Thank you, guys.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Serino.

20 Is that all right, Assemblywoman?

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. We go to  
22 the Senate now.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Senator Serino.

1               SENATOR SERINO: Thank you,  
2               Madam Chair.

3               I just want to say thank you to all of  
4               you for all of the care you give to our  
5               children and acknowledging the issues with  
6               mental health.

7               Mr. Lowry, I was wondering, what do  
8               you think would be an appropriate increase  
9               for the Career and Technical Education?  
10              Because I think that is so important, and we  
11              should even actually be getting younger  
12              children involved.

13             MR. LOWRY: Yes. There are two  
14             funding streams for current technical  
15             education. One is through BOCES Aid -- there  
16             is an aidable salary limit. That has not  
17             been changed since, I think, 1990. It's, in  
18             any event, over 30 years. The Education  
19             Department, the Regents in their state Aid  
20             proposal called for a phased increase in  
21             that, and we would support that approach.

22             For the Big 5 cities and a handful of  
23             our districts that are not in BOCES, they are  
24             supported through Special Services Aid, and

1           we would support a corresponding increase in  
2           that funding.

3                     SENATOR SERINO: Well, thank you very  
4           much, everyone.

5                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

6                     So we go to -- the next Assemblymember  
7           is Assemblyman Jensen.

8                     ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you,  
9           Madam Chair.

10                    To sort of ask the group a question,  
11           we in our communities, especially my district  
12           and the Greater Monroe County community,  
13           we've seen a large uptick over the past year  
14           and half of school board meetings becoming  
15           highly confrontational for a multitude of  
16           reasons, whether it's curriculum-based or  
17           dealing with mandates that are being put on  
18           districts by the executive branch.

19                    I just want pick your brains and see  
20           what your thoughts are. How do we lower the  
21           temperature -- and -- encourage --

22                    (Zoom interruption.)

23                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Jo Anne Simon,  
24           please mute.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Sorry.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: -- encourage  
3 positive relationships between our  
4 educational leadership with our parents, with  
5 our students, and get your thoughts on what  
6 you are hearing from your members.

7 MR. FESSLER: I could jump in on that  
8 from the School Boards Association  
9 perspective.

10 One of the things that we do in  
11 support of our members internally is provide  
12 training, like a lot of our organizations do.  
13 And we have had a couple of trainings  
14 statewide, and then with various groups, to  
15 provide information and suggestions and  
16 guidance as to what are the roles and  
17 responsibilities of school boards.

18 In this context, what are suggestions  
19 in order to bring down the temperature  
20 regardless of where you are on whatever the  
21 issue may be, to bring down the temperature  
22 to ensure that, you know, we have productive,  
23 civil dialogues and conversations.

24 So, you know, certainly no silver



1       bullet, I think. You know, a lot of these  
2       issues, as you note, are contentious. And,  
3       you know, it is a challenging time for a  
4       variety of reasons. And so our association,  
5       on behalf of our membership, tries to make  
6       sure to provide those opportunities and  
7       trainings and suggestions to ensure that the  
8       relationship between the school district,  
9       community residents, taxpayers, parents,  
10      students, family members, teachers -- that  
11      that dialogue and conversation is as  
12      productive as it can be, given the  
13      contentiousness of a lot of the issues that  
14      we are discussing.

15                ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Brian, do you  
16      think a lot of those issues -- if there was  
17      more local control that local school leaders  
18      had in determining some these things, might  
19      that lower the temperature as well? Because  
20      there is an ownership in that community  
21      rather than a sense that they are being  
22      dictated to from Albany.

23                MR. FESSLER: I think it's really --  
24      it tends to be issue-specific. You know,

1           certainly we are supportive of local control,  
2           you know, as a kind of foundational  
3           principle. But you did hear, I think, you  
4           know, some of those conflicts and challenges  
5           arise from various levels of inconsistency,  
6           whether appropriate or not, you know --  
7           varying guidance, directions, rules on a  
8           county-by-county basis.

9           So certainly I think some of, you  
10          know, the frustrations arise from that level  
11          of inconsistency regardless of the local  
12          control aspect.

13                 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you.

14                 MR. LOWRY: Thank you.

15                 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

16                 We will go to Senator Krueger.

17                 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18           I want to thank all of you for your  
19           hard work. But my question is specifically  
20           for Kyle from the Parent Teacher Association.

21           So there's quite a bit of discussion  
22           in New York City about mayoral control, and I  
23           don't know anyone who wants to do away with  
24           it. And yet we hear from parents very often

1           that they feel like they have been locked out  
2           of participating in our school system.

3                     And I'm just curious whether the  
4           State PTA has any thoughts about how one can  
5           continue mayoral control while at the same  
6           time making sure parents really do feel like  
7           they have a role in our school system and in  
8           their children's education, since certainly  
9           my experience is schools where parents get  
10          involved are absolutely the best schools.  
11          You know, you have a win-win from parental  
12          involvement. And I'm just curious what your  
13          association's opinion is.

14                    MS. BELOKOPITSKY: And, Senator, we  
15          would totally agree with you.

16                    You know, Michael Mulgrew earlier had  
17          some New York City-specific ideas about how  
18          to increase parent involvement there.

19                    Family engagement is the most  
20          important thing, in our opinion, that a  
21          school could be doing. Really meaningful,  
22          two-way, back-and-forth, thoughtful and  
23          listening communications between parents and  
24          caregivers, between principals,

1 school-related professionals, classrooms, and  
2 then school leaders.

3           You know, we are renewed about  
4 continued conversations in New York City. We  
5 have a fantastic PTA in Queens, Queens  
6 Community PTA, so we're really excited about  
7 that. New York City also manages many of  
8 their own parent programs. So we continue to  
9 always encourage New York City parents that  
10 do call our office to continue to have those  
11 conversations, to have them in your school  
12 district or in your school building with your  
13 local parent-teacher organization that they  
14 have in New York City.

15           But I think you're right. I think  
16 it's that meaningful two-way communication.  
17 Parents and families want to feel like they  
18 are both being listened to and heard, and  
19 then have some type of change come out of  
20 those conversations.

21           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
22 much. Thank you all.

23           Assembly.

24           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we have a

1           number of Assemblymembers.

2                     Assemblyman Otis first.

3                     ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Hi, there.

4                     I think I would like to ask a question  
5           of Brian from the School Business Officials  
6           regarding something you mentioned in passing  
7           in your testimony, but I'm really curious as  
8           to school districts during COVID and the  
9           unexpected expenses for testing, for other  
10          kinds of materials, and what they have done  
11          in varying ways to try and fit that into  
12          their financial plans and into their budgets,  
13          often not compensated for by state aid.

14                    And any recommendations you can make  
15          on how we can try and make sure some of that  
16          stuff is reimbursed, if possible, or how you  
17          see that. And I'll just say my experience is  
18          different districts dealt with these  
19          challenge in different ways. Wealthier  
20          districts probably had a better foothold on  
21          options than higher-needs districts, and that  
22          in itself was not fair.

23                    So whatever you can provide. School  
24          business officials are often the best ones to

1 ask a question like this, because they have  
2 to solve those problems.

3 MR. CECHNICKI: Sure. I think, you  
4 know, certainly the beginning of the  
5 pandemic, that was certainly a challenge  
6 because there was sort of the double whammy  
7 of being hit with those expenses, but also in  
8 an environment where aid was being cut at the  
9 time.

10 I think in the more recent years,  
11 between, you know, the first phase-in-step  
12 last year with Foundation Aid, the \$3 billion  
13 increase in the budget, the additional  
14 federal money -- I think a lot of those  
15 expenses -- you know, the money is now  
16 available, but really it's a matter of how to  
17 access that money.

18 And so there's lots of different  
19 funding streams now, and all of them have  
20 different requirements. And so specifically  
21 with those mental health grants, we're sort  
22 of a little concerned just about what that  
23 grant process will be. Because the more and  
24 more, you know, districts have to complete

1 long applications to, you know, receive these  
2 funds -- and certainly that's the case with  
3 the federal money -- it just becomes an  
4 impediment to districts wanting to seek those  
5 funds.

6 The other piece here that we have been  
7 advocating for on the property tax cap  
8 side -- so for districts that are less  
9 reliant on state aid and more reliant on  
10 their local property taxes, in this current  
11 inflationary environment that's putting a lot  
12 of pressure -- those added costs are putting  
13 pressure on them as well.

14 And so having some room within the  
15 property tax cap to allow for true  
16 inflationary growth will provide some of  
17 that, you know, swing room to allow for  
18 those. So it's really -- there's a lot of  
19 money there, but a lot of it is sort of the  
20 process of getting that funding and, you  
21 know, trying to reduce the administrative  
22 side of that as much as possible.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Well, thank you.

24 And I concur with your recommendation

1 on the reserve fund percentage, that that  
2 is -- 4 percent is way too low to be  
3 responsible.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

6 I don't see any Senators, so I will go  
7 on with the next Assemblymember,  
8 Assemblywoman Niou --

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, no  
10 more Senators. Excuse me, no more Senators.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Right.

12 Assemblywoman Niou.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Hello. Thank you  
14 so much for waiting so long tonight. I  
15 wanted to ask a couple of questions, probably  
16 for Kyle and then for Mark. But I think  
17 anybody could probably answer. Or people can  
18 answer if they want to.

19 But I've heard from many parents in  
20 New York City, in my district especially,  
21 they feel unheard with regards to, you know,  
22 COVID protocols, remote options. You know,  
23 we also heard from a couple of teachers and  
24 the teachers' union, and Michael and Andy,



1           and we just heard that some different things  
2           have been good and bad. Because some people  
3           started to learn differently, we started to  
4           see people, you know, actually blossom under  
5           certain kinds of remote learning because that  
6           was a different learning style. And some  
7           people were having a harder time because  
8           there were changes in their learning style.

9                     And so we wanted to kind of see what  
10          sort of frustrations and what sort of stories  
11          you were hearing from parents. And do you  
12          feel like you've been heard by city and state  
13          officials?

14                    I also wanted to ask specifically, you  
15          know, if union members felt like they've, you  
16          know, clear guidance. I guess administrators  
17          also, if they had any clear guidance from  
18          relevant local and state authorities when it  
19          came to COVID protocols. And do you feel  
20          like they've been left on their own? Do you  
21          feel like you've been left on your own when  
22          it comes to decisions regarding the safety of  
23          students and themselves and their staff  
24          during this pandemic?

1           MR. CANNIZZARO: Yes. So all of those  
2 things are important points that you hit, you  
3 know, I heard Brian talking about the  
4 changing guidance, and one of the things that  
5 principals and school leaders do is build a  
6 trusting relationship with their communities.  
7 And that is really the basis of everything  
8 that they have.

9           And with all of the changing guidance  
10 and quite often things being announced that  
11 principals don't even have the details for  
12 and then, you know, parents calling and  
13 saying, Hey, what's this about or what's that  
14 about -- the most recent was this rumor of  
15 another remote learning opportunity, right?  
16 You know, all of sudden parents are calling  
17 the schools to say, Oh, there is going to be  
18 remote learning? What do I need to do? And  
19 the principals are saying, Well, I don't  
20 know, I only heard what you heard through  
21 this announcement.

22           So not only does that build  
23 frustration, but it breaks down trust. And  
24 that's been really going on for couple of

1 years now. So that's going to be the biggest  
2 thing, is trying to restore that trust with  
3 the families.

4 And, you know, look, we've always been  
5 the ones that have been able to do that. But  
6 it's been really challenging through this  
7 pandemic with the guidance that's coming at  
8 us, and really just changing every single  
9 day. You know, we just changed the isolation  
10 protocols. We didn't know it until it was  
11 announced that the isolation protocols were  
12 changing. So those type of things are very  
13 frustrating, not only for us but then for the  
14 families.

15 MS. GALLAGHER: If I might, to  
16 piggyback off that just for a moment, is that  
17 upstate, you know, as Bob indicated, many of  
18 our schools are in multiple counties. So  
19 when you find one county is providing -- the  
20 county department of health is providing one  
21 set of guidance as opposed to another, it  
22 gets very, very challenging.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Yes, we've heard  
24 that, mm-hmm.

1 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: Assemblywoman, I'll  
2 be very brief. Yes. I think just yes to  
3 everything that you said.

4 Parents have been frustrated for a lot  
5 of reasons. You know, I'm a mom, I had COVID  
6 myself. I had to watch my son go through  
7 quarantine and remote instruction, so I could  
8 see that really firsthand.

9 As continuing Department of Health and  
10 CDC guidelines change, it's very important to  
11 communicate with parents. They really want  
12 to be heard on these issues and have a  
13 meaningful two-way conversation with school  
14 districts.

15 School districts are doing a great job  
16 in keeping our kids safe and communicating  
17 with parents, but it could always be more.  
18 So I thank my colleagues from the other  
19 associations for all of their work with their  
20 members and really communicating with  
21 parents.

22 But I think the answer is just yes,  
23 more is always better. Communication is key.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We next to go  
2                   Assemblywoman Hyndman, to be followed by  
3                   Assemblywoman Simon.

4                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
5                   Chair Weinstein and Chair Krueger.

6                   Hi, everyone. Thank you for your  
7                   testimony. This is specifically for Mark  
8                   Cannizzaro.

9                   Thank you for your leadership. I have  
10                  noticed that in my district we have lost  
11                  approximately four principals, one of them  
12                  being Harriet Diaz, who was real steadfast  
13                  person in District 29 schools. And I know  
14                  she talked about the Executive Leadership  
15                  Institute and how important it is to make  
16                  sure that principals have support.

17                  I think a lot of times in the  
18                  conversations around the pandemic that we  
19                  have lost that our principals needed support  
20                  too, in getting their buildings and their  
21                  teachers all in alignment with all of the  
22                  mandates and guidelines that come down.

23                  So you have asked for \$1 million, I  
24                  believe, in more above the -- what we gave

1       you last year. So I just wanted to say that  
2       in order to keep the pipeline of principals  
3       in our schools whole, that I wholly support  
4       that, and as well as our assistant  
5       principals, identifying those principals who  
6       need that next push in leadership.

7                You've done a great job in leadership  
8       for principals in New York City, and anything  
9       we could do in the Assembly to help you to  
10      push that, to make sure we have good  
11      principals moving forward, I'm here to  
12      support.

13               I don't have a question, but hi, Kyle.  
14      Thanks, everyone, for their testimony.

15               MR. CANNIZZARO: Thank you so much.  
16      That's very much appreciated.

17               CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18               Assemblywoman Simon.

19               ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Sorry. I'm  
20      juggling, I apologize.

21               Thank you for your testimony. Thank  
22      you for staying with us all day and for  
23      helping us to understand the way COVID has  
24      changed your world and the needs that you

1 have as they relate both to our recovery from  
2 COVID as well as, you know, the Governor's  
3 budget and where we can help you further.

4 I have a question -- it may seem a  
5 little bit out of left field, but years ago  
6 one of the issues I know that a lot of the  
7 school districts had was technology issues.  
8 And they had not updated their computer  
9 systems, many of them would -- you know,  
10 people would leave and they wouldn't update  
11 the passwords and former employees might  
12 still have those passwords. They were  
13 vulnerable to hacking.

14 I'm curious what the current state of  
15 affairs is with regard to the technology and  
16 the resiliency of that technology in your  
17 various school districts.

18 MR. CANNIZZARO: I would say in  
19 New York City it's improved greatly, but it's  
20 still uneven. You know, not every building  
21 can handle the bandwidth. So that's one big  
22 issue.

23 As far as some of the security issues,  
24 it's less, I think mainly because people are

1 more aware and astute to protecting these  
2 things. But it's still -- we're still  
3 vulnerable in certain areas, but not as -- I  
4 wouldn't say it's as bad as it's been in the  
5 past.

6 MS. GALLAGHER: I would have to  
7 concur, except that we also had to shift to  
8 remote instruction, so many of the concerns  
9 that we heard from our building  
10 administrators in our -- in SAANYS was more  
11 or less how it was being secure within the  
12 homes, or the access. So this shift to  
13 remote also shifted the argument.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay.

15 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: And we'd agree --  
16 oh, you go, Bob.

17 MR. LOWRY: I would just say that I  
18 think, you know, there have been some  
19 high-profile incidents with hackers or  
20 whatever, you know, seizing control of  
21 district data. In the Comptroller's audits,  
22 both these things cast a spotlight on these  
23 concerns, so I think school officials have  
24 become increasingly vigilant and diligent



1 about trying to make sure that they've done  
2 everything possible to protect their systems.

3 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: And I think from a  
4 parent's perspective, Assemblywoman, you  
5 know, SED had done -- previously did a survey  
6 when we kind of started remote instruction  
7 that found that at that time 215,000 students  
8 didn't have access to a computer, Chromebook  
9 or tablet to use for instruction. And the  
10 same survey found that 165,000 New York State  
11 school students lack internet access to  
12 actually participate in remote instruction.

13 Now we are in a new school year. Fast  
14 forward, school districts have done fantastic  
15 things to get devices into students' and  
16 families' hands. And I think your continued  
17 investments in the Legislature and our  
18 broadband initiatives really define, you  
19 know, real true meaningful low-cost and  
20 no-cost solutions for families is going to be  
21 critical as we continue to move forward in  
22 some type of remote environment.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Do you think  
24 there is a personnel need for people who

1       are -- you know, to consult with the school  
2       districts with regard to security? You know,  
3       I know everybody is more aware now, but I'm  
4       concerned that -- of the technical expertise  
5       throughout the state.

6               MR. LOWRY: You know, I don't hear  
7       that. And I would say that districts outside  
8       of New York City typically work with their  
9       BOCES, BOCES -- some of the BOCES maintain a  
10      regional information center. So that's a  
11      source that districts have available to them.

12             ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Right. Thank  
13      you very much.

14             CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15             I also just want to take a moment to  
16      thank all of the members of the panel,  
17      particularly the school administrators and  
18      supervisors, for keeping our schools -- all  
19      the good work you do keeping our schools open  
20      during this time of uncertainty. And, you  
21      know, you have a lot of support within the  
22      Legislature for all of the work that you do.  
23      We are very grateful.

24             And with that, we are going to thank

1           you. There are no more legislators who have  
2           questions, and we are going to move on to  
3           next panel.

4           MR. LOWRY: Thank you.

5           MR. CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

6           MR. FESSLER: Thank you.

7           MS. GALLAGHER: Thank you. Have a  
8           nice night.

9           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If you have the  
10          witness list, this is Panel E: Alliance for  
11          Quality Education, Jasmine Gripper, executive  
12          director; New York State Community Schools  
13          Network, Alli Lidie, network lead; New York  
14          State Association of School Psychologists,  
15          Beth Rizzi, president.

16          I think everybody is in -- yes.  
17          So why don't we go in that order, starting  
18          with Alliance for Quality Education.

19          MS. GRIPPER: Yeah, thank you for  
20          having me.

My name is Jasmine Gripper. I am  
21          the executive director for the Alliance for  
22          Quality Education.

23          I want to start my testimony by  
24          thanking the Legislature for committing to

1 fully funding the Foundation Aid formula.  
2 This is the first time since the Foundation  
3 Aid formula was created that the full  
4 phase-in amount has been included in the  
5 Executive Budget. Parents, students, and  
6 educators appreciate that we don't need to  
7 fight for this much-needed and much-deserved  
8 funding.

9 You have my full testimony to read;  
10 I'm just going kind of summarize a few key  
11 points and respond to a few comments I've  
12 heard earlier in the hearing.

13 First, there was a lot of discussion  
14 on the Foundation Aid formula. Again, we are  
15 excited about the commitment to fully fund  
16 the formula, but I just want to remind you  
17 that school districts have only received year  
18 one of a three-year phase in. No high-needs  
19 school district is receiving their full  
20 Foundation Aid amount until 2023. So before  
21 we start evaluating outcomes, we need to give  
22 districts time to get their full  
23 Foundation Aid and account for the  
24 disruptions in learning caused by the

1 pandemic.

2 For decades our schools have been  
3 underfunded, and getting students on track is  
4 not going to happen overnight. We support  
5 accountability for districts, especially  
6 what's outlined in the Contract for  
7 Excellence. The Legislature needs to ensure  
8 districts are meeting those requirements as  
9 the Foundation Aid is phased in.

10 Second, we have fought for decades for  
11 this funding, but we are worried that a high  
12 portion of state aid districts will be  
13 required to give it over to charter schools.  
14 There is a full-page summary of the impact of  
15 charter schools at the end of my testimony,  
16 but for example, in New York City, for the  
17 last three years New York City has been  
18 paying out for charter schools 200 million  
19 more every year, for the last three years.  
20 If this pattern holds, of the 350 million in  
21 state aid increases to New York City, over  
22 50 percent is going to go to 14 percent of  
23 students.

24 That is a deeply skewed distribution.

1 We need the State Legislature to curb the  
2 rising costs of charters.

3 As many of you mentioned, many of our  
4 districts and families are experiencing  
5 mental health crises due to the pandemic. It  
6 is absolutely essential that the Legislature  
7 moves forward supports for children and their  
8 families and their communities. A positive  
9 school climate, community schools,  
10 legislation like the Solutions Not  
11 Suspensions bill, the bill by Senator Jackson  
12 and Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas,  
13 for mental health counselors and  
14 psychologists in every school building --  
15 these are essential.

16 Lastly, the pandemic has revealed that  
17 childcare in New York State is in crisis.  
18 There are surplus funds in the State Budget  
19 which need to be invested in moving New York  
20 towards universal childcare as it's laid out  
21 in the Brisport and Hevesi bill. The cost to  
22 parents is too high, and providers need to be  
23 paid a quality wage.

24 New York really needs to invest in the

1 continuum of care from birth to 12. We look  
2 forward to working with legislators to make  
3 universal childcare a reality in New York  
4 State, and I thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So next we can  
6 go on to the New York State Community Schools  
7 Network.

8 MS. LIDIE: Hi. Thank you.

9 I am Alli Lidie, I'm representing the  
10 New York State Community Schools Network, and  
11 I want to thank you for the offer of the  
12 committee to provide testimony this evening.

13 I want to thank you all for the many  
14 comments and questions shared today regarding  
15 committee schools and your support for the  
16 strategy. Given that, I don't want to spend  
17 my time trying to sell you on community  
18 schools as the right place to invest. It is  
19 already clear that New York community schools  
20 work. If you are not, though, please do read  
21 the written testimony. You can learn more  
22 about the strategies, demonstrated return on  
23 investment, and what community schools have  
24 been doing across the state.

1           I will say, though, that given what we  
2           know about community schools, and what you  
3           all have expressed today, it is unfortunate  
4           there were not new investments directly in  
5           the community school strategy in the  
6           Governor's budget. So we are asking the  
7           state to maintain the \$250 million in  
8           existing community schools funding, and  
9           dedicate an additional \$100 million in a new  
10          community schools categorical aid to  
11          adequately fund and sustain communities  
12          schools statewide.

13           Also, in order to support schools, and  
14          effectively utilizing the community school  
15          strategy, the state currently funds three  
16          regional Technical Assistance Centers, or  
17          TACs. During the pandemic, the TACs have  
18          shifted their work, including hosting  
19          multiple webinars for the field focused on  
20          current needs. They created a Diversity,  
21          Equity, and Inclusion Portal, conducted  
22          virtual site visits, and helped districts  
23          discover how community schools can help  
24          support the adults in schools too.



1           The strategy is needed now more than  
2           ever before, and they need support to be able  
3           to work with more schools and districts.  
4           Therefore we are asking the state to increase  
5           the \$1.2 million investment in TACs by  
6           800,000, for a total appropriation of \$2  
7           million annually.

8           We also support critical funding for  
9           the programs and services that community  
10          schools effectively leverage and coordinate,  
11          including after-school and summer, expanded  
12          learning programs, pre-K, school-based health  
13          centers and mental health. This is all  
14          outlined in our written testimony.

15          The one specific piece I want to touch  
16          on for education is our ask around the new  
17          proposed RECOVS learning and mental health  
18          grant. The community schools strategy  
19          demonstrates that schools should not be doing  
20          this alone. This new funding stream should  
21          require that school districts demonstrate  
22          mutual collaboration with at least one  
23          community-based after-school, youth, or  
24          family-serving organization or a mental

1 health partner to help students recover  
2 academically. We think that will be the most  
3 effective way forward for this funding.

4 So thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And  
6 that's -- you can go.

7 MS. LIDIE: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Beth, from  
9 School Psychologists.

10 MS. RIZZI: Good evening. My name is  
11 Beth Rizzi, and I'm the president of the  
12 New York Association of School Psychologists.

13 I want to thank the chairs and all of  
14 the panel members for this opportunity to  
15 share our comments on the Governor's  
16 Executive Budget.

17 I share these comments under the  
18 backdrop of the national crisis that  
19 currently exists related to children's mental  
20 health. We have heard this mentioned  
21 multiple times by many panelists, and many of  
22 you, this afternoon and this evening.

23 We are well aware of the impact that  
24 these past two years have had on the social

1 and emotional adjustments of children and  
2 adolescents. The American Academy of  
3 Pediatricians, the American Academy of Child  
4 and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's  
5 Hospital Association have declared a national  
6 emergency in children's mental health, citing  
7 the serious toll of the pandemic and other  
8 social justice factors within our nation.

9 The Surgeon General issued a new  
10 advisory to highlight the urgent need to  
11 address the nation's youth mental health  
12 crisis, and we all applaud the Governor's own  
13 recognition of the mental health crisis in  
14 her State of the State address a few weeks  
15 ago.

16 On a personal level, I can tell you  
17 that our children are hurting. I see many of  
18 the children in my schools struggling with  
19 increased anxiety, heightened levels of  
20 depression, and general difficulties managing  
21 the challenges of school and life.

22 There are ways for you as legislators  
23 to support our children and make a difference  
24 in the mental health supports available to

1 youth and families. Senator Brouk and  
2 Assemblymember Rosenthal have sponsored  
3 legislation, S4347A and A454A, that would  
4 provide for the licensure of school  
5 psychologists. Currently without this  
6 licensure, school psychologists are limited  
7 to working within school districts and some  
8 state agencies.

9           However, as I am sure you are all  
10 aware, there's a severe shortage of mental  
11 health professionals in the community, and  
12 families are faced with long waitlists,  
13 extensive travel, and reliance upon emergency  
14 room services. Licensure of school  
15 psychologists would increase the mental  
16 health workforce throughout New York State.

17           Additionally, we have heard mentioned  
18 multiple times today Assemblymember Rojas and  
19 Senator Jackson's bills requesting one social  
20 worker and one school psychologist in every  
21 single school building around our state.  
22 This too will enable us to support our  
23 children better in their environments.

24           Additionally, there are a number of

1 proposals within the Governor's budget that  
2 would help to address the mental health needs  
3 of children. We are pleased to support the  
4 proposal for \$10 million in mental health  
5 support grants for school districts.

6 And unfortunately, we do recognize  
7 that high-needs districts have been  
8 disproportionately impacted by the pandemic  
9 and do not have the resources to address  
10 their students' needs.

11 Thank you so much for your time this  
12 evening, and I welcome any questions.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all  
14 for being here.

15 Assemblyman Benedetto, did you have  
16 any questions? Okay. So then we have  
17 Assemblywoman Simon, and then we will go to  
18 the Senate.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Very good.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you very  
21 much.

22 I have a question for you, Dr. Rizzi,  
23 which is about, you know, the mental health  
24 needs of our students in schools. We have

1       talked a lot about those issues such as  
2       anxiety and depression and the trauma that  
3       they are experiencing. But some of our  
4       children have also experienced COVID, and  
5       there have been reports of cognitive impacts  
6       of COVID on children, in particular on  
7       children, and I am curious whether or what  
8       work is being done to look at those needs, to  
9       establish what kind of cognitive impacts, how  
10      long they may be lasting, how present are  
11      they in the schoolchildren in New York State.

12             And I know many school psychologists  
13      are familiar with assessment work; others are  
14      not. And I'm curious what you are doing to  
15      address that issue, because I think long-term  
16      effects of COVID could very easily affect a  
17      lot of our children's learning.

18             MS. RIZZI: Absolutely. Thank you for  
19      your question.

20             I think that we are very early in that  
21      particular game, as much as I hate to say  
22      that, and it's almost -- I would call it  
23      similar to the research with regard to  
24      concussion. And we are going to have to

1 continue to study this to see what the  
2 long-term ramifications are.

3 However, of course, when there are  
4 concerns about a child's development, both  
5 cognitively and academically, we look to our  
6 school psychologists to assess the student's  
7 needs and to compare any baseline data that  
8 we may have on hand to whatever post-COVID  
9 data we have and then can therefore continue  
10 to collect.

11 And we're going to have to do research  
12 over the next several years, I believe, to  
13 truly address what this might be and to also  
14 tease out what is the potential cognitive  
15 impacts versus lack of access.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 Senator Shelley Mayer.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

20 And first, Jasmine -- nice to see you  
21 all, and -- but question for you. I  
22 appreciate that you include childcare in your  
23 education conversation. Do you have a  
24 specific dollar ask, or are you supportive of

1 the Brisport or the Ramos bill? What's your  
2 position on how best to address the  
3 inadequacy of childcare?

4 MS. GRIPPER: Yes. The dollar ask is  
5 \$5 billion for Year 1. I know it is a lot,  
6 but the industry has been disinvested in for  
7 so long we lost about 1,500 providers that  
8 permanently closed their doors during the  
9 pandemic. We think the Brisport bill  
10 provides a pathway to universal childcare.  
11 The Ramos bill is good, but she leaves out  
12 one critical component, which is before- and  
13 after-care for school-aged children up to age  
14 12.

15 And working parents really need that  
16 component. And even those extra three hours  
17 are really expensive if you don't qualify for  
18 a subsidy. The Brisport bill completely  
19 eliminates means testing, which is a huge  
20 barrier for undocumented folks having access,  
21 and also it traps parents in poverty. If you  
22 make a dollar more than what the subsidy  
23 requires, you can no longer get the subsidy.

24 And it is too expensive -- right now,



1           childcare costs more than the cost of CUNY or  
2           SUNY tuition, and we really need to rein that  
3           in for parents.

4                    SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you  
5           very much.

6                    Thank you to all of you for your  
7           really fighting for kids.

8                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9                    Senator Sean Ryan.

10                   SENATOR RYAN: Thank you,  
11          Senator Krueger.

12                   Thank you very much, Jasmine and Beth  
13          and Alli, for your testimony today.

14                   Jasmine, you thanked the Legislature  
15          for the Foundation Aid increase, but I feel  
16          it's really appropriate to turn it around and  
17          thank AQE for the Foundation Aid increase.  
18          You know, in 1993 a lawsuit was filed  
19          alleging that poor kids and medium-wealth  
20          kids were being shortchanged in New York  
21          State, and that went through one of most  
22          torturous processes of a lawsuit I've ever  
23          seen -- in court, dismissed, appealed, back  
24          in. And then a previous governor said, you

1 know, that -- the lawsuit was called the  
2 Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the CFE -- they  
3 said it was dead, there is no such thing, and  
4 no district is owed Foundation Aid.

5 But I knew that wasn't true because I  
6 had a button, and the button told me exactly  
7 how much my districts were owed. I keep that  
8 button. I really wish I could bring it out  
9 right now as a prop. But I know that my  
10 districts, especially the lower-wealth ones,  
11 they're going to get every one of those  
12 dollars in the next three years, you know,  
13 because of the commitment of everyone on this  
14 call, especially the Education chairs.

15 So I would say to you, thank you very  
16 much, but also, you know, your predecessor  
17 Billy, and I'm sure someone came before Billy  
18 Easton. And then the other progeny of your  
19 good work is the community school efforts in  
20 New York State.

21 So thanks, thanks for your hard work.  
22 And I look forward to, you know, working  
23 together in the future. But I really look  
24 forward to Year 3 when there is no CFE debt

1 anywhere in New York State.

2 MS. GRIPPER: Yes. Thank you. This  
3 was something we all did together. It took  
4 the Legislature standing up to Cuomo and  
5 demanding that, even when a powerful governor  
6 said it was not real. So thank you all for  
7 fighting with us.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
9 Senator Ryan.

10 I believe that Assemblymember Niou has  
11 her hand up now.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. I was  
13 just about to call on Assemblywoman Niou.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Sorry about that.

15 I just really wanted to add in -- I  
16 actually wanted to ask your advice on -- you  
17 know, you did put out this page on the  
18 inequities with the charter schools, and I  
19 was wondering what your solution would be for  
20 this on the state level.

21 MS. GRIPPER: Yeah, I think the school  
22 districts talked about this, which is  
23 increasing the aid category to charter  
24 schools so the state is picking up the tab,

1       reducing the rent payments in New York  
2       City -- a lot of the ballooning costs have  
3       been going to New York City -- reject the  
4       Governor's proposal to increase charter  
5       tuition -- we really just need to rein in the  
6       costs.

7               We think charters can and should get  
8       an increase, but not 50 percent of the  
9       Foundation Aid money going to public schools  
10      when they only serve 14 percent of the entire  
11      population.

12             ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: And currently  
13      with the formula the way that it is, it  
14      actually takes from our schools now, right?  
15      So like the way that, you know, the buttons  
16      that we were just talking about -- it would  
17      be a very, very different amount that would  
18      actually be getting to our kids, right?

19             MS. GRIPPER: Exactly. Either the  
20      state itself can pick up the tab and  
21      reimburse districts 100 percent for what they  
22      pay for charter costs, but if not, then that  
23      comes out of what districts would be giving  
24      for its general ed population.

1           So yes. That's extremely problematic,  
2           and that's the issue we want to address. And  
3           we should look into a long-term solution with  
4           the charter formula.

5           ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: I am really glad  
6           that you clarified between the two bills,  
7           between the Ramos bill and the Brisport bill.  
8           And I feel like, you know, the asset-limit  
9           piece was a very big one on my end.

10          And I think that, you know, a lot of  
11          other social benefits, a lot of our different  
12          programs often have these asset limits that  
13          are harmful to folks and trap them in a cycle  
14          of poverty. Could you elaborate a little bit  
15          more about, you know, what that looks like  
16          for folks, and why that is so important?

17          MS. GRIPPER: Yes. So currently, if  
18          you're a household of four and both parents  
19          work full-time and make minimum wage, you do  
20          not qualify for a childcare subsidy. And  
21          you're expected to pay \$15,000 for childcare,  
22          which is absolutely ridiculous and  
23          impossible.

24          And so what you have to do as a parent

1 is not make more than what the cutoff is for  
2 the subsidy. And if you make a dollar more,  
3 you lose your entire subsidy right now. And  
4 so that means parents, especially single  
5 mothers, really get trapped in low-wage work.  
6 And they can't advance professionally,  
7 because if they do, the childcare burden is  
8 too much and then they can't afford to send  
9 their kids to childcare.

10 So it really puts the burden -- if you  
11 don't have family support to help you with  
12 childcare, it puts you completely out of the  
13 workforce or it traps you in low-wage jobs.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: And I am  
15 super-appreciative of you for saying that,  
16 and also for all of your work. But I also am  
17 saying that, you know, I think that one of  
18 the other things that you guys fight for is  
19 making sure that we have after-school.

20 Is the after-school -- universal  
21 after-school, I believe -- is what you are  
22 hoping for? Can you talk to us about how  
23 that creates segregation when we don't have  
24 it?

1 MS. GRIPPER: Yeah. I mean, kids need  
2 a place to go. We talk about the rising  
3 crime rates in our community, and a lot of  
4 that is committed by kids who have nothing to  
5 do after school hours. And if we keep kids  
6 busy, productive, it is a good thing. And  
7 parents want their kids to have a safe place  
8 to be.

9 So, one, childcare subsidies help pay  
10 for after-school costs for kids up to age 12,  
11 which is really important. I think the other  
12 thing is community schools that are often  
13 open for a longer school day are essential  
14 for filling in that gap as well.

15 And so there is no one-size-fits-all  
16 approach. We need to make sure parents have  
17 options, those options are free and  
18 accessible in their community, and that they  
19 also have access to transportation.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 There are no further questions for  
23 this panel. Thank you all for the good work  
24 you've been doing over the years.

1 MS. GRIPPER: Thank you.

2 MS. LIDIE: Thank you.

3 MS. RIZZI: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Going on to the  
5 next panel, Panel F, New York Charter School  
6 Association, Yomika Bennett, executive  
7 director; Charter Parent Council, Jason  
8 Montanez, charter parent; Success Academy  
9 Charter Schools, Edwin Cespedes, board  
10 member; New York City Charter School Center,  
11 James Merriman, CEO.

12 And if you can go in --

13 THE MODERATOR: Mr. Cespedes is not  
14 with us at this moment.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.

16 THE MODERATOR: We will sync him in if  
17 we get him.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So  
19 let's -- the other three are here. So if we  
20 can start with New York Charter School  
21 Association and move on from there.

22 MS. BENNETT: Thank you, Chairs  
23 Krueger, Weinstein, Mayer, and Benedetto, and  
24 distinguished members of the Legislature.



1 Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
2 today.

3 My name is Yomika Bennett. I am the  
4 executive director of the New York Charter  
5 School Association.

6 Charter schools are not only  
7 delivering for students right now, they are  
8 about what's possible in the future. As you  
9 know, charter schools are public schools  
10 authorized by law. The law states, quote,  
11 teachers, parents, school administrators,  
12 community residents, or any combination  
13 thereof can start a school. This is a  
14 powerful law giving people the power to  
15 impact education.

16 Consider for a moment the sad history  
17 and current circumstance in some cases  
18 regarding education for disadvantaged  
19 communities. We should encourage charter  
20 schools as a matter of right and  
21 self-empowerment, particularly for  
22 marginalized and historically disadvantaged  
23 communities.

24 Charter schools offer all students,

1       regardless of race, identity, zip code, or  
2       family income, the opportunity to attend  
3       schools of their choice. There are fewer  
4       than 360 charter schools in the entire state.  
5       They serve more than 170,000 students. These  
6       schools offer a range of choices for  
7       families -- college prep, neurodiversity,  
8       dyslexia schools, autism schools, bilingual  
9       education schools, African and other culture  
10      schools, sustainability, CTE and health  
11      sciences, STEM, music, arts, and much more.

12             During the pandemic, charter schools  
13      throughout the state were able to adapt their  
14      learning options to meet the needs of their  
15      particular school families, with many charter  
16      schools offering in-person learning while  
17      surrounding schools were closed or remote.

18             The association applauds the Governor  
19      for her vision and support for students and  
20      family in the Executive Budget. However,  
21      there is more work to be done. New York  
22      State should promote charter school education  
23      because it works for families and students.

24             Per-pupil funding for charter school

1 students should be increased to equal  
2 per-pupil funding for district schools.  
3 Charter schools should have the option to  
4 choose to receive state aid directly. The  
5 current process sets up an us-versus-them  
6 paradigm where charter school students are  
7 viewed as stealing money from the district,  
8 when the reality is funding follows the  
9 student to support their public school  
10 education, not an entitlement of the school  
11 district.

12 Finally, New York State must remove  
13 the limit on the number of charter schools  
14 allowed by law as well as provide facility  
15 funding for charter schools statewide.  
16 Ultimately this also helps achieve the goal  
17 of reducing class sizes to improve education.  
18 Importantly, doing so also opens the pathway  
19 for people of color to start schools.

20 We urge you to create an Educational  
21 Equity Fund similar to the proposal in the  
22 Executive Budget to establish the Cannabis  
23 Social Equity Fund. Certainly if the state  
24 can support and encourage members of

1           disadvantaged communities to open cannabis  
2           shops, surely it will support and encourage  
3           members of those same Black, brown, and other  
4           disadvantaged communities to start schools.

5                     Thank you again for the opportunity to  
6           testify.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:   And next --  
8           Jason?   Jason, can you go next?

9                     MR. MONTANEZ:   Can you hear me now?

10                    Hi, everybody.   I would first like to  
11           thank all of the chairs -- Weinstein,  
12           Krueger, Benedetto, and Liu -- for having me  
13           here today.   I am Jason Montanez, and my  
14           family has been living in Buffalo for over  
15           20 years.   My son Jabari previously attended  
16           West Buffalo Charter School.   My daughter  
17           Juliet, a kindergartner, has also chosen to  
18           follow in his footsteps and is now attending  
19           there.

20                    When we first started looking for  
21           schools for our son, we started to look at  
22           the diversity of the staff, how big was  
23           school, what was the technology like in those  
24           schools.   But the most important thing was

1       how is leadership of the schools, was the  
2       staff and the leadership all in sync. After  
3       seeing five or six charter schools in the  
4       area, we decided to enter the lottery for  
5       West Buffalo Charter School, where we were  
6       ultimately selected.

7               We firmly believe that the people who  
8       have the greatest influence on our children's  
9       lives besides family are teachers. I feel as  
10      a parent we owe it to our children to put  
11      them into the best schools and to get them  
12      the best education possible. West Buffalo  
13      Charter School has offered our family this  
14      and much more. When my son was in  
15      fifth grade, the school nominated him to the  
16      Buffalo Prep Program. This combination of  
17      what he learned in his charter school,  
18      combined with the supplemental learning from  
19      Buffalo Prep, helped my son be way ahead  
20      academically. He got multiple scholarship  
21      offers from numerous Catholic high schools in  
22      the area and eventually chose Canisius High  
23      School as a destination for future learning.

24             We firmly believe this is all because

1 of the excellent education he had at  
2 West Buffalo Charter School. In fact,  
3 West Buffalo Charter School does such a good  
4 job that for his graduating class of  
5 52 students, 15 students went to private  
6 schools, either on partial or full  
7 scholarships, while another 17 students went  
8 to criterion schools.

9 Although the school has the perfect  
10 storm for failure -- such as a high  
11 free-and-reduced-lunch rate, a high number of  
12 ENL students, and a high number of students  
13 with disabilities -- the student achievement  
14 numbers, based on New York State assessments,  
15 are consistently in the top five when  
16 compared to Buffalo public schools and other  
17 charters.

18 As you make decisions regarding the  
19 New York State budget, please consider  
20 providing equitable funding to all types of  
21 schools. The money doesn't belong to the  
22 entity, it belongs to the child that is  
23 receiving an education, and it should be  
24 provided to the child regardless of the type

1 of educational institution that they attend.

2 We have to support each individual child.

3 They are our future, and as adults we have to  
4 invest in them fairly and equitably.

5 In addition, there should also be no  
6 limit to the existence of any type of school.  
7 Why would you put a cap on anything that  
8 would benefit anyone, especially our  
9 children? The charter school cap is missing  
10 from the budget this year, but we cannot  
11 afford to withhold great education options  
12 for our children just because of the type of  
13 school it happens to be. The only type of  
14 schools we should want to remove are schools  
15 that are not educating our children.

16 We need more of what is working for  
17 our children, not less. The budget should  
18 reflect this support that all children  
19 deserve and need. Our children will be  
20 sitting in your seats in the future. They  
21 are our greatest investment, and it starts  
22 with their education. Funding for charter  
23 schools should be on par with that of public  
24 schools. Charter schools offer longer school

1 days and a longer academic year, and that  
2 extra instructional time is a key for most of  
3 their success rates. Our children need the  
4 extra funding to help their needs and for  
5 their continued success.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And  
7 we go to James Merriman now.

8 MR. MERRIMAN: Hi. Good evening,  
9 everyone. Thank you to the chairs, the  
10 ranking members, and all the members of the  
11 Assembly and the Senate for the opportunity  
12 to testify.

13 Let me make just a few points.  
14 Charter school funding, despite all the talk  
15 about it being something unknowable, is  
16 knowable. It's set in the state law. The  
17 figures are transparent. They are knowable  
18 just in the same way that you can look at  
19 school state aid runs, if that's what you  
20 choose to do.

21 You want to know how much a charter  
22 school is going to get? It's right there  
23 in -- right there online. It's also clear  
24 that funding on a per-pupil basis, on average



1 in New York City, is less, much less than the  
2 funding the district has at its disposal to  
3 educate the students who choose district  
4 schools. For some schools it is to the tune  
5 of several thousand dollars.

6 I extend an open invitation to any  
7 member or any of their staff to sit with us  
8 and go through these numbers, and indeed  
9 we're looking to work with the new  
10 administration and Governor Hochul's staff to  
11 provide even more data to allow you and the  
12 public to make these comparisons. You should  
13 be able to do so.

14 We also call on New York City's  
15 Independent Budget Office to update its own  
16 analysis, which has shown historically the  
17 pattern of underfunding of charter school  
18 students. Simply put, the claim that charter  
19 schools get more money per child is not true.

20 You know, as I have listened, I can't  
21 think there is this undeniable fact. The  
22 only reason we have a growing charter sector  
23 is because each year more and more parents  
24 are choosing charter schools. And thus your

1 argument with charter schools is really an  
2 argument with parents.

3 Look, I personally -- I regret  
4 terribly that we are not more liked with  
5 members. But I can tell you it's even more  
6 dismaying, actually dismaying, to the  
7 over 100,000 families in New York City that  
8 desperately want you to support their efforts  
9 to find the best public school for their  
10 children. When I talk with them, they simply  
11 can't understand why you don't.

12 Despite that, it remains true that  
13 almost 40 percent of African-American  
14 students in early grades in New York City's  
15 public schools are in charter schools, and  
16 our ELL enrollment this year has reached  
17 record levels and continues to climb.

18 As Chancellor David Banks made clear,  
19 he wants to grow what is working. We want to  
20 be part of that partnership. We want to work  
21 hand in hand with him and district schools in  
22 New York City for a brighter future for all  
23 New York City schoolchildren.

24 Thank you.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2                   We go to our chair of Education,  
3                   Assemblyman Benedetto.

4                   Mike, you're still muted.

5                   ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I thought I  
6                   did, I'm sorry.

7                   Okay, listen, folks, you spent a long  
8                   day here, you've hung in there, I thank you  
9                   for that. And I appreciate your testimony,  
10                  okay? And I appreciate some of the things  
11                  you do there in the charter school community,  
12                  you know, because, bottom line, we are  
13                  looking at kids.

14                  But you know, James, you talked about  
15                  getting to be better-liked in the Assembly or  
16                  the Senate by some of the members. You know,  
17                  there is constantly questions in people's  
18                  minds about are charter schools playing on a  
19                  level playing field with the public schools.  
20                  Okay? Do they have the correct number of  
21                  special education population, and what is the  
22                  nature of the special ed population?

23                  Why don't we have the State  
24                  Comptroller with powers to audit the charter

1 schools in the City of New York? Why aren't  
2 we allowed to take maybe a look at their  
3 books and open up their books for us? And  
4 how about dismissal and getting rid of kids,  
5 their suspension policy, is that done with  
6 due process?

7 You know, these are questions that are  
8 thrown out a lot of times by a lot of my  
9 colleagues. And, you know, I've got to say  
10 they're right in a lot of those cases. So we  
11 want them to like you guys, but also you guys  
12 have got to be a little bit more likeable,  
13 okay. And I appreciate some of the work you  
14 do, okay. And I see a purpose in it for you,  
15 but I also have to be honest with you. There  
16 are questions in the minds of a lot of  
17 people, and -- well, keep fighting, please.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. MERRIMAN: Thank you, sir.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 Yes, I see Senator John Liu's hand up.

23 SENATOR LIU: I'm not going to use the  
24 whole three minutes, Madam Chair.

1           I want to say that I don't agree with  
2           anything that James Merriman said, but I like  
3           him. Mike Benedetto, this is a likable man.  
4           He stayed true to his cause and mission for  
5           over 20 years, and I always look forward to  
6           seeing him every year at this budget hearing.

7           But James, I don't agree with what you  
8           said. Thank you.

9           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
10          Senator Liu.

11          Back to you, Assembly.

12          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: With that,  
13          we'll go to Alicia Hyndman.

14          ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
15          Chair Weinstein.

16          I think my colleagues -- I don't know  
17          if it's getting late and we are getting a  
18          little loopy, but we'll see.

19          One of the things, the constant things  
20          we heard today -- thank you for your  
21          testimony. One of the things we heard today  
22          a lot was about the SUNY authorizer and the  
23          problems that are plaguing that authorizer.  
24          I remember when we used to have three

1 authorizers for charter schools: DOE, SED,  
2 and now SUNY seems to be the main one, and  
3 the problems there.

4 So what do you say about that? And  
5 also, Yomika, I think your analysis with  
6 cannabis and charter schools -- I'm trying  
7 to -- you know, I get it but, you know, I  
8 think that was interesting.

9 And one of the things -- my last part  
10 is when Bloomberg came into office, he  
11 changed the formula in New York City where  
12 the money follows the child no matter what  
13 school they go to. I think that's an  
14 interesting analogy, because one of the  
15 things that all of the -- even the Big 5,  
16 when they testified today, was about the loss  
17 of the traditional public school money and it  
18 going to the charter schools.

19 And the last thing I'll say is -- I  
20 lost my train of thought. But if you could  
21 follow my train of thinking, I'd appreciate  
22 it.

23 MS. BENNETT: I'll start. I'll start  
24 with the Social Equity Fund. And thank you

1 for the questions, Assemblymember.

2 The Social Equity Fund analogy is if  
3 the state's policy is we must support, right,  
4 economic development, right, and community  
5 development, helping disadvantaged  
6 communities, right, that fund is supporting  
7 cannabis shops, which is fine. That's  
8 okay -- right, that's a policy.

9 The same policy should certainly be  
10 applied to schools, right? Schools are a  
11 basis for good communities, right? Good  
12 schools make good communities. People choose  
13 to move into schools because of the -- excuse  
14 me, into communities because of the quality  
15 schools. So if there is an understanding  
16 that the Social Equity Fund is needed for  
17 disadvantaged communities and people should  
18 start cannabis shops, that same policy must  
19 apply to schools.

20 Certainly there is no suggestion at  
21 the state level that Black and brown folks  
22 should open up cannabis shops but they  
23 shouldn't open schools. So that was my point  
24 there.

1                   And for SUNY --

2                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: We don't have  
3 a lot of charter school operators that are  
4 Black or brown. We have a lot of -- we have  
5 larger chains, but if you can name a couple  
6 of Black or Latino or Asian charter school  
7 operators, I think that equity piece is  
8 valid.

9                   MS. BENNETT: And maybe that's a  
10 failing of getting information out there.  
11 There absolutely are founders of color and  
12 leaders of school of color. What we need,  
13 right, as well as we need more. And just as  
14 the Social Equity Fund would do that for  
15 cannabis operators -- find people, encourage  
16 people from a disadvantaged background in the  
17 communities to open cannabis shops -- we  
18 should do the same thing to encourage people  
19 from disadvantaged communities to open and  
20 start and operate charter schools.

21                   ASSEMBLYMAN HYNDMAN: My time is up.

22                   Hi, Jason. Good to see you here.

23                   MR. MONTANEZ: Thank you,  
24 Assemblymember.



1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator  
2 Krueger?

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4                   I just need to jump in on the equity  
5 money from my bill for marijuana. If you  
6 look at the bill, it's actually 40 percent  
7 goes to equity work in communities where the  
8 harm was done by marijuana; 20 percent goes  
9 to drug treatment and education about staying  
10 away from drugs; and 40 percent goes into the  
11 New York State public school funds.

12                  So on the theory that charter schools  
13 draw their money down from the New York State  
14 public school funds, I think I can safely say  
15 money from the growth of a cannabis industry  
16 will help the educational funding stream of  
17 New York State, which is not excluding  
18 charter schools, since that's where you all  
19 are getting your money.

20                  So I actually think you need to look  
21 at the entire funding stream of that new  
22 industry as opposed to just one piece of the  
23 funding stream. Thank you.

24                  MS. BENNETT: Thank you for that,

1 Senator.

2 I just want to clarify that the point  
3 is to create an educational equity fund. The  
4 point was that the Social Equity Fund exists,  
5 the state has clearly shown that they have an  
6 appetite and a way to do this.

7 There is a need for an educational  
8 equity fund to address the educational  
9 inequity that has happened -- and we all know  
10 the history of education in this state. An  
11 equity fund to address those inequities is  
12 much needed and should have the state's  
13 support. So thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
16 Assemblywoman Niou.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Thank you so much  
18 for having me.

19 So I will determine if I like you  
20 after this question, Mr. Merriman. Just  
21 kidding.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MR. MERRIMAN: Thanks.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: The suspension

1 rate at New York City charter schools is  
2 sometimes higher than in public schools. I  
3 wanted to see why it is, and how can you  
4 claim to be better at educating our students  
5 while subjecting them to such draconian  
6 measures?

7 MR. MERRIMAN: Well, first of all, I  
8 think the data on suspensions is less than  
9 ideal, and certainly one of the things we  
10 would love to work with is setting out a  
11 better gathering of all of that data. We  
12 would be very open to that.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: I'm talking about  
14 suspensions in schools.

15 (Laughter.)

16 MR. MERRIMAN: It varies from school  
17 to school. And the whole point and part of  
18 charters is parents can choose into a school  
19 that they feel provides the environment that  
20 they want for their children.

21 I am absolutely, I think, talking on  
22 behalf of charter school leaders when they  
23 say if they could get to zero suspensions,  
24 they would love to get to zero suspensions.

1           They are as aware as you and I that kids not  
2           in school are not learning.

3                     But in certain circumstances -- and if  
4           you were to listen carefully, as I think you  
5           did, because --

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU:  Actually, that's  
7           why I asked you that question.  Also I'm  
8           running out of time, and you are talking too  
9           slow, so I'm going to ask another question --  
10          and I apologize --

11                    MR. MERRIMAN:  Fair enough.

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU:  Yeah.  So there  
13          are often reports of charter school CEOs  
14          earning exceptionally high salaries.  And in  
15          general, there is far less clarity into how  
16          charter money is spent than at public  
17          schools.

18                    Why should we approve increased funds  
19          to charter schools, knowing how much of  
20          that -- you know, charter -- how much of that  
21          some charter officials will receive, far more  
22          than their public counterparts?

23                    MR. MERRIMAN:  So you know how much  
24          they receive.  I would argue that the

1 question is, how good an education are they  
2 giving students?

3 I mean, there are superintendents on  
4 Long Island earning nearly 400,000 to 500,000  
5 if you include in retirement benefits. Is  
6 that excessive? I don't know. People rarely  
7 raise the issue.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Okay, so that's  
9 your answer. All right, great.

10 So also I wanted to just add in just  
11 because I think that the punch line, of  
12 course, was that the state's education policy  
13 fund is Foundation Aid. So I think that that  
14 was the whole point of what Senator Krueger  
15 was saying. And I appreciate all of the work  
16 that she did, of course, on marijuana, but  
17 also on the fact that our state education  
18 equity fund is Foundation Aid. So I wanted  
19 to make it obvious.

20 Thank you, everyone.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

22 Senate, I don't believe you have  
23 anyone, but we do have an Assemblyman.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I don't see

1 other hands.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So  
3 Assemblyman Smith.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you so much,  
5 Chairwoman.

6 So a few of the issues -- and thank  
7 you for attending and enlightening us on some  
8 of these things. I definitely would like to  
9 have perhaps follow-up conversations to learn  
10 a little bit more about it. I represent --  
11 my district is on Long Island, but a few of  
12 the things that were mentioned, and things  
13 that have come up in my district -- what  
14 percentage would you say of your workforce is  
15 unionized? You know, teachers in charter  
16 schools. I believe there are some.

17 MR. MERRIMAN: I don't believe less --  
18 I mean, there are some. Probably less than  
19 10 percent.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay. Probably  
21 less than 10 percent. Okay. Because I think  
22 that, you know, we are talking about some of  
23 the differences when we are comparing apples  
24 to oranges, trying to figure these things

1 out. And again, admittedly, I represent --  
2 on Long Island we don't have too many charter  
3 schools, and it's an issue that -- you know,  
4 I was a public school teacher. I'm a strong  
5 advocate for public education. So it's  
6 something that I have a tough time coming to  
7 grips with when we are trying to -- we're  
8 talking about public funding going to  
9 institutions that -- that this concerns about  
10 accountability in the same regard and  
11 questions about that.

12 So I think that that's where my  
13 colleagues and myself are kind of coming  
14 from, where there is a little bit of  
15 skepticism because we just don't have  
16 answers, you know. There are certain things  
17 that we don't have access to, information.  
18 So if there are ways that you can help us  
19 understand, that would be very helpful, I  
20 think, because as we are going forward -- and  
21 then the other part of it is, you know, maybe  
22 a little bit more controversial, but I'll use  
23 an example.

24 One of my colleagues here on

1 Long Island served in the New York State  
2 Assembly. He ran for New York State Senate  
3 last year, and in the waning days of his  
4 campaign -- he ended up winning the race, but  
5 an organization associated with the charter  
6 school industry spent \$2.7 million --  
7 \$2.7 million against him. Now, he was a  
8 member of the State Assembly and, you know,  
9 didn't really take a strong position on  
10 school choice or, you know, advocate for  
11 public schools.

12 Of course, so I think, you know -- and  
13 again, I'm not singling out, but when we're  
14 talking about skepticism and information  
15 regarding how members feel about things, you  
16 know, I can say nobody has ever spent  
17 \$2.7 million in any campaign I've been  
18 involved with, but it might be tough building  
19 bridges at that point. So I think we have  
20 some issues in that regard as well.

21 So -- and again, I'm not asking you a  
22 question. It's more of a statement. But I  
23 think that's something that's concerning to a  
24 number of us, and I can see by the facial



1           expressions that my colleagues may have  
2           similar feelings.

3                     But again, if you could provide  
4           additional information, I think that would be  
5           helpful. Thank you for your time.

6                     MS. BENNETT: May I respond to that as  
7           well?

8                     ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

9                     MS. BENNETT: Just on the  
10          accountability. Charter schools are  
11          accountable. They're accountable to their  
12          authorizers. The school districts also have  
13          the authority to come in and inspect records  
14          and documents related to the schools. And in  
15          charter schools, if the schools don't perform  
16          according to expectation, they are subject to  
17          closure. Every five years they go under  
18          review for that.

19                    So there is a lot of accountability  
20          for charter schools, there's a lot of  
21          oversight authority right now, and so I think  
22          there is some disconnect between  
23          accountability and charter schools and what  
24          is required. We're happy to provide more

1 information on what is required there.

2 And on the political stuff, understand  
3 that the association is a nonprofit, we're a  
4 C(3). We're nonpartisan, we don't get  
5 involved in races or selecting candidates or  
6 anything like that. I just wanted to make  
7 that clear as well.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I totally  
9 understand. It's a different group that  
10 claims affiliation and whatnot. So thank you  
11 for your time on that.

12 MS. BENNETT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

14 I believe there are no further  
15 questions, so thank you to the panel.

16 And we will be bringing in the next  
17 panel, Panel H: New York State School  
18 Facilities Association, Fred Koelbel,  
19 legislative committee cochair, and New York  
20 School Bus Contractors Association, Nicholas  
21 Vallone, president.

22 MR. STAPF: Chairman?

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

24 MR. STAPF: I'm in Panel G. Joshua

1           Stapf, Literacy Rochester.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Aha, you're  
3           right. I skipped one. Thank you.

4                   MR. STAPF: You're welcome.

5                   (Laughter.)

6                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry about that.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Panel H,  
8           I got the message that Panel H is in the  
9           green room, not actually here now.

10                   So let us go to Panel G: New York  
11           Library Association, Briana McNamee, director  
12           of government relations and advocacy; Bio Bus  
13           Inc., Ben Dubin-Thaler, executive director  
14           and founder; and Literary Rochester,  
15           Joshua Stapf, executive director. Thank you  
16           for speaking up when I almost skipped over  
17           you all.

18                   If you can go in that order, starting  
19           with the New York Library Association.

20                   MS. McNAMEE: Thank you,  
21           Chair Weinstein. My name is Briana McNamee,  
22           and I have the privilege of serving as the  
23           New York Library Association's director of  
24           government relations and advocacy.

1           Thank you for providing me the  
2           opportunity, especially after a long, long  
3           day, to testify on behalf of our state's  
4           libraries and our library systems and the  
5           more than 10 million New Yorkers who hold  
6           library cards. Also, I apologize for my  
7           senior dog pacing in the background.

8           This year's Executive Budget proposal  
9           includes \$96.1 million for State Library Aid,  
10          \$14 million for State Library Construction,  
11          and the release of \$150,000 for the Library  
12          Funds. Well, I wish it were different. I  
13          come before you once again to speak about the  
14          failure of our Executive to acknowledge the  
15          crucial role that libraries serve in our  
16          communities and the contributions our  
17          librarians make towards the state education  
18          system.

19          The State Library Aid Program, as you  
20          may know, is a primary source of funding for  
21          New York's library systems which provide  
22          shared services and resources to each library  
23          in New York. These systems' services ensure  
24          that every community and every New Yorker,

1           regardless of relative wealth, have access to  
2           quality library materials and services.

3           Library systems services are  
4           efficient, they're effective, and they  
5           empower their libraries. While the Executive  
6           proposal does represent a moderate \$2 million  
7           increase, it falls short of the education  
8           statute by \$6.5 million. I should note, even  
9           if funded at the level, which is  
10          \$102.6 million, the State Library Aid Program  
11          would still make up less than one-tenth of  
12          1 percent of the entire state budget.

13          For library construction, the  
14          Executive has slashed the Library  
15          Construction Aid the last two years by  
16          \$20 million. As a result, every year you all  
17          have the responsibility to identify and  
18          resecure the aid. Unfortunately, this  
19          process has left the program stagnant. A  
20          statistic you likely have heard and seen me  
21          use before, \$1.5 billion. That is the  
22          current need within our community for  
23          infrastructure upgrades and renovations.

24          Next I will briefly mention the Love

1 Your Library fund. Each year the New York  
2 State Summer Library Reading Program hosted  
3 by local libraries offers unparalleled  
4 literacy and enrichment opportunities to the  
5 state's young learners. Generations of  
6 students have combated summer learning loss  
7 due to the program's literacy, supported  
8 arts, and programming. We support the  
9 Executive's proposal to distribute \$150,000  
10 of available funds to our library systems for  
11 this purpose.

12 And lastly, with my 30 seconds,  
13 Instructional Materials Aid. That includes  
14 library materials, textbooks, software, and  
15 hardware. Aid for each is critical to ensure  
16 students have access to educational materials  
17 and technology. Currently the rate is 6.25,  
18 \$6.25 per pupil. Our association supports  
19 the Board of Regents proposal to increase  
20 this aid, and we ask that you include it in  
21 your one-house and the final budget.

22 I would happily take comments and  
23 questions.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1                   We'll go on to Bio Bus, Inc.

2                   MR. DUBIN-THALER: Hi. Thank you so  
3 much, chairs, ranking members, and members of  
4 the Senate and Assembly.

5                   My name is Benjamin Dubin-Thaler. I  
6 am a scientist turned nonprofit science  
7 education person, and Bio Bus is the  
8 organization that I started in 2007. I went  
9 out and bought a used GM transit bus, filled  
10 it with microscopes, and started bringing the  
11 bus to schools all across New York City and  
12 New York State.

13                  And the idea was that if students  
14 experienced what it was like to be in a real  
15 science lab working with scientists, it would  
16 ignite their passion for science and careers  
17 in science. Now we are 26 scientists strong.  
18 We are helping students -- hundreds of  
19 thousands of students reach their scientific  
20 potential.

21                  We have two mobile labs, community  
22 labs, in West Harlem and the Lower East Side.  
23 We reinvented our programs twice during the  
24 pandemic, and in close partnerships with our

1 schools, principals, and science teachers.  
2 We went online, now we are back doing safe  
3 in-person programs. And we have been able to  
4 continue our paid research internship  
5 program.

6 We have over 50 high school and  
7 college students doing research with our  
8 scientists this year. Their work was  
9 recently featured in the New York Times, and  
10 those students are publishing a scientific  
11 paper. We have, in total, reached over  
12 260,000 students in New York State since  
13 2008.

14 New York State previously awarded  
15 \$400,000 in capital funds that helped us  
16 build our newest mobile lab, so we now have  
17 two mobile labs that helped us double our  
18 capacity. And this year over \$500,000 from  
19 New York State, in the budget line as well as  
20 member items, meant that we are reaching more  
21 students and spending more time with each  
22 student and have been able to hire additional  
23 scientists to help us reach students and,  
24 especially in this time, help students



1           overcome the learning loss that's especially  
2           hard-hitting in science when there's, you  
3           know, such an importance of hands-on work.

4           We are proud to match the public  
5           support that you all have helped us get with  
6           private investments, partnerships with  
7           Regeneron, Pharmaceutical, Colgate, and  
8           universities like Columbia and NYU. We have  
9           over 100 volunteers that help us achieve our  
10          mission, and together we are working to  
11          increase the number of students from  
12          communities that have been excluded from  
13          science because of race, because of gender,  
14          because of socioeconomic status. And they  
15          want to join New York's growing STEM  
16          workforce and meet the demand for STEM jobs,  
17          and we are trying to help them get there and  
18          we are helping them get there.

19          Thank you for your support in helping  
20          us continue to be a trusted partner for  
21          schools, communities, and young scientists as  
22          we expand to reach even more students.

23                 Thank you so much.

24                 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1                   And now, Literacy Rochester.

2                   MR. STAPF: Hello, my name is Joshua  
3                   Stapf. I'm the executive director of  
4                   Literacy Rochester, and I would like to talk  
5                   about a group of education that doesn't seem  
6                   to have an exact home within the committee  
7                   structure of both the Senate and the  
8                   Assembly, which is adult education and adult  
9                   literacy.

10                  New York State has 3.4 million adults  
11                  that don't have a high school degree and/or  
12                  are lacking the literacy levels to have  
13                  functional abilities within society.

14                  As a volunteer-driven program, we do  
15                  appreciate both the Legislature and the  
16                  Executive including \$7.8 million within the  
17                  budget for the Adult Literacy Education Fund.  
18                  For those of you who are unsure about that,  
19                  New York State is actually one of very few  
20                  states in the U.S. that provides adult  
21                  literacy education funding that is not coming  
22                  from the federal level, so we greatly  
23                  appreciate New York State providing that  
24                  extra funding.

1           The bigger thing, though, is that  
2           funding is restricted, and to really focus on  
3           workforce development, and it is leaving out  
4           people that are not looking to get into the  
5           workforce, whether they're a stay-at-home  
6           parent, they're retired, or they are disabled  
7           and they can't get into the workforce. And  
8           adult literacy has an impact not only on a  
9           person's -- a single person's life, but it's  
10          their family. It will help resolve poverty,  
11          incarceration rates, reduce public  
12          assistance. It increases child literacy  
13          rates along with also increasing civil  
14          engagement within their community.

15          So as a representative of adult  
16          education, we are looking for support for a  
17          new funding stream called the Community  
18          Literacy Fund, which helps community-based  
19          organizations that are volunteer-driven to  
20          provide services to these people that don't  
21          fall within normal adult education funding  
22          and programming.

23          These are people that often cannot do  
24          a three days a week or four hours a day --

1       you know, they need the services that can be  
2       provided by a volunteer because they can meet  
3       only on Thursday nights at 6:00 or Saturdays  
4       at 2:00. And they cannot move at same pace  
5       as group education classes; they usually  
6       often have to go slower.

7               Our standard person that we help has a  
8       reading level of below fifth-grade, and these  
9       are people ranging anywhere from 18 all the  
10      way up above 65.

11             CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all  
12      for being here.

13             We have a number of members in both  
14      houses that have questions, so we're going to  
15      start with Assemblyman Jensen.

16             ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you very  
17      much, Chairwoman, and I do have some  
18      questions for Bri.

19             But I do just want to make a comment  
20      that it's my own personal public policy that  
21      we should always take the recommendations of  
22      bearded individuals named Josh. So I  
23      certainly appreciate that.

24             Bri, I know you talked about

1 Construction Aid. Could you tell or share  
2 how many projects were funded with the  
3 \$34 million that was included in the budget  
4 last year?

5 MS. McNAMEE: Sure. So we don't have  
6 the number of projects for the 2022 budget  
7 last year, as the application for those  
8 projects just ended in October. But for the  
9 '21 budget we do -- or the '20-'21 budget --  
10 we do know that the Library Construction Aid  
11 program supported 135 projects.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Okay. I know  
13 when meeting with libraries -- Chairs  
14 Jean-Pierre and Ryan had a statewide tour,  
15 and I was happy to participate with part of  
16 that -- we heard from stakeholders during  
17 that, as well as throughout the year, that  
18 libraries in the state are owed around  
19 \$102 million.

20 Could you share a little bit more  
21 information about what that figure means?

22 MS. McNAMEE: Sure. So overall I  
23 think in the last decade -- I do have a chart  
24 on this somewhere -- I think we were actually

1           owed around \$130 million, if you're talking  
2           about what's in statute and what we lost or  
3           haven't received in aid.

4                     But that \$102.6 million that you're  
5           referencing is contemplated in Education Law.  
6           It's based on our funding formula that is  
7           tied to the census. Numbers obviously are  
8           based on the 2010 Census, and not the most  
9           recent. But when you see that in our talking  
10          points or hear advocates, that's what they're  
11          talking about.

12                    ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: And I know  
13          Commissioner Rosa at the beginning of the  
14          day -- it seems like a lifetime ago -- talked  
15          about the Instruction Materials Aid and SED's  
16          desire to increase that number and the  
17          failure of the Executive to do that.

18                    You know, certainly I would imagine  
19          that NYLA would be in support of that  
20          increase, if only just to get the library  
21          benefits of that. Could you touch on that  
22          also?

23                    MS. McNAMEE: Sure. A really good  
24          question.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Oh, thank you.

2 MS. McNAMEE: So Library Materials Aid  
3 is part of the state formula aid, and it's  
4 intended to supplement local funds budgeted  
5 for school library program support.

6 So currently, as I auction-called-off  
7 in my testimony, the current rate is \$6.25  
8 per student attending both public and  
9 nonpublic schools within the school  
10 district's boundaries. The Board of Regents  
11 proposal would increase that approximately  
12 \$2.

13 I should also note that that rate of  
14 \$6.25 has not been increased since 2007, so  
15 it's been quite some time.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN JENSEN: Thank you very  
17 much, Bri. And thank you, Madam Chair.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
19 We're going to go to the Senate now.

20 Senator Krueger, do you have any  
21 senators?

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
23 much. We do, and the first will be our  
24 Education chair, Shelley Mayer.

1           SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

2           I want to thank you all for being here  
3           and for your testimony, but I want to just  
4           focus on, Joshua, what you said.

5           One, these ALE programs have been a  
6           stepchild with no real home, and yet I think  
7           all of us know how critical they are in our  
8           districts. So I very much appreciate this.

9           A question on your Community Literacy  
10          Fund, which we've been contacted about as  
11          well. Are you proposing that that would be  
12          given to the State Education Department to  
13          distribute? Where would that be placed, do  
14          you know?

15          MR. STAPF: So we don't know exactly  
16          where it would be placed. We would usually  
17          recommend that it would not be placed within  
18          the Education, just because of the focus  
19          on -- that Education takes on the workforce  
20          development and how this is not so much  
21          driven that way, even though it is still  
22          within -- it's an adult education field.

23          SENATOR MAYER: So where would you --  
24          do you have an idea where you want it to be



1 placed? Or if you don't know, fine.

2 MR. STAPF: I don't. No, I do not.

3 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. And the other  
4 thing is that fund would fund programs that  
5 are volunteer-based in terms of providing  
6 adult literacy services. Is there adequate  
7 money for those that are not volunteer-based,  
8 for the regular ALE program? I think that  
9 you have less of an ask for that.

10 MR. STAPF: Yeah, so the ALE programs  
11 that are not volunteer-based, they follow a  
12 traditional education model of a classroom  
13 setting, so they hire teachers.

14 And so the Community Literacy Fund is  
15 meant to support learners that do not thrive  
16 within that traditional model, and they need  
17 that flexibility that is being able to be  
18 provided by a volunteer.

19 You know, you can't try to plug them  
20 into a classroom at 6 o'clock at night when  
21 it's only one person that maybe can meet at  
22 that time. But a volunteer can meet  
23 one-on-one at the time and location that best  
24 serves them, and also go at the speed that

1 works best for them, not the speed that works  
2 best for the majority of a group.

3 SENATOR MAYER: Do you have an  
4 approximate number of the number of  
5 individuals who would be served by this  
6 program statewide?

7 MR. STAPF: Yeah. So we estimate that  
8 with it up and running, we would serve about  
9 32,000 people. So that would be an  
10 investment from New York State of \$1,000 per  
11 student. And then we estimate the in-kind  
12 donation of a volunteer's time being \$3,000,  
13 giving a total investment of \$4,000 per  
14 student for anybody that would be involved in  
15 this program.

16 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. STAPF: Which is about a third of  
18 the current adult learners that are being  
19 served by adult education funding in New York  
20 State.

21 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. Thank you, very  
22 helpful. I appreciate it very much. Thank  
23 you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to the

1 assembly.

2 Our chair, Assemblyman Benedetto.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,  
4 Madam Chairman, and thank everybody for being  
5 here so late.

6 Briana, we all love our libraries. We  
7 always say that. That's universal. But also  
8 universal, we always seem to do wrong for the  
9 libraries in the budget, and hopefully we'll  
10 correct that this year. We are going to try.

11 MS. McNAMEE: Thank you.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ben, I love  
13 the Bio Bus, you know that. I have been on  
14 the Bio Bus. You are a scientist and you  
15 said you bought a second bus and you doubled  
16 your capacity. Well, you are a real  
17 mathematician. Yes, you did. And maybe in  
18 the future you could buy an electric bus like  
19 we are talking about and triple your  
20 capacity.

21 MR. DUBIN-THALER: Okay.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: But we are all  
23 for the Bio Bus.

24 And Joshua, I had the privilege of

1 meeting with a whole bunch of you guys only a  
2 couple of weeks ago in regards to adult  
3 literacy, and I've already had discussions  
4 with my educational team about it, and we are  
5 going to try to do -- I don't know what we  
6 can do, but we are going to try, okay? So  
7 your message is being heard.

8 MR. STAPF: Thank you.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And that's all  
10 I have to say. It's late and I know we are  
11 all a little tired.

12 Good luck, everybody.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Senator Sean Ryan, who's the chair of  
15 the Libraries Committee. Oh, I am slowing  
16 down. Sorry about that.

17 SENATOR RYAN: It's your first  
18 demonstration of waning energy. Very good.

19 Thanks to everyone for coming out to  
20 testify today, and thank you, Briana, for the  
21 hard work you do with your association and,  
22 you know, working closely with myself and  
23 Assembly Library Chair Kimberly Jean-Pierre.

24 And we did a tour this summer, and we

1       were joined by the Assembly ranker, Josh  
2       Jensen, so we learned a lot. But one of the  
3       things that kept coming up was the cost of  
4       ebooks, and then the second was the lack of  
5       internet connectivity and how libraries fill  
6       the gap on that. And I was considering if  
7       you could take a second to talk about those  
8       issues, please.

9               MS. McNAMEE: Sure. As far as ebooks,  
10       unfortunately, our Ebooks for All bill was  
11       vetoed by the Governor, but I have a lot of  
12       hope that we are going to reintroduce and  
13       just kill advocacy this year and really make  
14       sure that the Second Floor and all of you  
15       here and your colleagues really understand  
16       ebooks and digital literacy.

17              But as far as ebooks, just a little  
18       bit about it. The average cost of an ebook  
19       from a major publisher has tripled between  
20       2011 and 2020. Libraries typically end up  
21       paying two to three times more than they do  
22       for a hard cover -- sometimes up towards \$65  
23       per copy, compared to maybe \$15 for a hard  
24       copy that an individual might cover.

1           So instead of owning an ebook, the  
2           other part of this is that instead of owning  
3           that ebook forever, like a person -- like we  
4           would if we had purchased it, librarians must  
5           decide at the end of the licensing term  
6           whether they're going to renew it or not.

7           And then I think your other question  
8           was about how libraries are closing the gap  
9           on the digital network. I do know during  
10          COVID we tried to expand our networks. We  
11          tried to increase hotspots. I know we are  
12          working very closely with other organizations  
13          and allies in our community, including the  
14          NDIA, to really try to eliminate that digital  
15          inequity as much as possible.

16          But certainly with any funding,  
17          including last year's \$50 million grant, that  
18          would certainly help.

19          SENATOR RYAN: Thank you so much.

20          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21          Assembly.

22          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We -- let's  
23          see. Kimberly Jean-Pierre, our Library  
24          chair.

1                   Hi. I saw her. The hand was raised.

2                   THE MODERATOR: She's there,  
3 Chairwoman, but we cannot hear her.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yeah, we're  
5 trying to hear you, Kimberly.

6                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Can you  
7 hear me now?

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Yes, we  
9 can.

10                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Oh. I did  
11 a whole spiel.

12                  (Laughter.)

13                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Repeat. Repeat.

14                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I  
15 say this -- it's not so early in the day, for  
16 sure. And I want to thank everybody who has  
17 testified in this panel and to our chairs and  
18 to my chair -- my cochair in the Senate,  
19 Senator Sean Ryan. I know he said we did a  
20 tour over the summer. It was only a month  
21 ago. It feels like over the summer because  
22 we have been doing a whole lot.

23                  But Bri, I want to thank you for your  
24 partnership. And I know last session, last

1 budget, we were able to increase our  
2 Construction Aid by \$34 million. And with  
3 the Executive proposal, the slash cut, if you  
4 could talk a little bit about how much  
5 libraries would be at a disadvantage if we  
6 cut it, what positivity that the Construction  
7 Aid would do to libraries now.

8 MS. McNAMEE: Sure. So first -- just  
9 thank you, and the tour was awesome. And  
10 yes, it was in December. It was very cold, I  
11 remember.

12 But as far as the Construction Aid,  
13 yes, it was reduced by \$20 million again. We  
14 are very fortunate that the Board of Regents  
15 are aligned with us, and we're looking for  
16 \$45 million, which is still a drop in the  
17 bucket compared to the \$1.5 billion need.

18 But those construction funds go to  
19 everything from -- you saw it on your tour --  
20 a new child's reading area to a new annex to  
21 actually like safety features, ADA  
22 compliance, water features -- not water as in  
23 fish tanks, but making sure we have compliant  
24 water fountains and things like that,



1 compliant bathrooms.

2 So really those funds are going  
3 directly into your community to make sure  
4 that your residents have not only nurturing  
5 spaces but safe and healthy spaces as well.

6 So certainly with the reduction in  
7 dollars, if it stays this way I would be  
8 concerned that, again, those few hundred --  
9 135 projects we benefited last budget season  
10 could drop to a half of that.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. The  
12 time clock ticks.

13 In the last 30 seconds, what is the  
14 difference in cost between a hardcover or  
15 soft-cover book and an ebook book -- as my  
16 legislation was vetoed, we hoped -- we are  
17 going to bring it back and we hope for a  
18 positive outcome.

19 MS. McNAMEE: Sure. So typically, on  
20 average, a hardcover book is anywhere between  
21 \$15 and \$25 for a library, where for an ebook  
22 the cost can be anywhere -- typically we see  
23 between \$48 and \$70. At least that's the  
24 average that I'm seeing.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Per  
2 license, correct?

3 MS. McNAMEE: Per -- yeah, we're  
4 talking about per book. So for the ebook it  
5 would be per license.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The Senate has  
7 one more.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I was going to  
9 say does the Senate -- yes.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes. I see Samra  
11 Brouk.

12 SENATOR BROUK: Yes, a late addition  
13 to the list. Thank you so much.

14 I wanted to hop in because I had to  
15 give some Rochester love to our  
16 representative here, Josh, for holding it  
17 down.

18 I just want to say thank you so much,  
19 Josh. One, for making it through this day  
20 and coming and testifying, but also for the  
21 work that you do. We know it well here  
22 locally. And as someone whose father would  
23 have very much used these kinds of services  
24 to support his family, as a refugee from

1 Ethiopia, we know not just the economic but  
2 the family impact that this has. So I want  
3 to thank you for your support for this  
4 Community Literacy Fund.

5 I know that you have been working on  
6 this for a very long time, and give you a  
7 chance, one more chance, to convince folks of  
8 the importance of this that you might not  
9 have gotten a chance to speak on in your  
10 testimony.

11 MR. STAPF: Thank you. And we  
12 appreciate all the support that everybody has  
13 been giving us, especially you, Samra.

14 So with the Community Literacy Fund,  
15 the investment is to help people be able  
16 to -- just be able to engage in their  
17 community and engage in their life as just  
18 everybody else does. You know, we have  
19 people that come into our office that can't  
20 go to Wegman's by themselves -- which is a  
21 grocery store, if you don't know what  
22 Wegman's is. They can't go to the grocery  
23 store by themselves. We have parents that  
24 can't help their kids with their homework,

1           that can't have doctor's meetings.

2           You know, in the United States it is  
3           estimated that over \$100 billion in  
4           healthcare costs is related to adults having  
5           low literacy skills. Which means they can't  
6           read medications correctly, they can't  
7           properly communicate with their doctors on  
8           what the issues are. A child of low-literate  
9           parents is 72 percent more likely to be  
10          low-literate themselves. And it is estimated  
11          that about 43 percent of adults in poverty  
12          right now have reading levels below the  
13          fourth grade.

14          So it just affects everything from  
15          poverty to childcare to health. So being  
16          able to increase someone's literacy levels  
17          not only benefits them, it benefits their  
18          family and it benefits the community that  
19          they're a part of. So it's kind of a  
20          win-win-win.

21          And with the volunteer aspect that the  
22          Community Literacy fund is focused with, you  
23          know, one-fourth of the investment comes from  
24          the state. The rest comes from a community

1 member. So it really is the community  
2 helping the community be better.

3 SENATOR BROUK: Thank you, Josh. I  
4 look forward to working on that with you as  
5 well. Thanks.

6 MR. STAPF: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We now have  
8 three Assemblymembers, so we'll start with  
9 Assemblyman Otis, and then Assemblywoman  
10 Lunsford and then Assemblywoman Niou.

11 So we'll start with Mr. Otis.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Briana, you touched  
13 on it earlier about the Digital Inclusion  
14 Grant Program, and the way that's envisioned,  
15 the library systems are going to be a very  
16 important part of that.

17 And Josh is here, and I know Josh is  
18 very interested in digital inclusion work as  
19 well in what he's doing in Rochester. We've  
20 spoken.

21 But Bri, can you just give a little  
22 more flavor to how important digital  
23 inclusion programs are for dealing with  
24 digital literacy around the state and the

1           role that libraries play?

2                   MS. McNAMEE:  Sure.  So those funds  
3           that were allocated last year, libraries  
4           across the state are really looking forward  
5           to those funds finally being distributed.

6                   But much of the work that we are  
7           already doing is neighborhood-based, it's  
8           right in our communities.  But with  
9           additional funds, we can really use our  
10          community partnerships and collaborate with  
11          others who are already doing similar or  
12          expanded work and really make sure that we  
13          are addressing digital equity -- near, far,  
14          and every crevice of the state -- and making  
15          sure that we have digital navigators out  
16          there, making sure that we are spreading that  
17          Wifi access and really making sure that  
18          patrons -- at least at libraries -- of every  
19          age have access to the internet which they  
20          desperately to really thrive in the  
21          21st century.

22                   ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS:  And Josh, how do  
23          you see that tool working with the work that  
24          you've already described in Rochester?

1           MR. STAPF: Yeah, so I definitely  
2           agree that the digital equity needs to be  
3           addressed.

4           I think one aspect that people kind of  
5           overlook is they think that digital equity is  
6           giving people access to the internet and  
7           access to a computer. But it also comes with  
8           them being able to use it. It's great that  
9           you give them a computer, but if they don't  
10          know how to use it, it becomes a pretty  
11          expensive paperweight on their table.

12          So it definitely is a two-pronged  
13          approach of providing the education while  
14          also giving them access to the tools.

15          ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Great. Thank you  
16          both, and thank you, Helene.

17          I will yield back the rest of my time.

18          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator  
19          Krueger.

20          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Just quickly.

21          Thank you to Ben and your program. So  
22          I represent the East Side of Manhattan.  
23          Sometimes I refer to it as Bedpan Alley,  
24          because we have so many hospitals and

1 research facilities, and lots of them talk  
2 about offering internships to young people.

3 And I'm just curious, have you had any  
4 cooperation from them? Because it seems like  
5 sort of a perfect match with what you are  
6 doing and then having the opportunity to have  
7 internships in these amazing life science  
8 research facilities and hospital research  
9 facilities.

10 MR. DUBIN-THALER: Yes. Thank you for  
11 that question. It's an incredibly important  
12 topic, because we know how important those  
13 kinds of internships are to develop a young  
14 scientist's career. It's a critical  
15 experience, and most scientists -- most adult  
16 scientists like myself, when asked, you know,  
17 what caused them to actually pursue a  
18 scientific career, it's often those early  
19 research experiences as a high school and as  
20 a college student.

21 We are working directly with partners  
22 at Cornell to develop pathways for our  
23 students in our program across the city to be  
24 able to go into labs. In your district --



1           and a model that we have for that is actually  
2           a partnership that we have right now with  
3           Mount Sinai School of Medicine. That was the  
4           partnership that was highlighted in the  
5           New York Times article in the middle of the  
6           pandemic where we had students who were -- if  
7           you're a little squeamish, you might want to  
8           turn off your audio -- we had students who  
9           were going across the city collecting bird  
10          poop -- pigeon poop, goose poop -- and  
11          putting them in tubes. They were trained by  
12          the scientists, by a post-doc at Mount Sinai,  
13          and then they were bringing it back to the  
14          lab and learning how to analyze the genetic  
15          material in that poop.

16                 The purpose of all of this is to  
17          actually prevent the next pandemic. Because  
18          we know from coronavirus -- and flu virus is  
19          the same way, and a lot of viruses, you  
20          know -- they have animal reservoirs. So this  
21          is a research experience that these students  
22          had, exactly like you are talking about. Not  
23          only did they get recognition in the New York  
24          Times -- and the students themselves were the

1 main voices in that article -- but they're  
2 publishing a paper on it.

3 So that's exactly the kind of  
4 experience that we want, to continue to  
5 partner with Cornell, with Rockefeller, with  
6 labs across the city in order to increase the  
7 opportunity for those kinds of experiences.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. If you're  
9 looking for more contacts, I seem to have all  
10 the life science companies that are taking  
11 over these buildings and they come to talk to  
12 me about why I shouldn't have a problem with  
13 them taking over buildings. So I'd be more  
14 than happy to say to them, What are you doing  
15 to help the young children get internships in  
16 there so that they can become our next  
17 generation of scientists?

18 So I'm easy to find, so just come find  
19 me. Thank you.

20 MR. DUBIN-THALER: Will do. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
23 Assemblywoman Lunsford.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Thank you,

1 Chair Weinstein, and thank you to both chairs  
2 for your superhuman stamina, and everyone  
3 else who has stuck it out this late.

4 My questions are for Joshua, because I  
5 am a homer. Joshua, can you talk to me a  
6 little bit about Senator Mayer's question  
7 earlier about how this funding would be  
8 distributed? We talked a little bit when you  
9 initially came to me about sort of umbrella  
10 organizations.

11 Is there a trusted organization that  
12 this could be funneled through that you think  
13 would fairly distribute these funds to the  
14 local organizations?

15 MR. STAPF: Yeah, I think there are.  
16 Currently, through the ALE funding, part of  
17 that funding is to create what is called a  
18 stack. And that is kind of an oversight  
19 organization for ALE-funded groups, and there  
20 is one that handles what's called  
21 rest-of-state, and then there is one for the  
22 city. So they understand a lot of the  
23 volunteer-based programming that's kind of  
24 related with a lot of the ALE organizations.

1           And actually, when ALE started over  
2           20 years ago, the funding for ALE actually  
3           went through one of the organizations, called  
4           Literacy New York, and they actually had --  
5           they're the ones that kind of doled the money  
6           out based on the contracts that the state  
7           provided.

8           ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Could any  
9           literacy fund work the same way?

10          MR. STAPF: They definitely could work  
11          that same way. You know, the goal is to be  
12          able to provide the education and the  
13          resources that those students need, not so  
14          much try to fit a student into the parameters  
15          that State Ed or the federal government with  
16          WIOA, which is Workforce Investment --  
17          Title II, WIOA Title II is what it's called.

18          You know, instead of trying to fit it  
19          into those parameters and make a student fit,  
20          the Community Literacy Fund is looking to  
21          make the program fit into what the students  
22          need, be able to provide funding to cover  
23          expenses like childcare and transportation  
24          for these students that currently aren't

1 covered.

2 A good example is right now we  
3 actually have three refugee mothers who are  
4 at home watching kids, they have very young  
5 kids that aren't in school, they don't have  
6 their own transportation, they can't really  
7 leave the house. So we have to -- we are  
8 figuring out ways to be able to serve them  
9 there or also figure out how we can get  
10 childcare for them so that they're able to  
11 come to a program, that we are there to help  
12 them.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUNSFORD: Thank you,  
14 Josh.

15 And just for everyone else to know  
16 that in my district, English as a second  
17 language learners and New Americans are the  
18 primary way people receive adult literacy  
19 services. So I want to thank Josh and  
20 Literacy Rochester very much.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
23 Niou.

24 (Laughter.)

1                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: So I mostly  
2                   raised my hand because I wanted to ask Ben  
3                   more questions so that John can make  
4                   interesting faces.

5                   (Laughter.)

6                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: But I really  
7                   wanted to say thank you to, you know, the  
8                   panelists for presenting.

9                   Ben, I love your program. Bio Bus is  
10                  one of the programs that I have given my  
11                  dollars to, to make sure that we can have  
12                  amazing STEM programs for our kids,  
13                  especially in the Lower East Side who have  
14                  really loved your amazing adventures.

15                 And then, Mr. Stapf, I want to say  
16                 thank you so much for ALE advocacy, because  
17                 we also really desperately need your programs  
18                 in our district as well because, you know, we  
19                 have so many immigrant adults who do not  
20                 speak English as their first language. My  
21                 parents -- I would have probably honestly  
22                 recommended that they use your program as  
23                 well. And I think it's really, really  
24                 important that we fund the Community Literacy

1 Fund.

2 So thank you so much for presenting,  
3 and I'm really glad that Samra was able to  
4 give you time to be able to emphasize the  
5 importance of it.

6 I just have a couple of questions for  
7 Ms. McNamee. Could you -- I know --

8 (Zoom interruption.)

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: -- funds for the  
10 Love Your Library program, and they were  
11 never actually distributed. Right? And do  
12 you believe that this huge delay has been  
13 perpetuated -- like, why do you think it has  
14 been perpetuated for so long? And how can we  
15 ensure that we prioritize library funding?

16 And then you also spoke about, you  
17 know, the tremendous underfunding of our  
18 State Library Aid and some of the negative  
19 aspects. But what are some of the evolving  
20 needs in our current-day, post-pandemic, I  
21 guess -- well, I guess we are still in the  
22 pandemic -- and what can we do, and why do  
23 you -- I guess why do you think that these  
24 delays are happening when we desperately need

1 library help right now?

2 MS. McNAMEE: Sure. So I'm going to  
3 really try hard to remember everything that  
4 you asked.

5 But the first is why the Love Your  
6 Library fund -- that was created 15-plus  
7 years ago. And first it was a license plate,  
8 and then, second, it was a tax contribution  
9 by personal or business contribution. And I  
10 think, much like a lot of these funds that  
11 are created -- how many different license  
12 plates do we have in New York State? I  
13 think a lot of these funds are created and  
14 then they're forgotten about, and I think a  
15 part of it is because it's a feel-good  
16 concept and then it goes away.

17 And I think in our case our sponsor,  
18 who originally put this Love Your Library --  
19 retired. And so no, to answer your question,  
20 it has never been distributed. It is now well  
21 over \$150,000, and those funds, while that  
22 seems minuscule to many, that's thousands of  
23 dollars to each of the systems to be able to  
24 put towards a specific issue -- summer



1 reading, which is so incredibly important.

2 What was your second question?

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: No, that was  
4 basically really it.

5 I think that that is really important  
6 to make sure that we get our money to our  
7 libraries that are promised to our libraries,  
8 and we really needed your help during this  
9 pandemic, and I think that we are actually --  
10 some of the services that you are providing  
11 are helping to save our students right now.  
12 So I just really appreciate it.

13 MS. McNAMEE: And if I could just  
14 really quickly -- I do remember you had  
15 mentioned like the importance of library aid  
16 in general.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: Yeah.

18 MS. McNAMEE: Like where the  
19 heightened cost is. I think COVID, we've  
20 seen -- like we've just seen basic inflation.  
21 And then I think with COVID there are  
22 increased costs to staffing and health and  
23 safety and making sure that we are addressing  
24 our community needs and what they deserve,

1           and that comes with a cost, as well as  
2           printing and everything else that we have  
3           seen.

4                   And with increased aid, the services  
5           that you come to expect from public libraries  
6           are simply going to be expanded to address  
7           every age and every service that they need.  
8           So I think it's time for an investment in  
9           libraries, certainly.

10                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN NIOU: I agree.

11                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12           Thank you, panel, for being here.

13                   We are going to move on to the next  
14           panel, Panel H: New York State School  
15           Facilities Association, Fred Koelbel,  
16           legislative committee chair; and New York  
17           School Bus Contractors Association,  
18           Nicholas Vallone, president.

19                   If you can go in that order. Fred can  
20           start. Three minutes on the clock.

21                   MR. KOELBEL: Thank you for this  
22           opportunity, and I applaud you on your  
23           endurance as we roll into our 12th hour for  
24           all of you.

1           The New York State School Facilities  
2           Association, we represent the directors of  
3           facilities responsible for maintaining and  
4           operating thousands of school buildings and  
5           facilities across New York. These last two  
6           years have been challenging for our members.  
7           However, our members and their staffs met  
8           these challenges and provided clean, healthy,  
9           and safe places of learning for New York  
10          students.

11          We continue to meet these challenges  
12          despite staff shortages due to quarantines,  
13          retirements, and lack of candidates. Our  
14          budgets continue to be stretched by increased  
15          costs, new demands, and aging equipment. In  
16          short, the slices of our pie have become very  
17          thin. So I thank you for working with  
18          Governor Hochul to ensure funding for the  
19          cost of conducting enhanced lead-in-  
20          drinking-water testing and remediation. I  
21          encourage you to continue this practice to  
22          provide funding for future programs and  
23          initiatives.

24          Speaking of costs, I would like to

1 highlight a couple of initiatives that we're  
2 supporting. First is our proposal for  
3 capital outlay. Under the current law, a  
4 project of less than \$100,000 wholly funded  
5 for a capital outlay in the district's annual  
6 budget can be reimbursed through the  
7 Building Aid the following year.

8 One hundred thousand dollars is an  
9 inadequate number. When you factor in the  
10 cost of prevailing wage and the soft cost of  
11 any project, it doesn't really do anything.  
12 This increased cost will allow small projects  
13 to be quickly addressed before the need rises  
14 to the level of a bond. In short, we think  
15 it will save money because it avoids the cost  
16 of bonding money and borrowing and addresses  
17 the issue while it's still a small cost and  
18 hasn't grown larger.

19 Energy Reserve Fund. We are promoting  
20 the creation of an Energy Reserve Fund for  
21 schools. I think this year highlights the  
22 need. Energy costs are unpredictable and  
23 difficult to budget. I was on a meeting this  
24 morning with my staff, and in just one week

1       the price of fuel oil for us, which we buy in  
2       a cooperative with 78 others districts down  
3       here on Long Island, went up 20 cents a  
4       gallon. Okay? This Energy Reserve Fund  
5       would give districts a way to address  
6       unanticipated spikes in energy costs without  
7       impacting programs.

8               And then in the Governor's -- the  
9       Executive Budget proposal includes language  
10      that would allow the Environmental Facilities  
11      Corporation to offer public schools district  
12      financing for wastewater and stormwater  
13      infrastructure projects. Access to this  
14      program would help us address what are quite  
15      frankly needed but not glamorous and exciting  
16      needs.

17             So, you know, having a dedicated --  
18      having a line of funding outside of our  
19      budget where -- people don't get excited over  
20      drainage projects, I can assure you of that.

21             I know it has been a long day, so I'm  
22      going to conclude there, and if you have any  
23      other questions I will address them at the  
24      end.

1                   SENATOR MAYER: Mr. Vallone.

2                   MR. VALLONE: I want to thank all the  
3 members of the joint committee for allowing  
4 us the opportunity to speak today. My name  
5 is Nicholas Vallone. I'm the president of  
6 the New York School Bus Contractors  
7 Association and executive vice president of  
8 Rolling V Bus Corp.

9                   We represent over 200 private pupil  
10 transportation companies transporting half of  
11 New York's students. We employ approximately  
12 55,000 New Yorkers operating over  
13 30,000 school vehicles. School buses are and  
14 always have been the safest way for children  
15 to travel to and from school.

16                  We applaud the Governor and the  
17 Legislature for your recognition of the  
18 extreme crisis we are in with the school bus  
19 driver shortage. We strongly support the  
20 Governor's plan to roll out third-party CDL  
21 testing and stand ready, willing and able to  
22 be a helpful partner in the implementation.  
23 This is one initiative that will have the  
24 greatest as well as longest-lasting impact.

1 We are certain that third-party testing is a  
2 significant adjustment that will help solve  
3 our issue here in New York.

4 Next I would like to speak on the  
5 excessive financial burden in regards to the  
6 quarantine expense of 2021. We estimate that  
7 we have paid over \$20 million to employees to  
8 quarantine to keep our workplace and our  
9 students safe. This continues to be a  
10 tremendous financial burden to our industry  
11 and an expense for which we are not  
12 reimbursed. We are asking for your support  
13 to allow traditional reimbursement of these  
14 funds that went 100 percent towards the  
15 health and safety of our students.

16 Next, we applaud Governor Hochul, the  
17 Senate and the Assembly for proposing to  
18 electrify New York's school bus fleet. Many  
19 of our members are at the forefront of that  
20 movement, already running electric school  
21 buses throughout the state. Despite the  
22 significant advantages of electric school  
23 buses, the up-front cost has emerged as the  
24 greatest obstacle to their adoption.

1           New electric buses can cost three  
2           times that of a traditional clean diesel bus,  
3           and that is before considering infrastructure  
4           costs. Not only can operators not afford  
5           these vehicles, but these vehicles are also  
6           yet to be proven reliable in all operating  
7           environments here in New York State.

8           One effective way to speed up the  
9           conversion to an electric fleet is by  
10          eliminating the sales tax associated with the  
11          purchase of new equipment. The cost is  
12          currently passed along from the contractor to  
13          the school district, then to New York State,  
14          essentially paying its own imposed tax. In  
15          addition, we strongly suggest the creation of  
16          a green ribbon panel to examine and research  
17          our actual experience in running electric  
18          school buses here in New York.

19          Nevertheless, none of this will be  
20          possible without a change to Education Law  
21          Section 305 that speaks to pupil  
22          transportation contract modification.  
23          Current law does not allow for contract  
24          modification or amendment if such amendment



1 causes additional cost to the state,  
2 locality, or school district. Therefore,  
3 current law does not permit contract  
4 modification related to wages, related to  
5 compliance or related to electrification.

6 Lastly, we appreciate the Executive  
7 Budget proposal includes \$400,000 for the  
8 continued funding of the State Education  
9 Department's school bus driver safety  
10 training program. We'd also ask that  
11 additional funding be made available to SED's  
12 pupil transportation department so that this  
13 office may be properly staffed in order to  
14 accommodate the changes coming to our  
15 industry.

16 Again, I thank you for the opportunity  
17 to speak here today, and I look forward to  
18 answering your questions.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
20 go to Assemblywoman Jean-Pierre, chair of the  
21 Libraries Committee.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Good  
23 evening, and nice to see you again, Nick.

24 MR. VALLONE: You as well.

1           ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: I want to  
2 first thank you and all of your members who  
3 have committed their time during the  
4 pandemic, the height of the pandemic. And I  
5 know that there is a bus shortage -- a bus  
6 driver shortage, and we are paving our way,  
7 which -- I know that we spoke before and  
8 you're trying -- we're trying to see how we  
9 can get those jobs out into the communities  
10 so we can get more drivers.

11           But if you can speak to where you  
12 stand with outstanding reimbursements that  
13 are owed to bus companies from the state, if  
14 any, and also how we can better assist with  
15 recruiting efforts to the workforce. Because  
16 I remember we talked about how during the  
17 pandemic the drivers were still working and  
18 you were paying them, so -- and you have not  
19 been reimbursed.

20           MR. VALLONE: So on outstanding  
21 reimbursement, that's not related to my  
22 point. And my testimony would be I believe  
23 you are referring to the fact that the state  
24 did not reimburse school districts and made

1 an announcement, rather, that they would not  
2 reimburse school districts for transportation  
3 that did not occur after May of 2020.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Correct.

5 MR. VALLONE: Yeah. So, you know,  
6 those situations certainly did exist. We are  
7 far beyond them. We certainly would like to  
8 see that situation rectified. And, you know,  
9 I believe we are the only state in the nation  
10 that took that position.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you.

12 MR. VALLONE: And as far as getting  
13 these jobs out into the community, I'll bring  
14 it back to third-party testing. Right now,  
15 if you want to be a commercial driver in the  
16 State of New York, there is one sole  
17 gatekeeper, that being the DMV. And we love  
18 our colleagues at the DMV, and they've done a  
19 phenomenal job. But the expansion of  
20 opportunity in allowing individuals like  
21 myself and my colleagues and BOCES and driver  
22 training schools to make that situation more  
23 approachable and more accessible for more  
24 individuals, we truly believe that is

1           necessary to compete in this workforce when  
2           there are so many other opportunities for  
3           folks to go to work.

4           ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE:

5           Interesting. Okay, thank you.

6           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Shelley  
7           Mayer.

8           SENATOR MAYER: Yes. Very briefly.  
9           And thank you for your perseverance for  
10          making it through today.

11          But Fred, I just wondered -- you know,  
12          one thing you don't mention here and I  
13          haven't seen much about is any incentives to  
14          encourage schools to install solar. What has  
15          been your experience with whether schools are  
16          interested? And if they're not interested,  
17          why not?

18          MR. KOELBEL: Well, I have 48 kW on my  
19          elementary school in my district, and I have  
20          another --

21          (Zoom interruption.)

22          MR. KOELBEL: -- on the maintenance  
23          building in my district. Both were installed  
24          through our grants in the early '90s or when

1 we had had that funding.

2 One of the problems with the schools  
3 is the cost of solar. While it is coming  
4 down, it doesn't necessarily pay for itself  
5 for the school because we don't get to take  
6 advantage of the tax credits. You know, in  
7 many areas that's what makes it affordable  
8 for individuals. But when it comes to  
9 schools, we don't get the advantage of those.  
10 So as recently as two years ago we were  
11 looking at doing it as part of a performance  
12 contract, and it's difficult to make that  
13 work.

14 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. I hear you. I  
15 think that's a conversation we should have  
16 and figure out a better way to do it. I'm  
17 not sure the finances haven't changed in the  
18 last two years.

19 But that being said, Nick, thank you  
20 for your people really hanging in there  
21 during a very tough period of time. I know  
22 we worked hard to make sure some of these  
23 issues got resolved. What is the starting  
24 salary -- first, I'm very, very supportive of

1 the third-party testing as a method of  
2 increasing drivers. What is the starting  
3 salary for a school bus driver? For example,  
4 you're in the Catskill region. Is it minimum  
5 wage?

6 MR. VALLONE: No, Senator. And that's  
7 a really difficult question to answer aside  
8 from an individual, say, hourly rate. It  
9 ties more to a -- it's not only an hourly  
10 rate but a guarantee of hours per day and a  
11 guarantee of days per year.

12 As you know, schools operate for  
13 180 days, but often drivers are paid for  
14 upwards of 200 days-plus, excluding their  
15 option to drive in the summertime. So it's a  
16 really, really tough question to answer, but  
17 it's far from minimum wage.

18 SENATOR MAYER: So on balance, though,  
19 starting drivers are being paid what, \$20 an  
20 hour? I mean, just give me a ballpark.  
21 Because, you know, one of the reasons I think  
22 we don't have enough is that traditionally we  
23 haven't paid enough.

24 MR. VALLONE: Well, it's a fair point.

1 And yes, I will say that it's anywhere -- I  
2 mean, New York is vast -- anywhere from 18 to  
3 25 starting, and as high in some places as  
4 35. Right?

5 But what I will say to your point is  
6 that in looking at those different regions  
7 and looking at those areas with those  
8 different pay scales, the problem that we  
9 face is identical.

10 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. Thank you very  
11 much. Appreciate it.

12 MR. VALLONE: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go now to  
14 the Assembly chair of Education, Mike  
15 Benedetto.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yeah, I just  
17 felt compelled just to say thank you to both  
18 of you men for your -- for who you represent  
19 and how you have done and how dedicated you  
20 have been either providing for the facilities  
21 and getting our kids safely to school, and  
22 just also for your endurance being here all  
23 day long, if that's what you were doing,  
24 waiting for your time. You should be

1           complimented. The people you represent  
2           should be complimented.

3                     And know we think highly of you and  
4           what you guys have done. Thank you for being  
5           there in our time of need.

6                     Have a good night.

7                     MR. VALLONE: We appreciate that,  
8           Assemblyman. And I will be absolutely sure  
9           to share that message with our drivers and  
10          matron staffs, because they are the real  
11          heroes here.

12                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                    We are going to move on to the next  
14          panel.

15                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, you have  
16          Jo Anne Simon, who has popped up with her  
17          hand.

18                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Jo Anne  
19          Simon.

20                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: It's not really  
21          a question.

22                    Mr. Koelbel, I just want to follow up  
23          with you. Maybe I can give your office a  
24          call, because I have a kind of very nerd



1 question that I would like to ask and I don't  
2 want to take up all of the time of everybody  
3 else. But I just wanted to say that. So  
4 I'll speak to you soon, I hope.

5 MR. KOELBEL: All right. Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So now  
8 the next panel. For those of you following,  
9 it is Panel K. Even though I and J comes  
10 afterwards, which probably isn't the best  
11 thing on the Education hearing.

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: However, the  
14 panels were moved around, and the alphabet  
15 didn't change.

16 So Panel K is BOCES of New York State,  
17 Dan White, legislative chair; Rural Schools  
18 Association of New York, David Little,  
19 executive director; Neighbors of the Onondaga  
20 Nation, Andy Mager, organizer.

21 And if Dan White could start.

22 MR. WHITE: I will. Thank you very  
23 much, and I appreciate your persistence now  
24 that you're working on well over 11 hours. I

1 appreciate you sticking with us.

2 I'm Dan White, district  
3 superintendent, Monroe 1 BOCES, here  
4 representing the 37 BOCES in New York State  
5 and the 700 school districts we serve. You  
6 have our written testimony, so I will be  
7 very, very brief.

8 I want to hit on two important points  
9 of this. We have heard a lot this morning,  
10 this afternoon, and this evening on  
11 increasing state support for current  
12 technical education. It is a proposal that  
13 we have talked with you about before, you  
14 supported it in both houses. We are asking  
15 for that support again, and that is the  
16 increase of the CTE aidability for BOCES and  
17 also for special services aid for the  
18 Big 5.

19 We have a critical pipeline of future  
20 employees that we need to develop for many  
21 sectors of our economy. I know you all know  
22 that. And we believe strongly that every  
23 child in New York State should have access to  
24 quality CTE programs so they can participate

1 in the opportunities that exist in this  
2 economy. So we thank you for your support in  
3 the past, and we will ask you for your  
4 support moving forward. As you know, that  
5 was not in the Executive Budget.

6 The second point I want to hit on is  
7 support to promote access to mental health  
8 services. As you know, the need for mental  
9 health and behavioral health services  
10 predates the pandemic, but the need is now  
11 greater more than ever, and you heard that  
12 quite a bit today.

13 BOCES supports over 100,000 students  
14 in New York State, some of which have some of  
15 the greatest social and emotional  
16 developmental needs of kids in our region,  
17 yet we were not made eligible for the grants  
18 in the Executive Budget around mental health.  
19 That compounds the issue, because we were  
20 also not eligible for ARP funds with some of  
21 the federal monies.

22 And we would ask you to consider, if  
23 those things move forward in the budget, to  
24 make BOCES eligible as well, as we serve,

1           again, some of the neediest children in our  
2           region.

3                     That being said, grants go away, as we  
4           know. Federal funds are going to go away.  
5           And I think there is time to have a concerted  
6           discussion about access to mental health  
7           services in our schools and our communities  
8           everywhere in this state. We would welcome  
9           participating in that discussion. How can we  
10          develop consistent funding streams for  
11          schools and agencies, and how can we develop  
12          a consistent pool of professionals that can  
13          serve our community? So we will be willing  
14          and able to participate in that discussion.

15                    We have other things in our budgetary  
16          language that we submitted to you, but I'm  
17          going to stop and step aside so you can  
18          invite in other panelists.

19                    Thank you for the time.

20                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can we move on  
21          now to David Little.

22                    MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Chairwoman.

23                    Thank you, everybody, for hanging in  
24          there for this long. I know exactly how

tough it's been because I did it too, since  
9:30 this morning, watching, and I appreciate  
it.

Also, obviously, I appreciate the effort that all of you have made, along with the Executive, in reshaping the entire discussion around public education. We aren't talking about the total so much this year, for the first time.

We also -- I'm thrilled to not be talking about how we will have to horse-trade untoward proposals that would shift costs onto local districts in order to get at the real discussion that's underway. This is for the first time in my memory -- and that's 38 years involved in this, either in the Legislature itself or as part of this process -- that we haven't had to try and figure out how to buy back savings that have been passed on to local city school districts. It's a refreshing approach. And truly, for both of those things, we're are very grateful.

But there's a -- what can no longer be

1           considered an unintended consequence in this  
2           procedure we're going through, in the second  
3           of three years of fully funding Foundation  
4           Aid, and that is the practical implication of  
5           all this is that much of this funding is  
6           going to our wealthier districts, because  
7           they're the last to be fully funded because  
8           our neediest districts in many cases were the  
9           first to be fully funded when we started to  
10          restore the money taken with the Gap  
11          Elimination Adjustment.

12                 So we now find ourselves in the  
13          circumstance that the vast majority of  
14          high-need districts, certainly most of our  
15          rural districts -- and that's 370, virtually  
16          half of the school districts in the state,  
17          and a third of the students -- are receiving  
18          a less than inflationary increase.

19                 The purchasing power of half of our  
20          districts is going to decline because we now  
21          have either a 2 or a 3 percent increase,  
22          respectively, for all of those districts held  
23          on save harmless. Forty-two percent of our  
24          districts are not under the current formula,

1           and the ones that are under the current  
2           formula are operating under a formula that's  
3           now over a decade old, and certainly the  
4           needs of our children haven't remained  
5           constant over that time period.

6                     All of this begs the question of what  
7           we're going to do after full funding. Are we  
8           simply going to add an inflationary increase  
9           and add more or less money per year,  
10          depending on what the state's finances are?  
11          Or are we going to take the time and effort  
12          needed to cost out what it costs in 2022 and  
13          beyond to provide the state's  
14          constitutionally required education to all of  
15          its children? We haven't undertaken that  
16          exercise in probably 15, 17 years.

17                    And so to ignore that now, to know  
18          that we have many more English language  
19          learners, we've got a phenomenally increased  
20          degree of student mental health needs, we've  
21          got tremendously increased student poverty --  
22          and yet our formula doesn't adjust for that  
23          at all.

24                    You know, particularly for our rural

1 schools, while everyone's had a tough time  
2 during the pandemic, the impact on rural  
3 children has been the equivalent of solitary  
4 confinement. When you can't be transported  
5 and your parents have the car and you don't  
6 have internet access, you're by yourself. And  
7 we know what the emotional and psychological  
8 impact of that is when we do that to people,  
9 and that's what's happened.

10 And so we've got learning loss, we've  
11 got social and emotional retardation among  
12 our students, and we have to address those  
13 things. And we have no plan for that within  
14 our existing formula.

15 You know, I attended Senator Mayer's  
16 public forum about what to do about  
17 Foundation Aid, and I heard the same remarks  
18 every time I went to one of them. We had  
19 urban education advocates who were rightly  
20 asking for full funding of Foundation Aid,  
21 but their mantra was "How do you know a  
22 formula's broken until you fully fund it?"

23 Well, you know because it's a  
24 mathematical formula with predictive value.



1 Right? We knew exactly what would happen  
2 when we fully funded this. And so we have to  
3 take responsibility for also knowing how many  
4 of our children are not being helped in this  
5 circumstance.

6 So I would simply say, with the  
7 \$5 billion --

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: David, I'm  
9 given you a little leeway with the time, if  
10 you could just sum up. The time has expired.

11 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, this actually was  
12 my last comment. Thanks, Chair.

13 Simply, there's 2 billion in  
14 discretionary money within the budget,  
15 there's 5 billion set aside for us to put to  
16 a Rainy Day Fund in the middle of a crisis.  
17 And I would certainly urge the Legislature to  
18 try and fight for funding so that those  
19 districts that are at the 3 percent increase  
20 when inflation is greater than that not come  
21 out of this thing worse off than they were  
22 going into it, while many of our wealthier  
23 communities are getting an extreme level of  
24 support.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2                   And lastly in this panel, Neighbors of  
3 the Onondaga Nation.

4                   MR. MAGER: Great. Thank you very  
5 much.

6                   My name is Andy Mager. I represent  
7 Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation, a project  
8 of the Syracuse Peace Council. We're a  
9 community organization of non-indigenous  
10 people here in Central New York who have  
11 worked in solidarity with the Onondaga people  
12 for over two decades to protect our shared  
13 environment and build a sustainable future  
14 based on justice for all who live in our  
15 region.

16                  I come before you to urge increased  
17 support for three indigenous schools on  
18 indigenous territories which have been  
19 consistently underfunded by New York State  
20 for decades. My written testimony lays out  
21 the factual information, so I'll talk more  
22 personally here.

23                  My concern about the terrible harm we  
24 have carried out against indigenous peoples

1        was born in my U.S. history class at Oyster  
2        Bay High School on Long Island. My teacher,  
3        Mr. Vandermeer, supplemented the regular  
4        curriculum by having us read Bury My Heart at  
5        Wounded Knee, the powerful story about the  
6        nearly successful effort to destroy the  
7        indigenous peoples of the American West.

8                When I moved to Syracuse 40 years ago,  
9        I realized that I could be part of the  
10       solution, working with the Onondaga people to  
11       make amends for the legacy of violence and  
12       displacement imposed upon them by New York  
13       State and the United States.

14               I have had the privilege of attending  
15       a variety of events at the Onondaga Nation  
16       School, a facility which embodies the future  
17       of their nation. Filled with cultural  
18       imagery, language learning, and community  
19       spirit, the Onondaga are rightly very proud  
20       of their school.

21               But this school, like the Tuscarora  
22       Nation School in Western New York and the  
23       St. Regis Mohawk School in Northern New York,  
24       is desperately in need of major renovations,

1 systems repair, and expansion. And I'll  
2 note, following the previous speakers, that  
3 these are all three rural schools. It's long  
4 past time for New York State to remedy this  
5 situation.

6 Our ancestors signed treaties with the  
7 Haudenosaunee. Unfortunately, these treaties  
8 have been repeatedly ignored and broken.  
9 This history includes the illegal taking of  
10 land, denigration of cultural and religious  
11 practices, unfair treatment in the courts,  
12 and the appalling boarding school era --  
13 fortunately, all of which indigenous  
14 communities have survived.

15 Governor Hochul's budget makes a good  
16 start, providing over half of what the  
17 superintendents of these districts have  
18 requested to bring the schools to parity. We  
19 owe a huge debt to the first peoples of  
20 New York State. The 60 million for these  
21 three schools is a small down payment on our  
22 road to justice.

23 I'm happy to take questions and engage  
24 in further discussion. Thank you.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have  
3 Assemblyman Ra.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes. Thank you,  
5 Chair.

6                   Mr. White, I just wanted to quickly  
7 get into -- you know, you talked about the,  
8 you know, the current structure with CTE and  
9 the \$30,000 and phasing in an increase over  
10 three years for the aidable salary.

11                  A few years ago, myself and colleagues  
12 in our conference did roundtables around the  
13 state regarding something we called the  
14 Learn for Work Initiative, and we talked to  
15 BOCES in all of the regions of the state.  
16 And certainly this was a concern that every  
17 student that maybe is appropriate to be  
18 placed in one of the programs doesn't,  
19 because it becomes a little bit of a  
20 bean-counting exercise to the school. And I  
21 think ideally we'd be in a situation that a  
22 kid who is going to benefit from going to  
23 BOCES is going to get the opportunity, and it  
24 really is an equity issue for students

1           throughout the state.

2           So certainly I think that is, you  
3           know, a good solution within the current  
4           construct. But do you think we ought to be  
5           looking at maybe really rethinking the way we  
6           fund BOCES, to make sure that it truly is --  
7           the resources are there so that a student who  
8           will benefit from it can go there?

9           MR. WHITE: I think this is -- this  
10          proposal -- and thank you for those comments.  
11          I think this proposal is a very good start.

12          As you know, BOCES do not levy taxes,  
13          we do not receive state aid, and we can  
14          function in our current system. The  
15          aidability, particular for CTE, has not been  
16          addressed in over 30 years. So each year a  
17          school district sends a student, they're  
18          picking up a greater local share which will  
19          lead to some of the things that you described  
20          previously. So we think this is a huge step  
21          to do that.

22          I think there are opportunities to  
23          look at how we can increase greater access to  
24          BOCES' current technical education programs

1           and other things, as well as the Big 5. An  
2           increase in Special Services Aid would really  
3           help.

4           I remember you coming around the state  
5           to do that. And there are tremendous  
6           opportunities for children in this economy,  
7           and it is a shame when not every kid in every  
8           community can have quality access to programs  
9           to really fully participate in the economy.  
10          And it's an access equity issue, as you  
11          described. And we think this is a big step  
12          in the right direction to be able to provide  
13          greater equity there.

14          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes, and I think  
15          certainly on the career side and also on the  
16          educational side, when we have gone out of  
17          our way to create educational diploma  
18          pathways through a CTE option and that class  
19          is not available to a student in a certain  
20          district, then that avenue really isn't open  
21          to them. So thank you.

22          CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, do you  
23          have -- I don't think you have anybody?

24          CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We don't have any

1 hands up.

2 I do want to just point out to  
3 Mr. Mager that the issue of the three Native  
4 American schools' funding showed up this  
5 morning, and my two colleagues from Syracuse,  
6 Rachel May and John Mannion, raised the issue  
7 of real concern for the Onondaga School in  
8 particular. And we sort of match-made them  
9 with the Regents and Betty Rosa, who was  
10 going to follow up on this with them. So you  
11 might want to double-check with them as well.

12 MR. MAGER: Okay. Thank you very  
13 much. Yes, we have been in touch with --  
14 particularly Senator May's office. Yeah.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I think  
18 then we are -- this panel is -- going to say  
19 goodbye.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
21 much.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you all  
23 for being here.

24 MR. MAGER: Hope you are not here too



1 much longer.

2 MR. LITTLE: Thanks, folks.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're getting  
4 near the end.

5 We're going to bring in Panel I:  
6 New York State Catholic Conference, James  
7 Cultrara, director of education; Agudath  
8 Israel, Avrohom Weinstock, chief of staff.

9 And Jim, if you want to lead us off.

10 MR. CULTRARA: Good evening. And we  
11 are very grateful to you for inviting our  
12 comments on the Executive Budget. Good to  
13 see you all. And I wish we could actually be  
14 in person, but still good to see you.

15 We are also -- I should say more so --  
16 grateful for your ongoing support of the  
17 several programs that benefit the students,  
18 teachers, families of the state's religious  
19 and independent schools. Those programs go a  
20 long way to providing assistance for our  
21 teachers and our kids. More is needed, but  
22 let me comment specifically on the  
23 Executive Budget proposal.

24 Two programs in particular, of which

1       the Governor increases significantly the  
2       non-public safety equipment from \$15 million  
3       to \$45 million -- a generous increase. We've  
4       got great needs in this program, and the  
5       Governor recognizes that by allowing for the  
6       first time to -- schools can use those funds  
7       now to remediate hazardous conditions and to  
8       take care of critical capital needs in  
9       maintaining our facilities.

10               For too long, too many of our schools,  
11       Catholic schools, have had to close because  
12       they couldn't raise the funds needed to  
13       maintain their facilities. So finally we  
14       have access to those funds. Likewise, the  
15       Governor provides a generous increase in the  
16       STEM program from 40 to 55. It is a very  
17       popular program that you created, for which  
18       we are grateful -- popular enough that  
19       applications are coming in at \$100 million.  
20       So the appropriation is just halfway there.

21               We are hoping that under both programs  
22       the Legislature -- which you created these  
23       programs to our benefit -- we hope that you  
24       add to your support for these programs.

1           One program that the Governor did not  
2           provide funding for that's been there since  
3           1985, and that is the immunization  
4           reimbursement program that reimburses our  
5           schools located in the cities of Buffalo,  
6           Rochester, and New York City, for the costs  
7           of those schools and their principals in  
8           complying with the State Health Department's  
9           immunization program.

10           Again, since 1985 there was funding,  
11           and you and your colleagues increased that  
12           funding a number of years ago. Since that  
13           increase, though, it's never been advanced in  
14           an Executive Budget, and you have had to  
15           restore those funds, which we hope you will  
16           do once again.

17           Finally, while these programs that I  
18           have highlighted do provide direct -- excuse  
19           me, indirect support to parents and the  
20           education costs that they face, our parents  
21           still need help with the direct costs of  
22           their children's education. And my  
23           colleague, Avrohom Weinstock, if he has time,  
24           will talk about how 529 plans can provide

1           some of that help.

2                   Thank you, and I look forward to any  
3           questions.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5                   Now, Avrohom Weinstock.

6                   MR. WEINSTOCK: Sure. Good evening,  
7           chairs and members of the committee. I am  
8           certainly appreciative of your time at this  
9           late hour. Thank you for being here.

10                   My name is Avrohom Weinstock, and I am  
11           testifying on behalf of Agudath Israel of  
12           America, which advocates for and serves  
13           162,000 Jewish non-public schools to children  
14           across New York State. Education occupies a  
15           central place in Judaism and is viewed not  
16           simply as a means of attaining a job, but as  
17           a medium with which to transmit a cherished  
18           set of values.

19                   As you know, at approximately \$26,000  
20           to educate each public school pupil,  
21           New York's 383,000 non-public school students  
22           save taxpayers nearly \$10 billion annually.  
23           Put another way, while there is much to be  
24           thankful for in the Executive Budget,

1 14 percent of children still receive just  
2 0.96 percent of the total education budget.

3 Each child and each community is  
4 different. Nonpublic schools stand for the  
5 simple notion that parents should be able to  
6 offer the environment they believe will work  
7 best for their child. With the above in  
8 mind, and with budget projections firmly  
9 positive through 2027, now is the time for  
10 bold action to ensure that all schools can  
11 best educate our children in a safe  
12 environment.

13 With that, I will focus on a few areas  
14 of acute need. Jersey City, Muncie,  
15 Pittsburgh, Poway, Brighton, and now  
16 Colleyville -- a growing number of cities  
17 have gained notoriety for being the sites of  
18 antisemitic violence at a Jewish school,  
19 community center or house of worship. Asking  
20 for security funding to prevent something we  
21 hope will never occur is not the type of ask  
22 I want to make, but for the sake of our  
23 children, it is the one I need to make.

24 The proposed Executive Budget includes

1 a nonpublic school safety equipment increase,  
2 which my colleague Jim just mentioned, from  
3 15 to 45 million, and expands its list of  
4 allowable uses. Agudath Israel respectfully  
5 requests, given the current unfortunate  
6 reality, that the Legislature approve an  
7 increase of at least this much in the enacted  
8 budget.

9 We also support the proposed increases  
10 in STEM in the Executive Budget and making  
11 schools whole for medical recordkeeping  
12 performed, as my colleague just mentioned.

13 Personally, I could say that I  
14 benefited from a rigorous, multi-linguistic,  
15 dual-curriculum yeshiva education. Agudath  
16 Israel encourages a substantial equivalency  
17 solution that fully respects the rigor,  
18 diversity and autonomy of Jewish schools.

19 And with this I'll close. Now, today  
20 I could say that I could save for the college  
21 education of my second-grade daughter in a  
22 529 account. But will she be admitted to the  
23 college of her choice?

24 The proposal -- High Fives, as we call

1           it -- is to allow all parents, public and  
2           non-public, access to their 529 account for  
3           broad high school educational expenses, be it  
4           an SAT prep tutor, you know, a course --  
5           whatever it might be -- tuition. Note that  
6           the IRS and many states already allow this  
7           for K-12.

8                     With that, I'll thank you for  
9           partnering with us to enhance the education,  
10          diversity and security of New York's children  
11          wherever they may best learn.

12                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                    So I don't know if we are too tired,  
14          or you were just both really concise in your  
15          remarks. I think it is combination of both.  
16          But you're both people that we --  
17          representing organizations that we've dealt  
18          with over the years, and we're very much  
19          appreciative of the work you do for the  
20          non-public schoolchildren, 400,000-plus  
21          non-public schoolchildren in our state.

22                    So I think -- we thank you for being  
23          here. And we move on --

24                    MR. CULTRARA: Thank you, and thank

1           you for your support.

2                   MR. WEINSTOCK: Thank you.

3                   SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you  
4 both.

5                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And again, we  
6 will move on to the final panel, which the  
7 final panel has become a panel of one because  
8 Mr. Thomas was in flight -- so it was going  
9 to be in flight, so he couldn't make the  
10 hearing.

11                   So we have our last witness for the  
12 hearing: Advanced Energy Economy, Ryan  
13 Gallentine, director.

14                   Ryan, feel free to begin.

15                   MR. GALLENTINE: Thank you. All  
16 right, you guys made it from this morning.  
17 It's a marathon here. I assume I am the  
18 headline act here in the last spot.

19                   Yes, thank you for this opportunity to  
20 testify on the proposed budget on behalf of  
21 Advanced Energy Economy. My name is Ryan  
22 Gallentine. I am the policy director for  
23 Electrifying Transportation at AEE. We are a  
24 national association of businesses working to



1           accelerate the move to 100 percent clean  
2           energy and electrify transportation in  
3           New York and the United States. Our  
4           membership includes companies that build  
5           electric school buses, charging  
6           infrastructure providers, and fleet  
7           operators.

8                     My comments this evening will focus on  
9           the Governor's proposal to electrify the  
10          state's roughly 46,000-vehicle school bus  
11          fleet.

12                    AEE supports the Governor's proposal  
13          to achieve 100 percent electric school buses  
14          in New York by 2035. Electric school buses  
15          carry enormous potential economic, climate  
16          and health benefits, especially for our most  
17          vulnerable citizens, which I outline in  
18          detail in my written testimony.

19                    So we are asking the Legislature to  
20          accept portions of Part B and modify others.  
21          But by enacting Part B, New York would be one  
22          of the first states to provide dedicated  
23          transportation aid for charging  
24          infrastructure and the electricity associated

1 with charging these electric school buses.

2 This section should be adopted.

3 And moving on to amendments, as you  
4 work to hammer out the details of the school  
5 bus program within the budget, I am offering  
6 the following four suggestions for you to  
7 consider.

8 Number one, ensure schools have  
9 immediate access to robust incentives. The  
10 federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs  
11 Act and the State Bond Act money may  
12 eventually help fund incentives for electric  
13 school buses, but the timing for those  
14 funding streams' availability is not clear,  
15 especially if school districts are to start  
16 purchasing electric school buses to meet the  
17 Governor's 2025 target. Those school  
18 districts need to have access to those  
19 incentives now.

20 A state appropriation of at least one  
21 year of incentive funding will ensure that  
22 the funds are available immediately. They  
23 can be replenished on a supplemental basis  
24 once other funding streams are secured. You

1 might also consider making multiyear  
2 transportation funding programs available for  
3 schools now to help cover the higher up-front  
4 purchase price of electric vehicles, which  
5 has been discussed in previous panels.

6 Number two, prioritize incentives to  
7 school districts most in need. As outlined  
8 in a bill we actively support, Senate Bill  
9 5268, AEE recommends an incentives program  
10 that gives the most aid to school districts  
11 who are most in need of support as measured  
12 by the level of aid that a school district  
13 received in the previous fiscal year.

14 Number three, lease term extension.  
15 The Executive proposal increases the length  
16 of allowable procurement terms for electric  
17 school buses from five to 10 years. This is  
18 a needed change, but increasing this option  
19 further to 15 years will allow districts even  
20 more latitude and flexibility in negotiating  
21 for favorable terms when procuring these  
22 buses.

23 It does not require the leases to be  
24 15 years, but it gives districts additional

1 flexibility to make that decision at the  
2 local level. And longer ownership terms  
3 enable bus operators to realize the greater  
4 total cost of ownership parity with the  
5 diesel buses, due to lower fuel costs and  
6 reduced maintenance.

7 Finally, sales tax exemptions. School  
8 districts use school bus contractors as we  
9 heard to transport their students. We would  
10 support a sales tax exemption for the  
11 purchase of those contracted buses. Those  
12 private contractors should receive the same  
13 incentive to transition their fleet to zero  
14 emissions, as we heard from Mr. Vallone of  
15 the School Bus Contractors Association.

16 So with that, I will wrap up. Thanks  
17 for the opportunity to provide input on this,  
18 and we are supportive of these provisions.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: All right. I  
21 did not see any Assembly or I didn't see --  
22 sorry.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: A quick one.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I see Senator

1           Liu has --

2                   SENATOR LIU:  No.  No, ma'am.  I  
3           insist my Finance chair go first.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  I will be quick.

5                   SENATOR LIU:  Don't be quick.  I am  
6           sorry, point of information.  What time did  
7           they end last night?

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  We were  
9           13 hours.  So we have 10:30 last night, so --

10                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  We are early  
11           tonight.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  We are going to  
13           beat last night's meeting.  We are shorter  
14           than last night.

15                  SENATOR LIU:  Well, I may have a lot  
16           of questions.

17                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER:  No, you don't,  
18           John.

19                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  No, you don't.

20                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA:  As many as you can  
21           get in in three minutes.

22                   (Laughter.)

23                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Senator  
24           Krueger.

1                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2                   So you heard the previous panelist be  
3 concerned that there hasn't been enough  
4 research yet into whether electric school  
5 buses will be able to do the job. And I am  
6 curious whether you have explored any  
7 studies, because there have been electric bus  
8 lines in various places. I don't know about  
9 school buses.

10                  Have you done the research to convince  
11 people that we actually are ready to move to  
12 electric buses, while we may need to do some  
13 adjustments in our laws and even some  
14 adjustments in supplements for -- if there  
15 are higher costs up front? Because it's my  
16 understanding that the cost saved from not  
17 having to pay for diesel fuel would actually  
18 bring the cost in favor of electric over a  
19 period of time.

20                  So I am just curious what your  
21 analysis of this is.

22                  MR. GALLENTINE: Yeah, it is really  
23 this classic question of CapEx versus OpEx,  
24 right? It's a higher up-front cost that you

1 receive over the reduced -- over the period  
2 of time electric vehicles are, you know,  
3 proving to achieve parity over that, as I  
4 said, that 10-to-15-year life span of the  
5 vehicle.

6 I will say like, you know, electric  
7 school buses have not been around for all too  
8 many years, so it's an emerging field. But,  
9 you know, as my colleague Orville from Lion  
10 would have mentioned, they're running  
11 school buses in a number of different places  
12 that are not so different. They also have  
13 their pilot project in White Plains that's  
14 running right now.

15 And, you know, there is a lot of  
16 opportunity here. And I do think, from what  
17 I have heard from my members, it is less  
18 about the technology or the vehicles being  
19 able to do it, it's really about this  
20 financial hurdle and these up-front costs.  
21 Manufacturers on that 2035 timeline have told  
22 me that they are able to make that. They are  
23 not concerned.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very

1 much.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So John Liu,  
3 Senator Liu, did you have a question? Or you  
4 were just looking to draw this out?

5 SENATOR LIU: Madam Chair, I would  
6 never do that to you, because I know you have  
7 more hearings to run. I only want to thank  
8 Ryan for the information.

9 I do support getting us all to  
10 electric everything as quickly as possible.  
11 The question is always, as Senator Krueger  
12 invoked, that, you know, how soon can we do  
13 this. And how much more expensive is it now,  
14 rather than next year or the year after,  
15 because the infrastructure keeps building  
16 itself?

17 Anyway, that's it. You will see no  
18 filibuster here.

19 (Laughter.)

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. So I  
21 want to thank all of our -- I want to thank  
22 Ryan for being our last witness and waiting.

23 MR. GALLENTINE: I appreciate it.

24 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: It's been long



1           for us. I want to thank all of the -- my  
2           cochair, Senator Krueger, and all of the  
3           members who have participated throughout the  
4           day, and the public, for those of you who  
5           have followed and been watching.

6                     We are going to officially end the  
7           hearing and remind people that on Monday,  
8           January 31st, at 11 a.m. is the Workforce  
9           Development hearing, to be followed at 2 p.m.  
10          with the Housing hearing.

11                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Or sometime in  
12          the afternoon. We always claimed 2 p.m. for  
13          the second hearing.

14                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Right. And  
15          that one will go a while, too.

16                    So thank you all.

17                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And this  
19          officially ends today's hearing. Thank you.

20                    CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And thank you to  
21          all the chairs and rankers for staying all  
22          day. Take care.

23                    (Whereupon, the budget hearing  
24          concluded at 9:20 p.m.)

