

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

2 -----

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING
4 In the Matter of the
2024-2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

8 February 1, 2024
9 9:34 a.m.

10 PRESIDING:

11 Senator Liz Krueger
12 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

13 Assemblyman Michael Benedetto
14 Chair, Assembly Education Committee

14 PRESENT:

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

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

19 Senator Shelley B. Mayer
20 Chair, Senate Education Committee

21 Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara
22 Chair, Assembly Committee on Libraries
and Education Technology

23 Senator Iwen Chu
24 Chair, Senate Committee on Libraries

25 Senator John Liu
26 Chair, Senate Committee on New York City
Education

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
Elementary & Secondary Education
2 2-1-24

3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Senator Robert Jackson

5 Assemblyman Steven Otis

6 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

7 Senator James Tedisco

8 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

9 Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh

10 Senator Jamaal T. Bailey

11 Assemblyman Nader J. Sayegh

12 Senator Daniel G. Stec

13 Assemblywoman Chantel Jackson

14 Senator Peter Oberacker

15 Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes

16 Assemblyman Doug Smith

17 Senator Cordell Cleare

18 Assemblyman William Conrad

19 Senator Michelle Hinchey

20 Assemblyman Sam Pirozzolo

21 Senator Dean Murray

22 Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos

23 Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg

24 Senator Jabari Brisport

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre

5 Senator George M. Borrello

6 Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato

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8

9 LIST OF SPEAKERS

10		STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
11	Betty A. Rosa Commissioner		
12	NYS Education Department	15	22
13	David C. Banks Chancellor		
14	NYC Department of Education	182	192
15	Melinda Person President		
16	New York State United Teachers -and-		
17	Michael Mulgrew President		
18	United Federation of Teachers -and-		
19	Rosemarie Sinclair Executive Vice President		
20	Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSSA)		
21	-and- Cynthia E. Gallgher		
22	Director, Government Relations School Administrators Association		
23	of New York State (SAANYS)	305	319

24

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5	Jennifer K. Pyle Executive Director		
6	Conference of Big 5 School Districts		
7	-and-		
8	Joseph Hochreiter Superintendent		
9	Albany City School District		
10	-and-		
11	Dr. Carmine Peluso Superintendent		
12	Rochester City School District		
13	-and-		
14	Anthony Q. Davis Superintendent		
15	Syracuse City School District		
16	-and-		
17	Dr. Luis Rodríguez Interim Superintendent		
18	Yonkers City School District		
19	-and-		
20	James R. Barnes Chief Financial Officer		
21	Buffalo Public Schools	376	395
22			
23			
24			

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5	Timothy M. Kelly Superintendent		
6	St. Mary's School for the Deaf Cochair		
7	4201 Schools Association -and-		
8	Lindsay Miller Executive Director		
9	New York Association on Independent Living		
10	-and- John Lopez		
11	President New York State Coalition		
12	of 853 Schools -and-		
13	Randi Levine Policy Director		
14	Advocates for Children of New York	419	434
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
5	Robert Lowry Deputy Director	
6	New York State Council of School Superintendents	
7	-and-	
8	Brian C. Fessler Director, Government Relations NYS School Boards Association	
9	-and-	
10	Dan White District Superintendent Monroe 1 BOCES	
11	-on behalf of-	
12	BOCES of New York State	
13	-and-	
14	Brian S. Cechnicki Executive Director Association of School Business Business Officials of New York	
15	-and-	
16	Kyle McCauley Belokopitsky, Esq. Executive Director NYS Parent Teacher Association	
17	-and-	
18	David A. Little, Esq. Executive Director Rural Schools Association of New York State	465 484

19

20

21

22

23

24

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
5	Maxwell Prime	
	Director of Government	
6	Relations & Advocacy	
	New York Library Association	
7	-and-	
	Dr. Amy S. DelCorvo	
8	CEO & Executive Director	
	New York State Association for	
9	Computers and Technology in	
	Education	
10	-and-	
	Thomas Smith	
11	President	
	New York School Bus Contractors	
12	Association	
	-and-	
13	David Christopher	
	Executive Director	
14	New York Association for	
	Pupil Transportation	
15	-and-	
	Jessica Pino-Goodspeed	
16	Co-Leader	
	Healthy School Meals for All	
17	New York Kids Coalition	
	-and-	
18	Patrick Kenneally	
	Public Policy and Legislative	
19	Committee Member	
	New York School Nutrition	
20	Association	506 527

21

22

23

24

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget
 Elementary & Secondary Education
 2 2-1-24

3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Continued

4	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
5	Sydney Altfield Executive Director	
6	Teach NYS -and-	
7	Rabbi Yeruchim Silber Director of New York Government Relations	
8	Agudath Israel of America	
9	-and- Fatimah Barker Executive Director	
10	NY Charter Schools Association	
11	-and- James Merriman CEO	
12	NYC Charter School Center	554 565
13	Marina Marcou-O'Malley Interim Co-Executive Director	
14	Alliance for Quality Education	
15	-and- Chelsea Baytemur Director, Policy and Advocacy	
16	YMCA of Greater New York	
17	-on behalf of- Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs	
18	-and- Trudy Morgan Tetteh Policy Director	
19	NYS Community Schools Network	
20	-and- Jeff Smink Interim Executive Director	
21	The Education Trust-New York	
22	-and- Beatrice Weber Executive Director	
23	YAFFED	581 597

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I'm
2 Michael Benedetto, chair of the New York
3 State Assembly's Elementary Education and
4 Secondary Education Committee, and I'm
5 filling in for Ways and Means Chair
6 Helene Weinstein, who is not with us here
7 today because she's recovering from knee
8 surgery. And she is hoping -- and the rest
9 of us are hoping -- that she will be here
10 next week.

11 Today we're beginning the seventh in a
12 series of hearings conducted by the joint
13 fiscal committees of the Legislature
14 regarding the Governor's proposed budget for
15 the fiscal year 2024-2025. The hearings are
16 conducted pursuant to the New York State
17 Constitution and Legislative Law.

18 Today the Assembly Ways and Means
19 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee
20 will hear testimony concerning the Governor's
21 budget proposal for human services -- but
22 probably that's a typo, because it should
23 say -- because I see the commissioner of
24 Education in front of me -- this is a hearing

1 on education. Okay? And somebody probably
2 will be fired for that.

3 (Laughter.)

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: But that's for
5 another day.

6 I will now introduce the participating
7 members from the Assembly, and after that
8 Senator Krueger will introduce members from
9 the Senate. In addition, Ranking Ways and
10 Means Member Ra will introduce members from
11 his conference.

12 We are honored to have with us today
13 Assemblywoman Hyndman, Assemblyman Otis,
14 Assemblywoman Jackson, Assemblyman Sayegh,
15 Assemblywoman Jean-Pierre, Assemblyman Angelo
16 Santabarbara, Assemblywoman Ms. Pheffer
17 Amato, Assemblyman Mr. Bill Conrad, and
18 Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos.

19 Thank you, gentlemen.

20 Mr. Ra?

21 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

22 Good morning. We are currently joined
23 by Assemblyman Doug Smith, our ranking member
24 on the Education Committee, as well as

1 Assemblyman Pirozzolo.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning,
3 everyone. Nice to see everybody. Doesn't
4 this man have a fabulous voice? I'm going to
5 enjoy his booming voice all day.

6 We are joined, the Senate Democrats,
7 with Education Chair Shelley Mayer, City
8 Education Chair John Liu, Senator Cordell
9 Cleare, Libraries Chair Senator Chu, Senator
10 Brisport, Senator Hinchey. And I'm going to
11 ask my ranker -- and Senator Robert Jackson.
12 So sorry. Thank you.

13 And I'm going to ask my ranker,
14 Tom O'Mara, to introduce his members.

15 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you,
16 Chairwoman Krueger.

17 Good morning, everyone. Joining us
18 today on our side is Education Ranking Member
19 Jim Tedisco, Senators Pete Oberacker and
20 Dean Murray.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I want to also
22 mention that we also been joined by
23 Assemblywoman Mitaynes. Again, we are
24 honored.

1 Okay, time limits, very important.

2 Governmental witnesses will be allowed
3 10 minutes to testify. Nongovernmental
4 witnesses will be allowed three minutes to
5 testify.

6 Questions and answers. The chairs of
7 the committees relevant to each governmental
8 witness will get 10 minutes, and a second
9 round of three minutes if desired. Ranking
10 members of these committees will get
11 five minutes each.

12 Now, all other members of the relevant
13 committees will get three minutes each.

14 To all witnesses, all the written
15 testimony has been submitted already to the
16 legislators in advance, so we ask that all
17 witnesses please do not read your written
18 testimony. Instead, try to summarize.

19 To all legislators, please let myself
20 or Senator Krueger know if you wish to
21 question each witness -- not all of you have
22 to do that. Or, if there's a panel, if you
23 want to question those people.

24 After the opening remarks of each

1 witness or panel of witnesses, if they have
2 been conducted, the list will be closed.

3 Okay? That's important.

4 Everyone, witnesses and legislators,
5 should locate the time clock and keep an eye
6 on it. Please note that when the clock is
7 down to zero, you're going to be alerted that
8 your time is up. Please be considerate,
9 respectful. Respect the clock so that
10 everyone has a chance to be heard.

11 Please note that these time frames for
12 questioning include both questions and
13 answers. So members are respectfully
14 requested not to commence a new question with
15 insufficient time on the clock to permit a
16 proper answer. Due to the length of these
17 hearings we have no alternative but to
18 strictly enforce the limits. I guess I'm
19 back to being a teacher again today.

20 I should add that if any witnesses for
21 later on in the day, if you haven't checked
22 in, okay, that we know you're here. Please
23 check in at the top of the stairs.

24 I will now call our first witness.

1 We're honored to have the commissioner of the
2 New York State Education Department,
3 Ms. Betty A. Rosa.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And just before
5 you do -- I'm so sorry.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: By all means.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Just for those of
8 you who haven't been in this room since we
9 redid everything, you have to press the
10 button on your microphone very hard before it
11 goes from red to green, or vice versa. Same
12 things for legislators where this might be
13 your first hearing. This is a little
14 exercise assignment. Practice it, if you
15 can.

16 I also want to introduce
17 Senator Bailey, who's joined us. Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And I want to
19 introduce Assemblywoman Levenberg, who has
20 joined us.

21 Madam Commissioner.

22 (Mic issues; off the record.)

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We're on,
24 okay. I just heard "Don't touch it."

1 (Laughter.)

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So good
3 morning. Good morning, Chairs Krueger,
4 Weinstein, Mayer, Liu, Benedetto, and members
5 of the Senate and Assembly here today. I'm
6 Dr. Betty A. Rosa, the commissioner of
7 Education, and I'm joined by Executive Deputy
8 Commissioner Sharon Cates-Williams, Senior
9 Deputy Commissioner Dr. Jeffrey Matteson,
10 Chief Financial Officer Dr. Christina
11 Coughlin, and P-12 Deputy Commissioner
12 Angelique Johnson-Dingle.

13 Before I begin, I want to recognize
14 our chancellor, Chancellor Young, and our
15 Board of Regents who are watching today.

16 The department's budget request was
17 built on three key principles: Fostering
18 lifelong learning, academic success, and
19 improved outcomes for all students; advancing
20 equity, excellence, diversity, inclusion and
21 access to all; and above everything, we need
22 to strengthen our state's capacity to serve
23 the public.

24 First we want to thank the Governor

1 for including several important Regents and
2 SED budget and policy priorities in the
3 Executive Budget proposal, which included
4 funding critical staffing in terms of IT data
5 systems, literacy, health and the
6 zero-emissions bus initiative. Fully funding
7 expense-based aid. Providing additional time
8 for our 1.4 million to develop a new special
9 education tuition reimbursement methodology.
10 Consolidating pre-K funding streams and
11 addressing longstanding "supplement, not
12 supplant" statutory language. Providing
13 \$3 million in funding for the New York Online
14 Virtual Electronic Library, NOVELny.
15 Finally, an increase of \$235,000, for a total
16 of 1 million, to better serve the visually
17 impaired, who utilize the Talking Books and
18 Braille Library.

19 Regrettably, there are areas not
20 addressed in the Executive Budget proposal
21 that we ask the Legislature to consider and
22 address. And some of these issues we suggest
23 may not be budgetary, but they do need some
24 additional work and a thoughtful process.

1 The Executive Budget proposes three
2 changes to Foundation Aid: Replacing the
3 single-year inflation value with a multiyear
4 average, reducing the year-to-year growth in
5 Foundation Aid by 331.4 million.

6 A save-harmless funding cut by
7 167.9 million, which impacts on
8 337 districts -- prorated based on district
9 wealth, but primarily within rural districts,
10 although we know there are more impacts
11 beyond rural districts.

12 Increasing the maximum state sharing
13 ratio from 90 percent to 91, to support the
14 highest-needs districts, which partially
15 offsets the changes. This abrupt change,
16 with no accompanying regionalization language
17 or time for planning and implementation we
18 know will significantly impact rural
19 districts, limiting opportunities for their
20 students, and I say our students.

21 The department suggests working with
22 stakeholders on a multiyear what we call
23 "soft landing" to save-harmless funding which
24 will balance and stabilize the educational

1 opportunities for our rural students.

2 Also, please consider the Regents'
3 suggestions for updating Foundation Aid and
4 our \$1 million proposal to do a study to
5 review the formula once and for all and
6 identify what we consider long-lasting
7 changes.

8 Two critical issues I just want to
9 mention very quickly as to staffing. We are
10 unfunded for our Charter School Office since
11 that office has been funded through our
12 federal dollars. And we are -- this is it
13 for us in terms of not having support and
14 additional funds for staff to address many of
15 the issues when it comes to charters as well
16 as legal issues.

17 The other staffing need is tied to the
18 American Rescue Plan Act. We need to
19 continue the oversight, because all of us
20 know that on December 30, 2024, we hit the
21 financial cliff. We need to work to continue
22 through the liquidation period for schools
23 and districts utilizing their funding. And
24 that is something that we need to continue to

1 ask for support.

2 So let me shift to a major policy
3 issue that was not in the Executive Budget
4 proposal. Last July, most of you know, our
5 Office of Counsel released an opinion
6 interpreting the Second Circuit Court of
7 Appeals decision pertaining to the
8 responsibility of public schools to provide
9 special education to students over the age of
10 21. This is something that we -- under IDEA,
11 we have been working on. But we also know
12 that there's a financial attachment to this.

13 The decision requires public schools
14 in New York to provide special education and
15 related services to resident students, the
16 students with disabilities, until the age of
17 22. And our commitment is the age of 22 to
18 the end of the school year.

19 The opinion recommends that school
20 districts provide services to the end of the
21 school year. Currently, the statute must be
22 amended to recognize this required change.
23 There will be a cost to the state, including
24 increased reimbursements for Public Excess

1 Cost Aid, Private Excess Cost Aid, and
2 Foundation Aid.

3 Now I want to talk about the fact that
4 school districts, particularly in New York
5 City, have enrollment fluxes driven in part
6 by newly arrived immigrants. The newcomers
7 often arrive unexpectedly or midyear, well
8 after district budgets are established.
9 Districts are expected to educate all
10 school-age children within their boundaries,
11 with no delay. The current funding formula
12 does not support the costs of implementing
13 this expectation. Waiting for state or
14 federal reimbursement until the following
15 school year is really a challenge.

16 The Regents and the department propose
17 current year aid for these students with a
18 formula at the Foundation Aid per-pupil
19 level.

20 In addition, we must address another
21 issue which is really challenging, and that
22 is the fact that the federal government
23 requires us -- under English language
24 learners, we have the NYSESLAT, which is an

1 instrument that does not -- was not developed
2 to really look at the students with cognitive
3 disabilities. We are out of compliance, and
4 we must come up with a new design to measure
5 the ELL students with severe cognitive
6 disabilities.

7 Therefore, a new assessment is needed
8 to fulfill federal requirements. Failure to
9 do so will create penalties that include the
10 loss of federal education funds.

11 And finally, I do have to say another
12 issue that we're struggling with is our
13 museum, the State museum. Operational
14 funding for the State Museum is essential and
15 we must -- and we have been asking for either
16 a reliable base General Fund appropriation of
17 17 million, or a \$10 fee increase, which is
18 essential for the survival of the museum.

19 In conclusion, in summary, our
20 proposals are true to the voice of our
21 countless students, educators, parents,
22 stakeholders. I look forward to your
23 questions today and working with all of you
24 on behalf of our children in this amazing

1 state.

2 Thank you.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I know we have
4 another minute left. We're going to give you
5 bonus points.

6 (Laughter.)

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I've been told
9 that we have been joined by Assemblywoman --
10 Assemblywoman Simon has joined us.

11 And I neglected to mention that
12 Assemblyman Santabarbara, who's sitting with
13 us, is the newly appointed chair of the
14 Assembly Committee on Libraries. So forgive
15 me for that.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Since we're doing
17 announcements, I also accidentally didn't
18 introduce Senator Brisport and Senator
19 Hinchey, who are just below me.

20 Thank you.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Commissioner,
22 again, welcome.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Listen, I know

1 I have been, and many of my members feel the
2 same way -- our special ed schools, the 4201
3 schools and like schools, okay, have been
4 notoriously, as you well know, underfunded
5 for years, and yet they take care of the most
6 needy children that we have in our state.

7 For a long time we've been hoping that
8 a new formula is shared to be able to fund
9 them adequately. And I think we put money in
10 the budget so that could happen. Okay? We
11 did that last year, I believe. But still,
12 nothing has happened yet. Can you please
13 update us on that and where we're going and
14 possibly when can we see some results.

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

16 So I'm going to answer this from
17 somebody, as you know, with a strong
18 special ed background. I ran St. Agatha's
19 residential program. So I know the
20 importance of this issue with creating a
21 rate-setting methodology. And we have been
22 -- we actually put out our RFP. We've been
23 working on this, I think you know, for years,
24 trying to get the 1.4 million. And in the

1 process we have been engaging in
2 communication on ways that we can also
3 support our programs while we do the study,
4 while we get what I would call a vendor that
5 really, truly, deeply understands this issue.

6 Unfortunately, that was not the case.
7 And I'm going to ask Christina, because she
8 was at the helm of this issue of trying to
9 find the perfect solution. Christina?

10 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you,
11 Commissioner.

12 I'd like to add a personal note that
13 I'm the parent of a child who was served in
14 one of these special education schools, so I
15 feel this very personally.

16 Last year when we saw the funding in
17 the Executive Budget we moved immediately, so
18 that almost immediately upon enactment we
19 could put out an RFP. Unfortunately, we
20 didn't receive bids from appropriate vendors.

21 So we really felt like to do the job
22 well -- and we know this is so important --
23 we needed to go back out and do that again.
24 We were grateful that the Governor's provided

1 the funding and the time that we need to do
2 that.

3 At the same time we were working on
4 that contract and financial piece, we did go
5 through a fairly significant stakeholder
6 engagement process. So that we spoke with
7 parents, we spoke with school leaders of both
8 the public and private schools, we spoke with
9 students who were served, in order that when
10 we do select that vendor, we'll be able to
11 move ahead and we'll be very well informed
12 with what we want to achieve with that work.

13 So we haven't stopped, but this extra
14 funding we hope will help us attract the
15 right folks to do the good work that we want
16 to do. Thank you.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

18 Commissioner, I've been accused
19 sometimes of saying I'm protecting the SED
20 because of holding up curriculum bills in my
21 committee. Okay? Many of us have curriculum
22 bills that we want to see taught, okay? Can
23 you tell me, from your perspective, what's
24 the challenge there? What's the problem with

1 that?

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. I
3 would start by saying that as a state we have
4 local control. And we honor and respect the
5 local control of our communities -- our
6 superintendents, our school boards, our
7 parents within the community. There's a
8 process that's used in almost every single
9 community to engage in making the kinds of
10 decisions that local districts make about
11 curricula.

12 The other part of it -- and to your
13 point of being accused, I think there's also
14 a lot of misinformation -- for example, I'm
15 going to use a very concrete example, the
16 science of reading. There is no curricula or
17 curriculum that is the science of reading,
18 yet we talk about this. What we have a need
19 to do is to take stock and look at the
20 programs and the curricula that districts are
21 using. And we're developing a tool that
22 creates an inventory, strength. If you're
23 using a program, a curricula that is weak in
24 phonics or it's weak in phonemic awareness or

1 it's weak in being culturally responsive,
2 right, to the community, these are -- the
3 inventory is going to help the district take
4 stock.

5 We provide support. We have the
6 standards. Our focus has always been
7 updating, which we always ask for funding for
8 updating. We haven't updated some of the
9 standards for a long time because of lack of
10 funding. But our work is around setting the
11 standards work and then having the district
12 take the standards and do a lot of local
13 work. A lot of districts have core
14 professional -- professional, you know,
15 working groups that really work at aligning
16 the standards work with the kinds of
17 programs, with the kinds of curricula that
18 meet the needs of their students.

19 In some cases it meets the needs of
20 the students -- English language learners,
21 students with disabilities, a crossover,
22 students that are English language learners
23 with disabilities, and on and on and on.

24 This is a local decision. And we have

1 for that. That was done in 1985, to be
2 exact. And there were -- these were guides
3 that were distributed -- once upon a time our
4 department was engaged in this process. We
5 provided resources and guides, and we
6 continue to do that even with the limited
7 number of individuals we have.

8 We did take a look at that. We found
9 that there was amazing components to it. But
10 certainly it was outdated, since it was done
11 in 1985. Our ask is to get support to update
12 it and to turn it into a resource for our
13 communities to use, to make sure that it's an
14 additional resource in terms of our standards
15 work. Because remember, the issue of the
16 Holocaust is embedded, from kindergarten all
17 the way through, in our standards. We are
18 absolutely committed to the kinds of
19 resources that we make available to our
20 schools, just like our survey.

21 Our survey on the Holocaust produced
22 many amazing lessons, many amazing projects
23 that students are doing, many amazing
24 resources that we hope to create a repository

1 where these resources can be shared.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And resources
3 that you will need to maybe update an
4 estimation of what you would need moneywise?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well,
6 obviously in this -- in this what we call
7 tight budgetary -- as defined in this current
8 budget, I would say I can follow up with you,
9 but I would start at a half a million.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Sure.

11 Lastly, Assemblywoman Buttenschon
12 couldn't be here today, but she wanted to ask
13 you what you see as the most significant
14 educational challenge ahead of you and what
15 do you see as a possible solution to it.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Wow.

17 (Laughter.)

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: In
19 40 seconds? I would say in probably making
20 sure that we have -- that we create the
21 investments that -- up-front that we need to
22 create for our students to be successful.
23 Because if we don't pay for those investments
24 up-front, we're going to pay at the other

1 side of the ledger.

2 So I would say let's think about --
3 let's stop throwing out numbers that we put
4 all this money into. We have many, many
5 challenges. Let's truly make a commitment, a
6 joint commitment to invest in all of our
7 children and their needs.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
9 Commissioner.

10 Senator Krueger.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Our first questioner will be
13 Senator Shelley Mayer, Education chair.

14 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much,
15 Chair.

16 And thank you, Commissioner Rosa and
17 your staff.

18 First I want to be clear so that
19 listeners understand, because I think the
20 perception of SED, the State Education
21 Department, is the agency that really cares
22 about our kids and our schools and has
23 responsibility. The budget that we are
24 discussing here today, was that proposed by

1 SED or the Executive?

2 The budget that we are discussing, the
3 education budget, this was not the Regents'
4 proposal, was it?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: The
6 original?

7 SENATOR MAYER: No, the one we are
8 considering here today that the Governor
9 proposed. Is this the proposal of the
10 Regents and the State Education Department?

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, thank
12 you for the clarification.

13 As you know, every single year, from
14 September all the way through, the Board of
15 Regents really creates an extensive
16 opportunity with the two cochairs to engage
17 in all different kinds of conversations -- to
18 your point, Senator -- about the needs of the
19 department. And we also talk about the needs
20 of the department from support and what I
21 would call customer service as well.

22 We proposed, as you saw in our flyers
23 and our -- very specific areas. Now, we
24 did -- we do have and we can provide that to

1 you, we have an inventory, we took an
2 inventory of those things that we did
3 receive, as I shared in some of my testimony,
4 and those things that we did not receive.

5 So --

6 SENATOR MAYER: I understand. You're
7 talking about the department. I'm talking
8 about the students and the kids and what
9 Foundation Aid should look like.

10 Do you, as SED, support this proposal
11 to both cut the inflationary factor in the
12 formula and to eliminate save-harmless?

13 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. We --
14 we do not support this position because it
15 impacts on 337 districts. And it's been so
16 abrupt, and the conversations have not taken
17 place.

18 Our position has been that in order to
19 do this, we really should have a
20 three-to-five-year plan where we have
21 opportunities to get a new formula, where we
22 have opportunities to look at the impact
23 across the entire state and the various
24 districts, and make sure that the new formula

1 informs the study and the new formula informs
2 the work.

3 And also, we did an analysis of every
4 single district, which we have -- again, we
5 can share that with you -- of the financial
6 impact it has on each individual district.
7 So we -- but we did that after we saw the
8 information.

9 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. So again, going
10 back to the schools and the students, which
11 is our primary responsibility here, what do
12 you anticipate, given the number of schools
13 that will have an absolute cut if this budget
14 goes through as proposed -- what would be the
15 impact on those schools, both rural, suburban
16 and urban?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, the
18 impact is going to be obviously -- let me
19 start with the fact that we are -- we have
20 been warning districts about the fiscal cliff
21 from last year and the year before, knowing
22 that the financial -- additional financials
23 that we received for learning loss were added
24 with staffing and everything else.

1 I think a lot of districts were caught
2 off-guard, right, in knowing that we're going
3 through that process of the federal financial
4 cliff and then having this also happen. It's
5 really in many ways -- this has really
6 created the kinds of distress for districts
7 that now they have to rethink how they deal
8 with personnel issues, delivery services for
9 our students, as well as looking at what are
10 the kinds of decisions that they're going to
11 have to make this spring, as you know, for
12 September.

13 This is the time when, you know,
14 school superintendents and school boards and
15 communities begin to do the planning for next
16 year. So I think that the fact that this is
17 happening with -- I would have hoped that we
18 would have had much, you know, anticipated
19 conversations to really truly begin to do the
20 kind of work on regionalization which our
21 department has been in conversations with our
22 rural districts, looking at ways that -- how
23 do we as the department support those
24 districts that have been under -- what we

1 call under save-harmless.

2 But our focus has been about making
3 sure that we do this planning and we do it in
4 a thoughtful process and thoughtful manner.

5 SENATOR MAYER: I understand.

6 Under this proposal, a significant
7 number of schools would lose Foundation Aid,
8 and they lose between 8.1 percent and up to
9 48.2 percent of their Foundation Aid. Of
10 those several hundred schools, many are
11 deemed high-needs suburban, under your own
12 categorization, if I said that right, or
13 high-need rural or average need or the Big 4
14 as well, although they lose for a variety of
15 reasons.

16 What is the impact, again, from a
17 parent, a student, a teacher, a school
18 district, a taxpayer, on the loss of
19 significant Foundation Aid in a year when, as
20 you point out, they are going to have a
21 fiscal cliff because they're no longer going
22 to get the COVID federal aid that they got
23 previously. Have you itemized the number of
24 staff that may be laid off, programs that may

1 be terminated, students that may not get the
2 services or the range of services that we
3 have seen that students need as a result of
4 learning loss and social emotional loss from
5 COVID?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So we
7 started with -- which is what I'm pulling
8 out. We started -- and to your point, you
9 have a place like Mount Vernon, right, --

10 SENATOR MAYER: Yes, we have
11 Mount Vernon.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And when you
13 said the Big 4, it also impacts the Big 5 in
14 some of the --

15 SENATOR MAYER: Yes.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I don't
17 want to just say the Big 4, because the
18 Big 5, believe it or not, there are some
19 communities within New York City that will
20 also be terribly impacted.

21 So I would say we have done a complete
22 analysis, district by district, of the
23 impact, the percentage -- the way we did it
24 was Foundation net change, right, percentage

1 loss or gain, five-year enrollment change and
2 five-year -- you know, we did it with the ELL
3 enrollment. So we have this analysis, which
4 we're more than glad to share.

5 We do have to say that obviously one
6 of the things we've been doing -- and
7 Christina would tell you, along with
8 Sharon -- is looking at, from the
9 department's perspective, knowing this -- and
10 by the way, some of the formula, we even had
11 our -- Sean Giambattista, our State Aid, did
12 some analysis where even though it looks like
13 a district is only losing, let's say,
14 5 percent -- versus 35 percent -- the wealthy
15 district with the 35 percent doesn't lose as
16 much as, believe it or not, as the 5 percent
17 rural situation.

18 So we've been doing a lot of this
19 analysis and this comparison to prepare
20 ourselves to support our districts. And more
21 than glad, Senator, to share this information
22 with you as well as others.

23 SENATOR MAYER: Well, thank you. And
24 thank you for bringing up Mount Vernon, which

1 by the way I do not represent. But the idea
2 that a school district that was identified by
3 the Comptroller as in severe fiscal distress
4 in his most recent report would suffer a loss
5 of over \$2 million this year, what -- again,
6 what would be the impact, school-specific, if
7 you have identified that, for the Mount
8 Vernon School District, one -- a poor
9 district, an urban district, a district that
10 has had many ups and downs -- what would be
11 the impact?

12 Have you identified how many staff
13 would be laid off, what programs would be
14 terminated, whether there would be a football
15 team, whether there would be art and music?
16 Can you -- have you identified? And I ask
17 that you do so if you haven't done so.

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No.
19 Obviously between the time that this was
20 released to now, we've been doing our own
21 in-house, you know, what we call the large
22 picture, and then breaking it down into the
23 337 impacted.

24 But I can answer that because of our

1 involvement with some of those districts.
2 And I can answer it from having been a
3 principal, a superintendent, that you're
4 going to look at staffing, you're going to
5 look at services, particularly for special
6 needs and English language learners. You're
7 going to look at those mental health services
8 that you've put in place. You're going to
9 look at those potential extended resources
10 that you use -- that you've been using to,
11 you know, what we call the learning loss,
12 support, to continue to bring the kids up to,
13 you know -- sorry.

14 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you
15 very much, Commissioner. That's a harsh
16 time.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Let me just
18 announce for the day, sometimes you have more
19 to say than the clock lets you. We welcome
20 you to put your answers in writing, send them
21 to both Ways and Means and Senate Finance,
22 and we will get your answers to everyone.
23 Because one person might have asked you, but
24 everybody has the same questions they want

1 answered. Thank you.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: (Inaudible.)

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And Senator,

4 can we submit -- I'm sorry. Clarification.

5 I know we always submit. But the additional

6 materials, we're more than glad to submit

7 them as quickly as possible, so -- and then

8 follow up. To your point, if there are other

9 things that you would like us to further

10 research, more than glad to do that.

11 Thank you.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. Ra.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,

14 Commissioner.

15 And yeah, that data you were just

16 talking about, I think we'd all love to see

17 it. So if you can provide it through the

18 chairs of the appropriate committees.

19 Just continuing on with the

20 Foundation Aid situation, obviously this came

21 as a surprise to many of us as this budget

22 came out. You know, it's being characterized

23 that the Foundation Aid formula was

24 essentially steering money to districts that

1 were losing population. But that's not
2 really the case, right? And I know there's
3 many people in this room right now who are
4 very knowledgeable about school aid funding
5 and the formulas and all of that. Really, it
6 was manipulations we've made to that formula
7 over the years.

8 And I think one of the things you just
9 said, which is something that maybe gets lost
10 a little bit because we're so much talking
11 about the save-harmless, is the fact that for
12 years leading up to full funding of the
13 Foundation Aid formula, the question was
14 what's next. Right? So what do you -- I
15 mean, what is the long-term look when we
16 actually figure out where we need to go from
17 here? Because it took all these years to
18 fund Foundation Aid. We're talking a lot
19 about population, but obviously there are
20 many other factors that go into this formula.
21 And it seems like we're focusing on one
22 input. And even the result with this, you
23 know, removal of the save-harmless still is
24 manipulated to get to certain results.

1 So what do we need to do to have a
2 formula in 2024 for 2030 that accurately
3 reflects New York State schools?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going
5 to start by saying that, again, we've been
6 asking -- you know, we're talking about, you
7 know, a formula that uses the census from
8 2000, was probably a good thing in 2007. And
9 here we are, we've been asking to redo this,
10 and we know we have to do a study, we have to
11 come up with a formula that we can all
12 understand, embrace it, and know what are the
13 kinds of things we have to do to support
14 districts to transition to some of these new
15 ways of educating our children.

16 We do have conversations with our
17 rural districts, particularly because we want
18 to make sure that they get the kind of
19 education -- and there are different ways of
20 doing that. And, you know, we've talked
21 about regionalization, as you know, as a
22 really way of maintaining the identity,
23 because that is an issue that districts
24 struggle with, but at the same time providing

1 the kind of education for their students that
2 they so desire and their students deserve.

3 And so the Foundation Aid formula is
4 the first step. The second step is coming up
5 with a plan, a three-to-five-year plan, how
6 do we -- what are the kinds of lessons we've
7 learned that are efficient and effective that
8 we can put in place to support our districts
9 using them as exemplars and models as a way
10 of moving forward.

11 From the fiscal, I'm going to ask
12 Christina and then very quickly, because I
13 know -- Jeff, who's been our new deputy, who
14 really truly has been focused on this issue
15 with our team in terms of developing the plan
16 internally.

17 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you. I
18 want to say -- and this is a partial answer
19 to Senator Mayer's question earlier before,
20 but it relates to yours. The Regents state
21 aid proposal had proposed that we update
22 several data elements that are in the
23 Foundation Aid formula now. That was on the
24 assumption that we were at full funding and

1 we were going to keep on that same path.

2 So again, as the commissioner
3 mentioned, the census poverty, there's a need
4 resource category there that uses data from
5 2003. Districts have changed since then,
6 obviously. And so the Regents had proposed
7 those, and we sort of called them in public
8 space the low-hanging fruit elements of the
9 formula. But as the commissioner said,
10 education is -- the needs of children have
11 changed, and the way we can provide those
12 services have changed with time.

13 And so when we're thinking about what
14 a new Foundation Aid formula should look
15 like, we know we need some help with that,
16 which is why we requested the million dollars
17 for the study.

18 But it probably needs to be delivered
19 differently. And there may be other
20 variables that we should consider as part of
21 that formula that we weren't before. So
22 that's why we want to have the study, to have
23 a more holistic understanding of what
24 children's needs are and then figure out how

1 to fund it.

2 And Jeff?

3 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: Yeah,
4 I just want to mention that we just need a
5 longer runway for a safe landing for all of
6 our districts. One-eighty-one of the 337 are
7 the most sparsely populated places in our
8 state. They can't do this in one year. We
9 need a multiyear effort. We have a BOCES
10 regionalization model we already can use, and
11 we can work through them to assist these
12 districts.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Out of time.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 Our next questioner is Chair John Liu
17 of our New York City Education Committee.

18 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 Good morning.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good
21 morning.

22 SENATOR LIU: And thank you,
23 Commissioner Rosa, and your entire team for
24 joining us today, as always.

1 Commissioner, I do have a number of
2 questions for you piggybacking off what
3 Chair Mayer has already asked you about.

4 We understand that this proposal, the
5 budget proposal, was put forth by
6 Governor Hochul, and she has some very
7 specific education funding proposals. The
8 first question I have for you is, do you
9 think there's any logic to changing the
10 definition of inflation from price increases
11 from last year to this year to a definition
12 that includes the 10-year average, the
13 average inflation rate over 10 years, and
14 then giving school districts money based on
15 that rate of inflation?

16 Is there any logic to changing from a
17 one-year basis to a 10-year basis?

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, that's
19 a perfect question for DOB and the Governor's
20 office.

21 But if you're asking -- you know, we
22 internally have been looking at, you know,
23 inflation at 4.1 and then you go to 2.6, you
24 know. And then throwing out the high and low

1 and figuring, you know --

2 SENATOR LIU: When you're looking at
3 an inflation rate of 4.1 percent, you're not
4 looking at it from an academic point of view.
5 You're trying to figure out how much school
6 districts actually need to keep their schools
7 open.

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Correct.

9 SENATOR LIU: And if they go with a
10 2.6 instead because of this new definition of
11 10-year average, school districts are truly
12 realizing a cut in real dollars in their
13 school budgets.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Which is
15 why, to your point, when we have internally
16 looked at it, it is something that someone --
17 you know, in my testimony I said it would be
18 helpful to have a further understanding of
19 what the logic and the design behind it -- it
20 would be helpful.

21 SENATOR LIU: So would it be fair to
22 say that people at SED would not currently
23 understand the logic behind changing to a
24 10-year definition of inflation?

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think
2 that's a fair statement.

3 SENATOR LIU: Okay. So we're not the
4 only dummies here, because I can't understand
5 how you go to a 10-year average inflation
6 rate to allow schools to continue funding
7 their operations.

8 The other thing is, you know, the
9 Governor talks about common sense, common
10 sense. Common sense. And common sense,
11 based on getting school districts the money
12 that they actually need. And in her proposal
13 she references these reserves. I mean,
14 apparently school districts across the state
15 have put huge amounts of money under their
16 mattress, like almost \$3 billion worth. Is
17 that accurate? Or is there some flaw to that
18 kind of analysis?

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You mean
20 the -- the --

21 SENATOR LIU: Well, the Governor's
22 referenced reserves.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, no, no,
24 I -- yeah. The mattress part I don't

1 think -- I think we can all agree that that's
2 not where they're putting their dollars.

3 But I would say that many districts
4 that we deal with, that those reserves,
5 even -- especially during the time of COVID,
6 which you know districts had to up-front many
7 expenses. So there's been a bit of a
8 recovery. I think the full Foundation issue,
9 you know, was an incredible welcoming -- I
10 would say something that we celebrated.

11 I do think that this next move, you
12 know, I think as I said, caught us all off
13 guard, and my position on this whole
14 situation is that we really need to get back
15 to thinking about the formula, how do we do
16 this and do this right. Because to your
17 point, you can't say every district has this
18 kind of reserves. Many districts don't. As
19 a matter of fact --

20 SENATOR LIU: Well, I think the
21 Governor's implying that districts that would
22 see a cut in Foundation Aid because of this
23 elimination of the save-harmless provision,
24 that they have reserves to draw upon.

1 Would you say that that is an accurate
2 assessment? It's not accurate? Or you can
3 get back to us if you'd like.

4 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: It looks to us as
5 though most of the districts have reserves
6 that they can use as part of a transition.

7 But, you know, I will say that as part
8 of our federal funding we actually set up a
9 team at State Ed that would help districts
10 think about what would happen when that
11 federal stimulus funding ended, because we
12 didn't want them to hit a cliff and fall over
13 with respect to the services that were funded
14 to address pandemic learning loss and
15 socio-emotional needs. So a lot --

16 SENATOR LIU: So are you suggesting
17 that they may have reserves for this coming
18 year or the next two years but then they'll
19 have a cliff later on?

20 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We were talking
21 to districts -- we were talking to districts
22 about planning settings, using -- setting
23 some reserves aside so that they can
24 transition and extend the services that were

1 helping their students go back to school --

2 SENATOR LIU: And yet when they get
3 their Foundation Aid cut this year, that's
4 pretty much in perpetuity; correct? It's not
5 like they get it restored a couple of years
6 down the road.

7 And not only that, the transitional
8 funding, that also becomes a cliff for these
9 districts.

10 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: It's true. Yup.
11 When the reserves are gone, they're gone,
12 yeah.

13 SENATOR LIU: So we're setting up some
14 of these districts for a double cliff.

15 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Right. Yeah.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So to
17 Christina's point, if you use those reserves,
18 those reserves are gone. So yes.

19 SENATOR LIU: Because they're only for
20 one year. Whereas a reduction in their
21 Foundation Aid pretty much propagates from
22 year to year.

23 Thank you very much.

24 Commissioner, you talked about local

1 control before, being kind of like the
2 historical statewide approach to education,
3 giving local school districts control over --
4 I guess control over what they're teaching
5 their kids. But, you know -- and this is
6 something that I struggle with and I think
7 some of the colleagues struggle with also.
8 You had a question about curriculum and, by
9 extension, syllabi. We all -- and I know the
10 long-standing position of the State Education
11 Department is that the state does not impose
12 any of these requirements on local school
13 districts. But yet we do have statewide
14 standards. So, you know, where do you draw
15 the line between what a standard is versus
16 what a curriculum is?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Mm-hmm.

18 Yeah. And I think that's -- those two terms
19 a lot of times are conflated, unfortunately.

20 SENATOR LIU: Did you say conflated?

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah.

22 SENATOR LIU: Okay.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Because what
24 happens is the standards really look at, you

1 know, what do kids need to know. You know,
2 the what. Right? This is -- what do they
3 need to know? And so the goal is: Here are
4 the standards, this is what you need to know,
5 and then it becomes how do we get there. You
6 know, what are the kinds of -- from
7 everything, from what tools do we use to
8 support the kids knowing that. Right?
9 Sometimes materials, a program, you know,
10 instructional strategies -- all of that
11 becomes part of the teaching and learning and
12 the curriculum. So there are the different
13 components.

14 So the standards is what we develop
15 and we say, you know, this is what the -- a
16 student should know.

17 At the local level, the
18 superintendents, the educational leaders,
19 right -- the principals, the school board --
20 they come and get together and say, you know,
21 we're following the standards, we're making
22 sure that in our district these are the
23 materials we use, this is the curriculum,
24 this is the instructional strategies, this is

1 the professional development that we use to
2 ensure that we get there.

3 SENATOR LIU: All right. But -- now,
4 there used to be required Regents, a set of
5 Regents exams, which the Regents have
6 essentially provided -- now provided more
7 alternatives to a Regents degree. But in
8 those Regents exams, there was kind of like a
9 mechanism to strongly encourage local school
10 districts to teach certain material, that
11 material being on the Regents exams.

12 Now that the Regents exams are no
13 longer required by everybody, how do you
14 ensure that what used to be kind of ensured
15 by the Regents exams are still being ensured,
16 in terms of what local school districts are
17 teaching their kids?

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. So
19 again, Regents exams are still required. So
20 let me just say that.

21 And by the way, way, way back, Regents
22 exams were not required. You know, this
23 became a fairly -- believe it or not. I know
24 some people don't realize, but our Regents

1 exams are still in place. I mean, they have
2 not gone away.

3 That is one measure. Because
4 remember, in the classroom the teacher is
5 teaching the coursework. Right? The Regents
6 exam will test some of the elements that give
7 us an indication that they've met and they,
8 you know, pretty much know the knowledge,
9 that body of knowledge that they need to pass
10 that exam. That's one exam.

11 And so when we talk about the
12 standards and the curriculum -- for example,
13 there are places that go way beyond, you
14 know --

15 SENATOR LIU: I think my time is up.
16 But because Chair Krueger loves me, she's
17 going to give me a second round. Thank you.

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. Got
19 it.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: (Mic off;
21 inaudible.)

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: They get a
23 three-minute follow-up at the end, after
24 everyone's gone.

1 Thank you.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Chairman
3 Santabarbara, chairman of Libraries.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Thank you,
5 Mr. Benedetto.

6 And thank you, Commissioner, for being
7 here this morning. Good morning to you and
8 your staff.

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good
10 morning.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Just a few
12 questions.

13 Wanted to ask about the State
14 Education Department's request for a new
15 \$17 million General Fund appropriation for
16 the Cultural Education Revenue Stabilization.
17 I just wanted to know what that funding is
18 going to be used for, what areas need it the
19 most. And if you'd talk a little bit more
20 about that request and where it's going to go
21 and how it's going to benefit the education
22 system.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Great
24 question.

1 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
2 Thank you. And we certainly hope that you
3 support that request.

4 So we have some staffing, some
5 critical staffing needs that those dollars
6 will help us with. We also want to expand
7 our programming that we're offering students
8 who come and adults who come to visit. So
9 just the day-to-day things that we're not
10 able to do because the account is light, you
11 know, the budget is tight. So, you know, we
12 will be expanding our offerings.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Okay, thank
14 you -- thank you for that answer.

15 And I just wanted to circle back to
16 your opening comments. The Online Virtual
17 Electronic Library, I see there's a
18 \$3 million appropriation for that due to
19 changes in how the program is funded. But
20 will that still allow institutions across the
21 state to access it without any issues?

22 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
23 I'm sorry, we really can't hear with the
24 mics. Is this NOVELny?

1 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Yes. I'm
2 sorry, I should have put this closer.

3 Yes, the NOVELny program. There's a
4 \$3 million appropriation in the proposal due
5 to changes in how the program was funded.
6 Will this allow the system to continue to be
7 accessed by institutions across the state?

8 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
9 Yes, it will. Mm-hmm.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes. And
11 it's something that the Regents -- I mean,
12 we're very thrilled with that investment.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: And moving
14 on to the Summer School for the Arts, there
15 was a \$1 million cut by the Executive. How
16 is this going to impact the program and --

17 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
18 So --

19 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: -- effects
20 across the state?

21 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
22 So our request was for \$2 million, and that
23 would allow us to offer more residential
24 programming.

1 So as you know, right now the Summer
2 School for the Arts, it's really a two-part
3 program. We offer scholarships over the
4 summer so that students can self-select and
5 attend music and arts programs that they
6 would like to attend. So we offer
7 scholarships for that.

8 And then the second part is a
9 residential program, which is what the
10 Summer School for the Arts looked like in the
11 past. There were multiple residential
12 programs.

13 So \$1 million only allows us to offer
14 one residential; \$2 million would allow us to
15 offer two, potentially three residential
16 programs. And it also gives us an
17 opportunity to offer more scholarships for
18 students who want to self-select.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: So that
20 funding, additional funding, would benefit
21 the program --

22 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
23 Oh, absolutely, yes.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: So that's

1 something we should -- we're going to
2 advocate to put back in.

3 And I wanted to just ask generally,
4 just with libraries, what has the
5 Education Department heard from libraries
6 across the state? Are there issues that --

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We're having
8 a hard time -- I'm sorry --

9 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
10 Have we heard from libraries about --

11 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Let me
12 switch microphones, I'm sorry.

13 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Can you --
15 oh, that's better, yes.

16 (Overtalk.)

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Yes, thank
19 you for pointing that out.

20 Just libraries across the state, so
21 what have you been hearing from libraries?
22 What are the needs? What has the Education
23 Department heard that we can consider in the
24 budget?

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So,

2 Angelique, do you want to --

3 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE:

4 Thank you. So one of the things that we do
5 recognize, particularly with P-12
6 instruction, is really the critical
7 partnerships that libraries play -- not just
8 within our schools but also our public
9 libraries. They often serve as safe havens
10 and resource centers for families, right? So
11 it is important for them to receive funding
12 so that they are able to offer programs, they
13 are able to offer supplemental programs in
14 conjunction with schools, able to provide
15 adult learning services, programs for
16 families. And they are critical because they
17 do help our students and families and schools
18 in local communities.

19 Thank you.

20 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:

21 I would just add that broadband is still an
22 issue for some of our libraries, so we are
23 hearing that. So more funding to support
24 that would be great.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: And that's
2 a great segue to my next question --

3 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
4 See, there it is.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Just wanted
6 to also ask about obviously the importance of
7 technology in education. How is the budget
8 going to -- planning on addressing upgrades
9 in needed infrastructure in schools
10 statewide? I know some of my schools in my
11 district still don't have the technology that
12 they should have at this point.

13 Is there a plan in place, specific
14 initiatives, investments that can bridge that
15 digital divide, especially in some of the
16 rural areas and rural school districts?

17 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
18 Well, I guess, as I mentioned, more funding
19 allows us to do more, so -- we are aware that
20 there are some schools that are struggling or
21 dealing with challenges in providing enough
22 broadband, if not equipment, for all of their
23 students.

24 So any increase in funding that we

1 receive that supports the libraries would
2 support those needs.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Thank you
4 for that answer.

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And by the
6 way, we did do an inventory -- again, we can
7 share an inventory across the entire state in
8 terms of equipment.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Excellent.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So that
11 could be helpful, and we'll share that with
12 you.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: I have a
14 few minutes left; I just want to circle back
15 on the special education discussion that --
16 from earlier. I just wanted to ask about
17 the -- how the budget is supporting special
18 education programs, how we're improving
19 programs. And also the big thing is how are
20 we making sure that the children, kids and
21 students that need these programs are
22 receiving services, adequate services?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I don't
24 think we heard your --

1 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: We
2 didn't hear all of that --

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We didn't
4 hear the question on -- yeah. We just heard
5 special education and --

6 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: What
7 measures are being taken to improve the
8 special education programs in place, and how
9 are we making sure that kids are actually
10 receiving the programs and they're receiving
11 adequate services?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, okay.
13 Well, I think the BOCES -- I mean, the --
14 when we think about special education,
15 obviously I'm going to start by saying that
16 we're talking about different stages and
17 different levels, right, from the elementary
18 all the way through the inclusion programs
19 that we support, as well as having the BOCES
20 opportunities as well. So --

21 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: I
22 think as far as the department role here, one
23 of the things we're doing is modernizing our
24 data system within special education so that

1 we can track students better and be able to
2 see where the openings are and where the
3 deficits are so we can respond in realtime
4 with policy.

5 The other issue we have is obviously
6 residential placements are always an issue in
7 trying to support districts to find those and
8 to find the funding for residential
9 placement. We've got some proposals in the
10 commissioner's backup sheet for you guys to
11 look at as far as the residential piece is
12 concerned.

13 But we continue to monitor as well.
14 We have IDEA funding that comes through the
15 department, and part of our responsibility is
16 once those funds are doled out, to also
17 monitor how it's spent. We're modernizing
18 that process as well. Some of that is
19 paper-based, and it now has to go to a
20 digital base.

21 And we're also, inside the department,
22 creating a grants department so that we have
23 better functioning and more
24 cross-pollenization for those doing the

1 auditing work to ensure that it's done at the
2 highest rate possible, because the federal
3 government is very interested in making sure
4 that we're spending their money
5 expeditiously.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: And are
7 there steps being taken also to -- there's a
8 shortage of special education teachers and
9 related professionals. Are there steps being
10 taken to ensure we can fill those positions?

11 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: We
12 just have done some work in the Certification
13 Department to create a K-12 special education
14 certificate which will allow a lot more
15 movement, especially, you know, for some of
16 those districts that aren't all that large,
17 don't have a ton of staff, they need to be
18 able to respond to the needs and be able to
19 move staff to where the needs are.

20 Those kind of exercises came from the
21 field to tell us we need this kind of
22 certificate, and we responded to make sure
23 that they have that kind of flexibility.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Okay, thank

1 you. Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
3 much. Oh, I want to introduce Senator Stec,
4 who joined us.

5 And I want to turn it over to
6 Senator Chu, 10-minute chair of Libraries --
7 although that's not the sentence. Chair of
8 Libraries, 10 minutes. Not just for
9 10 minutes as the chair.

10 (Laughter.)

11 SENIOR CHU: Thank you, Chair. I
12 thought I got three months.

13 (Laughter.)

14 SENIOR CHU: Good morning,
15 Commissioner Rosa.

16 So I would like to bring the attention
17 to the School Material Aid. We know that
18 starting from 2007, the School Material Aid
19 from SED, the calculations stay set at the
20 \$6.25. In the past 17 years we can see the
21 inflation going up, we've digitalized all
22 those materials. How -- will you be able to
23 help us understand how does SED do the
24 calculation, or what was the formula to set

1 this amount, and why in the past 17 years it
2 stayed flat? And is this amount adequate
3 enough to meet our current needs, especially
4 right now we talk about not just the print
5 material but also the digital material, which
6 costs more. So ...

7 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you. That
8 formula amount is actually set in statute.
9 So we don't set it. What we do is we take
10 the student counts and we do the
11 multiplication and then share that with the
12 districts.

13 So the Regents last year actually had
14 in their state aid proposal a recommendation
15 that the library aid that you referred to,
16 but also the computer software and hardware
17 and textbook aids be increased to reflect the
18 inflationary changes since that time. It was
19 not enacted. But certainly we'd love to talk
20 more about that.

21 SENIOR CHU: And how much do you think
22 per pupil will be a reasonable amount for
23 now?

24 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Well, reasonable

1 is a hard thing to say. I mean, the
2 inflationary number off the top of my head I
3 would think maybe for the Library Aid it
4 might bring it to \$10, although that's very
5 much off the top of my head. But we can do
6 an estimate on that.

7 SENIOR CHU: Understand. Thank you.

8 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you.

9 SENATOR CHU: And the second question,
10 I notice, Commissioner, from your testimony,
11 you -- on the Library Construction Aid, SED
12 requests for 45 million. However, the New
13 York State libraries, they estimate from 2021
14 to 2023, the whole state need is
15 \$1.5 billion. And from NYLA's data, they are
16 actually requesting for 69.4 million.

17 Would you be able to tell us what's
18 the difference the -- like your ask and the
19 NYLA's ask, what's the difference?

20 And also I appreciate you bringing up
21 the need for high-speed broadband -- to
22 modernize and make sure our public library
23 has the assets for those technology supports.
24 Those infrastructure also cost -- especially

1 right now, the construction material costs
2 are going up. Like how does this -- is this
3 45 million reasonable? Or do you think
4 that's -- what's the priority here?

5 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:

6 We think the 45 million is reasonable.

7 You know, we would love it if you
8 would bring us back to the 45. Right now the
9 Executive's budget is offering 34 million.
10 So again, as I said earlier, when it comes to
11 libraries, any additional funding that can be
12 made available would be a plus for our
13 libraries.

14 Broadband, as we know, is a huge
15 issue. And just making sure that the
16 libraries have the proper resources and that
17 the facilities are where they need to be so
18 that they can support those who are coming in
19 to use it.

20 SENIOR CHU: Absolutely.

21 And have you been in discussion with
22 NYLA about the difference? Because they are
23 proposing for 69.4 million, 24 million more
24 than SED's proposal.

1 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
2 I'm not aware that we've had that discussion,
3 but we certainly will reach out to them.

4 SENIOR CHU: Yeah, that will be
5 helpful.

6 And I just want to bring it back to
7 the special ed. There is a school in my
8 district and many families who need those
9 crucial services. I just would like to
10 understand a little about the teacher and
11 student ratio. And also from the
12 administration perspective, what's the most
13 challenging now? Support, service, how --
14 like what kind of support SED would need to
15 provide the adequate service for those needy
16 families? For the special -- special
17 education: 4201, 4410.

18 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE:
19 Yeah, so when it comes to libraries and the
20 things that they're able to provide
21 additionally to what happens in schools is
22 really however we can dream about it. Right?
23 Essentially, the connection between our
24 schools and our libraries being able to

1 provide additional courses for students,
2 extended learning opportunities, learning
3 about how to utilize technology in safe
4 ways -- we've been talking a lot about
5 literacy, right? Being able to have
6 additional offerings at our local libraries
7 in concert with some of the work that our
8 schools are doing is so critical to helping
9 us achieve what we all want for our students.
10 And we saw "our" -- not just mine, but yours
11 and all children across the state to be able
12 to go as far as they would love to be able to
13 go. But understanding that having and
14 knowing how to read proficiently, accurately,
15 being able to comprehend and synthesize
16 information are all key things that students
17 need to be successful in life.

18 SENIOR CHU: My question was toward
19 the special ed program for 4410s, 4201
20 schools, the teacher and student ratio.

21 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE: Oh,
22 I'm sorry, I misunderstood. I didn't hear
23 that correctly.

24 But yes, when it comes to our 4410 and

1 our special education schools, we realize
2 that we have had some concerns around tuition
3 rate settling, tuition reimbursement. We do
4 the best that we can through our external
5 partners, through our SEQA offices, through
6 our local educational partnerships in
7 providing direct technical assistance to all
8 of those schools. Being able to go in,
9 offering professional learning opportunities
10 for schools, are all part of the things that
11 we do every single day.

12 But we also do realize that there are
13 challenges when it comes to funding,
14 understanding where there are openings for
15 families. We realize that there are also
16 some challenges in certain parts of the state
17 where there are services that are not able to
18 be provided. And our goal is to try to
19 ensure that every student who needs anything
20 that they need are able to stay in their
21 local communities, within their local
22 schools. And that comes from complete and
23 adequate funding.

24 SENIOR CHU: Then what would be the

1 most challenging part, from the SED or
2 administration perspective, to support those
3 families?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think one
5 is in terms of resources that are provided,
6 professional -- you know, helping families,
7 creating awareness, right? So that -- you
8 know, one of the things -- and you were
9 talking about the library space and really
10 creating those links so that there are
11 cultural, right -- you have access to some of
12 the cultural awareness in terms of materials
13 and opportunities for families to experience
14 the -- even beyond the school, that there are
15 connectors within the community.

16 And so with our children I think the
17 whole notion of having opportunities to be
18 very -- feel very much a part of the
19 community by creating these inclusive
20 environments, right, where the children do
21 not feel in many ways that they're not part
22 of, but rather the whole notion of
23 inclusivity, inclusion, and having them be
24 part of those communities.

1 You know, we clearly try to work with
2 not just libraries but -- yeah.

3 SENIOR CHU: Commissioner, I apologize
4 if I didn't make my question clear enough.
5 It's about special ed, special education
6 programs for those special-needs students.
7 It's not about libraries.

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, no, I
9 know. But I'm saying as a connector from the
10 program itself -- because I think that the
11 deputy commissioner talked about in school,
12 the programs themselves. But I linked it
13 back to the library as an added extension, a
14 connector for those children that need to be
15 very much a part of inclusive settings so
16 that they're with their peers.

17 So I was responding to the
18 inclusiveness, the importance of those
19 children having those experiences in
20 inclusive environments both in schools as
21 well as in the community, as extended ways of
22 having those access.

23 SENIOR CHU: Then, just curious, is
24 there any mechanism or any plan you -- is it

1 able to connect with those special-need and
2 when we're talking about the library
3 update -- upgrade, infrastructure
4 improvement, are we able to meet the need for
5 those specific families that they have those
6 resources, ways open to public, those special
7 populations will be able to also utilize it?

8 (Time clock sounds; overtalk.)

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You'll get back
10 to us.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We do that.
12 We'll answer that. Thank you.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ranker on the
14 Education Committee, Mr. Smith.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 And thank you, Commissioner, for
18 joining us today. I appreciate throughout
19 the year you've always made yourself
20 accessible to all of our members,
21 particularly when our members come to us and
22 they have problems in their districts, little
23 fires that need to be put out, you're always
24 helpful.

1 Now, unfortunately today the entire
2 state is ablaze because of the Governor's
3 proposal to cut back millions of dollars of
4 school aid to our schools. As you mentioned,
5 337 rural and suburban school districts
6 facing deep cuts. In my Assembly district,
7 the schools I represent, we're looking at
8 7.4 million in cuts. In one school district
9 to the north of me, Three Village on
10 Long Island, they're looking at almost
11 \$8 million in cuts.

12 I mean, this is devastating. You
13 know, you're talking about hundreds of
14 teachers potentially being laid off at a time
15 where learning loss is a major issue and at a
16 time where we're trying to expand programs,
17 teach students how to read properly, all the
18 things the department has advocated for,
19 things you've advocated for.

20 So I appreciate your answers in terms
21 of the fact that this department is an
22 independent agency, it's not appointed by the
23 Governor, it's appointed by the Regents,
24 which works with the Legislature.

1 So now this weekend on Long Island, we
2 routinely every year we have a legislative
3 breakfast at Longwood School District.

4 Usually there's over 500 advocates that
5 attend, 10 Assemblymembers, five Senators,
6 two members of Congress attend and take
7 questions from, you know, dozens of school
8 districts. What should we be telling them?

9 Because right now, you know, I'm at a
10 loss. The fact that the Governor releases a
11 state aid run -- when we do the Assembly and
12 Senate one-house budgets, we're not releasing
13 state aid runs, we're just saying, you know,
14 we have a priority of education, which
15 everyone knows.

16 So aside from telling school districts
17 to, you know, stay calm and we're going to
18 get this done, what would you be telling
19 these school districts right now? And I know
20 that's a tough question.

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going
22 to take it from three angles. One is sitting
23 there and -- to your point, when you said
24 about how do you bring the temperature down,

1 how do you create -- engage in a dialogue
2 that helps us to think about what would be
3 the message, I think -- and then obviously
4 we'll give you some -- you know, obviously
5 we've shared with you that we have some
6 information specific to the districts.

7 But I also think it's important to
8 rethink, I think as a body, to look at how,
9 you know, taking this as an opportunity to
10 really engage in a conversation of doing this
11 in a thoughtful manner. Right? How do we
12 create a plan, how do we engage all of us,
13 collectively, in a plan that gets us to where
14 we need to do the work and the -- and have
15 the investments that we need to continue to
16 do the work, coming out of the pandemic,
17 continuing to look at creative ways of using
18 our dollars, sharing our learning, you know,
19 opportunities, and clearly advocating -- I
20 think which is what you're doing --
21 advocating to have an opportunity to really
22 look at doing this within a
23 three-to-five-year plan.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I agree

1 completely. I think that makes a lot of
2 sense.

3 The Governor has mentioned and some of
4 my colleagues have mentioned the reserve fund
5 issue. Now, I speak with our school
6 districts across the state routinely. I
7 don't think any school board member or school
8 superintendent believes that their school
9 district should be a bank for public money,
10 and I don't think that's what they're doing,
11 as implied by the Governor.

12 But I do think that as we're looking
13 at -- you mentioned the federal fiscal cliff,
14 where the loss, the entire loss of COVID
15 funds -- our school districts have hired so
16 many mental health professionals to deal with
17 these things, you referenced that earlier,
18 and now they're looking at layoffs because
19 they don't have that.

20 So typically they would be looking to
21 tap into those reserve funds perhaps for this
22 year, but now this Governor's proposal
23 completely cleans them out. I mean, it's
24 literally going to put school districts in

1 fiscal stress.

2 I only have a minute, and I just want
3 to address one other issue that has come up
4 in this hearing regarding the Regents exams,
5 and you and I have spoken about this. We're
6 on the same page. I would say -- and I've
7 been asked a lot, are we lowering standards
8 by not requiring Regents exams? And I've
9 always said, absolutely not. Because as
10 someone who taught in the classroom, our
11 students need the time to be able to explore
12 Career and Technical Education opportunities,
13 all these opportunities that are offered.

14 Would you agree that by making it
15 optional -- which just a few years ago,
16 before Common Core, before Race to the Top,
17 these things were not mandatory but an
18 option. Do you think, do you agree with me
19 that that's not lowering standards?

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I'm
21 going to agree that we have -- our students
22 have multiple ways of demonstrating their
23 knowledge base. I think that this is one
24 way. Right? The Regents exam is one way. I

1 think that the way we raise -- you know, for
2 us, raising standards is saying, you know,
3 our children need to show various ways of
4 doing that work.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you. Thank
6 you, Commissioner, and thank you for your
7 work.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To the Senate.

9 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

10 Next is Senator Tedisco, ranker on
11 Education.

12 SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you.

13 Commissioner, I'm compelled to tell
14 you and anyone who is in earshot, as the
15 ranker on the education committee, and you've
16 heard me say this before, as somebody -- and
17 I say this with tongue in cheek -- who had a
18 real job, one we all respect and we know
19 we're losing teachers -- I was an educator,
20 taught kids with learning disabilities,
21 special education, did some team teaching.

22 This budget is bad holistically. It's
23 a disaster for education. And I just want to
24 put on the record that I and my conference

1 are not going to go quietly into the night if
2 this or any other budget tries to balance
3 itself on the backs of our kids, their
4 education, their future, or the taxpayers of
5 New York State who are going to have to make
6 up the difference for the programs which I
7 think are going to have to be cut.

8 This is a bad budget for the
9 44th Senatorial District. Eleven of my
10 schools lose funding. It's bad for the
11 North Country, the Mohawk Valley, the
12 Capital Region, the entire state.

13 What I want to do is just go back to
14 COVID for a minute and talk about that
15 impact. Yes, COVID impacted all of us. Yes,
16 it impacted their education. But really what
17 impacted their education is the decision to
18 put them in their kitchen in front of a
19 monitor, where their educators were miles
20 away in front of another screen. That failed
21 miserably, and we hope that doesn't happen.

22 What I want to ask you -- and this is
23 my question. Under this budget, we've made
24 some gains. That's good news. Under this

1 budget, if it is fulfilled, are we going to
2 gain anything in terms of the development of
3 the education of our kids which was lost, or
4 are we going to go back, slide back under
5 this particular budget?

6 What's your feeling about educational
7 development if we follow through on what we
8 see here?

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I
10 think that -- you heard me make the comment
11 about investment. So anytime that we have --
12 you know, we're coming out of -- to your
13 point, we're coming out of a crisis, right?
14 Our children were in isolation, all kinds of
15 mental health issues.

16 The disconnect -- and we are helping
17 -- you know, it created an opportunity, when
18 we came back into -- from hybrid to our
19 students being in school, we had to create
20 new entry points. Because some of the kids
21 were never in school and all of a sudden they
22 found themselves -- to your point as a
23 teacher, right, all of a sudden they were in
24 second grade or third grade. And then kids

1 who had been maybe one year in middle school
2 found themselves in high school.

3 All of those are -- those
4 social-emotional issues are real for many
5 children in terms of development. They're
6 very real in terms of transitions. So I know
7 that the last two years schools have worked
8 exceedingly hard -- teachers, guidance
9 counselors -- the teams that have looked at,
10 to your point, mental health, have worked
11 hard to create those reentry points, create
12 these connections, a sense of belonging in
13 those settings.

14 And at the end of the day, also,
15 retooling our academic and -- even with
16 attendance issues, right? And, you know, the
17 issue of how kids -- you know, the social
18 conducts that schools support children
19 with --

20 SENATOR TEDISCO: I don't want to cut
21 you short, but I've got a minute and
22 28 seconds, so I want to ask one more
23 question.

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

1 SENATOR TEDISCO: You talked about
2 reserves. In this particular budget, as
3 we've cut all these school districts,
4 \$2.4 billion for the migrant concerns;
5 500 million in reserves. Reserves for those
6 who are here through no fault of their own --
7 it's a border problem. I'm not sure the
8 process they're using really assimilates
9 anybody, it probably just kicks the can down
10 the road, pawns on a chessboard. No reserves
11 for our educational system.

12 This is my question. Many school
13 districts have taken on the migrant children.
14 Does the state or federal government provide
15 current-year funding to mitigate the cost of
16 educating those children? We have school
17 boards that put together a budget, \$26,000
18 per student. They get this influx, the money
19 isn't there for teachers of a second
20 language. What do you say about that?

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, you
22 heard me say in my statement that we should
23 have, you know, monies to -- not to wait till
24 next year, you know, when the children -- but

1 rather have the money right up front.

2 So my suggestion is that when you have
3 these kinds of situations, you need the money
4 up-front to --

5 SENATOR TEDISCO: I have a bill that
6 would require that. Any new students which
7 come in, English as a second language,
8 special education needs, under this problem,
9 should be fully funded -- not by local
10 taxpayers, but from the money they've already
11 sent to us. Because they billed budgets, and
12 they're elected officials, the school boards,
13 and it shouldn't fall on their backs.

14 Thank you so much, Commissioner.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
16 Assembly.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Hyndman,
18 do you have a question?

19 (Inaudible exchange; laughter.)

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Good morning.

21 PANELISTS: Good morning.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Good morning,
23 Dr. Rosa and your team. Thank you so much
24 for your testimony this morning.

1 I will not ask about Foundation Aid.
2 I agree with most of my colleagues in that
3 this change -- changing of the formula is --
4 we need a longer runway to make sure that
5 it's delivered to all of our districts
6 correctly.

7 A couple of my questions -- and I only
8 have three minutes, so I'll take them
9 afterwards if possible. While the Governor
10 did put in money for increased staffing, I
11 believe in IT, what other deficiencies for
12 staffing needs does NYSED have?

13 And what -- my other question is the
14 costs associated with the new FAFSA
15 requirement, while a lot of us think that's
16 good, what financial burden will that be on
17 the State Education Department? If you could
18 also tell me, when it comes to the Consortium
19 for Worker Education, how many employees are
20 in that department and what determines
21 success?

22 I did see a decrease in the allotment
23 for the Governor's budget and for CWE. Also
24 for My Brother's Keeper, maintaining it at

1 18 million. We're seeing an increase -- and
2 many colleagues have talked about this, is
3 not only My Brother's Keeper but districts
4 have expanded it to My Sister's Keeper and
5 are using the monies to help with
6 rites-of-passage programs and mentoring and
7 as well as the parent education component.

8 And my last question, when it comes to
9 CTE, I noticed you talked about BOCES. And
10 being a New York City member, we have seen
11 the benefits at Thomas Edison High School and
12 the CTE programs and the automatic workforce
13 placement of those high school graduates has
14 been instrumental. But the certification of
15 teachers has been very hard, as well as
16 funding for CTE programs.

17 And my last question, which I will
18 take offline, I'm wholly concerned about the
19 deficits in the charter school oversight part
20 of -- I didn't realize how much work you all
21 did in regards to SUNY oversight. I think
22 that's something that we absolutely have to
23 fix. We get lots of complaints from parents
24 about oversight and the charter schools as

1 far as SED, the Regents and SUNY is
2 concerned, and we really need to make sure we
3 start tackling the oversight. Because
4 complaints -- it's like there's no complaint
5 department for parents when it comes to a lot
6 of charter schools.

7 Thank you.

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going
9 to start very quickly to share with you that
10 we do have some exhibits that we can share
11 with you and others in terms of our staffing.
12 So that's an easy one to give you. So this
13 way we don't -- you know, we don't answer to
14 that one.

15 The CTE piece is something that we
16 are -- we always put --

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Oh, wow.
18 Offline.

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We will give
20 you lots of {inaudible}.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, Senator
22 Michelle Hinchey.

23 SENATOR HINCHEY: Hello. Thank you
24 very much. I want to start, Commissioner, by

1 thanking you for your comments on what I
2 think many of us believe is an absolutely
3 outrageous Foundation Aid proposal. And I
4 want to thank my colleagues for their
5 questions and focus on this issue too.

6 I represent, in the 41st District,
7 31 different school districts, and all but
8 six of them are seeing extreme cuts. We have
9 a total of over \$17 million in cuts in my
10 district alone.

11 I want to focus on one school
12 district, though -- but many of them are
13 doing this. We have one school district that
14 is facing a \$3 million cut itself, and we
15 know that the existing Foundation Aid formula
16 as it exists today has not been working for
17 them to this date. And they've already put
18 forward a proposal to close two elementary
19 schools in order to actually save money,
20 because it's not sustainable.

21 So now in a rural district that covers
22 multiple towns, actually spans two different
23 counties, they're closing two elementary
24 schools to save money and now, on top of

1 that, in this proposed budget would be seeing
2 another \$3 million in cuts to their district.

3 I fully agree and appreciate that we
4 should have a longer runway but also a real
5 study of what should happen and how we should
6 update this current Foundation Aid formula
7 and how we fund our schools. In the proposal
8 that you're thinking about and promoting,
9 what inclusion in there is for school
10 districts like mine that have already closed
11 different schools, particularly elementary
12 schools? When I think of the travel time for
13 our young kids on the buses while they're
14 traveling to schools multiple, multiple,
15 multiple miles away -- some upwards of
16 40 minutes -- is that taken into account in
17 what -- any study that would be going
18 forward? How are you looking at schools that
19 are already taking those cost-cutting
20 measures?

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

22 So very quickly, we have been taking
23 into account everything from staffing to, you
24 know, the issue of transportation costs,

1 distance, buildings, maintenance of
2 buildings, consolidation -- all of those
3 things. Regionalization, especially in the
4 high school piece.

5 I mean, all of these elements are part
6 of the conversation that we want to study and
7 we want to make sure that we have the input
8 of the various districts that are going
9 through this.

10 Several districts are going through
11 reorganizing for efficiencies because they
12 know long-term, you know, this is going to be
13 a problem.

14 SENATOR HINCHEY: And the processes
15 that they've already taken would be taken
16 into account in this new proposal.

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Mm-hmm.
18 Yes.

19 SENATOR HINCHEY: Thank you. I don't
20 want to repeat the questions of my
21 colleagues, but I appreciate the study.

22 We made a historic investment in
23 school meals. Wondering if in a very short
24 period of time you can talk about what you've

1 seen, the impacts you've seen in terms --

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. And I
3 think we have it. We put it in our testimony
4 as well in terms of what we believe, given
5 the fact that the issue --

6 SENATOR HINCHEY: Positive? Has it
7 been positive?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Positive.

9 (Laughter.)

10 PANELIST: Very positive.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. Otis.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you,

14 Mr. Chair.

15 Thank you, Commissioner and team.

16 I have a few topics I'll hit briefly.

17 First, I want to compliment a proposal you
18 have in your testimony and maybe suggest that
19 we include it in our budget, which is to
20 create an EV bus working group to get more
21 resources and state expertise to school
22 districts on the transition to EV buses.

23 So you don't need to comment. Good
24 proposal; let's see if we can get it done.

1 On the Special Acts school districts
2 rate-setting, one question is, I think that
3 while there's a plan for getting the study
4 done, do you have a a dollar value on what
5 just the inflation rate increase should be
6 for this year? Because I don't think it's
7 included in the budget, and we want to make
8 sure that these school districts who are
9 already way behind aren't losing even more
10 ground.

11 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We can share an
12 estimate with you afterward. Thank you.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Okay, that would be
14 great. Just a quick comment on the reserve
15 fund issue which a number of people have
16 touched on. We changed a few years ago the
17 percentage from 3 percent to 4 percent.
18 Four percent is still not enough for school
19 districts to be able to weather an unexpected
20 capital cost -- a boiler goes out, other
21 things.

22 And so no one should be thinking that
23 reserves are there to supplement programming
24 even in an off year. Their ratios, by

1 Moody's standards, are too low.

2 A question in terms of -- we've had
3 some discussion about curriculum and stuff.
4 I want to make a pitch for earlier-grade
5 science and technology education. And I know
6 this is something that you have in your
7 standards. But any comments on how that
8 dialogue is going with school districts?

9 What I hear from STEM programs is the
10 earlier you get the kids into science and
11 tech education, the better the outcomes.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. I'm
13 going to start and then, because science
14 is -- this year is our -- as you know, we've
15 moved ahead with our science standards and
16 this year the fifth- and eighth-graders are
17 taking their exam.

18 The one thing with science that's just
19 wonderful is that the early grades -- you
20 know, an issue like measurement, early on
21 projects very much experiential for our young
22 children. They start to conceptualize the
23 whole notion of really touching it, feeling
24 it, seeing it, understanding it. It is the

1 fundamental issue of deep learning starts at
2 that grade.

3 And science -- math, science, and
4 really truly getting kids to do these
5 hands-on so that -- going back to what -- we
6 talked about our standards. If we can get at
7 the early ages, applied learning in the
8 sciences --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We'll
11 continue it. But -- very exciting issue.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you all.

13 (Inaudible; laughter.)

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Robert Jackson.

15 SENATOR JACKSON: So good morning.

16 And let me first thank you for coming here.

17 And my first question for you,
18 Commissioner, is looking within the budget,
19 at things that you have to do that are new,
20 and understanding that your increase in your
21 budget is only 2.6 percent, can you get
22 everything that is needed in the time that is
23 expected so our children are not negatively
24 impacted? That's my first question for you.

1 And the answer's yes or the answer's no.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So that is a
3 broad question. And my answer is, can I get
4 everything? Absolutely not. Now, you know,
5 I keep going back to the point of investment,
6 investment, investment. Right? If we want
7 to do this and do -- have a real commitment
8 to educating our children in a way that our
9 children -- you know, we respond to their
10 needs, we need to invest.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah, I heard you
12 mention that several times when people asked.
13 And I totally agree with you.

14 And let me go to the next question
15 quickly. How important is class size in
16 dealing with our children's education? I
17 know that my kids used to go to a school
18 where their classes had 35, 40 kids in a
19 class. And how important is class size
20 reduction that's mandated in the law for
21 New York City?

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first
23 of all, the fact of the matter is, as you
24 know in New York City in particular, I am

1 responsible and I have been monitoring the
2 class size issue.

3 Class size is extremely important for
4 the very reason that many children, whether
5 they're special-needs, English language
6 learners, or children that really need the
7 kind of individualized attention -- class
8 size matters because, as most of us know, it
9 matters in private schools. It should matter
10 in public schools.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: My next question is
12 regarding there's a big issue in New York
13 City on mayoral accountability, or mayoral
14 control. How important is it to have
15 education advocates, people that have been on
16 the frontline for decades fighting for
17 various aspects as far as accountability,
18 curriculum -- how important is it to have
19 those individuals and parents engaged in the
20 development of policy changes that we must
21 implement?

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think that
23 every system should have the -- parental
24 involvement as part of the equation for any

1 district, any school, any society.

2 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. I just
3 want to -- my colleague in the next room from
4 me, State Senator Mark Walczyk, Indian Lake,
5 one of his school districts, is losing
6 43.5 percent of their budget. That's totally
7 unacceptable under any standard. I just want
8 to raise that point on his behalf since he's
9 not here. I know if he was here, he would be
10 here advocating for the children of his
11 district.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank
13 you, Robert Jackson.

14 Assembly.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Finishing one
16 Jackson, going to Mrs. Jackson.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: There we go.
18 Happy Black History Month, everyone.

19 Okay. As a licensed social worker,
20 former high school social worker in a CTE
21 school, I can say CTE works, Community
22 Schools work, Teacher Centers work. So we
23 should be funding them so that it doesn't
24 feel like a lottery where one student or one

1 teacher has access and is able to get in over
2 another.

3 We spent \$26,500 per student, 85
4 percent higher than the national average, but
5 Black, brown and students living in poverty
6 have a dropout rate such as 6 percent for
7 Latinos, 5 percent for Black students, poor
8 students, 6 percent and English language
9 learners at 16 percent. Can you speak to how
10 our budget impacts Black, brown and students
11 living in poverty?

12 And then lastly, if you can tell me
13 would you agree that we need to restore the
14 \$21.4 million for Teacher Resource and
15 Computer Training Centers?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So
17 let me start by saying -- again, I'm putting
18 my Bronx principal's hat on, and
19 superintendent's hat on. And clearly I do
20 totally agree that we have communities that
21 have additional needs that have to be
22 provided beyond, you know, your
23 standardization of needs sometimes. Right?

24 So I do agree with you that CTE is

1 something we've advocating in the department,
2 and it's an essential component of
3 opportunities for our children. Sometimes we
4 look at models of what we should be providing
5 and we always talk about access and
6 opportunities. If we don't provide our kids
7 with access and opportunities, obviously we
8 are leaving them behind. And in many places
9 that is the case.

10 So additional resources, again, ways
11 of creating the kinds of access to these
12 programs that our children can connect with
13 and be successful and join society as
14 contributors. So that's one key thing, and
15 that's a plug for CTE for sure.

16 Your second question about, you know,
17 from the social worker's perspective, again,
18 social worker resources for counseling,
19 right, for making the right decisions in
20 schools in terms of next steps, you know,
21 whether it's college and/or career or both,
22 is essential to have these individuals as
23 part of the equation for success.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: So you think

1 that we should restore the 21.4 million for
2 Teacher Resource and Computer Training
3 Centers?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Correct.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Okay, great.

6 And then for your justice-involved
7 students, what do you think we should be
8 doing for them?

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry,
10 the what?

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: The
12 justice-involved students, the students that
13 are --

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh,
15 absolutely. I think we had -- in our --

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Yes.

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- program
18 you saw the plan for a hybrid -- you know, a
19 school that we would create -- it's in our
20 plan. More than glad to share that with you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 Next is our ranker, Senator Murray.

23 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you.

24 And thank you all for being here.

1 I'm not going to delve too much into
2 the funding issue. We've covered that. I
3 will say this, as far as the CPI and the
4 so-called smoothing, I think it's absurd.
5 That's a financial snapshot of the current
6 situation. We should be taking it for the
7 year that it is, not rounding it or smoothing
8 it for an eight-to-10-year average. I think
9 it's absurd.

10 But moving on, back to an issue that
11 was brought up before, the Healthy Meals for
12 All. We made steps, but not enough. We
13 didn't get there, which is again a shame.

14 How many New York schoolchildren are
15 still going hungry because we did not fully
16 fund all meals for all?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I don't know
18 specific to how many children in total. But,
19 you know, if we look at -- and I think under
20 our deputy, the nutrition issue is critical.
21 And obviously we know that the issue of many,
22 many children, particularly in the urban
23 centers and some of the rural places, that is
24 the case.

1 So we are very much alarmed about this
2 issue of, you know, when we have children
3 that are coming to school and this is the
4 meals that they depend on -- and, you know,
5 education, obviously any of us sitting around
6 being hungry when you're trying to focus or
7 whatever, it is a critical crisis, and it's
8 an essential part of educating our children.
9 Feeding our children, making sure that they
10 are nutritionally healthy, is key.

11 And the fact that we are way -- I
12 mean, we're less -- a little bit less than
13 half -- I think we're trying to get to
14 302 million would be feeding all of our
15 children and -- yeah.

16 SENATOR MURRAY: How far off are we?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We're off
18 about -- I think 180, 182?

19 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE: We
20 would need 125 million in order to completely
21 provide universal free meals for all
22 students.

23 Currently our Community Eligibility
24 Provision Program is feeding and making

1 school breakfast and lunch available to about
2 86 percent of students across the state.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We can give
4 you the exact number, because we've done the
5 analysis of it.

6 SENATOR MURRAY: That would be great.
7 Thank you, I appreciate that.

8 And now switching gears, Commissioner,
9 you just -- a couple of minutes ago I kind of
10 wrote down the quote. I hope I got it exact.
11 But parental involvement -- you were talking
12 about parental involvement -- is needed in
13 any school, any district, or even society.

14 Well, I'm having parents that are a
15 little concerned, because we've heard for
16 years we need parents to be more involved.
17 But when they try to, they feel like they're
18 getting shunned a little bit. For example,
19 with the vaccinations -- and I'm not going
20 down the rabbit hole of good, bad or
21 indifferent. But medical exemptions, even
22 those are a little bit difficult at times,
23 we're finding. But the -- got rid of the
24 religious and philosophical exemptions. Any

1 sign of those coming back, giving parents a
2 little more control over the health of their
3 children?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I
5 think, you know, the idea here is that we all
6 collectively are engaged in laws that are in
7 place, right? Vaccination. And the greater
8 society looks at, right, these are the things
9 that are in place in order to protect our
10 children.

11 I think that the dialogues are
12 essential in understanding, because sometimes
13 you and I know, whether it's media or whether
14 it's, to your point, belief system and all of
15 that -- so, you know, while we have the
16 exemptions, while we have ways of addressing
17 these issues, going back to your point,
18 parental involvement doesn't necessarily mean
19 that you end up with consensus and agreement
20 and all of that.

21 And for our school districts and our
22 state, we follow the law.

23 SENATOR MURRAY: Sure. I think
24 it's -- a lot of them I've heard from, and

1 it's not just about the vaccinations. It's
2 about certain materials that are available in
3 school in some of the libraries. They feel
4 like they're not being heard then.

5 And I'm finding from district to
6 district, it varies, where maybe it
7 shouldn't. Maybe we do have to have an
8 overall policy that is pretty concrete that
9 can be followed so that parents feel like
10 their voices are being heard.

11 I've witnessed some in some districts,
12 and I won't name names, where parents have
13 just been shut down completely. You know,
14 "yessed" and then shut down. And that's it.
15 And nothing happens in their favor.

16 I think we need to open things up and
17 get more parents more involved by listening
18 to what they have to say. Not necessarily
19 agreeing, but at least listening.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Totally
21 agree.

22 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Assembly.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblyman
2 Sayegh.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Okay, thank you
4 very much, Commissioner.

5 You know, we've had the pleasure of
6 working together in my role as board
7 president, Big 5, and as an educator for some
8 40 years. And many of my colleagues and the
9 educational chairs, both in the Assembly and
10 the Senate, repeated the concerns about the
11 need to modify funding. And I think all of
12 us agree, equity in education is very
13 important. And there's so many instances
14 where there's a lack of equity because of
15 inequity in funding.

16 And there's a number of pieces of
17 legislation that are already before the
18 Assembly and the Senate that deal with trying
19 to fix some of the issues. And I'm just
20 concerned that it's been like some four or
21 five years we're talking about fixing the
22 budget formula and making it more equitable,
23 and then we hear funding was made available,
24 then it wasn't proceeded with, and therefore

1 things were put on hold. And then we hear
2 that there's a target as important as
3 special ed is, the target is on reviewing
4 special ed.

5 But the legislation and the needs go
6 beyond. And as educators, we all know that
7 the cost of educating a special ed child is
8 not one and a half times, it's really --
9 anybody that knows that you've got to split
10 children in smaller classes, your facility
11 cost is doubled, your staffing cost is
12 doubled. Educating ESL, English language
13 learners, your cost is doubled.

14 So the funding proposals deal with
15 looking at criterias like enrollment and
16 regional wealth and looking at the percentage
17 of special ed students that has been growing
18 nearly by 10 percent and more in many
19 districts, and also English language
20 learners.

21 My concern is this new study that
22 we're beginning to look at, are we looking at
23 existing legislation? Are we taking into
24 consideration, for example, that something as

1 simple as the census count that we use
2 presently is the 2000 Census? So something
3 as simple as saying let's use the most recent
4 2020 Census that makes more sense as to
5 social demographics.

6 Also, Building Aid. Schools in older
7 school districts all across the state,
8 because of the inequity, can't even address
9 the growing size of classroom space necessary
10 for students.

11 And finally, my concern is with the
12 migrants costing us \$2.4 billion, are we
13 planning to bring legal action? Because in
14 my opinion the bulk of that fund is
15 education.

16 So I know you don't have the time to
17 respond, but please take that into
18 consideration.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Senator Jabari Brisport.

21 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

22 And thank you all for your testimony.

23 Just a quick question about the
24 changes to Foundation Aid. It's my

1 understanding that, top line, the changes
2 proposed by the Executive, we would have been
3 expecting around 926 million had they not
4 done that. But it will be a 507 million
5 increase.

6 Has the Executive or anybody from
7 their team explained to you why they made
8 these changes to decrease?

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, we've
10 had conversations. I just have to say
11 up-front, I know I had a conversation with
12 the budget director one on one. We've had
13 some reviews. We've had some conversations
14 with Maria Fernandez, who is the liaison.

15 So we've had conversations in terms of
16 the information. But you're asking about
17 explaining, your question.

18 SENATOR BRISPORT: Yes, did they
19 explain why.

20 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: I would say the
21 Governor is obligated to issue an
22 Executive Budget that is balanced by the
23 State Constitution. So our colleagues in the
24 Division of Budget have to come at the state

1 budget with that framing. And it's a good
2 thing in New York that school aid is the
3 biggest piece of our General Fund
4 expenditures, but that means when times are
5 tough, it's hard to avoid looking at school
6 aid. We would hope that the Legislature's
7 actions would restore some of these cuts.

8 There wasn't a conversation about why
9 they went in one direction or the other, so
10 we couldn't speak to that.

11 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

12 And in terms of balancing the budget,
13 the state also has the ability to raise taxes
14 on the wealthy, to increase the revenue. If
15 we were able to tax the rich and increase
16 revenue, do you think we could restore some
17 of these cuts?

18 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Those are
19 legislative actions we would defer to you.

20 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

21 And for the ask for the \$1 million to
22 study Foundation Aid, is there a timeline for
23 that?

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We've been

1 asking for this for a while. We're hopeful
2 that this year, given the situation we find
3 ourselves in, that that will be -- you know,
4 obviously it wasn't funded, so we're hoping
5 that we can get an agreement that we get the
6 funding to do it.

7 SENATOR BRISPORT: Sorry, I'm asking
8 if the funding were granted, how long would
9 the study take?

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, I'm
11 sorry, I thought you said -- well, if the
12 study -- if we find out tomorrow -- no --

13 (Laughter.)

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- that the
15 funding is there and that we would do the
16 study, I think we have looked at the
17 possibility of we've done some low-hanging
18 fruits already. We have to bring in an
19 external partner. We have to work with our
20 stakeholders.

21 So I would say realistically we're
22 looking at at least two years to do these.

23 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: I would say two
24 years.

1 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:

2 Two, three, four.

3 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Even the
4 procurement process for a vendor takes time
5 for the state --

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Because
7 we've got to put it out for -- yeah.

8 So most of you know the RFP process is
9 challenging.

10 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
12 Assembly.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
14 Jean-Pierre.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: (Mic
16 issues.) These don't work for us. There we
17 go.

18 Good morning, and thank you for being
19 here. And it's great to see one of my
20 Long Island -- Angelique as part of the team.

21 So I first want to thank you for your
22 support with the monitor that we have in
23 Wyandanch School District. When we started
24 we were in a fiscal deficit, and now we are

1 in a surplus, so monitors do work.

2 And I also want to touch base on --
3 one of the colleagues mentioned the teacher
4 turnover. And on Long Island we've seen a
5 massive turnover in the East End. Last year
6 we saw dozens of teachers leave Amityville
7 School District. And we've also seen the
8 Comptroller's report where we are at the top
9 of the fiscally distressed.

10 So I want to see how we can work
11 together to help. And again, I just want to
12 reiterate that monitors do work. And we need
13 to look at how we can give some of these
14 monitors veto power. So we could talk about
15 that more.

16 I just want to push on the CTE. I
17 really like that you mentioned CTE, because
18 the CTE programs really work on Long Island.
19 And our kids are learning exceptional -- from
20 cosmetology to mechanics, and they're taking
21 those levels and moving on forward to
22 vocational schools. So please support CTEs.

23 And the school runs are -- and the
24 shortages are terrible, and we need to make

1 sure that we're funding. And these are
2 hurting the most needy school districts. And
3 we've seen them, they're particularly in my
4 district too. So I would love to see the
5 support around increasing funding. And the
6 Foundation Aid, I think we need a longer run.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So thank you
8 for the issue with the monitors.

9 And so let me start with the veto
10 power. We do have one district that has, as
11 you know, two monitors with veto power:
12 East Ramapo. And the rest have monitors and
13 we're constantly -- and by the way, just so
14 that you know, we get no funding, the
15 department gets zero funding to do these
16 ongoing weekly meetings and conversations to
17 monitor the monitors.

18 So -- but you're a hundred percent
19 correct that monitors do work. And, you
20 know, we go through stages before we get to
21 monitors with veto power.

22 But in the budget itself, the monitors
23 were not -- we're not funding, just to keep
24 that as a clear indication that those

1 investments have to also happen.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JEAN-PIERRE: And in my
3 last 20 seconds I do want to say when we were
4 searching for monitors, these qualifications
5 are very difficult to find, and we need to
6 figure out a way that we are helping folks
7 get their qualifications to become monitors,
8 because we've seen distress and fiscal issues
9 all across the state.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Agreed.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Our next testifier -- no, excuse me,
14 our next questioner will be Cordell Cleare.

15 SENATOR CLEARE: Good morning.

16 My question is -- well, happy Black
17 History Month. So I do want to ask about
18 that in our curriculum. I do -- I would like
19 to hear where we are in New York State with
20 the Black History.

21 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE: Got
22 it. Thank you.

23 So there are quite a few things. I do
24 want to point out in general, our standards

1 do uplift the history of all people across
2 the state. But particularly because this is
3 Black History Month, we are happy to share
4 about a program that we're participating in,
5 in conjunction with the Cultural Education
6 Center, where we are going to exhibit the
7 Emancipation Proclamation, we are going to
8 release resources through a social media
9 hashtag that we have created for schools, to
10 encourage the conversation around not just
11 the importance of the Emancipation
12 Proclamation, but also a speech that
13 Martin Luther King gave right here in the
14 State of New York about the importance of the
15 Emancipation Proclamation.

16 So through our Diversity, Equity and
17 Inclusion, DEI, Office, in addition to our
18 Standards and Instruction Office, there are a
19 number of resources that we will be sharing,
20 actually starting on Monday. So thank you
21 for that.

22 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. And ongoing,
23 the daily education of our children, are we
24 teaching Black History to all of our

1 students? Because it is American history.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

3 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE:

4 Yes, it is.

5 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. And then I
6 just saw here -- I know you testified a
7 little bit on the influx of immigrants into
8 our school districts. I represent a district
9 where we have many, many thousands of new
10 families.

11 I just want to know if you can explain
12 the -- how the funding was divided, how did
13 we come upon supporting our schools, because
14 we know their budgets are in already and
15 students are constantly coming. So how are
16 we supporting those schools?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So right
18 before that, in my testimony I talked about
19 making sure that the Regents and the
20 department advance the issue of really
21 getting those dollars up-front rather than
22 waiting. So that's one key issue.

23 The second issue is that as this was
24 happening, we had a designated individual in

1 our department tracking not only incoming,
2 where they were landing. And we even used
3 some of our funding from homelessness dollars
4 to support the districts as they were making
5 these transitions of bringing in the students
6 and welcoming them and working with English
7 language learners, you know, issues of
8 adjustment, entry points, a sense of really
9 -- you know, some of the kids had never even
10 been to school. Yeah.

11 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Assembly.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
15 Pheffer Amato.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good
17 morning. Good to see everyone.

18 And I just want to say for all my
19 colleagues I support everything that's been
20 said here regarding the budget that does not
21 support our children. I do want to give a
22 plus-one to the My Sister's Keeper
23 conversation. I think we need to find a way
24 to stream that all the time.

1 But Commissioner, as you know, in 2022
2 the department issued regulations that every
3 non-public school in the state must
4 demonstrate that they are providing a
5 substantially equivalent education through
6 one of seven pathways. Many of the pathways
7 have considerable expenses involved in
8 compliance, with the costs involved in
9 accreditation, administering testing or
10 preparing for an LSA review.

11 The language of the statute states
12 that the commissioner shall appropriate costs
13 involved in the statewide evaluation plan.
14 This seems to fit right into the category.

15 Will you be asking the Legislature and
16 the Executive to include these costs in the
17 basket of mandated services to reimburse
18 schools for the cost of your mandate or
19 demonstrating substantial equivalency?

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first
21 of all, the substantial equivalency plan, as
22 you know, we've been working with our
23 advisory groups. And the plan is due in
24 December, I think this December, the final

1 selection plan by design.

2 The nonpubs have -- and Christina will
3 speak to the nonpubs, you know, in terms of
4 the funding issue. But in terms of -- to
5 your point, we are always looking to support
6 our nonpubs in terms of their educational
7 support systems, to make sure that the
8 children get the kind of education that they
9 deserve.

10 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: And we'd be happy
11 to work with you on your question.

12 But I would point out that the cost of
13 state assessments, both through 338 exams and
14 the Regents exams, are a part of mandated
15 Services Aid now. So those -- should a
16 school decide to start administering those
17 tests as part of this work, that would be
18 supported already by the state. If you
19 wanted to expand that, we'd be happy to
20 provide technical assistance.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So it's
22 like a yes or a no. So how do they bear the
23 costs of paying for these mandates that are
24 imposed? Like how are we supposed to afford

1 them? I mean --

2 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: The schools have
3 an obligation to teach the students under the
4 state law. And so then they would
5 demonstrate that. And there's -- the
6 pathways approach that we took as part of
7 that new regulation was designed to provide a
8 number of new opportunities so that a
9 nonpublic school could find the one that
10 worked best for it.

11 And I'm not working as closely with
12 the non-public schools as I used to, because
13 I've changed roles, but I know that I'm
14 hearing from a lot of my colleagues in those
15 communities that there's a lot of movement
16 towards this. And we're very optimistic
17 about -- that the vast majority of schools
18 are going to be able to get there.

19 You know, and for the -- with respect
20 to new costs that they've done, you know, we
21 look forward to helping them on that piece
22 too.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: We can
24 talk more.

1 Thank you. Appreciate your answers.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Next up is Senator Oberacker.

4 SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you,

5 Madam Chair.

6 I'm going to throw a number at you:

7 29,967,516. I want each and every one of you

8 in this room to remember that number:

9 29,967,516 -- the amount of dollars that is

10 leaving my 51st Senate District.

11 Some notables. Jefferson Central

12 School, Schoharie County, over 800,000.

13 Roxbury Central School, Delaware County, over

14 800,000. Cherry Valley-Springfield School,

15 over 850,000, Otsego County. Franklin

16 Central School, Delaware County, 970,000.

17 And then Hancock Central School, Delaware

18 County, 1.2 million.

19 Commissioner, in your opening

20 statement, and one of the principles that the

21 Regents and SED has put out there, I think

22 it's the second bullet point: "Advance

23 equity, excellence, diversity, inclusion and

24 access to all."

1 How do I go to my 61 schools in my
2 51st Senate District with the 29,967,516?
3 How do I say that that advances equity,
4 excellence, diversity, inclusion and access
5 for all?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I would say
7 given, again, the fact that not only on the
8 analysis that we did, which you're referring
9 to, we did it on a district by district as
10 well as your composite of your area.

11 And this is obviously a situation that
12 collectively all of us have to address,
13 because this clearly does have a substantial
14 impact on this issue.

15 SENATOR OBERACKER: The word "equity"
16 doesn't, I think, apply in this case.

17 And my colleague Senator Liu talked
18 about common sense. I'd like to throw out
19 another kind of a name: Country sense.
20 Because under country sense, this makes no
21 sense.

22 And I'll revert back my time, my
23 44 minutes -- minutes? My 44 seconds.

24 (Laughter.)

1 SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Assembly.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. Conrad.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you, Chair.

7 Thank you, Commissioner and your team.

8 You've been a great team to work with in

9 collaboration over the years.

10 I again share the same comments as my
11 colleagues here on the Foundation Aid issue,
12 from the CPI comments to, you know -- and
13 we'll add on the CVA cases that have impacted
14 so many, and the zero-emission buses and
15 so on. I don't think we can belabor that any
16 more.

17 But one of the things that we touched
18 on a little bit was this teacher recruitment
19 discussion. And we've been talking about
20 this for some time. And in your budget, your
21 SED budget and proposal, you proposed several
22 different things on teacher recruitment.

23 But I also want to touch on what are
24 you doing right now, or what are you planning

1 on doing for teacher recruitment and teacher
2 leaders? Because that seems to be also a big
3 gap in our system, as we know that they have
4 such an impact in that building or in that
5 entire district. Can you elaborate on that?

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

7 So on teacher recruitment, one of the
8 things that I'm sure you saw on our request
9 was with, you know, really looking at metrics
10 and teacher org -- you know, ways of finding,
11 ways of identifying, along with multiple
12 pathways for teachers as well. Right? So
13 that we know that identifying pipelines,
14 teacher assistance, supporting them.

15 So for us, we've been really trying to
16 figure out those pipelines leading to
17 teachers, you know, coming into the
18 profession, and tapping several of those.

19 We have actually -- again, we can
20 share, given the amount of time, different
21 ways that we've done it through licensing.
22 We continue to have internal conversations
23 about how do we incentivize our teachers to
24 come into this amazing space which -- you

1 know, educating our students, as well as
2 creating a knowledge base, Teachers of
3 Tomorrow, TOC II, all of these programs that
4 we've been investing in is to really draw
5 individuals into the profession.

6 So we've made some really interesting
7 commitments and investments as part of
8 pulling in teachers as well as using, in HR,
9 you know, processes to make sure that we get
10 the word out about this -- this process.

11 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: I
12 guess there's -- one ask in our particular
13 proposal is that Teach.org is one of these
14 recruitment tools like we'd like to contract
15 with. It's a \$1.2 million ask. And they
16 have expertise and have shown demonstrated
17 success in getting teachers from all walks of
18 life into the profession.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: I would agree,
20 teacher or principal.

21 And I'll throw one thing -- we talk
22 about incentives. There is a disincentive
23 out there for teaching, and that's APPR. I
24 hope we can work on a local control

1 component.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And since --
3 APPR will happen.

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We have Senator
7 Stec.

8 SENATOR STEC: Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 Good morning. I've only got three
10 minutes, I'll try to do this as quickly as I
11 can.

12 Commissioner, were you consulted or
13 involved or provide input into the Governor's
14 Foundation Aid formula change in this budget?

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I was
16 consulted about some of the things that the
17 department -- for example, IT. Some of the
18 things that really are essential for our
19 functioning.

20 SENATOR STEC: But not the elimination
21 of the hold harmless?

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We were not
23 consulted on that.

24 SENATOR STEC: Do you personally agree

1 with the proposed elimination of the hold
2 harmless to the formula?

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, no, I
4 just stated earlier --

5 SENATOR STEC: Thank you.

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sorry.

7 SENATOR STEC: In my 45th Senate
8 District, the North Country, 24 out of my
9 47 school districts will receive almost a
10 total of \$8 million of less aid due to the
11 hold-harmless provision. I won't bother you
12 reading all 24 of the schools, but the ones
13 that received double-digit cuts: Keene,
14 32 percent; Lake Placid, 42 percent; Minerva,
15 25 percent; Newcomb, 46 percent;
16 Schroon Lake, 17 percent; Boquet Valley --
17 I'll highlight Boquet Valley because that's
18 another issue that we've got going on with
19 State Ed that's financially important --
20 23 percent; Saranac Lake, 19 percent;
21 St. Regis Falls, 11 percent; Clifton-Fine,
22 24 percent; Parishville-Hopkinton,
23 12 percent; Fulton Central School,
24 41 percent; Hadley-Luzerne, 16 percent;

1 Johnsburg, 20 percent; Lake George,
2 39 percent; North Warren, 25 percent;
3 Warrensburg, 10 percent.

4 These are devastating cuts. Most of
5 the schools are in the Adirondack Park, which
6 means when you start calculating the formula,
7 guess what? The State of New York does not
8 want more people living there, that hurts
9 them. Number two, guess what? The State of
10 New York owns a lot of property there. That
11 affects their wealth ratio.

12 Does anyone look at these runs before
13 they put them out and fire up 337 school
14 districts that are all staring at cuts in the
15 face?

16 (No response.)

17 SENATOR STEC: Never mind.

18 Anyways, there's \$167 million --

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You can
20 tell -- you can tell --

21 SENATOR STEC: -- \$167 million in
22 hold-harmless losses.

23 Now, there is a \$100 million in the
24 Executive Budget below the line that's called

1 supplemental assistance grants. What is
2 that? What is the hundred million dollars?
3 We're talking about \$167 million cut. What's
4 that hundred? Is that hundred like money for
5 the majorities to decide what school
6 districts to give bumps to?

7 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: It's not
8 programmed as far as we know.

9 SENATOR STEC: Which means the
10 Legislature could program it and do whatever
11 they wanted to with it? I think we know how
12 that'll go.

13 All right, so if I could, I just want
14 to remind my colleagues of last year what
15 happened in the eFMAP debacle. We were all
16 fired up, both sides of the aisle, both
17 houses rejected it in the one-house. Then we
18 went through February, March, no one talked
19 about eFMAP again. We talked a lot about
20 bail reform, we talked a lot about housing,
21 but all of a sudden at the last minute eFMAP
22 took hundreds of millions of dollars when
23 that final budget was approved in mid-April.

24 I want to remind all my colleagues

1 what happened and what we did to our
2 counties, and I want to make sure that we
3 don't let that happen, keep our eye on the
4 ball this time so it doesn't happen to our
5 schools.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
7 Assembly.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. De Los
9 Santos.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: Thank you,
11 Commissioner and your team, for your time and
12 dedication to education.

13 My question to you is I had been
14 working -- I had worked for the
15 Education Department and community schools
16 for many years, and in my years I have
17 experienced, unfortunately, a lack of
18 commitment and investment into -- lack of
19 parental engagement.

20 What can the State Education
21 Department do to engage more of the parents
22 who are desperately -- who need services and
23 have shown that they want to be involved in
24 their kids' education?

1 Also, can you commit to the creation
2 of a pilot program that will be fully
3 dedicated to working with parents throughout
4 the State of New York?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So we do
6 have -- I mean, we already have a parent --
7 and I'm going to let Angelique -- we already
8 have a commitment in State Ed in terms of
9 parents and working with parents. And it's
10 community engagement. So that's number one.

11 Number two, even many of the -- for
12 example, I think it was one of the
13 legislators I spoke to about the whole
14 science of -- you know, the literacy piece,
15 that we would do a separate conversation with
16 the parents, the same way we just finished
17 across the state, that we would do the same
18 for parents.

19 And I'm going to let Angelique talk
20 about that we already have it in the SED.

21 But I do think that parent involvement
22 at the local level, supporting that through
23 -- and by the way, one of our stakeholders
24 that we meet with constantly is our PTA, and

1 they are constantly taking the message back
2 and working diligently with many, many of the
3 communities that they're involved with.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: And what's
5 the name of the program, and is that program
6 working in conjunction with New York City
7 Public Schools?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, so what
9 happens is we meet with them in terms of all
10 the things that we're going through from our
11 regions and all the information that we need
12 on our RBERNS and our English, World
13 Languages; also meet with the parents in
14 terms of giving them, you know, support in
15 their home language as well.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: I have
17 another question. I know class size is
18 important. If you had an opportunity to
19 speak with Chancellor Banks, what advice
20 would you offer as it relates to class size?

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, we
22 speak with him all the time, and he just
23 submitted his plan. And I just reviewed his
24 plan, and we gave him feedback on his plan.

1 More than glad to share that with you.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: Thank you.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Senator O'Mara, ranker.

6 SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning. Thank
7 you for being here.

8 Like I say, I'm astounded by these
9 school runs. They're really eye-popping.
10 You know, for a Governor to present this type
11 of budget, a Governor that has taken much
12 credit for fully funding Foundation Aid and,
13 in her State of the State and budget address,
14 talked about several issues of consumer
15 protection.

16 This school run, this school budget is
17 nothing short of bait-and-switch and false
18 advertising. Districts in the Senate
19 district I represent in the Finger Lakes and
20 Southern Tier -- seven counties I cover.
21 Small districts, small city school districts,
22 suburban districts, Hammondsport, a very
23 small district, 30.7 percent cut of over a
24 million dollars. Penn Yan, an 18.5 percent

1 cut of over \$2 million. Watkins Glen, a
2 16.8 percent cut of over \$1.8 million.
3 South Seneca, a 16 percent cut of over
4 \$1.5 million.

5 And then the false advertising on
6 these school runs. I don't know where those
7 numbers come from. But the City of Corning
8 School District, you have on the school runs
9 hitting a 7 percent increase of \$3.5 million.
10 In reality, they're taking over a \$500,000
11 hit.

12 Elmira Heights School District, your
13 school run claims they're getting a
14 12.6 percent increase of \$194,000 -- no, of
15 \$2 million, when they're actually taking a
16 hit of \$194,000.

17 Wellsville School District, the school
18 run claims it's getting a 16.7 percent
19 increase of \$3.6 million -- they're getting a
20 275,000 cut.

21 Candor School District claims on the
22 school runs that they're getting an 8 percent
23 increase of \$1 million. They're getting a
24 cut of over \$140,000.

1 Something needs to be rectified in
2 these runs. It's not right. It's not
3 equitable. It's not fair. And the school
4 districts have many other costs coming. What
5 attention in providing state aid has been
6 paid to impending health insurance costs that
7 these districts are going to go through?
8 Provider costs through COVID were held
9 steady. That's over now. These -- health
10 insurance is being renegotiated, and my
11 school districts are telling me they're
12 facing 20 to 40 percent increases in their
13 healthcare costs.

14 These cuts are staggering. And if you
15 say there's less student population, that has
16 a lot to do with the affordability of living
17 in New York State and the high property taxes
18 that we have. You're going to cause such
19 significant property tax increases with these
20 runs, it's going to blow the exodus of New
21 Yorkers out of upstate out of the water, as
22 if we haven't seen enough already.

23 But what consideration are you giving
24 to the school districts on these health

1 insurance costs?

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Go ahead.

3 The runs that he's referring to, make a
4 clarification.

5 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: I was
6 just going to run it to Christina because
7 she, in her -- out of her shop comes those
8 runs, coming from the law sent over from the
9 Executive Budget.

10 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: So the runs are
11 based on data that are submitted to the State
12 Education Department, and then the Governor's
13 office, the Division of Budget puts together
14 the state aid proposals.

15 So I can't speak to what their
16 considerations were in this, but certainly we
17 intend to work with the school districts that
18 are impacted to help them manage their way
19 through this as best as possible.

20 With respect to the ones that --

21 SENATOR O'MARA: I've only got
22 30 seconds left, so --

23 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Okay.

24 SENATOR O'MARA: This budget -- any

1 budget should be about priorities and where
2 spending should be and where costs should be.

3 The priorities of this Executive --
4 \$2.4 billion for New York City's self-created
5 migrant crisis, \$150 million for floating
6 pools, \$45 million to plant trees,
7 \$15 million to pay the federal government to
8 rent their land to house migrants? This is
9 outrageous.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Assembly.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
13 Levenberg.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Thank you so
15 much for your testimony today and for
16 answering all these questions so
17 thoughtfully. I really appreciate it. I
18 represent the 95th Assembly District, which
19 includes Ossining and Peekskill. And when I
20 was on the school board in Ossining, I spent
21 many years talking about the harm to five.
22 Now we're talking about the harm to 337.

23 I think -- and it's interesting
24 because I know that there is this balancing

1 act and I know even then we were looking at,
2 well, we're seeing increasing enrollments,
3 but around the state, you know, there's lots
4 of districts with decreasing enrollments. So
5 it's really important that we actually create
6 a sound, basic education commission to study
7 the Foundation Aid formula and figure out a
8 way to make that transition logical,
9 thoughtful, and not harming districts.

10 Because obviously all students need and have
11 a right to that sound, basic education. And
12 we know that the formula, as good as it was
13 when it was first put into place to solve
14 many of the problems, is not really doing the
15 trick anymore.

16 So I'm grateful for your
17 thoughtfulness and wondering if there's any
18 particular bill that you support -- and you
19 don't have to answer me right now, because I
20 know that I am supportive of the bill that
21 puts that into place if we can't get that
22 money actually in the budget. And I know
23 that we were all advocating for that last
24 year.

1 I also wanted to bring up, because I'm
2 on the Library Committee, that I know many of
3 our libraries have talked about dealing with
4 censorship and protest attempts that are
5 draining their operational capacity. So I
6 just wanted to be cognizant of that and make
7 sure that we are covering the funding that
8 they need for any additional operating
9 expenses.

10 I'm grateful for the Construction Aid
11 that you had advocated for, even though I
12 know it's not enough because so many of our
13 libraries are old and also have the need for
14 staying up with technology and media and
15 really addressing the needs of the
16 21st century and are not able to do that.

17 One of the things that our libraries
18 have said to us that they would be very
19 helpful also to them is help managing grant
20 applications on a broader basis, and also
21 help managing construction, because that's
22 not their expertise. Many of them have asked
23 for that specifically. And if there is a
24 way, again, to either -- have a regional

1 approach to doing something like that and
2 making sure that the funding meets those
3 needs, I think that would also be really,
4 really helpful.

5 And again, you know, just some of my
6 colleagues today mentioned the federal fiscal
7 cliff. I know that we should continue to
8 advocate at the federal level to make sure
9 that that is not something that we have to
10 necessarily deal with. But as we do, I think
11 if we can find a way to move forward on that
12 Foundation Aid formula, that ultimately
13 that's going to be really helpful.

14 Thank you again for your testimony.
15 If you have answers to my questions, I'm
16 following my colleague Ms. Hyndman in looking
17 for those answers after.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 I believe I'm the next Senator. So
21 before I get to my questioning, just because
22 this seems to be a theme of every budget day,
23 the migrant issues are a national issue and
24 international issue, the State of New York's

1 issue and of course the City of New York's
2 issue. Fifty percent of people in New York
3 City are in fact related to new Americans.
4 And we're the breadbasket for the state,
5 moving our tax money upstate to cover all the
6 different costs for the state.

7 So while, yes, we are spending some
8 state and some city money on the newest surge
9 of migrants, if you look at the economic
10 data, everyone, whenever they want to, those
11 people who come to our state continue to make
12 our state the greatest state in the country
13 and pretty quickly turn around and increase
14 the tax revenue to the entire State of
15 New York.

16 That's my editorial comment. And each
17 day we seem to have this little discussion
18 here, so I thought I would throw it in right
19 now.

20 Questions for education. Thank you.

21 So both the Governor, in her
22 Executive Budget, is proposing a new
23 science-based reading model, and the City of
24 New York has also created, I believe in the

1 last year or so, they call it the New York
2 City Reads system. I want the best skill
3 sets for our children in reading. I want
4 them to learn correctly. But I'm also a
5 little concerned that one size doesn't fit
6 all. And so I'm curious what you and the
7 Regents actually think is the right answer
8 for our state system and our city system
9 moving forward.

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So the
11 beauty of this is that we have been -- our
12 standards, early childhood standards, were
13 done by Dr. Lesaux, a real amazing Harvard
14 expert in brain research in all kinds of --
15 so we have leaned on her, along with other
16 experts in this space.

17 We clearly understand that the issue
18 of the science of reading, which I said
19 earlier, as you know, gets confused with --
20 sometimes with New York City selecting
21 programs, curriculum. And some of those are
22 programs and curriculums that are vendor-made
23 versus, you know, the kinds of materials and
24 teacher-focused, teacher-made type of

1 approach, and emphasizing professional
2 development as well as instructional
3 strategies.

4 Similar to your opening remarks, our
5 children are coming into our schools with
6 some -- what I would call strengths and some
7 deficits. And it is our job to really align
8 the support to ensure that their learning
9 process and that our teaching and learning
10 process is one that aligns with the needs of
11 the individual children.

12 So with that, our department has been
13 putting a lot -- we did the summit, we did
14 the Regents, we just did the January 10th,
15 providing resources to school districts to
16 understand the science of reading, which is
17 based on real deep research for over 50 years
18 of really supporting children in the reading
19 space.

20 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE:
21 Yes, and in addition to what the commissioner
22 has shared, back in August, during an Early
23 Learning Summit, we did feature particular
24 resources, strategies that schools can take

1 with them to understand how to help our
2 youngest learners begin to develop the skills
3 they need to become fluent readers.

4 We have also, in addition to that,
5 just this January 10th, for the first time,
6 the State Education Department hosted a
7 hybrid literacy event where there were over
8 2100 literacy leaders and educators from
9 every part of this state involved in a
10 conversation, learning to understand what the
11 science of reading is and what it is not;
12 looking at what were some of the best
13 instructional strategies and practices at the
14 elementary and secondary level; understanding
15 how writing plays a part into helping
16 students learn how to read; and, most
17 importantly, some tips and strategies for
18 school administrators to support teachers in
19 their classrooms.

20 This is all part of just many
21 resources that we plan to release and plan to
22 support schools with. Our strategy and our
23 approach is to empower our local leaders to
24 help support their teachers in the context of

1 what their needs are for their particular
2 schools.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Chancellor, so as you know, I've been
5 very concerned about making sure we do the
6 accreditation of the private schools
7 appropriately, and concerns with some of the
8 schools that are receiving public money and
9 not delivering the -- as they are supposed
10 to, the substantial equivalency programs.

11 I'm curious how you chose the SED
12 accreditors for evaluation of these schools,
13 particularly because it's at least been
14 reported to me that one of the ones you chose
15 also runs yeshivas that have failed the City
16 of New York's evaluation. So if they fail in
17 their own schools, why should they be
18 accrediting anybody's schools?

19 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: So I fall victim
20 here to not working as closely on this as I
21 did, but I can tell you how we chose the ones
22 that we did.

23 We worked with two major accreditors
24 of accreditors. There are two bodies

1 nationally that work with accrediting bodies
2 to help them have the kind of good standards
3 that will make their accreditation processes
4 meaningful.

5 And we took the list of criteria that
6 they each use, that they agreed on are the
7 good measures of a good accreditation, and we
8 made those the standards that we put in our
9 regs. So we essentially trusted the experts
10 on judging accreditors for that process.

11 I can't speak to the one you're asking
12 about in particular, so perhaps we can talk
13 about that at another time and we can look
14 into it.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, I would
16 certainly like you to look into that, because
17 if you're flunking yourself, I don't think
18 you should be evaluating others in our
19 system. So thank you.

20 And then last -- and I was really
21 surprised, because I always try to go last
22 because I figure everyone will already ask my
23 questions. So we have this thing called
24 mayoral control in New York City, and the

1 Governor has proposed -- I'm sorry? Oh,
2 that's fine. Yes, bless you.

3 (Laughter.)

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Bless you.

5 We have mayoral control in New York
6 City. The Governor has suggested to us in
7 her Executive Budget a straight four-year
8 extender. SED has been -- I guess hired
9 someone to do a full review and study of
10 educational administration. I know that
11 there are hearings that have been going on in
12 each borough in the City of New York. I
13 don't know if they're all completed yet,
14 but -- yes, they're all completed.

15 So where are you all on what we should
16 be doing?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So, very
18 quickly, there are three components to this.

19 One is the -- this part is in draft
20 form, which was completed in December, which
21 is the historical context of all the mayors
22 and looking at the other states that have had
23 mayoral control -- Boston, as you know -- and
24 looking at those and where they are now

1 versus where they were. Some of them, as you
2 know, are making shifts.

3 And then the Part B to this has been
4 the five from December 5th all the way
5 through this past Monday -- we did our last
6 one in Staten Island, was the last hearing.
7 And all of that information now gets coded.
8 It's being -- some of them are already being
9 coded. And themes will come out of this
10 coding. Plus yesterday I think was the last
11 submission for the written testimony as well.

12 So all of that information is going to
13 be pulled together, and then we're coming
14 out -- which we have to finalize by
15 March 31st a written report of findings. And
16 that will go to the Legislature and will go
17 to the Governor for next steps.

18 So basically all of that information
19 will be in place, and we will have an
20 executive summary, we will have exhibits, we
21 will have -- you know, other people's
22 recommendations, will also be in that. And
23 then it will be up to the Legislature and the
24 Governor to make, you know, the

1 recommendation and next steps in terms of
2 mayoral control.

3 And if I can just add, and I know this
4 gets lost, we received -- and as Senator
5 John Liu knows this, and Senator Mayer and
6 others, we did receive finally support to do
7 this work. But I do want to thank -- our
8 work was done with our staff volunteering.
9 We did not receive any funding to support
10 this.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 And since -- very shortly -- while my
13 colleague and friend Tom O'Mara and I don't
14 agree on everything, I would like you to do
15 your runs on the math compared to the
16 Executive's runs and get us all answers on
17 why the numbers he was reading and I think
18 some others were reading does not jibe with
19 the information we got from the Executive.
20 Thank you.

21 Assembly.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: (Inaudible.)

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

24 Thank you, Commissioner, and to your

1 staff. I have more questions than there are
2 answers, I'm sure.

3 A couple of things. If I can just ask
4 you to say yea or nay, this issue about
5 curriculum versus approach, curriculum versus
6 method, that the notion of science of reading
7 is based on the science of how children
8 learn, which varies dramatically from one
9 child to the other and seeks to be
10 interactive and assess that on an ongoing
11 basis. Would that be accurate?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Correct.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Great. Thank
14 you.

15 The other thing I wanted to mention
16 and to thank you for your work on is talking
17 about school lockdown drills. And as you
18 know, I just was going to pull up some
19 information because, you know, I have that.
20 And that is that, you know, there have been
21 studies done about the impacts of doing the
22 lockdown drills on children and really
23 increasing incidences of depression and
24 anxiety in schoolchildren of up to 40 percent

1 just by going through those lockdown drills,
2 which are -- very dramatically are not
3 grounded in any kind of systematic way that
4 is trauma-informed, age-appropriate,
5 disability-related, no transparency to
6 parents.

7 And I know that we're going to be
8 working together further on that, and I
9 really appreciate your attention to this
10 issue. Just recently in Western New York
11 there was a lockdown drill that was done with
12 fake bullets, with kids learning how to
13 demobilize, you know, an assailant -- a kind
14 of thing which is much more akin to survival
15 training than it is protecting themselves in
16 the case if there is a shooter.

17 So what have you done with regard to
18 that issue within the department?

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. As
20 you know, we put together a safety task,
21 right, with our stakeholders. And within the
22 safety task we have these conversations,
23 right? And they came out with a report. And
24 we released the report. And I know that last

1 spring we also had the safety task force to
2 help schools develop the safety plan.

3 And within their safety plan we really
4 want -- you know, we had superintendents
5 there, we had principals there, we had safety
6 agents, homeland security. And this was an
7 amazing conversation, well attended. Which I
8 think we are having another one in April this
9 year, which will be our last because of the
10 federal funding.

11 And the whole idea was, to your point,
12 to do this practice, along with our guidance,
13 in making sure that the issue of
14 trauma-informed -- (time clock sound).

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So the Senate is
17 now up to second rounds for our two chairs.

18 Shelley Mayer, three minutes.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much.

20 Two questions. Because my focus and I
21 know many of my colleagues' is on students
22 and children with respect to the migrant
23 issue, in your testimony you say that you're
24 allocating 2.25 million in surplus 2022-'23

1 school year Title III funds to districts that
2 have enrolled high numbers of newly arrived
3 immigrants.

4 One is, how much -- is there more in
5 surplus in Title III funds? And two, can you
6 give us a list by district? I know it's a
7 modest amount in the scheme of things. Can
8 you give us a list of the 33 upstate
9 districts and the geographical districts
10 within the New York City public school system
11 that received this funding?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah. Yes,
13 we can do that.

14 SENATOR MAYER: Is there more in this
15 surplus Title III --

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We -- we did
17 use the homeless --

18 SENATOR MAYER: -- dollars?

19 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, we did.
20 And I think that was forty -- that was a
21 small amount.

22 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE:
23 Very.

24 SENATOR MAYER: Is there more in this

1 account that you referenced here, Title III?

2 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: No, we don't
3 believe so.

4 DEP. COMMISSIONER JOHNSON-DINGLE: But
5 we can double-check and get back to you.

6 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

7 Then on this other issue about 853s,
8 4410s and Special Acts, on the interim plus
9 rates, as you know -- and you worked with
10 us -- schools received 11 percent in
11 2022-'23. In 2023-'24, 6.25, but the
12 interest was -- increases were not
13 compounded. So as a result schools with
14 interim rates actually received a 5 percent
15 cut year to year.

16 Why do SED interim rates have to be
17 applied this way? Is it a matter of -- that
18 requires a legislative change, or is it a
19 policy decision?

20 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We face a number
21 of challenges with the rate setting, and
22 that's one of the reasons we have that rate
23 setting methodology reform piece in the
24 works.

1 SENATOR MAYER: Right.

2 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: But we have to
3 work with the Budget Division -- we develop
4 the rates, and then as they change over time
5 we need to work with the Budget Division on
6 that.

7 So I'm not sure in this piece if
8 it's -- to be honest, we have some staffing
9 constraints, and we have to make decisions
10 about what's the --

11 SENATOR MAYER: So, I'm sorry, what
12 word?

13 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We have some
14 staffing constraints. There's some --

15 SENATOR MAYER: Staffing constraints.

16 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Right.

17 SENATOR MAYER: That led to this
18 different way?

19 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: You know, I'm not
20 sure of the exact circumstance with this
21 group, but we are continuing to work to push
22 through to get as many of the rates
23 up-to-date as possible, which I think is the
24 core of your request.

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, I
2 think your question about the -- yeah,
3 because we do have a report in here about the
4 changes in terms of the rate starting out
5 from 11 -- 11 percent to the 6.4, you know.

6 So we will make that available. But
7 it is not solely to your question whether we
8 make that decision -- we don't make that
9 decision without our consultation with DOB.

10 SENATOR MAYER: I understand. I'm
11 just asking whether it requires a legislative
12 change, whether it's an argument with DOB.
13 I'd like some clarity on how to pursue it.

14 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We'll look into
15 that. Thank you.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblyman
17 Pirozzolo.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Good
19 afternoon, now.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good
21 afternoon.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you,
23 Chairman.

24 I want to speak about accountability,

1 but really system accountability. A lot of
2 times when I say accountability, people
3 mistake it for individual accountability of
4 people within the system. And I want to
5 really point to some statistics that we have.
6 If we're looking at New York State Level 4
7 from 2002 {sic} versus 2023, the numbers
8 change quite a bit. In 2022, to be a Level 4
9 you had to score at least 629 points, however
10 that was. And if you go to 2003 {sic}, that
11 number developed dropped to 474. Right?
12 We're constantly changing the goalposts.

13 So I don't know how we make a decision
14 on how we spend our money within the
15 Department of Education or anywhere
16 throughout the state. And when we get to the
17 point made by other people before me about
18 curriculum versus methodology -- so this is
19 another statistic, right, but clearly on the
20 top it says "The results of the 2022-2023
21 grades third to eighth mathematic tests
22 represent student achievement on the new next
23 generation learning standards. Because the
24 tests measured different learning standards,

1 the results are not compatible to prior
2 years."

3 So I'm asking you to please try to
4 keep our learning standards consistent,
5 because it seems to be the scapegoat that we
6 have is that we can always say, Oh, well, we
7 changed the methodology so we don't really
8 know if this year is better than last year or
9 the year before. We cannot have new wheels,
10 you know, on the bus all of the time just
11 because someone new comes in or there's some
12 sort of a flash in the pan. That's number
13 one.

14 Number two, I would like to know if
15 you or the State Ed Department has the
16 ability to withhold funding from school
17 districts when they discriminate based on
18 racial or ethnic bias. And two things I'm
19 going to point to is, one, recently we had a
20 young lady, an Asian woman, who was unable to
21 get testing for the specialized high school
22 examination because she was overrepresented
23 from her community.

24 And then just recently we had a

1 teacher who changed the wording of the wheels
2 on the bus due to global -- you know, global
3 events.

4 Now, there are obvious racial and
5 ethnic biases here. Can you stop or penalize
6 school districts when they do this, stop
7 funding?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, one of
9 the examples you used was a 310. And I would
10 submit that we have to -- you have to read
11 that in its totality, because that's not
12 exactly --

13 I think that what's been pulled from
14 that is one aspect. I would be more than
15 glad to share the decision of what was the
16 basis of it. Because a lot of times, you
17 know, when you get a report it looks like,
18 you know, the same thing happened in another
19 district with a child, and we reinstated the
20 child. Because obviously -- more than glad
21 to share the totality of that.

22 And at some point I'd like to answer
23 why we change standards. Because as our --
24 as things change, we do have to go in and

1 change -- you know, we can't keep the
2 standards that have existed -- our children
3 need to learn new standards, new material.
4 So yes, they are changed. And as a result of
5 changing them, the exam is going to change.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Mm-hmm.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I think we
9 would all be interested in seeing the
10 description of that in writing. Because I
11 know that there are lots of issues that get
12 raised around this. Thank you.

13 Assembly. Oh, no, it's the Senate,
14 because he was an Assemblymember.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: That's
16 correct.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Excuse me.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: We'd gladly go
19 again if you'd like.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you will,
21 after just three minutes from
22 Senator John Liu.

23 Three minutes, Senator John Liu.

24 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

1 I want to acknowledge Commissioner
2 Rosa's response to one of your questions,
3 which is what was happening with the study on
4 school governance in New York City and how
5 the New York City public hearings were taking
6 place -- and to specifically thank you and
7 your team for working very hard to get the
8 study done and to hold the public hearings
9 and acknowledge the hard work that your team
10 has put together -- that it has put in, on a
11 volunteer basis. And so thank you for that.

12 And we look forward to the results of
13 your study, which -- you know, you're the
14 experts. That's why two years ago we put in
15 legislation that SED would conduct that
16 thorough review and study of school
17 governance in New York City. So we look
18 forward to that, and that should -- I have no
19 doubt that will help us -- that will inform
20 us how to proceed as this year's expiration
21 of mayoral control in New York City
22 approaches in June.

23 I wanted to talk a little bit with you
24 about the class size issue. Because as you

1 mentioned before, you did give the New York
2 City Department of Education some feedback.
3 Related to that issue, it is my understanding
4 that SED held back some school aid from the
5 New York City Department of Education -- or
6 Public Schools, whatever they're called now.
7 Was that the case? And can you just tell us
8 a little bit about the circumstances
9 surrounding the withholding of state funds to
10 New York City?

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

12 I personally reviewed the first draft
13 that was done, and -- with our team.

14 SENATOR LIU: The first draft of what?

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: The first
16 draft {feedback} -- draft -- sorry. The
17 first draft of the report that has to be
18 submitted.

19 I did have the opportunity to speak to
20 the chancellor at the time, along with the
21 teachers' union president, as well as the
22 president of CSA. I encouraged all of them
23 to work together to really have a common
24 understanding and feedback as to how they

1 were going to proceed as they were putting
2 their plan together.

3 Through that process, we had several
4 questions we sent to them. And by the time I
5 received the first -- the plan itself, I did
6 have some serious concerns that I felt that
7 several of the questions needed to be further
8 explored and needed additional explanation
9 and clarification.

10 So we sent it back, and with that we
11 did -- you're a hundred percent correct, we
12 did hold money, which was released
13 December 18th was -- a substantial amount of
14 money was released at that point.

15 SENATOR LIU: All right. So I think
16 it's fair to say that the City of New York
17 was denied funds -- at least delayed funds --
18 because they did not comply with the class
19 size requirements.

20 NYS ED COMMISSIONER ROSA: That is
21 correct.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
23 Assembly.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To close out

1 the first round of the Assembly, Ms. Walsh,
2 you've been waiting an awful long time.
3 You're the caboose. Go ahead.

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Okay, thank you.

6 Good afternoon. And I want to just
7 add my voice -- there have been plenty of
8 questions about the Foundation Aid issue. I
9 want to add my voice to that as well as those
10 of my colleagues.

11 This question is going to have to do
12 with the zero-emissions school bus mandate,
13 however. As you know, there are significant
14 up-front costs that schools must budget for
15 to comply with the zero-emission mandate
16 which is going to begin in 2027, including
17 renovations to bus depots, the school buses
18 themselves, and their associated charging
19 infrastructure, and bus mapping, route
20 planning.

21 While there is some funding being made
22 available to help pay for part of these
23 costs, we know that it will not completely
24 offset the costs borne by school districts as

1 they transition their fleets to zero-emission
2 buses.

3 First question. You have publicly
4 spoken in the past regarding the challenges
5 facing upstate and rural districts as they
6 try to comply with the zero-emission mandate.
7 Can you reiterate any concerns about the
8 mandate and how it will affect these schools,
9 and what if any changes you think should be
10 implemented to help them comply with the
11 mandate?

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

13 So Christina and our team, we've been
14 meeting with the rural superintendents,
15 constantly -- this was -- our last meeting,
16 this was at least an hour's discussion, some
17 creative things came out of it in terms of
18 things that we should support and consider
19 and some of the things that they're looking
20 at and doing.

21 We still have concerns about the cost,
22 you know, and the impact that that's going to
23 have as well with the stations and some of
24 the other key components in order to get this

1 done. I know some people are looking at the
2 timetable and hoping that that could be
3 expanded, and that was an issue that was
4 raised.

5 Christina?

6 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We recognize from
7 our conversations with the stakeholder groups
8 and folks who are trying to put this together
9 that there really are a lot of challenges.
10 The Board of Regents had recommended a state
11 agency-level leader working group to think
12 about some of the issues that are outside of
13 Commissioner Rosa's purview, such as electric
14 transmission, which she's a quick study, but
15 that's a hard thing for her to pick up.

16 So there really are a lot of
17 challenges outside of what our school
18 districts are worried about.

19 We note that the Governor did support,
20 in our budget request for staff that would
21 help as districts are making those
22 transitions -- we asked for an electrical
23 engineer, we asked for folks in our
24 Transportation Office to help us do that, and

1 the Governor provided that, and did provide
2 that the grant funds that are provided
3 through the Environmental Bond Act would no
4 longer be deducted from a Transportation Aid
5 calculation. So if a district gets that
6 grant, that will help.

7 But we understand that there are other
8 costs, as the commissioner said, and we look
9 forward to conversations about that.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: I haven't spoken
11 with anybody who thinks that this is
12 achievable by 2027. I haven't talked to
13 anybody who thinks that it is, or affordable.
14 We've got to do something about this, really.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 We have been joined late by
18 Senator Borrello, three minutes.

19 SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you so much,
20 Madam Chair. Good to be here with you.

21 Commissioner, everyone, thank you very
22 much for being here.

23 I represent a lot of rural school
24 districts, and obviously there has been

1 enrollment decline. And I think earlier you
2 commented on the hold harmless and your
3 concerns about that. If you could just
4 expound on that a little bit. Because, you
5 know, what I'm hearing from my rural school
6 districts is, you know, their fixed costs
7 aren't going down with less enrollment; in
8 fact, they're going up. Particularly when
9 you start talking about mandates. You know,
10 Assemblywoman Walsh brought up the electric
11 bus mandate. That could be a huge hit.

12 So could you just tell -- if you
13 wouldn't mind talking a little bit about why
14 this hold harmless shouldn't be somehow tied
15 to enrollment declines.

16 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: If
17 it's okay, I'll respond to that.

18 SENATOR BORRELLO: Yeah, sure.

19 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON:
20 Appreciate the question.

21 It shouldn't be tied to the hold
22 harmless, especially without planning in the
23 future that this was coming. The abrupt
24 nature I think is the biggest challenge to

1 the districts.

2 Also I think we know in the last 20
3 years that there's different challenges with
4 students. And coming out of COVID, we have
5 more challenges with students in these
6 districts, and they've used some of their
7 federal money and some of the Foundation Aid
8 money that they've are received in the last
9 three years to try to address those needs in
10 realtime.

11 In many ways that three years of
12 funding made up for a decade worth of
13 withholding money from districts. And
14 getting that money without a mechanism for
15 them to set aside to make sure that they had
16 it in perpetuity was a real challenge as
17 well.

18 So hitting their main funding source
19 in one year, after they had been made whole
20 the prior year and made budgetary plans for a
21 long-term future, is the biggest challenge
22 for some of these districts.

23 SENATOR BORRELLO: Yeah, absolutely.
24 I think you're -- you know, this is a -- this

1 is not something that you change in one year.
2 You have multiyear budgeting.

3 Also I've heard -- and I'm sure you've
4 heard a lot from all school districts -- that
5 the increase in children in mental health
6 crisis is up. And that is certainly adding a
7 burden. Can you talk a little bit about
8 that? I know that there has been some more
9 focus and attention on that. But talk about
10 the mental health challenges facing our
11 schools right now.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So I
13 had -- as I had said earlier, children
14 haven't been isolated for that period of
15 time. Losses in terms of families, right.
16 These -- all of these issues, even with the
17 entry-point comment I made earlier, these are
18 all issues that schools are grappling with,
19 particularly in developmental issues. Right?

20 So if a kid enters a school and for
21 the first time you're a second- or
22 third-grader, that is a serious issue in
23 terms of, you know, when we start them in
24 kindergarten, first grade, and go through

1 their routines and things that they
2 absolutely gain as a result. That process
3 was interrupted.

4 SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you. And you
5 were interrupted.

6 (Laughter.)

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's how it
9 goes in this room.

10 Assembly.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: For a second
12 round, I recognize the chairman of the
13 Libraries Committee, Mr. Santabarbara.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Thank you.
15 Oh, my mic's working a lot better this time.

16 I do want to go back to my comments
17 earlier on the cut in the budget proposal for
18 the Summer School of the Arts. I do want to
19 express my concern with that and advocate for
20 restoration of those funds.

21 I also wanted to mention the reduction
22 of funding for the statewide Summer Reading
23 program. I think that's an important program
24 that all our districts utilize, a lot of

1 kids, a lot of students participate in that.
2 I know in the school districts where I visit
3 back home, kids every year come to get their
4 certificates and to participate in that
5 program. So I think it's a worthy
6 investment.

7 The cuts actually mean that the
8 funding that the 23 public library systems
9 received in the past, they wouldn't receive
10 that anymore. So I just want to advocate for
11 that and how important it is.

12 It also jeopardizes our goal to create
13 better readers and for reading instruction.
14 The services -- this is a time when we should
15 be increasing funding to increase proficiency
16 and not reducing it. Also, that funding
17 supports supplies, materials and support of
18 these Summer Reading programs. So I just
19 wanted to put in a plug for that.

20 And I also wanted to lastly ask about
21 the shift in reading instruction. There is a
22 \$10 million allocation for that. Just how
23 will that be used for training, and how will
24 it benefit our elementary school teachers and

1 teaching assistants? If you can answer that
2 real quickly.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

4 Just a point of clarification, and I'm
5 sure you'll have an opportunity -- the
6 \$10 million is not our \$10 million. This
7 money was allocated -- and I know that NYSUT
8 is doing some planning to obviously respond
9 to -- and my understanding, brief
10 understanding, is that they will be using it
11 for professional development and supporting
12 teachers. But I think they will be in a
13 better place to answer how the \$10 million
14 will be used.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Okay.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. We
18 have one more chair who's asked for her three
19 minutes: Iwen Chu, chair of Libraries.

20 SENIOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

21 Commissioner, before I bring back my
22 question I just want to strongly recommend
23 SED, when we talk about the budget, when we
24 talk about public libraries, their needs,

1 both sides should have better communication
2 so that we represent, you know, on the same
3 page what they actually need. Eventually the
4 public library needs still go through the SED
5 funding. So it will be better for us to
6 understand the actual need here.

7 So that brings me back to how are we
8 bringing the attention and support the
9 special-needs population, the family, in
10 terms of the SED and also public libraries,
11 in terms of the, like, materials or
12 infrastructure for the libraries, how we
13 support those special-needs populations.
14 Because those -- when those are designed,
15 oftentimes those populations, their needs are
16 not being addressed in the reading, the
17 printing, or the infrastructure.

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Yeah.

19 And so the key issue here is, you
20 know, we always say let's fit, not retrofit.
21 Because as you know, sometimes that's what
22 ends up happening with materials that are
23 needed. You know, even creating spaces for
24 families. As you know, you know, you go into

1 those libraries -- that was one of the
2 complaints that we did get.

3 Now I just want to point out that we
4 do have, you know, an individual who
5 really -- and I'm going to ask Sharon to
6 speak to that, who oversees libraries. You
7 know, and that would be a great start,
8 because she does have meetings, right, and
9 engages in that.

10 So we will make sure that -- you know,
11 that you and others are very much a part of
12 those conversations.

13 EX. DEP. COMMISSIONER CATES-WILLIAMS:
14 Yes, we'll connect you with our
15 State Librarian and we can continue the
16 conversations. And, you know, thank you for
17 your comments.

18 SENIOR CHU: Thank you.

19 Thank you, Chair.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
21 much.

22 Assembly.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Just one last
24 quick question. The Smart School Review

1 Board has been removed from the law going
2 over to you guys. I've been told that you're
3 okay with that. Not that I'm suspicious of
4 what they tell me, but is that true?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I will
6 tell you your suspicion was my suspicion when
7 I talked to Christina and the team, and I had
8 the same exact -- are we sure we want to take
9 this on? Christina.

10 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: We're okay with
11 that.

12 (Laughter.)

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: That's great.

14 I want to thank you very much. It's
15 been just about three hours here now. I
16 admire your duration, and I guess somebody
17 won the pool.

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: She did.
19 3:05. Two more questions and I win the pool.

20 (Laughter.)

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Oh, I'm sorry.
22 You know what, we can carry this on if you
23 want, Commissioner.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have members

1 who want to help you.

2 (Laughter.)

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: We thank you
4 for your time, your answers, and we wish you
5 well. Thank you.

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
8 much.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: There will be
10 a very, very short break before the next
11 panel comes on.

12 (Brief recess.)

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Our second
14 person to testify today will be the
15 chancellor of the schools of New York City,
16 the New York City Department of Education,
17 Chancellor David Banks.

18 Chancellor, we welcome you here. We
19 thank you for coming to Albany. We will now
20 begin.

21 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you so
22 much.

23 Good morning, Senate and Assembly
24 committee members. Thank you to Senator Liu

1 and Senator Mayer, Assemblymember Benedetto,
2 Assemblymember Weinstein and Senator Krueger.
3 My name is David Banks, and I have the honor
4 of serving as the chancellor of New York City
5 Public Schools.

6 I would like to personally thank
7 Governor Hochul for her support of mayoral
8 accountability, which has proven critical in
9 times of crisis and has helped our public
10 school system reach new heights while
11 advancing equity, transparency, and
12 accountability.

13 As my testimony will show, our school
14 governance structure is essential to making
15 bold and important changes that produce real
16 results for children and families.

17 Some of the highlights. It's been a
18 year of great progress and promise, as
19 reflected in increases in state test scores
20 of 12 percentage points in math and nearly
21 3 percentage points in ELA, outpacing gains
22 in the rest of the state and reducing gaps
23 between Black and Hispanic students and their
24 peers.

1 We also saw our first enrollment
2 increase in eight years. Our students and
3 families are feeling the positive momentum,
4 and we're headed absolutely in the right
5 direction.

6 But these are not our wins alone.
7 From the very beginning, family and community
8 voices have driven all that we do. Time and
9 again, we have listened to families and we
10 have responded accordingly. They have
11 informed our policies and our priorities in
12 tangible and meaningful ways.

13 So here's an example. One of the
14 first things I heard when I took this role as
15 chancellor was that our Fair Student Funding
16 formula needed to be updated. So we formed a
17 working group of parents, advocates, and
18 other stakeholders and ultimately we revised
19 our formula to add now over \$100 million to
20 support students in temporary housing and
21 schools serving high concentrations of
22 students with need. We listened to families,
23 and we responded.

24 It did not stop there. We expanded

1 Gifted and Talented programs, formed an
2 advisory council to reimagine special
3 education, and improved school facilities in
4 Brownsville -- all in response to community
5 feedback. And engagement has continued to
6 shape our administration's priorities.

7 So let me share just a sampling of the
8 work that we have led. Since I last
9 addressed you, we launched our signature
10 initiative, our top priority, NYC Reads.
11 NYC Reads is a comprehensive approach to
12 literacy instruction, including curriculum
13 shifts, intensive professional learning and
14 coaching, academic screening and
15 intervention, and supports for students at
16 risk for dyslexia. There is no more
17 important work for us than this.

18 So Phase 1 of NYC Reads launched this
19 school year, and Phase 2 will begin in
20 September, by which point NYC Reads will be
21 active in all early childhood and K to 5
22 classrooms across our city.

23 I want to thank Governor Hochul also
24 for her call to bring the science of reading

1 to other districts across the state. We
2 think this is critically important, and I'm
3 proud that New York City is paving the way.
4 When our kids read well, it sets them up for
5 success in school, work and life.

6 Now, once students have a bright
7 start, we must put them on the path to a bold
8 future. So we do that through our college
9 and career pathways work, which we've
10 expanded in groundbreaking ways that
11 reimagine the middle and high school
12 experience. Next year we will expand the
13 reach of our signature FutureReady program,
14 where students prepare for high-demand jobs
15 in healthcare, education, business, and
16 technology, with more industry focus areas on
17 the way.

18 We've also doubled the number of
19 students in multiyear employer-paid
20 apprenticeships, in partnership with the
21 New York Jobs CEO Council.

22 We are bringing new accelerated high
23 school programs to our families in
24 historically underserved communities,

1 including Bard Early College High School in
2 the Bronx, with more to come.

3 Of course, our children cannot learn
4 to read nor prepare for a career if they do
5 not feel healthy, safe, and well. I recently
6 announced our comprehensive plan to ensure
7 that every student and staff member feels
8 safe and supported, in light of rising
9 antisemitism and Islamophobia.

10 We've also expanded Project Pivot,
11 which has brought in trusted community-based
12 organizations to support violence prevention
13 at 257 different schools. We've taken
14 concrete steps to make our schools safer from
15 intruders, working to install new video door
16 locking mechanisms across all elementary
17 schools. And over the years we are going to
18 get to every single one of the schools in our
19 system.

20 We've also increased our mental health
21 supports, with daily mindful breathing;
22 additional school-based mental health
23 clinics, including with support from the
24 state; and an innovative new telehealth

1 therapy program with the city's Health
2 Department.

3 And to continue the learning and
4 social-emotional support year round, we've
5 offered full-day summer programming, two
6 years in a row, to an unprecedented 110,000
7 K to-8 students in our wildly popular
8 Summer Rising program, which we plan to
9 provide again this summer.

10 Our progress over the past two years
11 would not have been possible without our
12 current governance structure. NYC Reads is a
13 perfect example. We diagnosed an existential
14 problem facing our schools -- 51 percent of
15 our students were not reading on grade
16 level -- and quickly mobilized a solution
17 across our entire city. This is a huge,
18 transformational shift, one that will change
19 the trajectory of hundreds of thousands of
20 kids.

21 Mayoral accountability ensures that no
22 matter where a student lives or goes to
23 school, quality curriculum and instruction
24 will be in place to help them learn to read.

1 Mayoral accountability also helps us deal
2 decisively and effectively with crises. With
3 the influx of approximately 35,000 migrant
4 children to our city, we mobilized Project
5 Open Arms, supporting students' academic
6 transition, social-emotional well-being,
7 language access, physical health, and more.

8 This is a coordinated interagency
9 effort bringing the full resources of our
10 city to bear on behalf of our kids,
11 especially our most vulnerable, for whom a
12 centralized infrastructure is critical to
13 providing a wide array of supports.

14 And while I'm proud of the work that
15 we've done so far, I want to be transparent:
16 We face challenges ahead. First, we have our
17 stimulus cliff. Approximately \$1 billion of
18 stimulus funding is currently used to power a
19 wide range of critical programming, including
20 social workers in our schools, pre-K special
21 education, community schools, arts programs,
22 3-K, and much more. But these are not "nice
23 to haves" -- they are valued and impactful
24 programs, and they are at risk without new

1 funding.

2 In the last three years, we have
3 successfully reduced Central spending by
4 about \$250 million, and we've reduced our
5 head count by about 600 positions, while
6 protecting school budgets from
7 across-the-board cuts and, in fact,
8 increasing funding for our schools overall
9 over the course of this year. But we need
10 support from the state to maintain these
11 critical programs.

12 On top of this cliff, like many school
13 districts we have concerns about proposed
14 changes to the way inflation is calculated
15 under the Foundation Aid formula, as it would
16 mean a reduction in aid to New York City as
17 well as districts around the state, even as
18 inflation continues to increase.

19 There is also the class size law. As
20 you know, there is a five-year rollout for
21 this mandate. The State Education Department
22 has certified that we are currently in
23 compliance with the law. We intend to stay
24 in compliance in the outyears. Years 3

1 through 5 is where we will start to have to
2 make tradeoffs.

3 We recently convened a class size
4 working group. This is a working group that
5 we were not required to put together by law,
6 but it's representative of how we value
7 community voices. And in December this group
8 of parents, educators, labor representatives
9 and advocates issued its recommendations.

10 Additionally, an independent analysis
11 from the New York City Independent Budget
12 Office found that hiring the thousands more
13 teachers that we'll need to meet the mandate
14 will total about 1.6 to 1.9 billion dollars.
15 That's on top of the increased Foundation Aid
16 that we've already placed directly into our
17 schools' budgets.

18 So while we're thankful to the state
19 and the efforts in this room for the long
20 fight for full Foundation Aid funding --
21 especially Senator Jackson, who's a personal
22 hero of mine and whose efforts on CFE were
23 nothing short of heroic -- that funding has
24 been put to use over the last several years,

1 including finally bringing all schools to
2 100 percent Fair Student Funding and creating
3 new FSF weights for our neediest students.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I had a
6 little bit more, but (laughing) --

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We all have a
8 copy in front of us. It's okay.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: We're like a
10 good teacher: We're very strict.

11 (Laughter.)

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO:

13 Mr. Chancellor, okay, a question on my mind,
14 and I'm sure other people's: We've sent
15 you -- as you acknowledge in your testimony
16 here today, we've sent you a lot of money
17 over the past several years, okay, for the
18 students of New York. And we're happy to do
19 that.

20 Yet we're also, I have to admit, very
21 dismayed when we hear charges that maybe we
22 may see in the press or hear from some of our
23 friends in unions that schools are being cut
24 and programs are being cut. It's very

1 disturbing to hear.

2 But I want to talk to you and ask you,
3 what's happening here?

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, and I'm
5 joined by several members of my leadership
6 team here as well. And in fact, Emma, as we
7 get ready to respond to this, we have not had
8 any real cuts to our schools. What we had at
9 the middle of this year was what we call the
10 rightsizing of -- the midyear adjustments,
11 rather, excuse me. The midyear adjustments.

12 During the pandemic, if a school had a
13 thousand students and they lost 300 kids, we
14 were able to keep these school budgets whole
15 in spite of the fact that they lost students.
16 What we have done now, because those stimulus
17 dollars are running out for us, is we have
18 said we're going back to the way that we've
19 always done it. If schools have an increase
20 in students, we increase their budgets. If
21 they have a decrease in students, we decrease
22 their budgets accordingly.

23 That is the way we have historically
24 done our budgeting with our schools

1 throughout history. All the years -- I was a
2 principal for 11 years; that's exactly what
3 we did.

4 So we've not made indiscriminate cuts,
5 we've simply made adjustments determined by
6 the amount of students that have either come
7 into the school or the number of students who
8 have left the school. So a school has a
9 thousand kids and if now they're down to 750,
10 we are not in a position to continue to say
11 we're going to continue to fund you at that
12 level.

13 So it's what we see more as a
14 rightsizing of our school budgets and not
15 just an indiscriminate cut that every school
16 will get. In fact, almost 60 percent of our
17 schools saw an increase in their school
18 budgets. And then the other schools,
19 depending upon how many students they lost,
20 saw a decrease in the funding.

21 But Emma has really been leading a lot
22 of this work.

23 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Okay, thank you.

24 Thank you very much for the question.

1 So as the chancellor said, that's one
2 piece of this. I would just add that
3 overall, our midyear adjustment put more
4 money into school budgets across the city
5 than it took out. So, overall, rightsizing
6 our schools and aligning funding with
7 enrollment, because enrollment is up over
8 projections, put 100 million more dollars
9 into school budgets than some of the schools
10 that lost money. So as we look across the
11 city, that's what we saw.

12 I would also just add a couple of more
13 pieces in terms of where the chancellor and
14 the city, despite the press, have actually
15 increased funding for school budgets over the
16 course of this year.

17 So the chancellor mentioned we updated
18 our school-based formula, which is a very
19 equity-based formula, and we updated it to
20 add additional funding for students in
21 temporary housing, which includes our
22 asylum-seeking students. And for schools
23 with high concentrations of students with
24 need, those changes added an additional

1 \$100 million to school budgets as well over
2 the course of the year.

3 We also, thanks to all of you, added
4 additional dollars to school budgets this
5 year: Thanks to the uptick in Foundation
6 Aid, an additional \$214 million that went
7 into school budgets for C4E, which also went
8 out. So there's actually a few different
9 ways we've increased school budgets this
10 year.

11 The last one is the city has actually
12 put in additional dollars for very well
13 deserved, hard-earned salary increases for
14 our teachers and principals, which are also
15 flowing into school budgets this year.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

17 Listen, you mention in your testimony
18 historically underserved -- excuse me,
19 programs like Bard College Early College High
20 Schools. Which I just happen to think is an
21 absolutely 100 percent program -- this is
22 great. What I'm basically asking is, why
23 aren't there more of the Bard College Early
24 college High Schools? Why isn't there -- and

1 I'll throw my own college underneath the bus
2 in my district, the State University at
3 Maritime, which is renowned for their
4 ability, its wonderful engineers -- I would
5 love to see a Maritime High School College.

6 And besides that, how about -- and
7 New York City is home for so many
8 institutions: The Bronx Zoo, the New York
9 Philharmonic, wonderful museums. Tell me,
10 have we reached out? What are we doing in
11 this particular area?

12 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: First of all,
13 we've got dozens of wonderful and amazing
14 partnerships with community-based
15 organizations, various industries who are
16 connected to our schools. You may not always
17 hear a lot about them, and so therefore you
18 might not even realize that they're actually
19 in play. I mean, we have our Harbor School
20 out on Governors Island, which is an
21 absolutely amazing school which is sending
22 kids -- getting kids real experiences in the
23 maritime industry, and then actually sending
24 them out into jobs directly from those school

1 experiences.

2 A place like Bard, this is what we had
3 heard before as we got here: We need more of
4 those programs. That's what we're doing.

5 Bard has never been in the Bronx, and now we
6 have brought Bard in the heart of the
7 South Bronx, and the demand to get into the
8 school is simply overwhelming. And we have
9 plans to open up a Bard in Brooklyn as well
10 as. We're moving further along in that.

11 We've got plans to open up a
12 Motion Picture Tech High School, which is
13 something that will help us to have kids take
14 full advantage of the motion picture industry
15 and all the various careers that are
16 associated with that.

17 And we've got plans -- we haven't made
18 the official announcement yet -- to open up a
19 new Health Careers High School, together with
20 Northwell Health, and being supported by the
21 Bloomberg Foundation.

22 So there are a number of these things
23 that are in play, and it all is connected to
24 our theme about bold futures and that we want

1 all of our kids, when they graduate from our
2 schools, to be able to be connected to some
3 level of career path or college. But that
4 nobody graduates and is not clear about what
5 their next steps are going to be.

6 And we're continuing to build on
7 those, Assemblyman. So we get it, and that's
8 what we have been working on.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very
10 much.

11 Senator.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 We're going to start with
14 Chair John Liu, 10 minutes.

15 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.
16 And I am always happy to see Chancellor Banks
17 and his illustrious team wherever they may
18 be.

19 And Chancellor, I think you've done a
20 great job as schools chancellor.

21 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I couldn't
22 hear you. What did you say to me?

23 (Laughter.)

24 SENATOR LIU: I said I think you have

1 done an absolutely {cough} job as chancellor
2 of the New York City Public Schools.

3 (Laughter.)

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you,
5 Senator.

6 SENATOR LIU: You're trying to make me
7 choke, right?

8 (Laughter.)

9 SENATOR LIU: But of course, you know,
10 we don't talk about things that we agree upon
11 all the time, right? We talk about things
12 that we have to work out.

13 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

14 SENATOR LIU: And I appreciate the
15 challenges that you laid out, particularly
16 fiscal challenges. We know that the fiscal
17 cliff that you referred to is because of
18 federal funding that's running out.

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

20 SENATOR LIU: But when you took your
21 position as chancellor a little more than two
22 years ago, you knew that that federal funding
23 was going to dry up. The mayor knew that
24 that federal funding was going to go away.

1 So I appreciate the great new programs
2 that you put in place. NYC Reads, few people
3 will doubt the efficacy of that program.
4 Summer Rising. But these have all had price
5 tags. So what actions have you and the
6 department taken in anticipation of the
7 federal funding being dried up?

8 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, listen,
9 we continue to work very closely with the
10 mayor's office. And as we said, we've
11 reduced the head count at our offices,
12 number one. And we have worked very closely
13 with our schools to help them to understand.
14 We can be engaged in lots of different
15 activities, but we need our schools to be
16 very focused on the things that work and that
17 matter.

18 And that's why this reading for us has
19 been such a priority, because we believe when
20 you make the proper investments in early
21 children and in reading, you don't have to
22 spend millions of dollars on lots of other
23 programs that people seem to be in love with
24 those programs to help them to catch up.

1 SENATOR LIU: So which of those
2 programs have you saved money on? Just name
3 one or two.

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: You want to
5 talk about just some of the programs?

6 NYCPS CFO SCOTT: Sure. Some of the
7 essential programs that we basically save
8 money, one is adhering to the citywide hiring
9 freeze in OTPS -- can you hear me?

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, we're
11 just introducing ourselves when we --

12 NYCPS CFO SCOTT: Oh, I'm so sorry.

13 So Seritta Scott, chief financial
14 officer, New York City Public Schools.

15 So to answer your question, some of
16 the essential programs that we were able to
17 reduce, reducing our OTPS spending in
18 alignment with the city's overall OTPS
19 freeze, our hiring freeze, really taking a
20 look at our budget and reducing areas within
21 Central, as the chancellor said, really
22 focusing on the things --

23 SENATOR LIU: So was that enough to
24 overcome the loss of federal funds, offset?

1 NYCPS CFO SCOTT: It's not enough to
2 offset what we need in order to match what we
3 need for federal stimulus-funded programs.

4 But as the chancellor said, we
5 continue to work with the mayor's office and
6 OMB to advocate for the dollars that we need
7 for those programs.

8 SENATOR LIU: And in fact the
9 chancellor asked me and my colleagues up here
10 in the State Legislature to help deliver more
11 for New York City Public Schools -- for
12 public schools across the state, no question,
13 but certainly for New York City Public
14 Schools. And I think that we expressed that
15 we certainly want to support our public
16 schools.

17 But, you know, there are some big
18 issues out there. So I'm glad you brought up
19 the issue of class sizes. Do you think -- do
20 you think there are still classes in New York
21 City that are overcrowded?

22 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Oh,
23 absolutely.

24 SENATOR LIU: Do you think they have

1 to be addressed?

2 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Absolutely.

3 SENATOR LIU: Do you think that -- and
4 is that less important than Summer Rising or
5 NYC Reads?

6 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, certainly
7 not less important, no.

8 SENATOR LIU: Okay. So it's a
9 priority that needs to be addressed.

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

11 SENATOR LIU: And in fact it was a
12 priority that had to be addressed a long time
13 ago, well preceding your time. In fact, you
14 mentioned your hero, Robert Jackson -- we
15 call him "Action Jackson." You know, he
16 walked to Albany a couple of times --

17 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

18 SENATOR LIU: -- for the Campaign for
19 Fiscal Equity. That was not just about the
20 money. It was actually about a sound, basic
21 education.

22 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

23 SENATOR LIU: To which the money was
24 supposed to be applied. And the court said

1 that, you know -- I mean, you as chancellor
2 said it yourself -- I believe it also -- that
3 overcrowded classes deny a sound, basic
4 education.

5 But most importantly, the highest
6 court of this state said so. And so we have
7 to comply with that.

8 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

9 SENATOR LIU: And that's what the
10 Foundation Aid is there for, to provide a
11 sound, basic education.

12 So, you know, even as chancellor or
13 even the mayor, you don't have the ability to
14 just pay for things that you think are very
15 valuable when the original mandates haven't
16 been met yet. That's the problem.

17 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes, and I
18 agree with you. And we've been given five
19 years for implementation of this. We've got
20 to be in compliance with 20 percent each of
21 the five years. We're in Year 1 as we
22 currently stand. And we are in compliance
23 for Year 1. We don't see any issues or
24 challenges being in compliance even next

1 year, for Year 2. There's some small
2 adjustments that we will make, but we've
3 always said the first couple of years we
4 don't see any real challenge around doing
5 that. But as we get to Years 3, 4 and 5,
6 there will be some tradeoffs that we have to
7 make.

8 We expect to be in compliance with
9 this law. It is a law that you have passed,
10 and we're going to do everything we can to
11 be --

12 SENATOR LIU: Well that's good to
13 hear.

14 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: -- in
15 full compliance.

16 No, no, I don't want there to be any
17 misnomer about this. It is a law that you
18 have passed, and it is our job to implement
19 that law. What we are simply saying is that
20 there are lots of other programs that people
21 in the community do think are very, very
22 valuable, and they're saying "We don't want
23 it to be one versus the other."

24 We're certainly hopeful that the state

1 and federal government can continue to help
2 support us so that we can do that. We don't
3 want to be in a position where we've got to
4 reduce our 3-K programs because we're going
5 to make sure that we comply with this class
6 size law.

7 We've got social workers in almost all
8 of our schools around the city. Most people
9 around the city have said, We think that's
10 really important, we don't want to lose
11 those.

12 SENATOR LIU: I appreciate your
13 commitment. Because we certainly wouldn't
14 want to see what Commissioner Rosa alluded to
15 earlier today, that the City of New York lost
16 some school funding from the state because of
17 the noncompliance with class size -- and then
18 later on you finally came in compliance, and
19 that money was restored.

20 But you said that you expect -- you're
21 in full compliance this year, you fully
22 expect to be in compliance in Year 2. We
23 said from the outset that the whole reason
24 for a five-year phase-in was because we

1 expect the city, without having to do
2 anything, to be in compliance for the first
3 couple of years, possibly Year 3.

4 And that's just something that I would
5 like to, you know, make sure you understand
6 that we understand. That while you say the
7 public schools in New York City are in
8 compliance in Year 1 and potentially in Year
9 Two, that's without doing a single thing.
10 You've been in compliance without doing
11 anything.

12 So I implore you -- and if Dan wants
13 to answer -- because he's shaking his head, I
14 don't want it to fall off.

15 (Laughter.)

16 SENATOR LIU: You know, tell us that
17 you are going to be in compliance and you got
18 to start taking the actions now. You can't
19 wait until Year 3 to finally say, well, you
20 know what, now we're going to have to make
21 tradeoffs. Just like you couldn't spend the
22 last couple of years making plans to truly
23 offset that federal fiscal cliff that we all
24 knew was coming.

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: We've got --
2 Senator, we've -- our estimations are that
3 we're going to have to hire about another
4 10,000 to 12,000 teachers in order to be in
5 full compliance.

6 SENATOR LIU: In order to provide a
7 sound, basic education for all New York City
8 schoolkids.

9 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. Well,
10 there are lots of components to providing a
11 sound, basic education that go even beyond
12 just the class size. You can put five kids
13 in a class, but if you don't have a good
14 teacher, you won't have a sound, basic
15 education.

16 SENATOR LIU: Well, without reducing
17 the class sizes, you would still be in
18 violation of the State Constitution as
19 interpreted by the Court of Appeals.

20 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, that's
21 what I'm saying. So I'm just sharing with
22 you the projections of what we're looking at.
23 We've got to hire another 10,000 to 12,000
24 teachers in order for us to be in compliance.

1 But -- and we're estimating that, and
2 the IBO is estimating that at anywhere from
3 1.5 to close to \$2 billion for us to do that.
4 That's on top of the funding that we're
5 already at. But --

6 SENATOR LIU: By the way,
7 Mr. Chancellor, a year ago you were sitting
8 in that seat saying that the cost estimate
9 would be about 500 million to a billion
10 dollars a year.

11 I've only got one minute left. Let me
12 just say that --

13 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: That was K to
14 5. That was not for the entire -- that was
15 not for the entire system.

16 SENATOR LIU: Yeah, but up to
17 \$1 billion for the entire school system, that
18 was the estimate a year ago.

19 Let me just finally say this, that,
20 you know, the issue of class sizes is not an
21 isolated issue. I think the issue here is
22 that many of us, especially your hero
23 Senator Jackson, wanted to force the City of
24 New York to reduce class sizes much earlier

1 on. And I actually was opposed to that
2 because we had not fulfilled our end of the
3 bargain to fully fund Foundation Aid.

4 Now that we have, we have to insist
5 that the City of New York come in compliance
6 with the Court of Appeals interpretation of
7 the State Constitution. That's all we're
8 asking for. And what this does, though, it
9 highlights an issue, a nagging issue to me
10 that with every new administration that comes
11 in, they forget the promises made by the
12 previous administration. That is what the
13 current school governance system in New York
14 City provides.

15 And so there's a lack of continuity,
16 and we will continue this in my Round 2 of
17 questioning. Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
19 Assembly.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblyman
21 Ra.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,
23 commissioner -- Chancellor, I'm sorry.

24 So just a few questions. You went

1 into a few of these items within your written
2 testimony.

3 The 35,000 migrant students that have
4 been enrolled, do you have any estimates in
5 terms of the fiscal side of that whether it's
6 staff -- I assume many of them, you know, are
7 English language learners, transportation,
8 space -- those types of issues as it relates
9 to enrolling those students and providing
10 them an education?

11 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Yes, thank you for
12 the question. And to introduce myself, which
13 I failed to do, I'm Emma Vadehra, I'm our
14 deputy chancellor for operations and finance
15 in New York City Public Schools.

16 There has been an additional cost
17 associated with the students we are serving.
18 And just to look at the additional
19 asylum-seeking students we're serving, to
20 look at the past two years, over the course
21 of the last year we put about \$120 million
22 directly into school budgets. That's for the
23 students -- we fund our schools based on
24 enrollment -- and for additional dollars for

1 staff.

2 Over the course of this year, so far
3 we've put about \$130 million out to school
4 budgets directly for those students we
5 believe are these students, and for funding
6 associated with that.

7 We also -- as the chancellor
8 mentioned, we also continue to put out money
9 throughout the year for increasing
10 enrollment. So we've put out also
11 \$20 million for that. We assume some of that
12 is due to these students; some is not.

13 There are additional costs associated
14 with busing and food. Those are a little bit
15 harder to pull out, since they're actually a
16 small proportion of all the students across
17 our system.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And am I
19 correct, has there been any direct support
20 from the federal government related to this?

21 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: We have not
22 received new directed support from the
23 federal government related to this, no.

24 These students are impacting our

1 enrollment, so at some point we will, but no.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

3 Just moving to a different issue. I
4 know -- and you mentioned it, the recent plan
5 you put out regarding antisemitism and
6 Islamophobia. You know, there have been a
7 few I think newsworthy and high-profile
8 incidents in recent months, you know, from
9 the teacher in Queens and that whole
10 incident. There was the recent issue with
11 the map that omitted Israel from it.

12 If you can just elaborate a little bit
13 on this plan that you recently rolled out.
14 My understanding is you plan to provide
15 additional training, you know, at the -- I
16 guess at the building level, and to teachers.
17 And just how that's going to be rolled out,
18 what the time frame is of all that.

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, yeah.
20 So, and many have heard in the papers
21 initially so much of this kicked off with
22 Hillcrest High School and the incident at
23 Hillcrest High School in Queens where we had
24 a Jewish teacher who was targeted. That's my

1 alma mater, Hillcrest, so it was very
2 personal to me. And I know the school very,
3 very well. It's a great school.

4 But when you see an issue like that of
5 antisemitism rear its head, we recognized we
6 needed to do something. But we started to
7 see these incidents happening all across the
8 city, and we certainly don't think that they
9 are unconnected to the current crisis that
10 we're watching happening in the Middle East.

11 So emotions are running high, not only
12 across the city, but it has certainly visited
13 itself in our schools and with our adults and
14 our students. And one of the biggest
15 challenges has been our students are so
16 deeply influenced by what they see on social
17 media, and then when they come into school so
18 many of our teachers have been afraid to
19 engage the kids in these kind of courageous
20 conversations, if you will, because nobody
21 wants to be accused of saying the wrong
22 thing.

23 So what we're doing is really
24 encouraging our schools, providing a level of

1 professional development training, bringing
2 in other groups who are expert in these
3 spaces to help them understand how to have
4 these conversations as well as how to deal
5 with their own internal bias based on their
6 own experiences that our adults themselves
7 have.

8 So it's a big body of work. We've got
9 schools where kids have behaved very badly,
10 and we don't think that there have been the
11 proper consequences that have been applied,
12 and so we're doing a retraining for all of
13 our principals around the city around how to
14 properly use the discipline code. Because we
15 do think that the consequences are laid out
16 already. We don't need to add anything new.
17 It really is going to take a whole systemwide
18 kind of reeducation for everybody for us to
19 do this.

20 And the final component is we haven't
21 fully embraced engaging the faith-based
22 community as well. We've started a
23 faith-based advisory council, which I'm
24 meeting with, which many members of the

1 Jewish community, Muslim community, as well
2 as other religions -- we speak over 180
3 languages in our New York City public
4 schools. And so it's a wide diversity here,
5 and we're going to do everything we can to
6 try to get it right.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 Our next questioner is Education Chair
10 Shelley Mayer.

11 SENATOR MAYER: Hello, Chancellor.
12 Welcome. Welcome to your team.

13 The first question is, as you know,
14 the Governor's Executive Budget proposes a
15 change in the calculation of Foundation Aid
16 by readjusting the inflationary factor.
17 Which, according to what I see, would -- if
18 it had run according to the existing law, the
19 City of New York would get an additional
20 \$131,881,000.

21 So question one is have you expressed
22 or are you expressing publicly your concern
23 about this? And if so, I didn't see in your
24 testimony, other than just a reference to it,

1 what are you going to do about losing
2 \$131 million?

3 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's why we
4 came here.

5 (Laughter.)

6 SENATOR MAYER: Oh. Okay.

7 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, so we are
8 on the record here officially, and we
9 certainly want to be in strong communication
10 with the Governor's office to express our
11 formal -- our position and feelings about
12 this. We think that this does not help us at
13 the level that we expect.

14 And Emma, we can talk a little bit
15 more about just what we have experienced in
16 the past, we had reasonable projections that
17 at least that formula was going to be
18 consistent with what it has been in the past.
19 And there's certainly now additional
20 adjustments we're going to have to make at
21 the loss of revenue.

22 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Yes. So I know
23 you all have already heard about this, but
24 yes, so our calculations are the same. We

1 would have expected to see an additional
2 \$130 million, and we're certainly
3 disappointed to see that change, not one that
4 we were expecting, and deeply believe those
5 additional dollars are needed (a) generally
6 just to keep up with inflationary costs that
7 all districts are facing, right? Our costs
8 are going up -- our busing costs, our food
9 costs are going up. And then as the
10 chancellor said, of course we -- like all
11 districts -- have additional needs due to the
12 stimulus cliff.

13 SENATOR MAYER: What is the rate of
14 inflation in our budget that you use to
15 project your costs for the coming year? If
16 you know.

17 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Do we know
18 the rate that we work from?

19 SENATOR MAYER: If you don't know,
20 someone can get back to me.

21 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: We can get back to
22 you on that. And I will also say it differs
23 across our different contracts, which we were
24 just looking at as well. But they're

1 outpacing what the state is providing us,
2 right, so --

3 SENATOR MAYER: They are outpacing the
4 rate that the state has -- okay.

5 The other thing is you mentioned about
6 what you use the stimulus funding for,
7 Chancellor, which I think many of us are very
8 sympathetic that, frankly, you used it for
9 ongoing expenses for services that needed to
10 be provided to the students of New York
11 City -- arts; social workers, you mentioned
12 that; pre-K; special ed; tutoring; teacher
13 recruitment and preparation.

14 Now that you're facing these loss of
15 the federal funds, what's going to happen to
16 these particular services, particularly
17 social workers in schools and pre-K,
18 special ed, community schools -- actually,
19 everything you list here. What is your
20 intention?

21 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: You know,
22 we -- we're going to have to reduce,
23 probably, the amount of these services that
24 we're providing if we don't get additional

1 help. And that's part of the reason why
2 we're here today.

3 But if we were to assume that there's
4 no additional help that is coming, then that
5 is going to mean that we're going to have to
6 be having to make significant reductions in
7 those services and programs that we have
8 offered. Community schools, the arts
9 programs -- these are all things that are
10 critical.

11 And if there are no additional
12 dollars -- because we are looking to shrink
13 as much of our central budget as possible,
14 but even that our central budget is a small
15 percentage of the overarching budget. The
16 vast majority of our dollars that we get go
17 directly to our schools and they sit in
18 school budgets. But we will have less
19 dollars that we will be able to spend on all
20 those programs. That's just what the bottom
21 line is going to be, unless we get real help.

22 And what we know is that our schools
23 and our parents and our communities really,
24 really, really love all of these programs,

1 and we're going to do the best that we can.
2 But if we just don't have any additional
3 dollars, there's nothing else we'll be able
4 to do other than to make reductions.

5 SENATOR MAYER: I understand.

6 Have you done a projection of layoffs
7 or reduction of services that's a document
8 you'd share, or are you not --

9 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: We have not done
10 projections of layoffs or reductions in
11 services. We are still hoping -- we don't
12 control our budget, and we are still hoping
13 to get additional dollars to support some of
14 these programs. And we are working with us
15 and with the city on prioritizing them.

16 I know there was the question of sort
17 of what have you already phased down, and I
18 would note to that question one of the things
19 we have already phased down that was
20 stimulus-funded -- in part because it's the
21 kind of thing you can phase down in a
22 different way -- is we had some facilities
23 investments that we were doing with that
24 money that we've already started to phase

1 down.

2 So where there's things like that that
3 are not direct programming to kids and
4 families, as the money started to climb, we
5 started to phase those out. But looking
6 ahead, we're hoping to be able to protect as
7 many of these programs as possible.

8 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, and we
9 get a lot of our -- you know, our support --
10 you know, the direct appeal comes from the
11 mayor as well, and we ask the mayor. And
12 he's very much aware of all of these programs
13 as well. And so while we've not made all of
14 these direct projections just yet because
15 we're still waiting to see, you know, from
16 the mayor's office what additional supports
17 we get -- I'll give you an example, is the
18 Summer Rising.

19 We were very concerned, as the
20 stimulus funding is running out, our ability
21 to still be able to meet the needs of the
22 Summer Rising. It may be the most popular
23 program that we have right now. And
24 110,000 students K-8 -- we could easily have

1 150,000 students. And the mayor just days
2 ago really made the commitment to help to
3 close that gap.

4 Maybe there are other gaps as well
5 with some of these other programs. As
6 community voices are heard, the mayor is
7 hearing it as well. And so there are
8 adjustments that are made to our budget.
9 Ultimately we work with the budget that we're
10 given.

11 SENATOR MAYER: Except the budget that
12 you're given it sounds like is a subject of,
13 you know, political pressure and parents'
14 voices, and things can be changed on the city
15 side, according to what you just said.

16 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I would say
17 so. Budgets are, you know, political
18 operatives, if you will. And so, you know,
19 they're always subject to some form of shift
20 and adjustment.

21 SENATOR MAYER: So to that end, what's
22 the current plan about 3-K for the coming
23 year?

24 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Specifically

1 meaning what? The --

2 SENATOR MAYER: Are you -- is 3-K
3 going to be reduced in its scope?

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah -- no.
5 So 3-K, first of all, you should just know we
6 believe also is an extremely valuable
7 program. And 3-K is also something that we
8 think ties directly to everything we believe
9 in around literacy development. And our
10 whole efforts around NYC Reads is also very
11 connected to pre-K and 3-K.

12 The challenge that we faced as we came
13 in here, into this administration, was around
14 the amount of money that we were spending for
15 empty seats, where there was an
16 oversaturation of seats in one particular
17 community and not enough seats in other
18 communities, where -- but we were paying for
19 those empty seats.

20 And so what we are working very
21 closely, together with the Mayor and OMB, is
22 around kind of shrinking the amount of money
23 that we've been spending on seats that were
24 not being actually utilized -- underutilized

1 seats. And so that's essentially where we
2 are. We're looking at a shrinking of these
3 underutilized seats.

4 SENATOR MAYER: Without a reduction in
5 the overall program for the need that exists?
6 Or is there a shrinking of the overall
7 program?

8 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, no.
9 No, no, we're not looking at a shrinking in
10 the overall program. We've made a commitment
11 that any family who's looking for a 3-K seat,
12 there will be a seat that will be provided to
13 that family.

14 The challenge there is that it may not
15 always be an available seat in the
16 neighborhood that you're in. If all those
17 seats are already filled, you may have to go
18 to a different neighborhood in order to get
19 that seat. But that's all generated by
20 demand in any particular area.

21 SENATOR MAYER: Lastly, I just wanted
22 to thank you for your responsiveness to me
23 and others about acts of antisemitism and
24 Islamophobia in the district, and your

1 convening of a multi-faith council. And, you
2 know, I have spoken to you about sharing the
3 resources for other school districts. I
4 happen to think it's something that should
5 have been included in this budget. There
6 should have been funding for this. This is a
7 statewide school problem.

8 And so I appreciate your taking
9 leadership on that and look forward to you
10 sharing the resources, the ones that you
11 think are successful. Not all of them are,
12 so -- appreciate that.

13 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Appreciate
14 it, Senator. Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
16 Assembly.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
18 Hyndman.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Good morning.
20 Oh, sorry, good afternoon, Chancellor.

21 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good
22 afternoon, Assemblymember.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So one of the
24 things that one of my colleagues said in an

1 earlier panel and it brought to mind is we
2 talk a lot about parent participation and the
3 lack of, and I know 2023 was the CEC
4 elections took place for the 2023-2025 cycle.

5 Can you tell how much you spent on --
6 how much did the New York City Department of
7 Education spend on those elections? Because
8 we've seen a drop since the pandemic of
9 parents attending because the virtual option
10 is no longer there, and those meetings are
11 hardly attended. If that's one of the first
12 ways to get parent participation -- as you
13 know, I was a former CEC member and there was
14 a lot of ways how we were able to engage
15 parents.

16 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure. Right.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So if you
18 could tell me the numbers for that.

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, we
20 don't have that readily available, but we can
21 certainly get that to you.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. And
23 what other methods do you involve to get
24 parent participation up for our public

1 schools? You know, I am pleased about the
2 NYC Reads program and the career pathways,
3 especially because of the six high schools I
4 represent in District 29. And the Summer
5 Rising program, I know our parents take full
6 advantage of that.

7 But I think, you know, the explanation
8 about the midyear budget adjustments, it
9 makes sense to us, because now we're seeing
10 some of our schools are becoming more
11 overcrowded because there's a lot more
12 migrant students, especially in the Bricktown
13 area of District 29. That school, PS/IS 116,
14 a small school, has a lot more students and a
15 new principal, which is a lot for her to take
16 on at such time.

17 So what supports are being given to
18 principals who are dealing with an influx
19 every month, especially in Southeast Queens?
20 As you know, transportation issues have
21 always been an issue, worrying about students
22 getting the education they need as sites
23 change, as the parents have to recertify.

24 And if you could also talk about we do

1 a lot of -- a lot of our schools want to do
2 more violence prevention in our middle
3 schools, and what are you doing to offset
4 that in our middle school populations?

5 Thank you.

6 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you,
7 Assemblymember.

8 First, Deputy Chancellor Dan Weisberg
9 will respond.

10 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
11 you very much, Assemblymember. It's a great
12 question.

13 We know that in District 29 many of
14 the schools have really opened their arms and
15 hearts to our newcomer -- our newest
16 New Yorkers. Our first thing is what we hear
17 most from principals on this issue of course
18 is funding. So if you have 80 additional
19 kids that come in during the course of the
20 fall, you know, September to December, one of
21 the things that Emma and Seritta and their
22 folks do is -- and they have ramped this
23 up -- is to make sure the funding is
24 available right away, as quickly as possible,

1 so you can post and hire teachers. That's
2 really important. That's probably the most
3 tangible thing we can do from Central.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 We're up to Senator Chu.

6 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

7 Good to see you here, Chancellor Banks
8 and now the team.

9 So we already heard a lot about the
10 federal funding and the new formula for the
11 Foundation Aid. We are facing some cuts to
12 service, the staffing -- we all heard about
13 this.

14 So what exactly is the impact we're
15 talking about to our student population?
16 And -- because we all can agree after the
17 school hours, the study, the learning
18 experience does not end when the school hours
19 are done or after they graduate from the
20 school building. The learning continues in
21 the public libraries as well, lifetime.

22 So now we're talking about the city
23 also cutting those libraries' service. With
24 all those -- the school assistance funding

1 got cut, likely, and the public library
2 funding, the service hours got cut, what
3 exactly is the impact to our student
4 population? And how do you mitigate that?

5 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, it's
6 maybe a little difficult to respond to.

7 But I would say this. Our -- this is
8 where we engage so many of our community
9 partners as well who have provided additional
10 supports and services to our schools. So
11 earlier I heard Dr. Rosa speak about museums.
12 We have encouraged greatly our schools to be
13 engaged with community-based partners who
14 also provide a wide range of services that go
15 even beyond the budgets that we have even in
16 our schools. We got hundreds of those
17 organizations, which continue to do work in
18 our schools to try to help mitigate some of
19 the pain that we are feeling and some of the
20 pain that we know is still to come.

21 But yeah, we -- but what I really want
22 our schools to stay very focused on is
23 keeping the main thing the thing. And the
24 main thing is to ensure that our students are

1 going to be academically proficient and be
2 able to be in school and do what we need them
3 to be able to do to perform in school. And
4 that's why we have continued to center the
5 priorities for us around reading and around
6 math instruction, that those things we still
7 think will be very focused in some of the
8 Career and Technical Education and our
9 career-connected learning. Critically
10 important for us.

11 So in spite of some of these other
12 challenges and some of the other areas where
13 we know we're going to suffer some loss, that
14 we're still going to be able to keep our eye
15 on the prize.

16 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, I appreciate
17 that.

18 And, second question, under the state
19 law secondary schools with more than
20 700 students are required to have a full-time
21 certified school librarian and part-time for
22 those below the enrollment threshold.
23 However, back in 2023 the numbers show, in
24 our 1600 New York City schools, only

1 260 certified school librarians. Are we able
2 to address that?

3 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: It's
4 interesting, we were just talking about that
5 a little bit earlier today. So we have an
6 effort underway to try to increase the amount
7 of school librarians. It is not easy to
8 always find the folks who have all the
9 certifications to step into that role. But
10 it ties very directly into all the things
11 that we think are critically important.

12 So yeah, it is a shortcoming in our
13 schools. For many, many years we've never
14 had enough librarians, we've never had enough
15 fully stocked libraries. And so yeah, that
16 remains one of the issues and challenges that
17 we are continuing to look at. But we have
18 450 of our schools actually across the city
19 that have a library, and 185 of our campuses
20 that have the spaces, and 265 certified
21 librarians. And so far from where we really
22 want to be, and this remains an area of real
23 challenge for us.

24 SENATOR CHU: Thank you.

1 And speaking of the space, I actually
2 want to bring to your attention and also see
3 if you have the answer. When we are
4 designing a new school, what's the ratio for
5 the school libraries when we consider the
6 school population size and the classroom of
7 the libraries?

8 Because I want to bring to your
9 attention Brooklyn Tech High School is the
10 largest public high school in the
11 United States of America. They have
12 6,000 students. However, their school
13 library, the capacity is only 100 students.
14 It's ridiculous.

15 Like, first I want to know if you're
16 aware of the situation. And also, when we're
17 doing the construction school planning with
18 the SCA, are those in the consideration?

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, I don't
20 know what the particular formula is. I don't
21 even know about many of our schools that have
22 multiple libraries in any particular
23 building. You know, when Brooklyn Tech was
24 designed, it certainly wasn't designed for

1 6,000 students. But it was still designed as
2 a huge school.

3 SENATOR CHU: The largest.

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, and
5 with a large library. But certainly not a
6 library that would seem commensurate with
7 4,000 to 6,000 students in the building,
8 right?

9 But as you're asking the question
10 around how we do our new school designs --

11 SENATOR CHU: Yes.

12 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: -- we don't
13 design many schools now for 4,000 to 6,000
14 students anyway. Most of our schools are
15 much smaller than that.

16 SENATOR CHU: What would be the ratio?
17 Say 300 students, what would be the ratio for
18 that space?

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I think it's
20 still just one library generally that we
21 design in a school. It's an interesting
22 question, it really is. It's not one that's
23 ever been raised before, that if you have a
24 school that has a library because you have

1 500 kids, should you consider having two
2 libraries if you have 3,000 students or
3 something.

4 So I'll make a note of that, but it's
5 the first I've ever heard it even being
6 raised.

7 SENATOR CHU: Thank you. You know,
8 30-students capacity in one classroom, with
9 300 students, that means we need a 600 for
10 the books {inaudible}.

11 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, and I
12 would just say that -- and the way that the
13 advent of technology, so much of the work
14 that we're doing now is used from a
15 technological standpoint that it's been in
16 fact reducing kind of the overreliance on the
17 physical library structure.

18 So I'm not sure that we would still be
19 in a position to say we're going to develop
20 multiple libraries when we are required to
21 build, you know, X number of classrooms and
22 gyms and dance studios and a wide range of
23 other things that people also think are
24 important.

1 But it's something that we can
2 certainly take a look at.

3 SENATOR CHU: Exactly. And that's how
4 I want to draw the attention. I appreciate
5 you talk about the dance, the arts and
6 thinking out of the box, be creative when we
7 design our schools -- new schools nowadays,
8 we modernize the new schools.

9 So I want to talk about the class
10 size. I have local schools and parents and
11 school leadership express their concern they
12 didn't get much support from the public
13 school system and they may, due to compliance
14 for the class size law, they need to cut down
15 arts, dance, science, jazz class -- I don't
16 think that's the approach, and I believe we
17 all agree those enrichment classes are as
18 important as academics.

19 So I really want to know what's the
20 public school system here giving the guidance
21 or the suggestion -- or what's the plan,
22 actually, given out to the local school,
23 instead of telling the principal to go figure
24 it out?

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Listen, in
2 the schools like a Brooklyn Tech, which are
3 just -- I mean, they're packed. That's a
4 school that makes the case for an overcrowded
5 class and an overcrowded school. And we
6 absolutely --

7 SENATOR CHU: Elementary schools.
8 Specifically elementary schools are
9 overcrowded here.

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right, yeah,
11 I was just making a -- making a connection,
12 right? So at the far end you have some
13 schools which are clearly, to any reasonable
14 person, you can see class sizes are just far
15 too large, too many kids.

16 We need to respond to that, and that's
17 what this class-size bill will require us in
18 fact to do. And I was an elementary school
19 teacher, and no one wants to have 35 students
20 in a class. And this class-size bill is
21 meant to respond to that.

22 But what we have said to all of our
23 principals across the city -- and this work
24 is going on right now -- is we have to do a

1 full assessment of every space that we have
2 in that building. And the priority is going
3 to be where we know we're going to have of
4 the special programs that are really good,
5 and we enjoy having those programs, but if
6 we're not in a position to maintain those
7 because we need that space as additional
8 space, we're going to have to do that.

9 And that's what we're doing. We're
10 doing -- we have parents who believe very
11 deeply in the 3-K programming that we have.
12 But we had a working group which put on the
13 record for us, the majority of the working
14 group, to say you should consider moving all
15 the 3-K programs out of the schools, because
16 you're going to need those classes in order
17 to meet the class-size mandate. And we're
18 going to hear from parents in a big way about
19 that as well.

20 And so there are a lot of things that
21 we have to look at in order to get to this
22 compliance, which we will. But those are
23 examples of some of the things we're talking
24 about when we say there are going to be

1 tradeoffs that are going to be needed. We've
2 got rooms where special programming is
3 happening, counseling is taking place -- we
4 may not be able to afford to do those because
5 we're going to need those spaces in order to
6 comply with the class-size --

7 SENATOR CHU: Which -- that's why I
8 want to bring to your attention I'm hoping
9 the SCA or school -- the public school
10 system, when doing those -- be creative.

11 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

12 SENATOR CHU: I'll circle back.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Assembly.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
16 Pheffer Amato.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I like
18 how you say that.

19 (Laughter.)

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good
21 afternoon, Chancellor and team.

22 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good
23 afternoon.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I'm

1 going to switch it over a little bit.

2 You know, what changes would the
3 administration support in regard to CECs'
4 accountability and ensure that hate has no
5 room in our classroom? In the meetings and
6 the correspondence of the CEC -- and I'm
7 particularly talking about the CEC 14
8 president, who called out for a walkout on
9 school days.

10 And in addition, a New York City
11 principal, on her letterhead, hosting a
12 meeting this weekend, actually Saturday,
13 calling on other educators to inform them on
14 how to teach about the genocide of
15 Palestinians and Israel occupation, which let
16 me just say is absolutely false. So how does
17 a principal just take it on her own to host a
18 curriculum? Which we heard earlier today
19 it's very hard to get curriculum in our
20 schools.

21 But really about the CEC and how this
22 sort of stuff is going haywire. I appreciate
23 if you could comment on that.

24 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, listen.

1 You know, the CECs themselves are -- we've
2 seen examples where we've had some challenges
3 coming from our CECs. And we are meeting
4 with them and we are reinforcing and
5 reiterating expectations from the CEC.

6 The challenge that we have with regard
7 to that is that ultimately CECs are duly
8 elected bodies that don't come under the full
9 control of the chancellor. And I think many
10 people believe that they do. And we
11 certainly have a role and responsibility in
12 that space, but our interpretation has been
13 that we don't have complete direction over
14 the CECs.

15 Now, that being said, when we think
16 that folks are engaging outside of the bounds
17 of what they've been elected to do, we are
18 having those conversations, we are
19 admonishing where we need to. And in the
20 cases where we think the removal is
21 necessary, we will do that.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So you
23 have that authority to remove, then, if it's
24 outside the boundaries?

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: If -- if --
2 if it is outside the boundaries. There are
3 folks who would challenge that, but that's a
4 challenge that we'll be prepared to deal
5 with.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I mean,
7 we spend tons of money in this system, in the
8 curriculum or in the other conversations
9 about bullying and teaching our students how
10 to act appropriately. And I know we can't
11 control parents, and I want to say as a
12 former Parent Association president, I
13 encourage parents' participation, and that's
14 where we're trying to figure out how to do
15 more in. But when they're bad actors or
16 actresses, how do we do that? Because it's
17 not acceptable to go on social media and
18 pull -- you know, tell students to come out
19 for a protest. You're telling kids in
20 Far Rockaway, which I represent -- shout out
21 to 27 -- and kids are just jumping on the
22 train to head out to Brooklyn. Who's
23 responsible for that student? Ultimately,
24 that CEC president is responsible for

1 anything that happens to any student outside.

2 (Time clock chiming.)

3 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: (Sighing.)

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good

5 answer.

6 (Laughter.)

7 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I had a

8 better one.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: We'll

10 talk more offline. Thank you, though.

11 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I had a

12 better one.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Yup.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Laughing.) I'm

16 sorry, that wasn't fair.

17 Robert Jackson.

18 SENATOR JACKSON: Welcome, everyone.

19 Thank you for coming up.

20 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Senator.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: I just have some

22 quick questions.

23 How much money was held up that John

24 Liu made reference to, because you were not

1 in compliance and then subsequently the State
2 Education Department gave you the money that
3 you were entitled to?

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, so I
5 heard that part of the testimony earlier
6 which was a little baffling for me, to be
7 honest with you. When we talk about holding
8 up, we submitted our report in a timely
9 fashion. As a response to the report that we
10 submitted, there were some questions that
11 were then raised. This is part of a natural
12 process. And that took -- over the course of
13 about two weeks, and at the end of the two
14 weeks, the funds were released. So there was
15 no major holdup; this was a pretty standard
16 process of what happens here.

17 And ultimately how much money were we
18 talking about?

19 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: About 750 million.
20 But as the chancellor said, we did get it
21 when we expected to get it, given when the
22 report was turned in.

23 And we went back and forth on some
24 questions; the final implementation report is

1 what was approved.

2 SENATOR JACKSON: The Executive Budget
3 basically -- everyone is being cut. I mean,
4 half of the school districts are screaming
5 about the cuts that are being made. How much
6 is going to be impacted -- if in fact it
7 stays that way, which we don't expect, how
8 much money are you going to lose? So I heard
9 earlier it was about \$131 million?

10 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: That's what we
11 think the difference is, yes.

12 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. All right.
13 And the New York -- so that's what you -- the
14 highest -- you know, in the Campaign for
15 Fiscal Equity Contract for Excellence, the
16 class-size reductions and money should go to
17 the highest-need schools. Because my
18 understanding is that this was -- there was a
19 class size workgroup in which Johanna Garcia,
20 who is my chief of staff, was the elected
21 cochair, with Dr. Marmor, the principal of a
22 high school in Queens.

23 But I've been hearing that your first
24 deputy chancellor was uplifting the minority

1 report of seven members versus the guidelines
2 from 40-plus members, who were the majority
3 of the people on there, in order to vet
4 exactly what needs to be done. In my
5 opinion -- and I was not there -- it seems
6 like a bias towards the minority report
7 versus the majority report, which there were
8 over 40 people there. So ...

9 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Our first
10 deputy was very much involved with this whole
11 process and can speak to that.

12 SENATOR JACKSON: Oh, I understand.

13 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
14 you, Senator.

15 So not only are we not biased in favor
16 of any particular member's views, we've been
17 raising up, even here, the recommendations
18 from the majority, which we think are very
19 important. I don't know exactly what that
20 report was about. I did recently attend a
21 CEC meeting, CEC 20, where one of the members
22 who helped put out the minority report is the
23 CEC president, so certainly referred to it at
24 that point.

1 But we are lifting up, believe me, the
2 recommendations of the majority report, which
3 I think personally deserve a lot of
4 attention.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
6 Assembly.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And for the
8 second time in a row, Senator Jackson --
9 Assemblywoman Jackson.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: It's Jackson
11 and Jackson.

12 (Laughter.)

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Happy Black
14 History Month.

15 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Bard College
17 is in my district, so I'm grateful to have
18 it.

19 And I just want to say Project Pivot,
20 thank you for thinking of that. It's used to
21 help reduce and prevent violence.

22 I'm just wondering how the funding for
23 this project is allocated, how much funding
24 is actually put into it. Are the schools

1 receiving it, or are the community-based
2 organizations receiving it?

3 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: (To COO
4 Vadehra.) You want to speak to that?

5 But let me just say, before you get to
6 the number, Bard as well as Pivot were put
7 into your district because we heard from the
8 people in the district. So I just want to
9 make that distinction. Because we've heard a
10 lot about the fact that there have been a lot
11 of things, you know, with community voices
12 not heard.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: I was one of
14 the loudest voices.

15 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yup,
16 absolutely.

17 But in terms of the numbers?

18 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Thank you very
19 much for the question.

20 We're spending about 15 million on
21 Project Pivot this year. As the chancellor
22 said, that's supporting about 250 schools,
23 and the money's -- you know, this is about
24 supporting the CBOs working in those school

1 communities and the CBOs that have been there
2 a long time to support those school
3 communities.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Does the money
5 go to the CBOs, or to the schools to spend
6 down?

7 (Overtalk.)

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Are the
9 schools giving the money to the CBOs? How is
10 that working?

11 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: The money's in a
12 contract with the CBO.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: With the CBO.

14 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Yes.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: Okay, great.

16 And then Chancellor, I just want you
17 to know that I'm paying for like library
18 upgrades and all kind of technologies,
19 technical stuff in my schools. I bought a
20 calming space with my discretionary funds.
21 Thank you to my speaker.

22 I'm just wondering, when does my
23 responsibility get to pull back and this
24 actually be a responsibility at DOE to take

1 care of, instead of me and my little bit of
2 \$265,000 trying to solve a problem of a
3 library or technical issues in my district?

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Listen. You
5 know, we are funding these schools and trying
6 to provide as many of the supports as we
7 possibly can. We absolutely also rely on
8 other elected officials to do the best that
9 you can to help plug the gaps. We don't
10 always expect that we can fill every single
11 need that every single school has. And we
12 try to fill the most, the greatest needs. We
13 may not always have the funding to have a
14 room like you just -- a calming room. And in
15 fact, in light of, you know, the class-size
16 law, we may not be able to do that anyway,
17 because that room may now have to be
18 repurposed for the purpose of class size.

19 So -- and that's not a knock on
20 anything, it's just simply to say that we all
21 have a role to play here, and I think
22 together, as long as we continue to work
23 together, we will try to plug as many of the
24 gaps as we possibly can.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN JACKSON: It's -- it
2 gets a bit expensive and it's much harder for
3 my public schools, non-charter schools, to
4 get things done through the School
5 Construction Authority. I just want to put
6 that out there.

7 When money goes to the charter
8 schools, they put things up in a minute. My
9 schools are waiting time after time, all kind
10 of processes. So if we can work on that
11 together, I'd be glad to.

12 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Mm-hmm.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Is Senator Brisport here?

15 SENATOR BRISPORT: Yes.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, there you
17 are.

18 (Off the record.)

19 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

20 Chancellor, in your testimony you
21 mentioned several programs being funded by
22 federal stimulus funding that is running out.
23 And in your response to Senator Mayer
24 earlier, you said that without additional

1 help New York City will be considering making
2 cuts to those programs.

3 The Invest in Our New York package of
4 legislation contains several bills to tax the
5 rich and raise revenue. Would you support
6 the state raising revenue for additional
7 education funding to avoid cuts to critical
8 programming in New York City public schools
9 and to potentially expanding them?

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I'm -- I
11 mean, you know, I would certainly take a look
12 at that and weigh in at the appropriate time.
13 But I don't know that I want to be on record
14 as saying that in this particular moment in
15 time.

16 SENATOR BRISPORT: Okay. So not a yes
17 yet --

18 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: No, not a yes
19 yet.

20 SENATOR BRISPORT: I also want to
21 mention -- in another response to
22 Senator Mayer about early childhood
23 education, you spoke about removing
24 underutilized seats. What percentage of

1 those underutilized seats occurred at
2 facilities that are fully staffed?

3 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Do we know?
4 Do we have any numbers off the top --

5 SENATOR BRISPORT: Okay, I'm asking
6 because I see no evidence that unused seats
7 reflect a lack of need in the community, and
8 only have seen evidence that unused seats
9 happen when there's not enough workforce to
10 teach those seats.

11 I have a childcare center in my
12 district -- actually, Shirley Chisholm --
13 that at one point had half of its seats empty
14 because it had half the teachers it needed.

15 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: We can
16 certainly provide that to you, because we
17 have a lot of numbers around that.

18 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you so much.

19 But my question is, would you support
20 efforts to raise wages for the early
21 childhood educator workforce in order to
22 recruit more and stabilize the sector?

23 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So
24 this is a long-standing issue, the issue of

1 pay parity. And it's one that the mayor and
2 the chancellor are committed to addressing.

3 One of the ways we took tangible steps
4 was investing in early childhood programs for
5 disabled children and providing contract
6 enhancement that allowed for greater pay,
7 which has made a big difference.

8 But this is a larger problem, and it's
9 a much more expensive problem. So it's
10 something -- something that we're going to
11 have to tackle together.

12 SENATOR BRISPORT: Thank you.

13 I yield my time.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15 Assembly.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
17 Mitaynes.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Hi, thank
19 you.

20 I want to talk a little bit about
21 learning loss. A lot of our kids are still
22 catching up, and some may never catch up,
23 actually entering adulthood without the
24 skills needed for success.

1 Achievement gaps across race in the
2 state persist in districts. And considering
3 we have wealthy neighborhoods and very poor
4 neighborhoods, is there any data on
5 differential rates of recovery from learning
6 loss?

7 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Not that we
8 have here. But certainly some numbers that
9 we can give to you.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: I appreciate
11 that.

12 Also federal funding requires 20
13 percent of the funds be spent on learning
14 loss. How much has been spent on learning
15 loss? What percentage of the federal funding
16 has been used for that particular need?

17 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Give us a moment
18 and we'll send that up and give it to you.

19 But I would just say we have been
20 spending the required 20 percent -- and,
21 frankly, would argue and then some, in terms
22 of the many ways in which our federal dollars
23 are supporting recovery.

24 But give us a minute.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: On mayoral
2 control, you want four more years, and there
3 was various hearings that were happening. A
4 lot of what I heard were parents, students
5 and staff saying that they don't want to
6 continue the mayoral control.

7 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: What do you
9 say to that? What do you say to them
10 particularly?

11 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I would say
12 that I think that what I heard -- and I
13 attended four of the five hearings as well --
14 that many of the folks who were saying that
15 they do not want it were not saying
16 necessarily what they wanted.

17 And many of the people who were
18 expressing that they did not want to see
19 mayoral control, what I refer to as mayoral
20 accountability, I think the -- many of them
21 were referring to lots of things that
22 happened even before this administration.
23 They were upset about collocations with
24 charter schools and a wide range of other

1 issues.

2 What I have said is that, I think very
3 clearly, to judge this administration on what
4 we have done in the two years that we've been
5 here and judge us on the record that we
6 have -- we have engaged with elected
7 officials in New York City like no other
8 administration has. We've been completely
9 transparent. We've been open.

10 We have met the needs of what's
11 happening with Project Open Arms and these
12 migrants who have come into our school
13 system, and we have made sure that we have
14 been there to support them. Enrollment is up
15 for the first time in eight years. Our
16 academic performance is up, and outpacing the
17 state.

18 We believe that we have earned the
19 right to have mayoral control continue -- not
20 for any political reason, but based upon what
21 we're doing. And the fact that -- an example
22 of NYC Reads and what we're doing to ensure
23 that every child can read is amazing.

24 I became chancellor, and I had almost

1 no one other than Assemblyperson Simon and
2 Bobby Carroll, who said to me, Can you ensure
3 that the kids can read? Nobody was saying
4 that. They were talking to me about all
5 manner of programs. But meanwhile, for all
6 of the money that we had, kids couldn't even
7 read.

8 But we were able to bring together an
9 entire systemwide approach to ensure that
10 every child is going to be on grade level by
11 the third grade, and be able to respond to
12 this migrant crisis and be able to get kids
13 back in school after the pandemic. We think
14 we've earned that right.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 Senator Cordell Cleare.

17 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay, I'm going to
18 try to go really fast.

19 Hi, good to see you.

20 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good to see
21 you, Senator.

22 SENATOR CLEARE: To meet the
23 class-size mandate, I read in your comments
24 that you convened a working group, and I

1 commend you for doing that.

2 Did the possibility of surveying the
3 space occupied by collocations, especially
4 that may not see the same kind of enrollment
5 of -- and experiencing the number of ELL
6 learners, the number of newly arrived
7 New Yorkers and their programs and special
8 needs -- was that considered, to survey those
9 spaces?

10 Before we try to take away 3-K and
11 other services, we do have in our schools a
12 lot of collocations. Did we look at that
13 space?

14 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Appreciate the
15 question.

16 So we are actually -- we're surveying
17 all our schools for all their spaces, just to
18 make sure. So we have central data, but
19 we're asking -- this is one of the
20 recommendations of the working group, was
21 great, you all have data, what do your
22 principals actually think of that data? Is
23 it up-to-date?

24 So we're in the process of asking

1 everybody -- that will be about collocated,
2 that will be about all schools in terms of
3 whether there's additional classroom space
4 available.

5 As you know, one of the reasons --

6 SENATOR CLEARE: So that includes
7 charters. You are looking at those spaces as
8 well?

9 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Yes, as a part of
10 the looking at the space survey, yes.

11 As you know, one of the reasons we end
12 up -- can I finish one more? One of the
13 reasons we end up with collocated schools is
14 because of the state law requirement that we
15 either collocate or fund the leases for those
16 schools. So it's a tradeoff either way.

17 SENATOR CLEARE: So that's related to
18 my next question --

19 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Oh, sorry.

20 SENATOR CLEARE: And your position on
21 the fact that New York City is the only
22 district in the state that has to pay charter
23 rent, and the only district in the state that
24 does not receive any charter transition aid.

1 That, according to the education law center,
2 costs us an estimated \$258 million in fiscal
3 year '23, and deprived the DOE of 2.6 billion
4 since 2011.

5 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, no,
6 that's the reality. But that's the law.
7 That's the law that the State Legislature
8 passed and we are bound to adhere to.

9 And so you certainly wouldn't ask us
10 to comply with the law around class size but
11 say, violate the law on how we have to
12 support charter schools. If we move every
13 charter school out of the spaces of New York
14 City Public Schools right now, we would have
15 an even heftier tab to pay for their rent in
16 outside space, therefore reducing even more
17 resources from our current schools. So we
18 take it from one, but you pay for it on the
19 other side as well.

20 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay, thank you.

21 You made general mention of the
22 migrant influx to New York City in your
23 testimony. What are the education budget
24 shortfalls, if any, related to the influx of

1 migrants to our school districts?

2 And just real quick, because you could
3 try to get both -- in the Governor's State of
4 the State she offered a mental health clinic
5 to any school that wants it. I've heard that
6 50 percent of school districts did not apply.
7 Are any of those in New York City? And if
8 so, how many, where and why?

9 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Two
10 questions, 10 seconds. I'll try to go quick.

11 SENATOR CLEARE: You've got
12 10 seconds.

13 (Laughter.)

14 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: We're working
15 closely on the mental health clinics. The
16 state's been a great partner, and we're
17 continuing to expand those. Happy to give
18 numbers some other time.

19 Asylum seekers, the --

20 SENATOR CLEARE: Okay, you'll get it
21 to me.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 SENATOR CLEARE: (Inaudible.)

24 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: I would say the

1 real cost is that --

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I'm going to
3 cut you off. But you are more than welcome
4 and we'll happily have you follow up with
5 everybody. Thank you.

6 Assembly.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblyman
8 Manny De Los Santos.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: Thank you,
10 Chancellor Banks, for being here.

11 A lot has been said about class size,
12 and we truly understand the importance and
13 impact that it has in our kids' education and
14 families as well are patiently waiting for.
15 But the reality is I'm still trying to
16 understand, as we speak today, what's the
17 update? What's currently happening with
18 class size? Can you provide a quick update?

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, the
20 quick update is that we were given a
21 five-year rollout timeline, and that every
22 year we've got to meet the mandate by
23 20 percent.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: But what

1 are we currently doing as we speak right now
2 to make that a reality? What initiative is
3 being taken?

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, the
5 first thing that we did was we formed a
6 working group that we were not mandated by
7 the law to even have to do. That was the
8 first thing, is to do an overarching
9 assessment of where we are.

10 So we first of all we got all -- we
11 organized that working group. That working
12 group has produced a number of
13 recommendations that we are currently
14 considering all of them. As we speak right
15 now, all of our principals across the city
16 are doing a full-on assessment, we're doing a
17 survey systemwide of what our spaces actually
18 look like, what those spaces could be
19 converted to.

20 You've got a school that has a dance
21 studio in its school that they use for dance
22 programs, primarily even after school. Our
23 ability to convert that into a traditional
24 classroom so it can be used to reduce class

1 size.

2 These kinds of efforts are happening
3 all across the city as we speak right now, so
4 that we have all the fundamental data in
5 front of us that we need. But we also
6 have -- we already have a lot of data, right?
7 We know we have at least 400 to 500 of our
8 schools right now that we know will need
9 additional classroom space. It goes beyond
10 the hiring of even more teachers. They will
11 absolutely need additional space. Francis
12 Lewis High School in Queens will need an
13 additional 178 -- 170 classrooms to comply
14 with -- 78, I'm sorry, additional classrooms
15 to comply with the class-size law. We've got
16 these numbers that are coming in from all of
17 our schools.

18 So it's not going to be just the
19 number of teachers that we have to hire, it's
20 also going to be the capital expenses,
21 because some of them will be able to
22 repurpose, but many of the schools that are
23 suffering from real overcrowding, we have to
24 build. So that is connected to what we're

1 then going to be able to do with school
2 construction projects.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: On that
4 note, Commissioner Rosa alluded to a
5 statewide engagement, parental engagement
6 program. As it relates to DOE, do we have
7 something similar to that to engage parents
8 more in the process of getting involved in
9 their kids' education?

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, listen,
11 class -- not class, parent engagement is
12 something that is core to how I move as a
13 leader in the first place. I spend more of
14 my time meeting with parent groups than
15 anybody else. I just came from the Panel for
16 Educational Policy last night, and CECs I do
17 twice a month, and many, many others.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: Thank you.
19 thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 I believe I'm the last Senator, except
22 for chairs who may have three-minute
23 follow-up.

24 So thank you very much, Chancellor.

1 You've answered many questions already. And
2 a topic that I'm not sure has come up yet,
3 although it came up I think with the previous
4 chancellor, concerns about the testing
5 high schools and the competitiveness and my
6 constant question of I'm sure you before
7 today, and other chancellors: If we just
8 have more academically rigorous high schools
9 for our students to go to, pretty much that
10 test school issue will probably disappear.

11 So how are we doing on increasing the
12 number of rigorous college-focused
13 high schools?

14 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, and I
15 think that's one of the things I alluded to
16 earlier. That's what Bard Early College
17 actually reports. So we've got Bard in the
18 Bronx, which we just opened this year, and
19 the demand is already overwhelming there.

20 And one of the things that we did was
21 we prioritized kids from the Bronx for that
22 school, so it's not just inundated with
23 students from all around the city, but kids
24 from the Bronx are actually going to have a

1 great opportunity to go there.

2 The following year we expect to open a
3 Bard in Brooklyn. And so -- and we are in
4 conversations around a host of other ways to
5 build not just more specialized schools, but
6 academically rigorous schools. Which you do
7 not necessarily have to take the exam to get
8 into the school, but provide a highly
9 rigorous program.

10 Dan, you want to weigh in on anything?

11 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Yeah,
12 and just to connect it, Madam Chair, our
13 pathways priority the chancellor established.
14 So the bold futures. This is a universal
15 vision for all of our schools. So the
16 idea -- because you're 100 percent right. If
17 the school that's 10 blocks away, the high
18 school that's 10 blocks away is going to give
19 you a good, solid education, all the moms and
20 dads feel good about it, then, you know,
21 whether you get into a specialized school or
22 not is not going to be as big a deal.

23 So how are we going to tackle that?

24 Opening some new schools like Bard Bronx,

1 Bard Brooklyn, certainly is part of the
2 equation. But part of the equation is making
3 sure for every single one of our high
4 schools, every child that's in that
5 high school is going to graduate with a real
6 plan to earn a good living whenever it is
7 they enter the workforce, whether that's
8 after four years of college, graduate school,
9 or they go right into the workforce.

10 So the Healthcare High School --

11 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: The
12 High School for Health Careers that we're
13 going to be opening, together with Northwell
14 Health, with the CEO of Northwell Health is
15 personally deeply involved, where every
16 student who graduates from that school is
17 going to have an opportunity to get a job in
18 the healthcare industry -- not just on a wish
19 and a hope, but they're going to have some
20 guarantees where they're really going to be
21 able to do that.

22 We expect major demand for a school
23 like that. We're expecting to locate it in
24 Long Island City, together with our

1 Motion Picture Tech School. These are not
2 specialized schools, but they are schools
3 that really will draw on the great interest
4 that kids really have, and we think will give
5 kids a really academically rigorous program
6 that is not just simply academically
7 rigorous, but it is -- it has a tremendous
8 focus for potential careers.

9 And that's what we hear from parents
10 and families all the time: We don't want
11 them to just graduate with a diploma and we
12 say congratulations, but they're actually on
13 a track and a path to a real rewarding career
14 and a real job. That's something that is
15 very important. That's what we're trying to
16 build into this overall portfolio.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So when you first
18 became chancellor, I insisted you come to a
19 complex I was very proud of in my district
20 with six schools in one building, the Julia
21 Richman Complex, four high schools, an
22 elementary, a special needs school.
23 Everybody always said, Oh, you can't do that,
24 it won't work -- and it works unbelievably

1 well. These were kids that weren't supposed
2 to be able to ever graduate high school, in
3 all of these high schools, and it's a rock
4 star group of high schools and the kids
5 graduate in four years and they go to
6 college.

7 But I also have a district where I
8 have kids who apply through that high school
9 process -- and I know the rules changed, and
10 I'm not saying I disagree with the rules.
11 But I have parents who say, My kid didn't get
12 into any of 10 schools. So what the hell's
13 going on there?

14 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
15 That's a -- by the way, as a parent who had
16 two kids who went through that process, I
17 totally, totally feel the pain of any parent.
18 Even if your kid does get into the school you
19 want, it's a very stressful process.

20 How do we make it not stressful, just
21 alluding to your earlier question and the
22 chancellor's response. So one of the things
23 we're doing to avoid that, because that
24 should not happen, you get to list up to 12

1 choices. Everybody should have --

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: They didn't get
3 into 12 schools.

4 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
5 What's that?

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I said 10
7 schools, but they didn't get into 12 schools.

8 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: It
9 does happen. Not in many cases, but even one
10 is too many.

11 One of the things that we have done to
12 make the process more family-friendly is to
13 publish -- this wasn't done, which is a
14 head-scratcher to me, but it was never
15 done -- so parents can see before they list,
16 before the child lists the 12 choices, what
17 has the waitlist traditionally been in that
18 school.

19 So it's just like applying to college,
20 for those of us who went to college. You
21 don't put all of your choices at the schools
22 with long, long waitlists. You've got to put
23 some where you know you're going to have a
24 very good chance -- that you're happy with --

1 of getting in.

2 So that should happen less and less.

3 And part of what our guidance counselors do,
4 part of what our enrollment people do in the
5 welcome centers is counsel our families. You
6 know, don't just list three schools -- which
7 a lot of parents do -- that are very, very
8 high demand. That's going to lead to a tough
9 situation. Make sure you look at some of the
10 other schools which are great but maybe they
11 don't have traditionally have waitlists.

12 So that's part of the answer.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So on the same
14 theme, and following up on questions around
15 we need the smaller class size, we need
16 libraries, we need all these things. And I
17 come from a district where for years we just
18 didn't have enough schools, period,
19 District 2. I kept telling other
20 chancellors, and then one year we woke up and
21 they were waitlisting kindergartners. It was
22 like, wait a second here. We don't waitlist
23 kindergartners. Well, they did in my
24 district.

1 So we tried -- we tried, and we were
2 successful at building a lot of schools in my
3 district. How? Because we made deals with
4 private developers, through the SCA. And we
5 actually got not only I think five or six new
6 schools -- I've been here for 22 years, so it
7 was over a period of time -- in my district,
8 but the city didn't have to pay for the
9 capital costs because we made deals. You
10 want to go up six more stories? We can live
11 with that if you're going to give us a
12 school.

13 So I hope that this Department of
14 Education is coordinating very carefully with
15 the mayor's people who are busy talking about
16 the City of Yes and rezonings and new rules
17 and, particularly at least in Manhattan,
18 commercial to residential. All of that needs
19 to happen, but can happen right or wrong.
20 And in my opinion, it only happens right if
21 we're factoring in new schools as part of
22 this deal anywhere it's happening, but
23 particularly when we're doing commercial or
24 residential.

1 I don't want to wake up five years
2 from now and be told, Oh, we did all this
3 great residential conversion but we don't
4 have one school in that district, because
5 that is going to blow up in your face and
6 whoever replaces me, because I'm not sure
7 I'll be here in five years.

8 And so I just hope that you're doing
9 really solid coordination on planning for new
10 school space and taking every opportunity in
11 any borough to maximize the use of zoning and
12 building, particularly in support of
13 affordable housing, for school space also.

14 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yes,
15 absolutely, Senator. We thank you. And
16 that's a big part of just the formula in
17 which we work in our office of new schools.
18 And so yes.

19 I was just in the Bronx a couple of
20 days ago, and we are going to look to build a
21 Bronx STEAM Center. And for those here who
22 have been to the Brooklyn STEAM Center, it's
23 one of the most amazing resources in the
24 city. And we're looking at Queens as well,

1 and some other great things that we're
2 looking to do in Queens, yes --

3 (Laughter.)

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: So we are --
5 so the needs are everywhere, but we're
6 certainly taking all that into strong
7 consideration for sure.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And for many
9 years I've been very concerned that we
10 changed the rules of the road and everybody
11 sort of dropped the ball on vocational ed,
12 because college isn't for everybody, as I
13 think you already referenced. So have we
14 addressed some of the real losses that I
15 think we saw in the public school system in
16 high schools for vocational ed?

17 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, that's
18 a big part of what we're talking about here.
19 These schools are -- like the Health Careers
20 School, you know, these in many ways are what
21 you may have thought about as your
22 vocational ed schools, except this is not
23 your -- as I like to say, this is not your
24 father's vocational ed stuff. This is not

1 shop class.

2 These are highly rigorous,
3 credentialed programs where when kids come
4 out with these types of credentials, they can
5 step right into the 21st-century workforce
6 and put themselves in a position to be on the
7 track to the middle class and beyond.

8 The Motion Picture Tech High School is
9 about teaching kids all of the various trades
10 that are connected to the motion picture
11 industry. And there are just dozens and
12 dozens of different ways for them to come out
13 with a real viable career, whether they
14 decide to go to college or not.

15 And so we don't really refer to it so
16 much as vocational ed, that's kind of an old
17 term. But it's -- these are career pathway
18 schools that really provide a level of
19 career-connected learning. And this is what
20 kids are asking for. They don't want to go
21 to school just to go to school and then we
22 give them a diploma and it doesn't mean a
23 whole lot. They really want to be able to
24 come out with the kinds of skills and

1 credentials that they can step right into the
2 job market, and that's what we're very
3 focused on.

4 And many of those schools are not --
5 they're not specialized high schools in the
6 traditional sense, but they are specialized
7 in the sense that they're really going to put
8 kids on a pathway for their own futures.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
10 Perfect timing. Thank you very much.

11 Assembly.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
13 Jo Anne Simon.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So a couple of
15 questions. Thank you very much for your
16 testimony. A couple of things that I want
17 to just address.

18 A, thank you very much for NYC Reads
19 and your support of that. One of the
20 concerns I have is because when you implement
21 anything you have rollout issues, you have
22 training. And I am somebody who never
23 supported mayoral control before I was in
24 office -- so it's not personal. But I don't

1 want to see NYC Reads become a casualty of
2 the current conversation on mayoral control,
3 because they're two different things.

4 We really need to do NYC Reads. We
5 need to build it out, and we need to make
6 sure our kids are reading. And I thank you
7 for your support on that going forward.

8 So -- but also with regard to building
9 schools, New York City has got to be a better
10 negotiator for more space. And again, that's
11 how anything gets built today, is if you're
12 building another building, I'll give you a
13 school and you have to ask for more space.
14 Because the Dock Street School should have
15 been 375 kids at least. It's 330. It can't
16 grow. It's too small. But they took a
17 four-and-a-half; they needed two-and-a-half.
18 Right? So it's not your thing, but that's a
19 big issue --

20 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I understand.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: -- in terms of
22 that. And so that's one question.

23 The other question I have is -- one of
24 my colleagues asked this question, and it

1 goes along with one of my questions, which is
2 what are we losing as a result of this
3 federal cliff. I have schools losing
4 restorative justice programming, social
5 workers, community schools. I have -- four
6 schools are losing in two categories, one is
7 losing in all three of those categories. And
8 because of that, that makes it harder then to
9 do what we need to do to utilize community
10 centers in our schools for youth to go and
11 prevent, you know, gang and gun violence in
12 Black and brown communities, like having the
13 schools open seven days a week, 6:00 to
14 midnight, with programming for communities,
15 families, youth, ESL programs, workforce
16 development, wraparound services.

17 What are we doing about that? How are
18 we going to do these things? Because they
19 all need to be done. What are you going to
20 do?

21 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: So first of all,
22 thank you for the question. Really
23 appreciate your knowledge of where the
24 stimulus dollars are going in your district.

1 That is very appreciated. Seriously, I wish
2 everyone had that. That's great. Because,
3 as you said, they're going to some really
4 critical programs.

5 As the chancellor said earlier,
6 there's some of those programs that the city
7 has -- that City Hall announced last week
8 that the mayor will invest in this year, so
9 just thinking about where kids are and how we
10 make sure there's a safe space for them.
11 Summer rising is a big piece of that. Right?
12 How do we keep our schools open during the
13 summer --

14 (Time clock chiming.)

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's a shame they
16 cut off the list.

17 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: It's almost like
18 you don't want to hear --

19 (Inaudible overtalk.)

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- continue
21 offline. We welcome all responses in
22 writing, and we will share them with
23 everyone. Thank you.

24 Sorry, second round, Chair John Liu.

1 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 For the record, I want to say that
3 Liz Krueger will not be replaced, because
4 number one, she's irreplaceable. And number
5 two, we're not going to let her go.

6 (Laughter.)

7 SENATOR LIU: But Chancellor, I really
8 appreciate the discussion on great high
9 schools, because there's just been way too
10 much emphasis on like three schools out of
11 hundreds. And I think the emphasis on
12 providing more choice and high schools of
13 rigor is absolutely the right thing to do.

14 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Right.
15 Right.

16 SENATOR LIU: Now, having said that,
17 this mayor and you as chancellor think it's
18 the right thing to do. But in the not too
19 distant future, potentially maybe -- I'm
20 going to go out on a limb here -- probably
21 six years from now there's going to be a new
22 person and a new administration that comes
23 in. And maybe they may not have the same
24 priorities that you have.

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

2 SENATOR LIU: Just like this current
3 mayor and administration doesn't have the
4 same priorities that the previous
5 administration had.

6 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

7 SENATOR LIU: And, you know, that
8 speaks to some of the testimony we heard in
9 the public hearings that the State Education
10 Department held about how best to govern our
11 schools in New York City. In fact, I
12 distinctly recall one of the stakeholders at
13 the Brooklyn hearing testifying very clearly
14 that it sounds good, mayoral control, but
15 every time you have a new mayor, there's like
16 whiplash that teachers and parents and other
17 stakeholders, even children experience
18 because of a sudden shift in priorities and
19 therefore the dismantling of programs that
20 lots of people maybe have complained about,
21 but lots of people like. Even NYC Reads,
22 which I trust your judgment -- because I've
23 known you for a long time -- that that's the
24 right way to do it. But I think even you

1 have to concede that not everybody
2 universally accepts NYC Reads as like the
3 best way to do it.

4 So we don't know what the next
5 administration's going to do. And some would
6 argue that all these changes, it's not
7 actually good for the long-term stability of
8 our public school system.

9 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: I would say,
10 Senator, the recognition that there is no
11 perfect governance system, and if we start
12 from there.

13 I've been in the school system from
14 before mayoral accountability, and there are
15 a lot of people I heard even at the hearings
16 who I don't know if they go back that far. I
17 remember what it looked like when we had
18 32 community school districts kind of all
19 doing what they wanted to do.

20 And I think as we look even across the
21 nation and we see what some of the community
22 boards are doing, where they're banning books
23 and targeting LGBTQ students and a wide range
24 of things. It's not like there's a panacea

1 on the other side.

2 What we have said here is that we're
3 not saying to have mayoral control forever,
4 but we certainly think that we have earned a
5 right with this mayor and this chancellor.
6 You know, after the next six years if you
7 decide there's a new mayor in place and you
8 want to do it differently -- but we think
9 we've earned that right because we've been
10 open, we've been transformational in the work
11 that we've been trying to do on behalf of
12 New York City kids.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ranker Smith.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you,
16 Chairman.

17 Thank you, Chancellor. Thank you for
18 having your staff join us today.

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Can you share what
21 if any impact smaller class sizes would have
22 on specialized high schools and middle
23 schools? A few of our members were asking.

24 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Listen, I

1 think smaller class sizes will always benefit
2 all kids. Right? I mean if you have a class
3 with 35 and now you have a class with 18,
4 you're going to get more attention and a
5 greater opportunity for you to be even more
6 proficient in your work.

7 But that would apply to any case.

8 Many of the kids in the specialized
9 high schools are really academically
10 proficient kids, and so, you know, I don't
11 know that you'll see dramatic changes. These
12 are kids that are already hitting it out of
13 the park, they're going to the top colleges
14 in the country. But still, those kids don't
15 need to be in a classroom that's
16 significantly overcrowded.

17 My position had always been we should
18 reduce the schools that have significant
19 overcrowding. The challenge I always had
20 with the law was simply that if you take a
21 school in Brownsville that has 21 kids in the
22 third grade, by definition that's
23 overcrowded. That means that principal now
24 has to use whatever additional dollars he has

1 to hire an additional teacher for the one
2 student. That to me was what -- that was
3 what I had a challenge with.

4 But as a concept, I'm not fighting
5 against -- I'm not a chancellor that's going
6 to fight against smaller class sizes. I
7 believe in smaller class sizes. But I think
8 we should really address the schools that are
9 the overriding class challenges and too large
10 class sizes in different parts of the city,
11 and that's not everywhere.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I think that's a
13 commonsense approach that you're trying to
14 take on that.

15 Now, when we're talking about -- in
16 your testimony you mentioned that there's an
17 additional 35,000 students and young people
18 that have come as a result of the migrant
19 crisis. And, you know, as you know, we have
20 a great public education system. We educate
21 every student. Normally to educate
22 35,000 students in the State of New York, you
23 know, at \$26,000 per student, you're talking
24 about \$900 million to do that.

1 How are you able to do what you do and
2 how are you able to -- you know, and again,
3 I'll put it kind of in a different
4 perspective because I represent -- I'm out on
5 Long Island.

6 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Our large -- one
8 of our largest suburban school districts,
9 Brentwood, has 18,000 students. I represent
10 the Sachem School District that has 12,000
11 students. So you're talking about adding
12 what would effectively, in other parts of the
13 state, be very large -- that's like two or
14 three times the largest school districts we
15 even have in other parts of the state.

16 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: How are you
18 handling that?

19 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, I would
20 tell you, I would say to you, Assemblyman,
21 that in many ways this has been a really good
22 thing for us. Because what you have to
23 remember is this. For the five years prior
24 to our arrival in office, New York City lost

1 150,000 students and families from our
2 schools, including 70,000 who left within two
3 years of our arrival. Families have been
4 leaving New York City and leaving our
5 schools. For many years we would say we have
6 over a million kids; we no longer have over a
7 million students. We had a high point of
8 1.1 million. We're over 900,000, but we do
9 not have even a million students anymore.

10 So in many ways these students who are
11 coming are helping to fill the empty seats
12 that have now, you know, been existing for
13 the last several years. We were on a decline
14 in enrollment for over five years. Now we're
15 on the uptick. And so it would be one thing
16 if these students came on top of the
17 1.1 million that we had. They did not. In
18 many ways they're still filling the empty
19 spaces of the families who have left. We
20 actually see that as a boon for our school
21 system.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay, thank you
23 for the clarification on that, because I
24 think that -- as you're mentioning that,

1 that's definitely something that on paper you
2 may not -- you know, it may not be
3 recognized.

4 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: In terms of -- and
6 we talked about it in the earlier part of the
7 day -- the Foundation Aid cuts, do you have
8 any feeling -- because I know on the whole at
9 least the Governor had proposed, you know, a
10 \$200 million increase in Foundation Aid for
11 New York City but under the previous formula
12 it would have been greater than that.

13 Can you reflect on that? I know
14 obviously we're going to work to get
15 additional funds.

16 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah. And I
17 mean that's been part of the challenge that
18 we've been talking about, which is any loss
19 of funds severely affects us. And
20 particularly when you couple that with the
21 fact our stimulus funds are running out and
22 the city is facing tremendous fiscal
23 challenges. All of these things happening at
24 the same time.

1 And so it does require us to make very
2 difficult choices. And how that plays out is
3 as we engage parents and families and
4 communities -- and you're talking about
5 really tough choices around programs that
6 people love and that make a real difference
7 in the lives of their kids -- that we're not
8 in a position to necessarily fund all of it
9 is a challenge for us when you -- if you say
10 we can lose Summer Rising because we're going
11 to use that money to fund something else, and
12 we have parents who will say to us, What are
13 you doing? That program was critical for my
14 family. So tough choices.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

16 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 Last for the Senate, three minutes
19 more for Senator Chu.

20 SENIOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

21 Chancellor, so I'm very, very excited
22 to hear about the Motion Picture Technology
23 High School. That sounds amazing. And this
24 is the beauty of New York: We are a diverse

1 community, and the diverse need is the
2 crucial -- that as a public school system we
3 need to meet every family's need as much as
4 possible.

5 So I just want to bring it back to the
6 class size. So the law was passed back in
7 2022, over a year already, given that now
8 we're in January 2024. So what exactly is
9 the plan from the DOE, the public school
10 system here, to -- to imagine about this, how
11 we meet the compliance with the class size in
12 2028, however, also meet the need for gifted
13 and talented, for District 75, for the
14 bilingual classes, for the enrichment, for
15 the AP classes? What exactly is the plan?

16 And it's not right to tell the school
17 to go figure it out or tell us there's a
18 financial -- it's a collaboration, it's a
19 partnership. We need to figure out how to be
20 creative to -- when you do those designing,
21 how do you restructure what exactly is the
22 plan after the 12 months, past year?

23 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: Thank
24 you so much, Senator. And, you know, this is

1 part of the reason why the chancellor
2 convened the working group, was to answer
3 just those questions. How do -- you know,
4 what is the best way to comply? You're
5 pointing out some really important tradeoffs
6 that would have to be made. You're also a
7 hundred percent right, we would not throw
8 this on the schools and tell them just to
9 figure it out.

10 But there will be decisions that will
11 have to be made as we phase in 20 percent a
12 year in order to comply. We can comply with
13 this law, and we will comply with this law.
14 It is going to require some choices to be
15 made.

16 So the working group talked about some
17 steps that can be taken. You can cap
18 enrollment at your high-demand schools and
19 make the student body smaller. That's one
20 method you could do. You could move out
21 early childhood programs. You can move out
22 other programs. That's another way you could
23 do it. In some schools, Senator, we just
24 would need more funding to hire additional

1 teachers because the classrooms are already
2 there.

3 So it's going to vary by school, but
4 in every case it's going to require some
5 tradeoffs.

6 SENIOR CHU: That's exactly what I
7 want to point out. Like other than
8 tradeoffs, there's no second path, there's no
9 way we can figure something out to
10 restructure? Like --

11 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG: So
12 let me -- yeah. I mean, it's a great
13 question. Let me be -- let me answer it very
14 directly. No. There are only a finite
15 number of ways you can reduce class size.
16 One is you can create another class if you
17 have space and hire a teacher. Obviously
18 that additional teacher requires funding --

19 (Time clock chiming.)

20 FIRST DEP. CHANCELLOR WEISBERG:
21 Anyway, there are two other ways, but we'll
22 get to that.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You can follow up
24 on the two other afterwards. Thank you.

1 Assembly, I believe the Senate is
2 complete.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To close out
4 on the Assembly side, Assemblyman Pirozzolo.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: thank you,
6 Mr. Chairman.

7 Good evening. Thank you, Chancellor,
8 for being here. Good evening?

9 (Laughter.)

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: It feels like
11 that, right.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Anyway, thank you
13 and the team for being here.

14 I want to start out on a pleasant
15 note. Your IGA, Brandon Bloomfield, from
16 your office, has been a very big asset to my
17 office, which means he's a tremendous asset
18 to you. So there are times that things work,
19 so you can let him know that I say thank you.

20 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: I'm a little
22 bit surprised that some of my colleagues have
23 mentioned things about school safety, and
24 that would have given you a very good

1 opportunity to discuss two issues that I
2 wanted to talk about with you, and that would
3 be the Safe Watch Act and the hiring of
4 assistant safety agents. I thought that
5 would have been a perfect opportunity for you
6 to bring those up, but you had neglected to
7 do so.

8 And as I've been sitting here, I was
9 just notified that there's been a very
10 unfortunate incident in Van Buren where two
11 students have been stabbed and possibly an
12 illegal handgun has been --

13 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: While we're
14 here?

15 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: While we're
16 here.

17 -- has been uncovered. Not that those
18 things would have stopped, but, you know, the
19 assistant safety agents I think would
20 certainly be a very big and important thing.
21 So we can address that.

22 As far as mayoral control is
23 concerned, I don't want to take this
24 personally, because I don't mean you

1 personally --

2 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Sure.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: -- think you
4 deserve mayoral control. I don't think
5 anyone has earned it. As a parent and a CEC
6 member, president for seven years, I really
7 feel that there is zero place for parental
8 input on a meaningful level. So I'm going to
9 ask you this question, which is: Do you
10 think that there should be a New York City
11 parents union that is an equal partner in
12 educational decisions for New York City
13 schoolchildren that is not under your
14 influence?

15 Okay? That's really been the problem.
16 It's you and it's the teachers' unions, and
17 there's zero meaningful input from
18 independent parents. And until we get that,
19 there's no tripod. You know, balance is
20 always going back and forth.

21 And then I wanted to speak about
22 possible bias that we have. There was a
23 lawsuit recently about a young lady who
24 wanted to apply to take the test prep classes

1 for the specialized high school, an Asian
2 lady, and she was told that she
3 overrepresented her population, you know, and
4 that it wasn't allowed for that. So there
5 are certainly certain issues that I think
6 exist.

7 In addition, we've had the issue with
8 the "Wheels on the Bus" song that have been
9 changed, you know, like we mentioned with the
10 map. And I don't know that I see enough from
11 you as far as don't do it, stop doing it, or
12 whatever. I mean, you might be handling it
13 behind the scenes, but as a legislator or as
14 a parent, you know, we're supposed to be
15 creating safe spaces for our children, and I
16 can say that I don't think that we always
17 are.

18 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, there
19 was a range of things that you said. And it
20 looks -- we're not going to have much time to
21 respond to them, so I would certainly welcome
22 an opportunity to follow up with you. Every
23 one of those issues that you just raised I
24 think are critically important and deserve

1 real time.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you.

3 Understood.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I'd like to --

5 I do have one thing.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Please.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO:

8 Mr. Chancellor, just thank you for all your

9 time and so on.

10 But I just want to ask, because
11 Assemblyman Al Taylor couldn't make it today
12 but wanted to know about community schools in
13 particular throughout the city, community
14 schools that are attending to needs of the
15 kids well beyond the academic, but also their
16 -- the physical and healthwise, foodwise and
17 so on. These schools that might be open
18 after school and open six days a week and
19 possibly even the weekends, where are we on
20 that?

21 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: How many
22 community schools do we have? Do we have the
23 number?

24 NYCPS COO VADEHRA: Over 400.

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Over 400
2 community schools that are provided with a
3 wide range of additional resources and
4 supports.

5 I would love for every school to be a
6 community school. And I think that community
7 schools provide an invaluable service to New
8 York City -- not just to our New York City
9 schools, but to the city, because they
10 provide services not just for the kids after
11 school, but the parents and the whole wide
12 range of things. And so I couldn't say
13 anything greater about community schools.

14 The challenge that we face is, again,
15 it's just a fiscal one, which is -- which
16 will threaten, you know, the continued
17 expansion of the community schools' work.
18 We'd love to put more community schools
19 around the city. But a hundred-plus of them
20 are really funded by the stimulus funding,
21 and those are the ones that we've got real
22 concerns about our ability to continue to
23 stand those up. We're going to continue to
24 fight for it and do everything that we

1 possibly can. I believe very much in
2 community schools.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And very
4 lastly, I've heard twice here today about
5 somebody being denied taking a specialized
6 test for one of the schools. I've never
7 heard that before. Can people be banned
8 because they are over the limit -- do you
9 know of this?

10 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, no, I
11 just recently heard about this. They're not
12 supposed to be banned. So I don't know, this
13 may be a case of somebody behaving badly at a
14 particular school, trying to deny someone an
15 opportunity --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: If you can get
17 back to us on that, that would be great.

18 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah,
19 absolutely.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: And I want to
21 thank you very much for the time you have put
22 in. It seems to be just shy of three hours.
23 Is it three hours? Well done, sir. I
24 appreciate it.

1 NYCPS CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you so
2 much.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you
4 yourselves, and thank you for coming so.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 Only two hours.

7 (Off the record.)

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: As everybody
9 is beginning to move out, maybe our next
10 panel can gradually work their way up. The
11 United Federation of Teachers, the New York
12 State United Teachers, the Council of
13 School Supervisors and Administrators, and
14 the School Administrators Association of
15 New York State.

16 (Off the record.)

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, please,
18 I'll ask people to regroup. It's like an
19 unruly class here.

20 Panel, good afternoon. Thank you for
21 coming here. We have -- at this point in the
22 proceedings we will change the format that we
23 have presently with the panels. Instead of
24 10 minutes, you will all have three minutes

1 each. And folks, we're very strict on this,
2 okay? Now, I'm a good guy, but Ms. Krueger
3 over here, she is hard-nosed, okay?

4 So I don't know who is supposed to go
5 first, you can decide upon that, but
6 you're -- you're a gentleman, Mr. Mulgrew.

7 Ms. Person, go right ahead.

8 MS. PERSON: Well, thank you. It is
9 an honor to address you today regarding the
10 Executive's budget proposal. My name is
11 Melinda Person. I am the president of the
12 New York State United Teachers, representing
13 nearly 700,000 members in education and
14 healthcare.

15 Since taking this role last spring,
16 I've had the opportunity to travel around the
17 state and visit schools in every corner of
18 this great state, from Queens to Watertown,
19 Chenango to Buffalo. And I am proud to tell
20 that great things are happening in our public
21 schools and that this is not the time for us
22 to take our foot off the accelerator when it
23 comes to funding our schools.

24 There are innovative hands-on learning

1 programs throughout the state. Students are
2 building robots, launching podcasts, growing
3 and selling their own organic vegetables,
4 practicing forensic skills through mock
5 investigations -- all within daily curricula.
6 CTE courses are equipping students with
7 modern-day skills to put them in the advanced
8 jobs of today and tomorrow. I have seen
9 incredible community schools that are
10 supporting students' diverse needs, feeding
11 kids, providing access to healthcare, dental
12 care, supporting entire families.

13 We are moving toward a holistic view
14 of education, one that nurtures our students'
15 mental, emotional and physical health because
16 we know these are critical factors in
17 academic success. And last year's victory of
18 fully funding Foundation Aid for the first
19 time in history was a clear message across
20 our state. In New York we love and support
21 our public schools. And I want to thank all
22 of you for being the champions of
23 Foundation Aid for the last 30 years, many of
24 you -- Senator Jackson, I want to acknowledge

1 updated, we're 100 percent in agreement with
2 that, but we can't only update certain
3 elements of the formula to save money in what
4 seems to be an arbitrary way, in an arbitrary
5 cut.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
7 Ms. Person. I'm sorry, but the time is up.

8 Okay, Mr. Mulgrew.

9 MR. MULGREW: I will avoid all the
10 pleasantries because I have three minutes.
11 Ready? Okay. Thank you all, we appreciate
12 all the work and collaboration we've done in
13 the past.

14 In terms of the Executive's budget
15 proposal, you've heard my colleague speak
16 about the hold harmless. Anytime you do a
17 sweeping change you really need to have a
18 real conversation lest you make mistakes and
19 people get hurt -- in our case, that's
20 children.

21 In terms of the Foundation formula, we
22 can do a lot better than the Olympics in
23 taking the 10, taking the United States judge
24 and the Russian judge out of the gymnastics.

1 We should have a real conversation about this
2 because New York City should not be losing
3 \$131 million.

4 Mayoral control. Let's stop the bogus
5 rhetoric. You change it -- any change does
6 not mean we no longer have mayoral control.
7 I will bring up Boston, Cleveland, New Haven.
8 In all of those cities they have mayoral
9 control. Mayoral control, everyone who's on
10 the board, what we would call the PEP, first
11 has to be nominated by a committee which the
12 mayor does not have control of and can only
13 pick those people to be on the board. And
14 once they're on the board, they're on fixed
15 terms so they cannot be dismissed for
16 disagreeing with the mayor.

17 That is the type of board we're
18 looking to, to move towards the future of
19 New York City. Would that board have ever
20 stopped a mayor from putting in universal
21 pre-K and 3-K? No. They would have
22 supported it. Would that board have ever
23 stopped a chancellor and a mayor from putting
24 in NYC Reads, where we're getting to the

1 science of reading? No, they would have
2 fully supported that. Would that board have
3 said to a mayor you cannot supplant hundreds
4 of millions of dollars of state funding, cut
5 community learning schools, cut pre-K and
6 3-K, and tried to sabotage the law for class
7 size? That board would have stood up and
8 said, We're not standing for this.

9 That is what we're looking for. Prove
10 your case, stop playing politics with our
11 schools.

12 In terms of other things here before
13 us, we are right now in a very good place in
14 terms of what we have -- what we are doing
15 with reading, not just now in New York City,
16 but across the state. But this is one thing
17 that frustrates us so much. I'm going to
18 talk about Teacher Center. Why do I talk
19 about Teacher Center? Because we know they
20 have direct results.

21 My colleague from CSA is going to
22 speak about how she believes she's going to
23 have a problem with class size because it's
24 unfunded. Why is it unfunded in their eyes?

1 It's true, but not the way you think.
2 Because they know the money gets here, but it
3 doesn't get to their members. How does the
4 money disappear in City Hall or in the
5 Department of Ed is the question.

6 Yesterday there was a PEP meeting.
7 What happened during the PEP meeting? Oh,
8 what a shock, more consulting contracts. We
9 have no idea what they do, but they don't
10 help our members and they don't help my
11 members.

12 So when we're talking about teacher
13 center, we're doing this in New York City and
14 there's a lesson to be learned here. We
15 surveyed every school that's using a
16 Teacher Center for the science of reading,
17 and every school that's using an outside
18 consultant. It's almost a perfect match.
19 It's working and moving forward where we are
20 using Teacher Centers and where we are using
21 consultants, all the teachers are reporting
22 to us are the consultants are trying to sell
23 us more products and not help us with our
24 program.

1 So overall we have a lot of challenges
2 here before us. Class size is clearly
3 something that you all have an interest in,
4 and I will be looking forward to answering
5 any of your questions.

6 Thank you.

7 (Time clock chiming; laughter.)

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Sinclair,
9 go ahead.

10 MS. SINCLAIR: Good afternoon,
11 Chairs Krueger, Benedetto, Mayer, Liu and
12 honorable colleagues. My name is Rosemarie
13 Sinclair, and I'm the executive vice
14 president of the Council of School
15 Supervisors and Administrators.

16 On behalf of CSA President Henry Rubio
17 and First Vice President Dale Kelly, it is a
18 pleasure to be with you. We are grateful for
19 your ongoing support.

20 Today I wanted to just speak about the
21 Foundation Aid, the new class-size law,
22 professional development, and school safety.

23 We are thankful for the Foundation Aid
24 that was approved last year. While we

1 believe that the formula needs long-overdue
2 changes, we strongly oppose the proposed
3 adjustments. We caution the state not to
4 eliminate the hold harmless provision. We
5 also believe it is unconscionable to lower
6 the inflation rate calculation.

7 Any process to revive the
8 Foundation Aid should be transparent, engage
9 stakeholders, and allow school leaders enough
10 time to process how changes will impact their
11 school budget. We urge you to fund a study
12 to reform the outdated formula to ensure the
13 state resources meet the complex needs of our
14 students.

15 Another concern is that proposed
16 budget does not consider the financial
17 impacts of the class-size law. CSA fully
18 supports smaller class sizes. However,
19 without additional funding and space, the
20 prescribed limits will lead to the
21 displacement of students and severe program
22 cuts.

23 We have heard directly from hundreds
24 of principals who either do not have the

1 necessary funds to hire additional teachers
2 required by the new law, nor do they have
3 enough space to break students up into
4 additional classes.

5 Reduced class sizes without additional
6 funding will force school leaders to cut
7 resources from extracurricular activities,
8 valuable enrichment and/or intervention
9 programs, particularly harming our most
10 vulnerable students in high-needs
11 communities.

12 Our unit has concerns about a
13 potentially high turnover in school
14 leadership in the coming months.

15 There is no entity that has done more
16 to recruit, train and retain school leaders
17 than CSA's Executive Leadership Institute.
18 With your support, we can expand ELI's
19 professional development which support school
20 leaders with training to help them to provide
21 mentoring and coaching, and expand the
22 flagship of principal programs.

23 Finally, the safety of our students
24 and staff is definitely an urgent concern for

1 CSA. We have seen a significant uptick in
2 incidents that typically result in
3 suspension. There are a number of weapons
4 being confiscated in our school buildings,
5 and assaults against students, teachers and
6 administrators. An adequate level of
7 administrative staffing in our buildings is
8 essential. So we'd just ask that that will
9 be done.

10 Thank you for your time.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

12 Ms. Sinclair.

13 MS. KELLY: Good afternoon.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Kelly.

15 MS. KELLY: That's okay, we know who
16 we are.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MS. GALLAGHER: Good afternoon. I am
19 Cindy Gallagher, with the School
20 Administrators Association of New York State.
21 It's an honor to represent our over
22 22,000 members.

23 In the spirit of brevity, our position
24 on the Governor's budget is SAANYS cannot

1 believe that the first year of the full
2 Foundation Aid phase-in was going to be its
3 last. We cannot believe that we're at the
4 table again this year talking about the same
5 topic.

6 What we do believe in is that last
7 year's commitment in the final budget was a
8 commitment based on a complete understanding
9 by you all of the great needs of our school
10 districts. We do believe that last year's
11 final budget was a commitment to consecutive
12 years to do a constructive process like we
13 had determined, and that if something does
14 need changing in the Foundation Aid, that it
15 be a comprehensive study that we've all
16 thought about and examined.

17 We do believe and we do hope that the
18 FY '25 budget that will be final will
19 continue that commitment that we know that
20 you were so strong on in last year's final
21 budget.

22 Two other areas that are important to
23 our members. One, I'd like to talk about the
24 FAFSA, which I don't believe has been brought

1 up too much today. That would require school
2 districts to provide information to seniors
3 and their parents and their guardians four
4 times a year on the FAFSA and DREAM Act
5 application.

6 We understand the initiative, but that
7 will be a considerable amount of work for the
8 school districts, as well as it probably is
9 not the true root cause of the complexity of
10 that FAFSA application process. So we would,
11 you know, request an examination of that
12 component of the Executive Budget.

13 On the Back to Basics Reading
14 initiative, we completely are full steam
15 ahead with providing instruction based on the
16 science of reading. That kind of shift,
17 however, is very intensive and takes a good
18 amount of time to do. So we do believe --
19 and we congratulate our colleagues on the
20 efforts that they will do in their teacher
21 resources to accomplish that shift in
22 instruction.

23 But it cannot be done one teacher at a
24 time or one grade level at a time. It does

1 take the guidance of a building administrator
2 to embed that over time with a
3 sustainability. So we would respectfully
4 request that additional resources be provided
5 to building administrators for this
6 initiative as well as the many others under
7 this proposed budget that would be put on the
8 roles of our administrators.

9 With the remaining time I'd just like
10 to say that 63 percent of our members in a
11 survey this fall indicated that they
12 definitely felt the positive impact of the
13 final budget last year. And what they did
14 was to use that on increased support staff
15 for students in terms of staffing, as well as
16 expanded programs. What they told us in that
17 survey was their highest needs for students
18 this year was learning loss, student
19 absenteeism and of course staffing shortages,
20 staffing shortages, staffing shortages.

21 So thank you, and we look forward to
22 any questions that you may have.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Gallagher,
24 well done. And well paced, too, by the way.

1 (Laughter.)

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Listen. Now
3 we're going to ask questions, but let me
4 stress that all chairs, everyone is limited
5 to three minutes here. Okay?

6 Okay, so let me start off. And you
7 started off, Ms. Person, by saying great
8 things happening in the schools, and they
9 have always done. Our state, the New York
10 teaching task group -- or any state in this
11 country -- they respond to things.

12 But let me ask you a couple of
13 questions. Mr. Mulgrew, you have talked
14 about cutbacks that have been going on this
15 past school year, and I specifically asked
16 the chancellor about schools being cut back,
17 and he kind of says, no, that's not
18 happening. Tell me, explain the discrepancy.

19 MR. MULGREW: Yes, it is happening,
20 which is why we sued the mayor. It's
21 happening -- look, we've had record funding
22 for the last two years with the
23 Foundation Aid, and that has been a good
24 thing. The mayor announced three rounds of

1 5 percent cuts. One cut has already gone
2 through, so there actually has been cuts.
3 Those cuts were hit on community learning
4 schools, they're cutting back 3-K seats,
5 they've cut back on after-school programs and
6 other things. So those cuts are already
7 happening.

8 Right now at this moment there is an
9 additional \$800 million in cuts that are on
10 the table for April. Those have not been
11 rescinded. He did magically, after we filed
12 the lawsuit, magically the City of New York
13 found \$7 billion two weeks ago in the middle
14 of the night. So they did pull back a lot of
15 the cuts, but there's still cuts.

16 As well as the supplanting, which is
17 so aggravating. Because first we get
18 supplanted, which is they take the education
19 funding you're doing, you know how this
20 works, and they take their amount of
21 commitment out of the budget. Right? So
22 they supplanted the education funding you
23 sent and then, on top of that, they went and
24 cut the schools. This is a really big

1 problem.

2 Yes, if you ask me, I say this is part
3 of them building a case so that they comply
4 with the law of class size so that a year
5 from now when they get to put in -- they get
6 to do the review process, they're going to
7 try to prove they don't have the money.

8 And let's be clear. Since you passed
9 the class-size law, at the time you passed it
10 there was enough money in the capital and the
11 facilities fund to pay for all additional
12 seats and space needed. Since that time,
13 over \$2.5 billion has been reappropriated into a
14 different part of the city budget.

15 So I judge people by their actions.
16 So yes, there's been cuts, but there's even
17 more of a heinous thing going on here where I
18 believe they're trying to purposely set up
19 not to be in compliance with the law by using
20 the one thing in the law, the review process,
21 to stop it.

22 So there has been a lot of cuts. We
23 will continue to push back. But in terms of
24 the supplanting, look, that's up to you,

1 you're allowing -- I don't believe -- we
2 filed a lawsuit on the maintenance of effort;
3 you sent the money. Maybe you should do
4 something about it also, because I don't
5 believe you intend for the City of New York
6 to cut -- supplant your education funding,
7 cut their schools while they have record
8 reserves, which they just admitted they will
9 have an \$8.2 billion reserve, as well as a
10 multi-billion-dollar operating surplus for
11 this year.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To the Senate.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
14 much.

15 We have Senator John Liu.

16 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

17 Yes, Michael Mulgrew, we're well aware
18 of the city taking city funds away,
19 potentially, and having it replaced with
20 state funding. So we want to make sure that
21 that's not happening. We're looking for
22 remedies to that.

23 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

24 SENATOR LIU: Ms. Sinclair, thank you

1 very much for being here. And I always
2 appreciate your members. It's like your
3 members are always between a rock and a hard
4 place. And I appreciate your comments, but I
5 also want to point out that your comments
6 kind of highlight the contradiction if not
7 hypocrisy of what the chancellor talked
8 about. Right?

9 You're saying that your members,
10 meaning the people who actually have to run
11 individual schools, are asked to create more
12 classes, to reduce class sizes, and not given
13 any more additional funding.

14 The chancellor here, on the other
15 hand, says, Oh, and you're saying that you
16 have to hire more teachers without the
17 additional funding. The chancellor himself
18 just said before, well, the city's got to
19 hire 10,000 to 12,000 more teachers. That's
20 going to cost a lot more. And he's saying
21 that he's going to need the funding to do
22 that, but he hasn't communicated that to your
23 members that obviously, in order for all the
24 schools and your members to comply with the

1 class-size law and the constitutional mandate
2 of New York State, that you will have to get
3 additional funds.

4 MS. SINCLAIR: Absolutely.

5 SENATOR LIU: So there's a -- you
6 know, there's clearly a -- mixed messages or
7 at least cross-signals that's going on here.

8 I want to show you that it's not our
9 intent -- I think I can speak for almost
10 everybody here -- that it's not -- the intent
11 here is not to make a difficult situation
12 even more difficult for principals and
13 assistant principals, it's to make sure that
14 our kids are all getting a sound, basic
15 education. And to that end, schools that
16 need more teachers in order to reduce their
17 class sizes, clearly they have to get more of
18 a budget to pay for those teachers.

19 MS. SINCLAIR: Yes. They need a
20 budget.

21 SENATOR LIU: There is no disagreement
22 from us on that point.

23 So I just want to assure you that, you
24 know, we're going to certainly work with the

1 members of CSA as well to ensure that there's
2 going to be a smooth transition.

3 And then the last thing I'll mention
4 is that the chancellor -- I didn't have a
5 chance to mention this before, but he
6 often -- and it's not just the chancellor,
7 the City of New York often presents false
8 choices. If you reduce class sizes, you take
9 away arts funding -- I mean, arts programs or
10 science labs. And that's just a false
11 choice, because there are certainly other
12 things they could do. For example, just
13 building more space.

14 MS. SINCLAIR: And before the time
15 goes out, I definitely want to say that we
16 don't just need teachers, right, 10,000 to
17 12,000 teachers. Who's going to support and
18 supervise them? You're going to need
19 assistant principals, you need
20 administration. Right? So that's more
21 money.

22 SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Assembly.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Our ranker on
2 Ways and Means, Mr. Ra.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. Thank you
4 all for being here and your patience today.

5 I want to ask about this Back to
6 Basics Reading proposal. You know, there was
7 a quote from the Governor, something to the
8 effect that basically, you know, we just
9 throw kids in a room with some books and let
10 them figure it out -- which I don't believe
11 is what's going on in our schools in New York
12 State.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MULTIPLE PANELISTS: No. No,
15 absolutely not.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So I'm wondering if
17 you could comment on this particular proposal
18 as far as literacy and reading in our
19 schools.

20 MR. MULGREW: Anyone can take it.

21 MS. PERSON: I can say a little bit
22 about this. Over the last five or so years
23 there's been an emerging body of research
24 that points to some different approaches,

1 instructional strategies with regard to
2 literacy and teaching children how to read.
3 And the science is pointing us in this
4 direction that we need to rethink how we
5 teach.

6 And so the Governor is proposing that
7 all school districts in the State of New York
8 look to SED for some best practices and then
9 review their current curricular decisions and
10 programs that they're using to make sure that
11 they're aligned with best practices. And
12 there's some additional funding in the budget
13 that will support professional learning for
14 educators and administrators.

15 So we think -- we're supportive of
16 this approach. We think it's the best thing
17 for kids. And our members want to do
18 everything they can to see that kids can
19 succeed. There's nothing better than
20 teaching a kid how to read.

21 MS. GALLAGHER: And we've had a number
22 of our districts move in that direction. And
23 at our recent conference where some of the
24 Governor's representatives were there, they

1 did hear that that takes an intense effort.
2 That is a strong instructional shift to go
3 from one approach to another. It takes
4 years.

5 And so it is an approach that is
6 seeing great benefit. You certainly I'm sure
7 have all read a number of, as Melinda said,
8 of different theories over time on the best
9 way to teach reading, and this is a movement
10 back to a shift of more looking at some basic
11 reading skills and really using them in a
12 consistent way.

13 And as I said before, that really
14 takes the support of a strong administrator
15 at the building level.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

17 And just one other piece that -- you
18 know, we've talked about the Foundation Aid
19 and the hold harmless and all of that. One
20 of the things the commissioner was talking
21 about was really we need a multiyear effort
22 to figure out what the formula looks like
23 going forward.

24 So if any of you could comment on the

1 types of things that we weren't maybe
2 thinking about or doing, you know, 20 years
3 ago when this formula was created that have
4 to be part of our consideration as we go
5 forward.

6 MR. MULGREW: We have much greater
7 data now than we had 20 years ago, like
8 everybody else. And there's weights.
9 Foundation Aid is there for you to meet the
10 additional challenges that a child might
11 have. So with this data, we should be able
12 to have a robust conversation about how those
13 weights should change. Especially when it
14 comes to our students with IEPs, students who
15 are newcomers, students who are homeless --
16 there's all sorts of different things that we
17 now have much greater data, and that's what
18 we should be using to make these changes.
19 Not just take an average.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To the Senate.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Senator Shelley Mayer.

24 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

1 First I just want to say that the
2 Senate Majority strongly supported \$1 million
3 last year, and I'm confident will again this
4 year, for a study for Foundation Aid to be
5 reviewed. And we should just move ahead with
6 that.

7 At the same time, we can't reduce
8 Foundation Aid while we're having this
9 discussion. There's no reason the two things
10 can't happen at the same time and we continue
11 to pay.

12 I just want to give credit to all four
13 of you and your members, because as you know,
14 along with Senator Liu and many of my
15 colleagues, including my Republican
16 colleagues, we've toured schools in the city
17 and the state to see what schools are doing
18 to address learning loss and social and
19 emotional loss as a result of COVID. And
20 there are exceptional school leaders, and
21 they really make the difference -- the
22 teachers, administrators and principals who
23 have really made a difference, and we
24 acknowledge that.

1 So to that end, because we see the
2 schools really have to be community schools
3 whether they're deemed it or not, they have
4 to serve the family now. It is a different
5 school than the 1950s, I hate to tell some of
6 my friends.

7 But what is your ask on the community
8 schools and the risks of the Governor's
9 budget to the existing community school model
10 that both NYSUT and UFT and I think the
11 administrators and principals support as
12 well?

13 MS. PERSON: So I'll say for us our
14 ask is a \$100 million categorical grant
15 program to double the number of community
16 schools in the State of New York. That is
17 our proposal.

18 We have witnessed community schools in
19 the city, in rural districts. We toured
20 community schools in Ilion, New York.
21 Community schools look differently in
22 different areas of the state, but they all do
23 the same thing, in that they assess what is
24 missing, what are the obstacles to learning

1 for the students in that school building, and
2 the obstacles for families, and then they
3 meet those needs.

4 So we believe with this grant money we
5 could double the number of schools in every
6 corner of the state.

7 MR. MULGREW: And we believe we use
8 this money more effectively when it -- things
9 are identified. Mental health right now
10 clearly is one of the focus areas. The issue
11 becomes that you throw money at mental
12 health, but if you do it to a community
13 learning school, you know it's going to get
14 to where it's needed to be. And it's more
15 efficient use. You know, teachers get
16 aggravated but they understand --
17 administrators -- we all get this, it's not
18 the school where you just do academics. The
19 school has basically become the social safety
20 net for its community. And they're asking us
21 to do all of this. Which we're not saying
22 no, but it requires a lot more. And we know
23 through the community learning school process
24 we can actually really target that.

1 MS. GALLAGHER: And we've -- I'm
2 sorry, we've suggested over the years, too,
3 that the community school set-aside not be a
4 way to keep funding the community schools.
5 That we do see the value of community schools
6 in every one of the districts that you
7 visited, as you said. But to do that as a
8 set-aside, to take it away from the
9 Foundation Aid, has been a positive thing for
10 our schools.

11 PANELISTS: (Nodding affirmatively.)

12 MR. MULGREW: Yup.

13 MS. SINCLAIR: I was just going to say
14 that the community school really is
15 considered the hub for the community, right?
16 So -- and it does look --

17 (Time clock chiming.)

18 SENATOR MAYER: I think I knew the end
19 of that sentence, so thank you very much.
20 Thank you all.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 Assembly.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
24 Pheffer Amato.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good
2 morning.

3 MR. MULGREW: Good morning -- good
4 afternoon.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good
6 afternoon. Good evening, tomorrow --

7 (Laughter.)

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So I
9 want to touch on the teacher shortage or that
10 you're going to need to hire teachers. What
11 are you -- you know, as the chair of
12 Governmental Employees, that's what we're
13 hearing about, that we're short-staffed.

14 What do you think it needs, what do we
15 have to do to attract more teachers into our
16 state?

17 MS. PERSON: One of the things that we
18 are pushing for is pension reform to fix
19 Tier 6. Right now we're having trouble
20 retaining folks because when they find out
21 the trajectory of their career and how many
22 years that they're going to have to stay in
23 the career, they're looking elsewhere,
24 because we don't have parity and equity

1 across pension tiers.

2 And so we believe 30 years should be a
3 career for our public servants. This is how
4 we're going to attract people into the
5 profession and get them to stay there. And
6 we're hopeful that we're going to continue to
7 move toward parity between Tiers 4, 5 and 6.

8 MS. SINCLAIR: When we think about
9 teachers and the need for teachers, the fact
10 that, as she mentioned, Tier 6 -- and you
11 look at Tier 4, you know, you could retire at
12 55 with 30 years. With Tier 6, 63 years old
13 and up to 40 years. And you see there's a
14 lot taken away.

15 They may come in but may not stay.
16 There may be a problem with retaining these
17 individuals. And then there are those that
18 say I'm not going to come at all. So, you
19 know, starting from changing the Tier 6 to
20 also in higher education just telling them
21 the goodness and what they could do to help
22 children and so forth and kind of bring them
23 in, you know, mentoring and coaching them to
24 do that work.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: So I'm
2 going to piggyback off of that. As a former
3 paraprofessional -- which I'd like to give a
4 shout out to that -- never wanting a career
5 in education, I saw many women and men who
6 would consider that, but that pathway has to
7 be helped, you know, mentored and cleared
8 through to say, well, you could go to school
9 while you're here, or how to become -- from a
10 paraprofessional to the path of being a
11 teacher. And I think that's like hiring
12 within and working on that.

13 But going back to what you just said
14 before about schools being a whole place
15 for -- you know, I think we need more
16 paraprofessionals. That's the best support
17 you can have. There should be one in every
18 classroom.

19 MR. MULGREW: I completely agree with
20 you. And our paraprofessionals, especially
21 during COVID, were such -- it was
22 amazing what they -- they went -- so many of
23 the children that were at first could not be
24 found or communicated with, in New York City

1 I can say the paraprofessionals, without any
2 direction from anyone, went out and found
3 their children. And they hooked them back
4 in --

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Yeah.
6 And with respect to the classroom, just for
7 the record, I spoke to every child that I
8 ever was in charge of. I started a
9 relationship with them, through graduating
10 high school, and their families.

11 So thank you for that support.

12 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Senator Chu.

15 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

16 I have two questions. Hopefully it's
17 CSA and then UFT can help me answer this.

18 Chancellor Banks was here and I was
19 asking about the class size, if there is any
20 second route other than trade off some
21 programs from the school and -- because I'm
22 hearing from like school principals and
23 parents their concern that some -- art,
24 science, jazz, those classes are going to be

1 taken out in order to meet the compliance for
2 the class size.

3 I want to know the public school
4 system -- this law passed in 2022. So ever
5 since then what does DOE, the public school
6 system, give as guidance -- or suggestion, or
7 any plan -- to our school leaders?

8 CSA?

9 MS. SINCLAIR: Well, I do know that --
10 and our first vice president is on the task
11 force, committee, the group to talk about
12 class size and what to do. So they have been
13 meeting, they have been discussing various
14 things. So that is true, that is going on.

15 Our concern is you're not just looking
16 at -- we talked about funding, but we also
17 need to look about the space. We have
18 schools, and you've heard about -- it's
19 campuses, right? You have buildings with
20 schools within schools. How are we going to
21 actually do this within the five-year time
22 frame? I don't know how, without us getting
23 funds, without moving in a certain direction
24 to really help these schools.

1 We don't want children displaced. If
2 you have a certain amount --

3 SENATOR CHU: Does the chancellor or
4 the administration give you any support?

5 MS. SINCLAIR: Well, there have been
6 just the talks about, you know, what to do
7 and so forth as far as the class size task
8 force. That is definitely --

9 MR. MULGREW: There's been a
10 reluctance to actually put a real plan in
11 place going forward the next three years. A
12 lot of the work with the committee has been
13 about what will the cost be, and that has
14 turned out to be a very hot-button issue
15 amongst the committee. They're constantly
16 talking about how the DOE is trying to
17 overestimate everything.

18 But the law is clear. There's no
19 reason -- it's first the children with need
20 and the programs they have, and then you move
21 forward, and then there is a process for
22 waivers where it is everybody agrees it
23 should be there. So the law is very
24 prescriptive in terms of being common sense

1 to making it work. And that's something I'd
2 never hear --

3 SENATOR CHU: I actually have another
4 question for you.

5 MR. MULGREW: -- from this
6 administration.

7 SENATOR CHU: Yes. The chancellor
8 said we need to hire 10,000 to 12,000 more
9 teachers. With the Tier 6 and all the
10 challenges with that, from the UFT
11 perspective do you think that it's possible
12 in 2027 we hire 10,000 more teachers?

13 MR. MULGREW: Over the next three
14 years -- you know, I am optimistic because
15 we're starting to finally get a couple more
16 people into the profession, but keeping them
17 is going to be the problem. Because the
18 Tier 6 thing blows up on us every -- when
19 they're like, 42 years?

20 (Laughter.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,
22 Michael. I have to cut you off, sorry.

23 Assembly.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman

1 Simon.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

3 I want to thank all of you for your
4 testimony. Mr. Mulgrew, I'd love to know
5 more about how that breakdown of schools who
6 get trained by Teacher Centers and others --

7 MR. MULGREW: I'll send you our
8 survey.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I'd love to have
10 that information.

11 Let me just give a thumbs-up to paras.
12 I'm still in touch with my para from the
13 '70s. So great work, great teamwork a really
14 important part of that.

15 You know, when it comes to this issue
16 of science of reading and this approach, it's
17 the kind of thing that we need to do together
18 and we need to keep moving forward. One of
19 the concerns -- and this is something I've
20 raised with the School Boards Association, is
21 the fact that once you buy books, many
22 millions of dollars, the schools keep wanting
23 to use them.

24 And it's somewhat like mayoral control

1 where we put this in, and I need my four
2 years, or I need my eight years. And if it's
3 not working, it's not working. If there are
4 problems with it, we need to address those
5 problems. Either we -- I don't want to keep
6 doing the same thing just because we have the
7 books or just because we have that law.

8 So, you know, what are school
9 administrators doing to advance that
10 conversation?

11 MS. GALLAGHER: One of the things of
12 course is supporting your teachers. And I
13 think one of the ways -- and we have had many
14 discussions with State Ed on this. What you
15 need to do is build a new skill level where
16 in fact you are able to really analyze and
17 take apart those kind of textbooks and
18 curriculums that you want to start shifting
19 to, and then comes the actual instruction.

20 But that is a whole different field of
21 thought. I mean, as one -- it was either
22 Melinda or Michael who -- you know, what
23 we're seeing are vendors coming on board, but
24 that is not the whole story. You have to

1 know how to use them, when to use them, and
2 what kind of things need supplement.

3 MS. PERSON: So I would just add that
4 teachers teach students how to read, not
5 curricula, not books, not stuff that you buy.
6 Right? And so we have a whole lot of
7 folks -- and I think the commissioner said
8 this earlier, there is no science of reading
9 curriculum. Right? It's about giving our
10 members, the educators that are working
11 directly with students, the tools that they
12 need to do their job -- so that they can
13 differentiate instruction, so that they can
14 take on the really complex task that is
15 teaching a child to read.

16 PANELISTS: (General agreement.)

17 MR. MULGREW: You know, the whole --
18 look, education is a massive industry outside
19 of the schools, as far as we're concerned,
20 and everybody's always trying to sell us an
21 idea. And we saw over and over again was
22 certain people's ideas got spread around, and
23 it just -- giving a child and teaching them
24 the joy of reading meant that they had to

1 have the basics in place. And that became
2 prevalent across most of the country.

3 And we're seeing -- we're not seeing
4 the results that should be there. And we
5 know it has to be the science of reading.
6 But it's a -- it is an extremely difficult
7 instructional change for a teacher who's been
8 teaching one way, and this is something we're
9 hoping higher ed also starts to help us with.
10 We're seeing some higher ed that is now
11 starting to directly go towards this
12 instruction.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Senator Murray.

15 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,
16 Madam Chair.

17 Three minutes is fast. I'll start
18 with a quick statement.

19 Ms. Person, you brought up earlier CTE
20 programs. These cuts, what they could do --
21 or these reductions in funding -- I would
22 invite the Governor and anyone who questions
23 the success of CTE and how beneficial it is
24 for the students to come to William Floyd

1 School District, in my Senate district, where
2 it is a high-needs district with just an
3 amazing CTE program. It's fantastic. And
4 we're seeing the results. Graduation rates
5 are high. Kids are getting out with jobs.
6 They have career ambitions here. It's
7 working fantastic.

8 These cuts could ruin that and set us
9 back.

10 But we're talking about hiring more
11 teachers to meet the classroom-size needs and
12 things like this, but I fear if these cuts
13 don't change, then it's the exact opposite
14 direction: We could lose teachers.

15 Is there an estimate? Could we be
16 losing teachers if these numbers stay the way
17 they're being proposed?

18 MS. PERSON: We definitely could see
19 the loss of staff in our schools, programs.
20 The cuts to elementary STEM programs,
21 after-school programs, those are the types of
22 things that we're hearing from our members
23 and from superintendents and school boards.

24 I want to say a little bit more about

1 CTE, though, because I think it is so
2 critically important. There is a waiting
3 list for CTE programs across the state right
4 now. I was speaking to a BOCES in
5 Monroe-Orleans County, and they have
6 200 students on a waitlist to get into the
7 CTE program for a health careers program.
8 Right? We have a healthcare worker shortage,
9 we have students that are demanding these
10 programs. And because of the archaic way
11 that we fund CTE in this state, we are not
12 funding enough spots for these kids to get
13 the education that they need.

14 So we need to reform the BOCES aid and
15 the Special Services Aid formulas so that we
16 can finally get those resources out and serve
17 these students.

18 SENATOR MURRAY: Amen to that.

19 MR. MULGREW: She's right.

20 (Laughter.)

21 SENATOR MURRAY: I agree on
22 everything.

23 MR. MULGREW: New York City, our
24 programs? We're a 91 percent graduation rate

1 for CTE students. That's 10 points higher
2 than the academics.

3 MS. SINCLAIR: Yeah, they're doing
4 very well.

5 MR. MULGREW: Yeah. They are -- this
6 is the future.

7 SENATOR MURRAY: Amen. I agree with
8 that completely.

9 And with the short time I have left,
10 Mr. Mulgrew, recently the UFT filed a lawsuit
11 regarding congestion pricing. Is that still
12 ongoing? And if so, may I say thank you?

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. MULGREW: Yeah, when -- we waited
15 to read the documents and it was clear that
16 the MTA filed documents that said negative
17 impact on pollution, congestion and quality
18 of life for four and a half boroughs of
19 New York City. So I'm not going to stand by,
20 and my members and everyone we're joined
21 with -- it was a -- there's a
22 collaboration -- we're not going to stand by
23 and say a half a borough gets a benefit while
24 four and a half get a negative impact.

1 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Assembly.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ranker Smith.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you,

6 Mr. Chairman.

7 Thank you all for joining us. You
8 know, I'm happy to hear your testimony. I
9 stepped out for a few minutes, but I was
10 listening as I was out in the Concourse. And
11 I'm happy that you're able to give a voice to
12 so many educators and principals across the
13 state, because what you kind of hit the nail
14 on we've been now hearing now for several
15 weeks of just the peril and the concern about
16 the potential for cuts and reductions in
17 service.

18 What I wanted to talk about at the
19 beginning of the year, knowing that we do
20 this every year, was community schools. And
21 I'd like to take a moment to talk about that,
22 because those are needed improvements that
23 I'd like to see across Long Island, across
24 the State of New York. And unfortunately I'm

1 hoping we can, you know, buy back, I guess
2 buy back the school aid through the Governor.

3 But I was hoping that instead of
4 talking today about, you know, the perilous
5 reductions in service that we could talk
6 about building on the successes. Last year I
7 viewed as a success, the last several years.

8 Can you talk about what we could do if
9 we can get past this?

10 MR. MULGREW: Well, thank you for
11 asking us the question, because you -- he
12 limited us to three minutes. We had it in
13 that testimony.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MS. PERSON: I was going to talk about
16 it.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MS. PERSON: So I had said earlier
19 that we're asking for \$100 million for
20 categorical funding for community schools.
21 This can fund the position of a community
22 school director in the schools that this
23 investment, for each dollar that we invest,
24 it leverages over \$6 of returned services

1 into our school buildings. They bring in
2 folk from the community, community-based
3 agencies, they do all kinds of things that
4 wrap services right around children and their
5 families so we can remove all obstacles to
6 learning.

7 And I -- the most recent community
8 school that I visited, they had a hub of
9 activity where they were providing kids food,
10 hygiene products, they had laundry facilities
11 for families to access. Right? These are
12 the types of things that are barriers to kids
13 actually showing up in school.

14 And so we talk about addressing
15 chronic absenteeism? Community schools are
16 the answer.

17 MR. MULGREW: We go out of our -- go
18 ahead.

19 MS. GALLAGHER: Actually, if you think
20 about the traditional model where it's mostly
21 outside -- inside-outside kind of services,
22 this is just the opposite, where you're
23 bringing the outside inside. And that
24 enhances communication just a hundredfold.

1 And so what we've seen in so many of
2 our districts where this is going so well --
3 right in the Capital District we've got three
4 or four models that are just superb -- you
5 see those services all being communicated and
6 based on the students. So, you know --

7 MR. MULGREW: And for you all, for the
8 community schools -- because the union runs
9 community schools in every borough in
10 New York City. We partner with all these
11 different people. And everything said about
12 return for the dollar, all of that is there.

13 During the pandemic the community
14 schools of New York that we run had the
15 highest academic performances, because there
16 was a complete connection in place.

17 And just think about a health clinic.
18 Forty years ago you put a health clinic in a
19 school, it was a great thing, you'd have a
20 ribbon-cutting. What was the utilization?
21 You didn't even check. There might have been
22 8 percent of the school population. You make
23 it a community school with a director,
24 they'll have 90 percent of the children

1 signed up to go to that center.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

3 I think it's worth every penny. It's
4 an old idea, but it's time to implement it.

5 Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Senate time.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8 Robert Jackson.

9 SENATOR JACKSON: First let me thank
10 you all for coming in. And it's imperative
11 that you be here to communicate to us what
12 the impact of her proposed budget will be.

13 And so I asked that question, but I
14 don't want you to answer because I know what
15 it means. You know, people are already now
16 starting to look at other options so that
17 they can maintain their livelihood, you know?

18 But I want to say to you that if this
19 was your membership up here, and there were
20 500 people in this room, I ask you who is
21 your State Senator, who is your State
22 Assemblymember, you need to reach out to each
23 and every one of them, including the Governor
24 and everyone else. And when you see them

1 walking in the street or in the store,
2 buttonhole them about how important it is
3 that this does not happen.

4 And in fact in my opinion the
5 Republicans and Democrats are working
6 together (raising voice) because the impact
7 is going to be devastating. And I say it
8 loud like that because it is going to be
9 devastating. But it's not going to happen,
10 because we're going to stand united and fight
11 this.

12 Now, the Governor can come on board or
13 she can just fight with everyone in the State
14 of New York. I know if I was the Governor, I
15 would open the door and say, Come in, don't
16 worry about it, we're going to be all right.

17 We have to be. But we have to be
18 active in making sure that things happen.

19 And I totally agree with you as far as
20 Tier 6 is a major issue. How do I know that?
21 Because I chair the Civil Service and
22 Pensions Committee. And I've said loud and
23 clear when we first opened it up, that Tier 6
24 sucks. And everyone says it. You know?

1 So we have to change things for the
2 better. And we have to be willing to fight
3 for it. And I'm ready to fight with you.

4 PANELISTS: Thank you.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Who dares want to
7 go after RJ?

8 (Laughter.)

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: But
10 Ms. Hyndman, you're going to have to.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: (Inaudible.)

12 (Laughter; inaudible exchange.)

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: You can pass
14 the baton to me, Senator Jackson.

15 Thank you all for testifying today. I
16 was a former substitute teacher, a former CEC
17 president, and I'm still a parent of a
18 middle-schooler, which is why I testified at
19 the Queens public hearing regarding mayoral
20 control. Because I feel, as an elected
21 official and a parent, the system must
22 continue to evolve and change. The community
23 needs something better.

24 I do believe, however, that it must

1 wait until after the budget to have this
2 discussion and have the Assembly work on what
3 mayoral control should look like.

4 I feel reform is critical, and
5 modifications are necessary. But were we to
6 leave it in the Governor's hands to say
7 mayoral control should be around for four
8 more years, we're leaving our parents and
9 children to the peril of not having any
10 reviews for four years.

11 I also feel that we ask our teachers
12 to be reviewed every year, and they do it --
13 willingly or unwillingly, but the teachers
14 are still reviewed. So I feel that as a
15 Legislature we have the ability to review
16 mayoral control. How many years, how that
17 looks, that's up for us to decide as parents,
18 as legislators who are elected by our
19 community to make those decisions.

20 So for a blanket approach of four
21 years, I feel it's a disservice to the
22 parents and students in New York City.

23 So to President Mulgrew, I've known
24 you for a lot of years now, but what steps do

1 you think we should be taking to supplement,
2 not supplant, the deficits that are going to
3 exist in our public schools?

4 MR. MULGREW: It really comes -- look,
5 we have a lawsuit filed but why do we have to
6 wait for the -- that to play out, where you
7 can just do additional strengthening of laws
8 and regulations here to say you cannot do
9 this? You cannot literally take hundreds of
10 millions of dollars, billions of dollars from
11 education and stick them into reserves for
12 the city.

13 Because that was never your intent,
14 and that would be the approach I would take.

15 And I agree with you on mayoral
16 control, it should be done after the budget
17 and you should -- I know we're all waiting
18 for the SED's report which you commissioned
19 and which we're looking forward to reading.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Exactly.
21 Exactly. I know our Speaker agrees, we'd
22 like to take as much policy out of the budget
23 as possible, particularly this one.

24 But thank you.

1 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Senator Cordell Cleare.

4 SENATOR CLEARE: The \$100 million
5 grant to double community schools in
6 New York -- I think is what you said -- where
7 would that be? We have 400. I just want to
8 get an idea of where would we get more
9 community schools. That would be 800.

10 MS. PERSON: So there would be a grant
11 program that districts that were interested
12 in converting to a community school model,
13 they would apply to the State Education
14 Department and receive grant monies to get
15 started.

16 What most districts have found is
17 after that initial investment, they're able
18 to sustain the costs of a community school on
19 an ongoing basis. So they really just need
20 the initial startup cost to get off the
21 ground.

22 SENATOR CLEARE: Oh, great.

23 Social workers in schools. Where are
24 we with that? Do we have social workers in

1 most of our schools, some of our schools? I
2 believe every school should have a social
3 worker.

4 MS. GALLAGHER: I would say increasing
5 numbers, but that was largely dependent, for
6 this beginning school year, based on the FY
7 '24 final budget. In fact, as I had
8 mentioned in the survey that we had done at
9 the beginning of the year, that our --
10 63 percent of our respondents indicated that
11 they had had increased levels of staffing,
12 and that had been for our members in terms of
13 school counselors, social workers, and
14 mental health clinicians.

15 MR. MULGREW: And for us the issue has
16 been if we can find them -- we're hiring them
17 right now. But, I mean, the community
18 learning schools that the union works on,
19 every one of them we have -- we find outside
20 funding to make sure each one of them has a
21 social worker. We found a tremendous need,
22 and it's actually really paid off quite well.

23 But there has to -- again, saying --
24 the reason why we're asking for it

1 specifically as this one thing going directly
2 only for this is because historically it's
3 gone to school districts and it goes into the
4 general budget.

5 SENATOR CLEARE: Yeah.

6 MR. MULGREW: And then -- boom. It
7 doesn't fulfill the need or the spirit of
8 what you think you're getting by doing this.

9 MS. GALLAGHER: And it's designated as
10 a set-aside, which means that the school
11 districts are required to use it --

12 SENATOR CLEARE: I get it. I want to
13 ask another question.

14 What is your -- thank you -- your
15 position on the fact that New York City is
16 the only district in the state that has to
17 pay charter rent, and the only district in
18 the state that doesn't receive charter
19 transition aid? That, according to the
20 Education Law Center, cost us an estimated
21 \$258 million in school year '23 and deprived
22 the DOE of 2.6 billion since 2011.

23 Do you support New York City getting
24 transitional aid?

1 MR. MULGREW: I support a lot more
2 than that. I support that we shouldn't be
3 the only school district supplying rent.

4 I mean -- and you didn't even bring up
5 the fact that in their per-pupil allotment
6 for the charter schools they already have a
7 facilities allotment, and then they're
8 getting free rental space. I mean, don't get
9 me started.

10 (Laughter.)

11 MR. MULGREW: This is ridiculous.

12 And then New York City actually
13 reimburses the charter schools at a much
14 higher rate for special education services
15 than the state says they have to do.

16 SENATOR CLEARE: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblymember
19 Pirozzolo (inaudible).

20 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chair.

22 Thank you, everyone, for being here
23 today.

24 MR. MULGREW: Thank you.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Mr. Mulgrew,
2 I'm really going to talk to you, because I'm
3 from the city, you're from the city -- not
4 that you're not from the city -- but you
5 heard me speak to the chancellor about parent
6 involvement, right?

7 MR. MULGREW: Mm-hmm.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: And my concern
9 about mayoral control -- and I had my rep
10 speak at a meeting the other night on
11 Staten Island -- is that as bad a filter that
12 I believe the Department of Education had
13 been, or at least the mayor and the
14 chancellor have been as far as advocating on
15 behalf of students, at least they are a
16 filter. And since you are the only other
17 game in town educationally, as the UFT, I
18 kind of referenced that too, is that, you
19 know, having the influence of the UFT if
20 there was no mayoral control.

21 But the real question is parental
22 influence. We don't seem to have any
23 meaningful parental influence. And that's
24 where I'm really going with this, because I

1 know that your people do a very good job and
2 it's got to be a very stressful job to do
3 this day after day and see how children
4 progress or don't progress.

5 So I asked the mayor this -- the
6 chancellor, I'm sorry. Do you think there
7 should be a New York City parents' union as
8 an equal parent -- as an equal partner in
9 education decisions and influence, not under
10 your influence, as far as when it comes to
11 negotiating things? Because you've even said
12 today -- you've used the word your members,
13 her members. You didn't mention students
14 once. But quite honestly -- it's for your
15 members, right -- there's nobody who
16 represents students.

17 MR. MULGREW: I'm going to disagree
18 with your statement. Because first of all,
19 we wouldn't have class size if it weren't for
20 the parents of New York City. The parents of
21 New York -- it was not -- the United
22 Federation of Teachers was part of it, but it
23 was the parents of New York City who did
24 this.

1 So in terms of mayoral control itself,
2 there should be some sort or form -- because
3 we support that parents actually should have
4 a real authority and voice inside of the CECs
5 and whatever we do with that final panel, if
6 people want to keep that.

7 So for us, everything that we've ever
8 done, we can never be successful without
9 parents. And that has always been our thing.
10 That's why, you know, every two and a half
11 months I meet with the CEC presidents. I do
12 all of these things, and they tell us what to
13 do.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: When you're
15 talking about parents, you're talking about
16 groups that are within the DOE, not
17 independent parents.

18 In addition to that, I just want to --

19 MR. MULGREW: Actually they're all
20 independently elected people from their
21 communities.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: Well, that can
23 be argued.

24 But what you do when there are

1 incidences in schools like we've had with the
2 changing -- the elimination of Israel on a
3 map or the wheels on the bus go 'round and
4 'round? What do you do disciplinary-wise to
5 work with your members to prevent that from
6 happening?

7 MR. MULGREW: We could have a whole
8 hearing on discipline right now in our public
9 schools, especially in New York City.

10 There was a push under a previous
11 administration that we were -- that
12 principals' hands were being tied to do any
13 sort of actual real discipline when it was
14 needed to happen, and suspensions. And for
15 us, it's all about every child comes to the
16 school, we have to make it safe.

17 More importantly, when it comes to the
18 future, it is our job as educators, working
19 with parents, to make sure that we're making
20 each generation better than the next.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay.

22 Mr. Mulgrew, thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN PIROZZOLO: (Inaudible.)

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: To the Senate

1 side.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Senator Tom O'Mara.

4 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

5 Good afternoon. Thank you for being
6 here. Thank you for representing your
7 memberships, and thank all of your members
8 for the great work they do throughout the
9 state in our education system. I truly do
10 appreciate that.

11 I am encouraged by a few of the issues
12 that have been talked about a little bit with
13 CTE, Teacher Centers, and a rational and
14 reasoned approach to reevaluating the
15 Foundation Aid formula. We need input from
16 all sides on that. And we'll hopefully come
17 up with a formula that when you make a change
18 to a certain input, you get the results you
19 would expect. Because the way I've seen it
20 over the years, you make one change, thinking
21 you're going to have a result, and it doesn't
22 come out that way.

23 And I want to join in with
24 Senator Jackson on our bipartisan approach

1 and, frankly, outrage to this education
2 proposal. And if this truly is -- and I want
3 to get your opinions on this, briefly. Do
4 you believe this is set up to be a buyback
5 for the Legislature? Because I've never seen
6 anything like it in my years here. And no --
7 no -- I mean there's always some buybacks
8 that are in there, legislative adds that go
9 out and come back in. I've never seen
10 anything like this to this magnitude by far.

11 What's your impression of that? Are
12 you hearing anything from the executive on
13 it? Is that what they're expecting here?

14 MS. PERSON: From what I can tell, the
15 Executive and the Division of Budget is
16 trying to start a conversation. And I think
17 what I said in a recent interview was we're
18 starting something --

19 (Laughter.)

20 MS. PERSON: -- because we're
21 concerned about all of the panic that this is
22 creating out in the field. They -- the local
23 parents are being alerted we're going to
24 be -- we might be closing your elementary

1 school. Parents that are being alerted, your
2 kid may lose intramurals and the STEM --
3 elementary STEM program. There will no
4 longer be Spanish for fifth-graders. Right?

5 These alerts are going out to our
6 communities. And it's really unnecessary. I
7 know there's a budget dance that has to
8 happen. But this is creating too much
9 upheaval in our communities, and I think it's
10 great that there's a bipartisan rally from
11 both houses that are demanding that this
12 money is going to be restored. We're very
13 grateful for that.

14 MS. GALLAGHER: This is not the
15 conversation, if it was designed to be that,
16 that we were hoping to have for this year.
17 We were set on a far different path last year
18 that we were hoping to continue and build
19 upon, so.

20 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you. Well --

21 MR. MULGREW: One hell of a buyback.

22 SENATOR O'MARA: Yeah. Unlike any
23 I've ever seen. But, you know, if this is a
24 budget dance, it's more like a mosh pit.

1 (Laughter.)

2 SENATOR O'MARA: So carry on.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes, my bad.

4 There was another person, and I neglected to
5 say that Assemblywoman Levenberg would like
6 to say a few things.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Thank you.

8 And it's hard to go after that mosh
9 pit comment without a lot of laughing.

10 I just wanted to thank you again for
11 all of the hard work that you do on behalf of
12 our schools and our students. And of course
13 representing our teachers you're also
14 representing an awful lot of parents, because
15 there's a lot of parents that are teachers.
16 Just saying.

17 Anyway, I know that -- you know, I
18 heard you talk about APPR a little bit. I
19 know that that's an issue that you're
20 concerned with a little bit about. I know
21 about pension reform, and I'm completely on
22 the same page with you. Community schools --
23 again, I represent communities like Ossining
24 and Peekskill that may not have exactly

1 community schools but they have models that
2 are very similar and they do those wraparound
3 services, and that's wonderful.

4 I'm not sure you talked at all about
5 the UPK funding. I'm curious if you have any
6 opinion about that.

7 And finally, this is kind of a little
8 bit off the topic that you might think, but I
9 think it's very relevant, which is as you're
10 thinking about congestion pricing and things
11 of that nature, how have you heard from your
12 members at all about how housing prices have
13 impacted their ability to perform their jobs
14 effectively?

15 And I don't know if you'd like to
16 comment on that but, you know, obviously
17 housing has been a big topic of discussion
18 for the Legislature, for the Executive,
19 and -- something that I'm very focused on --
20 for keeping everybody able to afford where
21 they live and work.

22 MR. MULGREW: Okay, I'll do housing
23 fast. It is now -- we've just finished a
24 survey of our membership; it is the

1 number-one economic concern of every one of
2 the members in New York City. A large
3 portion live not just in the city but around
4 the city. We have a housing crisis. We have
5 a workforce housing crisis. We have always
6 supported work on more low-income housing,
7 but the housing that we need does not fall
8 into that. We have to do something. It's
9 been over 50 years since there's been a
10 workforce middle class housing program in and
11 around the City of New York, and it has to
12 happen. We're going to lose everyone.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: I'm just
14 hoping you can share that report with us, if
15 that's possible.

16 MR. MULGREW: Sure. It's
17 overwhelming. This is it. This is now
18 taking up their monthly -- their weekly
19 budgets.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: And if you
21 have any information about maybe average
22 commute times for members, both, you know,
23 NYSUT and UFT, I think that would be really
24 helpful for all of us.

1 MR. MULGREW: I'll see what -- I'm
2 sure we have something. We know they don't
3 like congestion pricing.

4 MS. GALLAGHER: Do you want a response
5 on universal pre-K very quickly?

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Sure.

7 MS. GALLAGHER: Of course we, you
8 know, appreciate all the additional funding.
9 But it is time for that to really be kind of
10 folded in in a manner that is transitional
11 into the state aid kind of funding streams,
12 as opposed to keeping it as a grant for our
13 school districts.

14 So we know it is successful, we know
15 that early childhood works. It is just
16 exactly where we have to head.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN LEVENBERG: Right. And
18 then if you have any opinions about the
19 Foundation Aid proposal, there are a few --
20 in terms of doing a study to reinvent
21 Foundation Aid, there are a few bills out
22 there. And if you have any opinions about
23 which ones you like the best, good to know.

24 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE PANELIST: Sure.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Senate side.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I
3 think I'm just closing. Thank you all for
4 your work.

5 So my great knowledge of education:
6 schools with great principals end up being
7 great schools. Great teachers want to work
8 for great principals. Great teachers can
9 become great principals.

10 We have Teacher Centers; we used to
11 have training centers for principals. Do we
12 have any anymore?

13 MS. SINCLAIR: Yup, we do. Well,
14 that's why I was talking about ELI. Because
15 we have our Executive Leadership Institute
16 that actually trains our leaders and helps
17 them in various aspects of their careers.

18 And we were looking forward to having
19 an increase because I don't see anywhere else
20 that's actually training and helping
21 administrators, school leaders and other
22 leaders in offices.

23 MS. GALLAGHER: And we receive the
24 same from it, yes, into our Magellan Fund,

1 and that was supported by the Legislature
2 last year.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

4 Then there was lots of discussion
5 about the changes in protocol for reading and
6 what's expected of teachers. So when I do
7 the Governor's math, what she's giving us to
8 help ensure that we train the teachers
9 throughout the state in the new protocols for
10 teaching reading, it works out to be \$500 per
11 teacher. Can you do it on \$500?

12 MS. PERSON: Yes, we can.

13 (Laughter.)

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, excellent.

15 MS. PERSON: Well, for the first
16 20,000 teachers. That is the plan.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you all think
18 that this can be done?

19 MS. PERSON: We do, yes.

20 MR. MULGREW: Yes. We've already
21 worked on the -- since we started a year
22 before New York City, and we're all sharing
23 those resources, sharing all those resources.

24 And just last year alone, over a

1 thousand teachers came in voluntarily. We
2 had to add classes; we didn't think it would
3 be that popular. They just spent their two
4 weeks in the summer being trained on the new
5 reading approaches, and then we used a lot of
6 those folks -- we trained leaders, we had
7 principals who came in -- and we just started
8 moving it.

9 When it's educators working with
10 educators, it tends to be much easier.

11 (Laughter.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good lesson.

13 MS. GALLAGHER: But we would also
14 really request that some of the additional
15 funding be added to our building
16 administrators. For their support throughout
17 this whole initiative.

18 MS. SINCLAIR: Absolutely.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have many more
20 questions, but I don't have enough time, so I
21 also, just on behalf of the Senate Democrats,
22 want to thank all four of you and your
23 members for the work you do. Because, you
24 know, we've got to get the education right.

1 Right? We've got to get it done.

2 So thank you.

3 Assemblymember?

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel, thank
5 you very much. We really appreciate your
6 testimony. Thank you.

7 And as they leave, let us ask the next
8 panel to come on up, which is the Conference
9 of Big 5 School Districts, Albany City School
10 District, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers and
11 Buffalo Public Schools.

12 (Off the record.)

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And as you all
14 see the clock getting later, and we're going
15 to have a new panel. But also, if you're
16 watching and tracking, if you're going to be
17 on the next panel -- so this is Panel B. If
18 you're on Panel C, if you wouldn't mind start
19 heading down to the front so that when we get
20 to you, it can move faster. And then the
21 same pattern. It actually really moves us
22 along. Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel No. 4,
24 we welcome you. We thank you for coming here

1 today. We thank you for your patience
2 waiting to testify.

3 So I will leave up to you who will be
4 the first to go. Will it be as we have it
5 listed here, Ms. Pine? Please. Ms. Pyle, my
6 apologies. Okay, go right ahead.

7 MS. PYLE: (Mic off.)

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Inaudible.)

9 MS. PYLE: There we go. Sorry about
10 that.

11 My name's Jennifer Pyle. Most of you
12 know me. I serve as executive director of
13 the Conference of Big 5 School Districts, and
14 we represent Buffalo, New York City,
15 Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, Albany,
16 Mount Vernon, and Utica public schools.

17 Thank you for providing us with the
18 opportunity to testify today, and for your
19 unwavering commitment to the needs of urban
20 education in New York State.

21 We're pleased that the Executive
22 Budget proposal maintains full funding for
23 expense-based aids. However, the Governor's
24 adjustments to the Foundation Aid formula,

1 including the elimination of save-harmless
2 provisions and reduction of the inflation
3 factor, would be devastating to school
4 districts already struggling to meet the
5 needs of some of the state's most vulnerable
6 children. This retreat from full funding,
7 coupled with the impending exhaustion of
8 federal grant funds, would have dire
9 consequences.

10 While we recognize that a complete
11 overhaul of the formula will require
12 significant time and resources, it's our
13 desire to see the state begin making small
14 adjustments in the '24-'25 State Budget that
15 would move us closer to a more equitable and
16 adequate funding model.

17 It's imperative that the state commit
18 to full funding and a revised Foundation Aid
19 formula that's transparent, predictable, and
20 distributes funding in an equitable manner
21 reflective of unique student needs. We urge
22 you to eliminate the Foundation Aid
23 set-asides and afford school districts the
24 ability to target funding where it's most

1 needed.

2 While we support school choice and
3 affording parents the option to send their
4 children to charter schools, we have serious
5 concerns with regard to the current charter
6 school funding system. Charter school
7 expansion in saturated school districts must
8 be limited and the New York State Board of
9 Regents designated as the sole authorizing
10 authority.

11 Our school districts currently operate
12 some of the most innovative and successful
13 CTE programs in the state. We urge you to
14 increase the Special Services Aid per-pupil
15 funding and to align this funding with our
16 Career and Technical Education programs by
17 expanding it to students beginning in
18 Grade 9. In addition, more resources should
19 be provided to enable Mount Vernon and Utica
20 to expand already successful in-district CTE
21 programs.

22 Our school districts have some of the
23 state's longest running and most successful
24 prekindergarten programs. However, funding

1 levels have not been adjusted to reflect the
2 actual costs of these vital programs. The
3 state must commit to fully funding
4 prekindergarten programs in high-need urban
5 school districts.

6 We applaud the Governor's focus on
7 mental health needs in our schools.
8 Unfortunately, funding for health services
9 has been frozen for many years, and Buffalo
10 and Rochester will actually experience a
11 reduction under the Governor's plan. We urge
12 you to again restore this cut and to provide
13 additional targeted health and mental health
14 funding for all member districts to assist
15 them with increased demands for health
16 services.

17 (Time clock chiming.)

18 MS. PYLE: Am I up? That was three?

19 Thank you. In closing, I just want to
20 say we appreciate the focus on literacy, and
21 we look forward to working with you on that.
22 And thank you for the time today.

23 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT HOCHREITER:

24 Good afternoon. Thank you for the

1 opportunity to share the funding priorities
2 of the City School District of Albany for the
3 '24-'25 school year and beyond.

4 With the promise to fully fund
5 Foundation Aid for all New York school
6 districts fulfilled for the current school
7 year, our state has entered a new era in
8 school funding. In Albany we're thankful to
9 be starting from this newly leveled playing
10 field, and we arrived at this place just in
11 time, as the last of our federal COVID-19
12 relief funding is set to expire in September.

13 Your support this year steered us away
14 from what would have been a very dangerous
15 fiscal cliff, and we applaud you for your
16 vision. Now, we ask that you maintain your
17 focus on funding equity. We urge you to
18 consider the unique needs of individual
19 school districts and communities in making
20 the difficult decisions that are always a
21 part of the budget-development process. We
22 know your decisions are not easy, yet we also
23 know how critical your support is for our
24 students, our families, and our community.

1 With these needs in mind, we in Albany
2 have identified the following priorities:

3 Foundation Aid funding and Albany's
4 unique needs. As you consider the school
5 funding formula, a commitment to the unique
6 challenges of individual school districts and
7 communities is critical. This is especially
8 true as we address the significant
9 long-standing disparities in student outcomes
10 that the pandemic has exacerbated.

11 Some unique fiscal challenges in
12 Albany include the fact that 63 percent of
13 the property in New York's capital city is
14 tax-exempt.

15 The oversaturation of charter schools
16 in Albany is among the highest in our state
17 and nation. While we value parental choice,
18 oversaturation can destabilize a child's
19 education, and it also burdens taxpayers with
20 redundant operational expenses that drive up
21 the cost of publicly funded education in our
22 city.

23 Albany is also one of 34 federally
24 designated resettlement cities nationwide, a

1 fact that our city and our school district
2 take great pride in. Our enrollment of
3 English language learners is up more than
4 40 percent this school year, and is up more
5 than 150 percent since the 2020 school year.

6 We continue to advocate for funding
7 equity in prekindergarten. This is
8 especially important for high-needs districts
9 like ours, which were early implementers of
10 full-day pre-K but remain hampered by an
11 outdated funding formula.

12 The statistics for the future of the
13 teaching profession are stark, and you know
14 them well. We applaud the meaningful steps
15 the state has taken to address these looming
16 challenges. We urge you to continue to
17 expand these measures and develop new
18 pathways.

19 And finally, support for
20 social-emotional and mental health. We ask
21 for your continued commitment to the
22 social-emotional and mental health supports
23 that our students and families require. This
24 is critical now more than ever, following the

1 loss and uncertainty of the pandemic.

2 Thank you.

3 ROCHESTER SUPERINTENDENT PELUSO: Good
4 afternoon. I'm Dr. Carmine Peluso,
5 superintendent of the Rochester City School
6 District.

7 I want to extend a special thank you
8 to the chairs of these committees, the
9 Rochester delegation, and the entire
10 Legislature. I'm grateful for your
11 unwavering commitment to meeting the unique
12 needs of our district.

13 I would like to share that the
14 district has launched Invest in Tomorrow, a
15 comprehensive school plan that streamlines
16 our grade configuration and includes school
17 closures that will help maximize resources
18 and lead to better learning experiences and
19 outcomes for our students and families.

20 The following are several key
21 priorities the Board of Education and I have
22 outlined for this year.

23 It is unfortunate that the
24 Executive Budget alters the commitment to

1 Foundation Aid. We strongly urge that the
2 state enhance the formula's transparency,
3 predictability, and inclusivity. The formula
4 must be adjusted to effectively address the
5 unique needs of students, particularly those
6 with special programming.

7 We implore you to place a moratorium
8 on the addition of charter schools and the
9 expansion of current schools. Currently,
10 28 percent of public school students in the
11 City of Rochester attend charter schools.
12 This year we will pay out more than
13 135 million in charter school tuition costs.

14 Furthermore, the disproportionate
15 number of special-needs and ELL students our
16 district serves contributes to higher costs
17 associated with their education. It is
18 important to highlight that this is a
19 situation creating an uneven playing field.
20 This inequity requires immediate attention to
21 ensure a fair and sustainable education
22 system for all students.

23 With the expiration of federal
24 stimulus funds in September, school districts

1 must scale back on staffing and services used
2 to support students and learning coming out
3 of COVID. One of our areas of critical need
4 is the mental health and emotional state of
5 our students and staff. Our district
6 provides valuable health services to our
7 school community. We urge you to reinstate
8 the \$1.2 million Rochester School Health
9 Services Grant funds removed from the
10 Governor's budget.

11 In the coming year we face the need to
12 enhance and expand our technological
13 resources and formally request another round
14 of funding through the Smart Schools Bond
15 Act. This includes updating and increasing
16 the funding which has remained stagnant since
17 2007 at \$24.20 per pupil for hardware and
18 \$14.98 per pupil for software. It is also
19 important that the Smart Bond be expanded to
20 include essential software, subscriptions,
21 and services necessary for cybersecurity and
22 the ever-evolving threat against our student
23 and staff data.

24 With the recent influx of immigrant

1 students and families who were relocated to
2 Rochester from New York City, adequate
3 funding is crucial to address their needs and
4 provide necessary support. Notably,
5 Rochester is the sole Big 5 district to
6 receive immigrant families outside New York
7 City. Funding is essential for additional
8 bilingual teachers, translators, and support
9 services.

10 We also request the expansion of
11 Special Services Aid for Career and Technical
12 Education. The funding cap of \$3,900 per
13 students requires an increase, and we must
14 include ninth-grade students in the
15 allocation.

16 Thank you again for supporting the
17 Rochester City School District and
18 prioritizing our student needs.

19 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: Good
20 afternoon. My name is Anthony Davis, and I
21 have the privilege of serving the students,
22 families and staff of the Syracuse City
23 School District as superintendent.

24 Thank you for allowing me the

1 opportunity to be here today to discuss the
2 Executive Budget and the potential impact it
3 may have on students across the state and,
4 more specifically, our students in Syracuse.

5 Due to the expiration of federal
6 stimulus funding through sources like ARPA
7 and CRRSAA, we will need continued state aid
8 increases and funding support to adequately
9 address academic, social-emotional and
10 technological needs of our district.

11 As stated by many other
12 representatives today, the Executive Budget
13 proposal to use the multiyear average of
14 inflation formula for all school districts
15 does not benefit the Syracuse City School
16 District. This decision will reduce funding
17 for our students by approximately \$6 million.

18 As you may know, Syracuse continues to
19 be one of the poorest communities in the
20 state. In fact, based on recent census data,
21 the City of Syracuse has struggled for years
22 with some of the worst child poverty rates in
23 the entire nation, most recently receiving
24 the dubious distinction of being ranked

1 second.

2 As you investigate how to revise the
3 Foundation Aid formula, we strongly encourage
4 the state to utilize updated census and
5 poverty data and increased weightings for
6 special education, which represents about
7 21 percent of our students, and English
8 language learners, which represent
9 approximately 22 percent of all students, for
10 equitable funding.

11 With the federal funding coming to an
12 end, it is an urgent matter to update the
13 formula to ensure that state funds will be
14 allocated to students who need it most. This
15 is a change that will not only ensure equity
16 next year, but for years to come, and is long
17 overdue.

18 We currently have 225 full-time
19 equivalent positions that are currently
20 funded with federal stimulus funding,
21 equaling approximately \$22 million. These
22 positions are critical in supporting the
23 increase in post-COVID mental health needs of
24 our students, along with reading and math

1 interventions that address their learning
2 loss.

3 We're asking for additional aid to
4 increase our instructional materials. These
5 funds provide access to educational
6 materials, and the rates have not increased
7 since the '90s.

8 As our district embarks on the first
9 regional STEAM high school in the state with
10 a cohort of 9th-grade students, through a
11 phase-in model, in September of 2025, we're
12 looking to increase Special Services Aid to
13 include 9th grade. By fall of 2028, the
14 regional STEAM school will house 1,000
15 Career and Technical Education students.

16 And in addition, Syracuse currently
17 has 25 Career and Technical Education
18 programs where all programs start with a
19 9th-grade cohort. Therefore, a Special
20 Services Aid increase will ensure greater
21 quality programs and opportunities for our
22 students.

23 Finally, I would like to touch on our
24 reading intervention initiatives. As the

1 Governor has budgeted funds for literacy, it
2 is important that we continue to support our
3 students with reading interventions. We need
4 to ensure our students have the necessary
5 skills to succeed in today's world.

6 Thank you.

7 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ:

8 Good afternoon, legislators. I am Dr. Luís
9 Rodríguez, interim superintendent of Yonkers
10 Public Schools.

11 You should have received a copy of my
12 detailed testimony already, but I'll
13 highlight some of the challenges that make
14 Yonkers' situation so unique.

15 In contrast to the statewide trend of
16 declining enrollment, since 2022 Yonkers has
17 seen a 14 percent increase in students
18 requiring special education services. The
19 district has closed 17 sections of
20 less-intensive support and opened 45 sections
21 of more-intensive support classes over the
22 past three years to address student needs.

23 A key service demand area involves
24 children with autism spectrum disorders,

1 estimated growth 21 percent and 19 percent
2 respectively over the past two academic
3 years. As Table 6 in my remarks
4 demonstrates, demand for OT and PT services
5 has seen a 40 percent increase in group
6 sessions and a 21 percent increase in
7 individual therapy sessions since 2019.
8 Costs have risen from \$4 million to
9 \$5.3 million.

10 Yonkers is also facing a 283 percent
11 increase in hiring one-to-one aides since
12 school year 2022. One-to-one positions have
13 increased from 81 FTE to 310 FTE by
14 school year 2024. Specialized transportation
15 and out-of-district programming have also
16 dramatically increased.

17 In school year 2021, the district
18 served 397 students in our extended school
19 year program, for an estimated cost of
20 \$3.9 million. Last year we served 715 such
21 students at a cost of \$8.3 million.

22 The key to success includes the
23 assignment of full-time mental health
24 professionals to every one of our schools.

1 This can't be sustained with Yonkers ranking
2 a staggering 282nd in New York State
3 per-student aidable funding. It's simple.
4 Yonkers needs equitable and sustainable
5 funding for our comprehensive programs for
6 all our students.

7 Facing an overall estimated budget
8 deficit of \$87 million, we look towards
9 New York State for recurring revenue to
10 maintain essential services. Our students'
11 continued success and our effectiveness in
12 safeguarding our democracy is ultimately
13 what's at stake.

14 Thank you very much for your
15 attention.

16 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES:
17 Thank you for having me today. My name is
18 Jim Barnes. I'm the CFO for the Buffalo
19 School District.

20 Superintendent Tonja Williams extends
21 her apologies. She's been ill the last few
22 days, so she asked me to pinch-hit for her.

23 I have much the same concerns,
24 structural and with the end of ARP ESSER,

1 that have been expressed by the table, so
2 maybe I'll just give you a perspective from
3 Buffalo.

4 Buffalo has 30,000 pre-K through 12
5 children. That number is down about 3,400
6 over the last four years, so our enrollments,
7 gen ed, are declining. However, what
8 comprises that 30,000 current count are
9 6,700 SPED-classified children with IEPs,
10 5,300 multi-language learners, and
11 1500 McKinney-Vento, or homeless, children.
12 So we are a large, very poor and high-needs
13 district.

14 Our fiscal challenges that we're
15 looking out toward in '24-'25, as everyone
16 else has stated, is the end of ARP ESSER
17 funding for Buffalo. That's \$90 million.
18 And that includes 314 FTEs, largely in the
19 areas of social and emotional wellness,
20 security guards, and other areas to address
21 the learning loss.

22 We've taken steps in preparation for
23 this financial cliff. We've identified about
24 30 million in one-time expenditures out of

1 that ARP ESSER final year budget that we can
2 cut. We're rightsizing during our
3 school-based budget process, where classrooms
4 that might have had 10 or 12 kids in them are
5 now going to have to teach up to 20.

6 So we're doing all within our power to
7 prepare for this financial cliff, but we will
8 have at least a \$50 million hole left to
9 fill. And again, that will largely be
10 comprised of those 314 FTEs, which total
11 \$30 million with benefits. And again, those
12 314 employees, they provide learning loss,
13 social and emotional wellness, which are all
14 very big factors that the district still
15 faces.

16 Regarding the Governor's budget, I
17 won't elaborate on the CPI factor anymore.
18 It doesn't make any sense why you would
19 change to a 10-year average without notifying
20 anyone. That has about a \$10 million impact
21 on Buffalo.

22 Health Services Grant. Our nursing
23 costs have just skyrocketed, and we extended
24 the services -- oh, that's me. I'm sorry.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very
2 much. Thank you for all your testimony.

3 Ranker on the Libraries Committee,
4 Mr. Santabarbara. Oh, sorry, Chair.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: I don't
6 know if I have a ranker.

7 Anyway, I guess I just want to thank
8 you all for being here. I know it's been a
9 long day, and it's going to be longer. But I
10 want to thank you for talking about the
11 topics you talked about.

12 I want to touch on community schools.
13 I have a number of projects in my school
14 district in Schenectady that we're working on
15 for community schools. But I did have the
16 opportunity to visit the Sheridan Prep
17 Academy in the Albany City School District --
18 it was a few years ago, but I -- there is
19 additional funding and allocation in the
20 budget set aside for community schools. So I
21 think from what I saw, from what we're
22 working on in Schenectady, I think they're
23 great, they're a great addition to the school
24 system. I've got a lot of positive feedback

1 from our community.

2 I just wanted to hear particularly how
3 the Albany City School District is doing with
4 community schools. And if anyone else has
5 some comments on them, I'd love to hear that
6 feedback as well.

7 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT HOCHREITER:

8 Sure. I can tell you in Albany we have eight
9 elementary schools that are community
10 schools, and four elementary schools that are
11 considered magnet schools. And we have
12 enjoyed a long history of community schools,
13 so much so that we're actually trying to
14 figure out if we could use that budget to
15 hire a direct -- basically a director to
16 coordinate all of those activities.

17 So there's a little bit of equity
18 among those eight schools, but certainly
19 there is a 30,000-foot level of consistent
20 programming among all 12 of those schools.

21 I know that we continue to advocate
22 for additional funding in terms of community
23 schools. That was one of our legislative
24 priorities last year. And that the

1 families I know I have met with, although in
2 my brief eight-month career -- but certainly
3 the principal that you had mentioned and met
4 with has been there over 10 years.

5 These schools provide wraparound
6 services that are critical, absolutely
7 critical to school communities. Within that
8 vein, we're working with our elected members
9 of the Assembly and Senate around child
10 safety zones and the opportunity that
11 community schools have to provide additional
12 support in neighborhoods that have high
13 crime, that are considered unsafe by what
14 that data would indicate, is really
15 important. We communicate and collaborate
16 with the mayor, Kathy Sheehan, and our chief
17 of police around having additional services
18 to support -- to make sure that schools are
19 safe, that communities feel safe, and that
20 staff feels safe attending.

21 But we have experienced great success
22 with our community schools. We have a
23 marketing campaign -- as parents are choosing
24 right now, presently, to determine if they

1 want to attend any of our magnet schools --
2 to let them know what the benefit of the
3 community schools are and what services are
4 available to them within our own district, as
5 opposed to other districts in the
6 Capital Region.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Great,
8 thank you for that.

9 We're just about out of time; I did
10 want to ask about food pantries, but maybe
11 I'll get another opportunity after we're
12 done.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

14 Senator Shelley Mayer.

15 SENATOR MAYER: First of all, thank
16 you all. A special shout out to my own
17 superintendent. Thank you, Dr. Rodríguez,
18 for being here and thank you for your work in
19 a difficult time.

20 You know, one thing that sort of
21 strikes me, we collectively killed ourselves
22 to get full funding of Foundation Aid. And,
23 you know, we know it has real benefits for
24 your students. You represent, collectively,

1 50 percent of the state's students -- some of
2 the poorest students, urban students, ELL, as
3 you've mentioned, special-needs students --
4 all these challenges.

5 I think it's very important that we
6 understand what are the real impacts that
7 will occur if Foundation Aid is not funded at
8 the level you anticipated, where you're all
9 going to lose what you thought you were going
10 to get, if this budget goes through. And I
11 know Mount Vernon isn't here, but I just feel
12 an obligation to mention that an almost
13 \$3 million loss, in a district with an
14 increased enrollment -- not a declining
15 enrollment -- under financial distress.

16 What are the consequences if these
17 cuts were to go through as anticipated?
18 That's question one.

19 Question two is on saturation of
20 charter schools, particularly in Albany,
21 Buffalo, where you have -- and I don't know
22 Rochester, is it as significant. What are
23 the implications of this saturation in this
24 time?

1 And thirdly, all of you have stepped
2 up because of COVID and taken on more
3 responsibility than the old school model.
4 Can you just speak, if you have a chance -- I
5 know you don't have much time to respond --
6 to this issue of what you have -- you're all
7 doing way more, and I think it's very
8 important that you communicate that to the
9 audience that hears this, so they understand
10 the urgency for the parents in your district
11 and the kids. They need to hear how dire
12 this could be.

13 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES:
14 Thank you for that question. My colleagues
15 allowed me to answer the part on charter
16 schools.

17 SENATOR MAYER: Yes.

18 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES:
19 Charter schools in Buffalo are on track to
20 represent, next year, \$178 million in
21 expenditures out of our Foundation Aid. We
22 are saturated, and we've been saturated for
23 years. They opened another new school last
24 year, and seven other schools expanded.

1 Charter enrollments now make up
2 34 percent of the total Buffalo school-age
3 children, and they -- I want to stress again
4 \$178 million. Eleven million of that will be
5 due to the change in SPED tuition rates that
6 is going through the Board of Regents right
7 now. It's in a comment period. But it's to
8 be voted on in March. That's \$11 million
9 more out of our budget.

10 SENATOR MAYER: Honestly, don't use up
11 all my time on one question.

12 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES:
13 Sorry.

14 ROCHESTER SUPERINTENDENT PELUSO: And
15 I do want to build on charter schools.
16 Just -- we're at 28 percent in the district,
17 but it also is -- we have a 20 percent,
18 21 percent special ed rate in the district,
19 16 percent ELL rate in the district. Our
20 charter schools have an 8 percent special ed
21 rate and a 4 percent ELL. So we are
22 educating more expensive children.

23 MS. PYLE: Mount Vernon (inaudible.)

24 SENATOR MAYER: Okay, thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assembly,
3 Ranker Smith.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you so much.
5 And actually, that's a perfect segue from the
6 last question.

7 Could you finish answering the
8 Senator's question regarding charter schools?

9 ROCHESTER SUPERINTENDENT PELUSO: I
10 was just -- so we are 28 percent, right,
11 135 million this year in costs for charter
12 school aid. It is a -- but what my concern
13 is the uneven playing field of our students
14 with disabilities and our ELL students that
15 are in-district and we're servicing them
16 in-district, and an equal percentage is not
17 in charter schools. Which, you know, creates
18 an uneven playing field.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Yeah, that's
20 something that I know has been brought up
21 over the years of picking and choosing
22 students, not accepting every student, having
23 a different bar. And I know there's some
24 proposals about accountability and

1 transparency.

2 I'm curious, with respect to your
3 school districts, regarding the zero-emission
4 school buses. Do you each have school bus
5 fleets, or do you contract out for those
6 services? Could you speak about that a
7 little bit? Because I think a lot of us
8 would like to push -- at least push the
9 mandate back from 2027. It's -- yeah, if you
10 could speak on that.

11 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: So for
12 Syracuse, it's a small -- we have a very
13 small fleet. We contract out to an outside
14 agency.

15 However, we have a major problem with
16 the bus driver shortage, where it's -- no
17 matter who we're trying to contract with,
18 they're pulling from the same pool of
19 drivers. Which has been our major problem.

20 But right now we do not have the
21 capacity to extend to actually building our
22 own fleet.

23 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ:
24 Yonkers is in pretty much the same situation.

1 We use approximately four vendors to provide
2 a fleet of somewhere in the neighborhood of
3 600 buses. And we're pretty much under the
4 same kinds of constraints with respect to the
5 conversion to electric vehicles.

6 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES: A
7 hundred percent contracted.

8 ROCHESTER SUPERINTENDENT PELUSO:
9 Rochester is contract as well.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I imagine -- oh,
11 and the City of Albany, sorry.

12 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT HOCHREITER:
13 Yeah, we contract as well. And a significant
14 portion of our students -- a very high
15 proportion of our students, actually -- ride
16 city buses.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay. So actually
18 what you're reflecting is -- I'm out on
19 suburban Long Island, and we represent a lot
20 of large school districts -- not as big as
21 yours, but most of them do contract out. But
22 there's still a considerable cost to that as
23 well, because now the vendors you're working
24 with -- are you having any idea of estimates?

1 Because obviously what smaller districts
2 would have to do to convert their own fleet,
3 your vendors are now going to have to do
4 that. Costs could go up significantly. Are
5 you hearing those --

6 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: That
7 is absolutely the conversation, that the
8 costs are going to go way up because not only
9 do they have to buy the buses, they're going
10 to have to build facilities to take care of
11 them.

12 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT HOCHREITER: And
13 alone from any of our vendors moving to meet
14 the state requirement, we're looking at a
15 30 percent increase next year for just our
16 contracted bus service as is.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay, thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

19 Senator John Liu.

20 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

21 I want to thank our superintendents
22 for joining us. And I think it's safe to say
23 that we share your -- we feel your pain, we
24 share your pain, because it will affect our

1 constituents also.

2 And this redefinition of inflation to
3 be a 10-year average is really just an
4 arbitrary way to cut the budget. And it's a
5 significant cut. So I think we're going to
6 be fighting that very forcefully.

7 So that's all I have to say. I would
8 just have one quick comment for Dr. Peluso,
9 which is that, you know, there are no
10 migrants coming from New York City. There
11 are asylum seekers, most of whom are passing
12 through New York City. But they are in
13 search of the American dream.

14 We're a great state, and we try to do
15 our best to help all of them.

16 Thank you.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
18 Walsh.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Hello. Good
20 afternoon. So my question has to do with the
21 closure of Saint Rose, and I'm specifically
22 addressing our Albany superintendent. You
23 know, as a pipeline for future teachers,
24 Saint Rose was really very important.

1 And my question is, how does the
2 closure of Saint Rose further strain the
3 teacher pipeline, from your point of view?

4 ALBANY SUPERINTENDENT HOCHREITER:

5 It's very significant. In the Capital
6 Region, after Saint Rose, there is
7 Russell Sage College and University of
8 Albany, the major player, which has very few
9 educational programs.

10 Now, I do understand that Russell Sage
11 is expanding and so is University of Albany.
12 But in terms of a recruitment tool and being
13 able to recruit teachers here -- and we have
14 outstanding benefits in all of our employment
15 agreements for reoccurring tuition
16 reimbursement, opportunities for
17 advancement -- there's nowhere for them to
18 go. And so what's happening is school
19 districts -- the gentleman at the table here
20 and those that couldn't make it, and I'm sure
21 every other school district in the state, are
22 working really, really hard and begging for
23 money to build our own, grow our own programs
24 with nowhere -- or, in this case in the

1 Capital Region, nowhere for those students to
2 go. We have nowhere for a teaching assistant
3 to go in their own backyard in order to be an
4 ELL teacher, special education ed, or any of
5 those vacancies that we find hard to fill.
6 So we're very concerned.

7 But I'd also be remiss if I didn't
8 state that we're concerned about what's going
9 to happen with the physical plant of the
10 campus. So while we have a duty to make sure
11 that our existing staff have opportunities
12 for advancement and to use any accredited
13 education program for a recruitment and
14 retention tool, we have concerns about that
15 big hole in the city that will exist now.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Sure. Sure.

17 I have one more quick question for
18 anyone who'd like to answer. I'm hearing a
19 lot about the policies that some school
20 districts are developing about cellphone
21 pouches and having kids put their cellphones
22 in. You know, we hear about the dangers of
23 overuse of screen time and social media.

24 I'm just curious as to the people on

1 this panel, is that something that you've
2 utilized or are you thinking about utilizing
3 it? What are your thoughts?

4 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ:

5 We've started a pilot program with the honor
6 system in Yonkers, and we're focused
7 specifically on our middle-school population,
8 such that the minute that they arrive in the
9 school building, they put their phones in the
10 pouches, they keep the phones for the rest of
11 the day but aren't able to access them. And
12 then they're released at the end of the day.

13 So far it's been -- we've had a very,
14 very good experience in terms of looking at
15 the extent to which that has led to
16 significantly more time on task within our
17 classrooms.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Interesting.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 Senator Chu.

22 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

23 So my question is going to pivot to
24 our school library material aids. Because

1 this material aid has stayed flat from 2007,
2 17 years ago, at \$6.25 per pupil. I am more
3 familiar with the New York City school
4 system. I'm happy to see all the
5 superintendents here. I just want to know,
6 like, with this insufficient funding, how
7 does our schools -- or could you give us any
8 example to show us how our schools support
9 our students in those materials? And
10 especially right now with the digital
11 materials, it's a trend -- it's something we
12 should utilize. And it's easier with the
13 technology improvement. However, that costs
14 way more than the hard-copy book. I remember
15 back in 2023, last year, a regular nonfiction
16 young adult, the cost averaged \$26. That's
17 over four per-pupil costs to buy one book,
18 without saying for the digital access.

19 So could any one of you give us some
20 example how our schools actually run our
21 school libraries?

22 MS. PYLE: (Inaudible.) Does anyone
23 want to speak to it? With regard to your
24 challenges to purchase instructional

1 materials, given the low reimbursement you
2 receive.

3 ROCHESTER SUPERINTENDENT PELUSO: You
4 know, I echo exactly what you're saying,
5 right? It is harder for us to purchase with
6 -- you know, especially for us trying to find
7 appropriate, culturally relevant material.
8 And then having to be able to replace some of
9 the old stuff, having that low rate obviously
10 impacts what we're able to replace it with.

11 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ:
12 Well, the upside, on the other side of that
13 coin, is to the extent that we have been
14 moving more and more toward computer-based
15 assessment, the fact that more curricular
16 materials ought to be available in digital
17 format, not only constitutes sort of practice
18 runs for our students and our staff, but it
19 also makes it easier for school districts to
20 comply with NIMAS requirements for students
21 with disabilities, for example.

22 SENATOR CHU: That's wonderful.

23 Can you add a school district?

24 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: I will

1 just say that what we've had a difficult time
2 with is vetting the materials that we want,
3 because we need diverse materials. So as we
4 look for the right information that our
5 students could actually benefit from -- it
6 has been a challenge. So just finding the
7 right people in the right setting to get that
8 work done so that the material that we're
9 using is meaningful.

10 SENATOR CHU: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
12 Assembly.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes. Listen,
14 I've heard that there are problems in some of
15 the school districts in the area who have
16 community schools and food pantries. While
17 they're having great lines of people
18 attending or going to participate in this,
19 and they're running out of food.

20 Do you have the same problem in your
21 schools?

22 BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS CFO BARNES: We
23 have a very robust community school program.
24 I think we have 24,000 visitors to our

1 Saturday academies alone, and the food is a
2 very big part of it. We've had no problems
3 with food shortages.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Is that the
5 same all around?

6 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: The
7 need is there. The need is absolutely there.
8 We have lines around --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Is the food
10 available?

11 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: Yes.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Good. I'm
13 glad to hear that. Lastly --

14 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ:
15 Well, if I might --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes.

17 YONKERS SUPERINTENDENT RODRÍGUEZ: --
18 Assemblyman, I concur that the need is there.
19 Food insecurity is a major not only
20 quality-of-life issue, but quality of
21 learning condition that is a very significant
22 concern.

23 It is, however, one of a series of
24 services that we really need to focus on if

1 we are going to serve the whole child. In
2 most households we're in, food insecurity is
3 a major issue. I guarantee you housing is an
4 issue. Usually underemployment of guardians
5 or parents is an issue. So I think it needs
6 to be looked at as part of a continuum of
7 services and supports that we have to
8 provide, in consultation with community
9 partners.

10 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: If I
11 may add to the answer that the food is there;
12 getting families to accept the assistance is
13 another piece of the puzzle. As well as our
14 homelessness rate has gone way up. And those
15 are school-age children.

16 So getting it to everyone is just
17 another part of that concern.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

19 Teacher recruitment. You talked about
20 it in Albany it's a concern. How do the rest
21 of the districts look upon that? Are you
22 having problems and difficulty with that?

23 SYRACUSE SUPERINTENDENT DAVIS: Major,
24 major problem for us. And part of it is the

1 competition, where you come to the urban
2 setting versus going out to a suburban
3 setting or a rural setting. The problems are
4 different, so to get someone to come to the
5 city and you start looking at what they pay
6 and what we pay, and it becomes a huge
7 barrier.

8 So we're just working on different
9 ways to make it more attractive to come to
10 the city. And mostly, for at least Syracuse,
11 you've got to have a heart for it. You've
12 got to want to be there. And that's what we
13 count on, and we try to -- we also have one
14 of our Career and Technical Education
15 programs in an urban teacher prep program
16 where we try to grow our own.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very
18 much.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Senator Robert Jackson.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: Hi, everyone. Thank
22 you for coming. Because as a legislator from
23 New York City, listening to all of you I get
24 to I guess hear the situation that you're in

1 compared to the situation that I'm in or that
2 we're in, in New York City.

3 So you may have been here when I said
4 if this audience was filled with 500 people,
5 we have to organize our people to protest
6 against these cuts. And obviously the aim is
7 not on you, it's not the aim of the Senators
8 or Assemblymembers, it's the Governor.
9 Whether she likes it or not, it's her budget,
10 Executive Budget.

11 And so we have to change that.
12 Obviously with the leadership of both the
13 Senate and the Assembly are going to be
14 communicating how we cannot allow this to
15 happen. New York State -- you know, the
16 budget is \$232.7 billion. That's the
17 budget -- proposed budget, that is.

18 And, you know, so it's clear that, you
19 know, the amount of cuts, the devastation it
20 would have, I'm not hearing it from you, but
21 I can just imagine -- I've heard it from my
22 colleagues when they were speaking earlier.
23 You know, half of all of the school districts
24 in the State of New York are going to have

1 cuts. That means people are going to be
2 losing their homes, cannot afford food, like
3 you talked about, looking for other jobs, job
4 security, if in fact they're relatively new
5 and don't have the seniority that, you know,
6 they can stay around.

7 So this is huge. This is not a small
8 piece of the pie. And if in fact the
9 executive team of the Governor is like, you
10 know, putting it out there to frighten
11 everyone -- well, you frightened us. Now
12 come back and let's do the right thing. You
13 frightened us. Come back and do the right
14 thing and let us know that we're going to
15 transition this but you're going to get the
16 money that you need.

17 But understanding that -- I hope that
18 each one of you put out something to all of
19 your people, get the parent leaders in, get
20 the community leaders in and have them reach
21 out to their State Senators, State
22 Assemblymembers -- because every State
23 Senator and every State Assemblymember should
24 be united in ensuring that the money's

1 restored. Everyone. And if they don't,
2 their constituents will give them the price.
3 You know what that means, right? They won't
4 get reelected, because you're not
5 representing them.

6 So I say this to you, thank you for
7 coming. I hope you have enough to get back
8 to where you come from. If not, you know,
9 maybe you can spend the night here.

10 (Laughter.)

11 SENATOR JACKSON: No, I'm joking, of
12 course.

13 (Laughter.)

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you for
15 coming. And seriously, you gotta push. We
16 all have to push together, okay? Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It wasn't a
18 question, but you do get an offer out of
19 this, so --

20 (Laughter.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,
22 Robert Jackson.

23 Assembly, the Senate's done.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel, we

1 thank you very much for coming. And it's
2 going to be a tough year, but you guys are up
3 for it, I hope, and hopefully we are too.

4 Thank you for coming.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Our next
7 panel, Panel No. 5, please make your way on
8 down: The 4201 Schools, the New York State
9 Coalition of 8053 Schools, the New York
10 Association on Independent Living, and
11 Advocates for Children.

12 (Off the record.)

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel, thank
14 you very much for coming here today. Is
15 there somebody missing right now? Well, be
16 prompt.

17 (Laughter.)

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, thank
19 you for being here. As you know, you have
20 three minutes to give your testimony.

21 And who will present first?

22 MR. KELLY: I will.

23 Good afternoon, Senator Liu,
24 Senator Mayer, Senator Krueger,

1 Assemblyman Benedetto, and your honorable
2 colleagues. My name is Tim Kelly. I'm the
3 superintendent at St. Mary's School for the
4 Deaf in Buffalo.

5 It is a pleasure to be with you today,
6 and we are grateful for your continued
7 support and friendship through the years.
8 Through my testimony you're going to hear a
9 lot of words like thank you, thank,
10 appreciate, grateful.

11 The association represents 11
12 nonprofit schools, state-supported schools
13 serving children who are deaf, blind and
14 physically disabled throughout New York
15 State. In recent years, many of the students
16 that have come into our schools have
17 additional disabilities, whether they be
18 physical or cognition. We also have a number
19 of families with different backgrounds,
20 including those who are asylum seekers. And
21 our schools do have the ability to meet the
22 needs of these asylum seekers.

23 So thank you for the opportunity to be
24 able to testify today, and thank you to the

1 Assembly and Senate for your longstanding
2 support to most importantly our students, as
3 well as our schools. So thank you.

4 We would like first to thank the
5 Assembly and Senate for your longstanding
6 support. Your work to restore and increase
7 state support to our schools was really
8 impactful, and was impactful to our students
9 and their families, so we are truly grateful.

10 This year we're asking for state
11 support in the area of growth. We ask that
12 our schools receive funding increases
13 commensurate with those provided to the
14 public schools and other special education
15 schools.

16 Also we ask for support in the area of
17 mental health. Our students, whether they're
18 deaf, blind or physically disabled, still
19 have the same mental health problems as
20 students do in public schools.

21 In terms of capital assistance, we are
22 grateful for the 30 million that was passed a
23 couple of years ago, and we're asking that
24 the appropriation for the second round of

1 health and safety projects be put forward.
2 We appreciate and need the support. Our
3 schools are aging and our student populations
4 are changing.

5 We also would ask that you support
6 growth and workforce retention. Our school
7 staff members are specially trained and
8 certified to work with children who are deaf,
9 blind and physically disabled. We propose a
10 new initiative to increase salaries for our
11 teachers and professional staff. We suggest
12 \$30 million, a program over three years to
13 incrementally increase salaries to better
14 compete with public school districts.
15 Sometimes our teachers leave to go to the
16 public schools to make as much as twelve to
17 \$25,000 more, depending on the district.

18 We are grateful for the New York State
19 Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian
20 Legislative Caucus's support of this
21 initiative in their annual People's Budget,
22 which was packaged in December. So we
23 appreciate that.

24 We also are --

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I'm sorry --

2 MR. KELLY: Okay. We're grateful.

3 thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

5 MS. MILLER: Hello, my name is Lindsay

6 Miller, executive director of the New York

7 Association on Independent Living. Thank

8 you, Assemblymember Benedetto, Senator Mayer,

9 and all the members here today for having me.

10 I represent the statewide membership
11 association for Independent Living Centers,
12 community-based not-for-profit organizations
13 that are run by and for people with
14 disabilities. We provide a range of advocacy
15 services and supports that are all focused on
16 helping individuals of all disabilities and
17 all ages live independently in the community.
18 The services are person-centered, and they're
19 focused on the needs of the individual,
20 whether it be help finding affordable,
21 accessible housing in the community; learning
22 to navigate the local transportation system;
23 developing the skills needed to live
24 independently; transition from unnecessary

1 institutional placement back to the
2 community, work which has saved the state
3 more than 2 billion since 2001, based on
4 ACCES-VR data; benefits counseling to support
5 employment goals -- and these are just a few
6 examples.

7 We also assist ACCES-VR to meet their
8 mission by providing community-based
9 wraparound services that complement the
10 voc rehab services provided by ACCES-VR.
11 We're a dedicated referral source and a
12 valuable resource to counselors.

13 ILCs employ. The majority of their
14 staff are people with disabilities statewide,
15 and they help to elevate them to leadership
16 positions and governance within the centers.
17 They also work with local businesses to
18 understand their responsibilities to hire and
19 support employees with disabilities.

20 And for younger people with
21 disabilities, we provide help to transition
22 from school to employment, a newly added core
23 service that really needs investment.

24 Our work is integral to the goals of

1 this administration -- developing a
2 Master Plan on Aging, Olmstead
3 implementation, and making New York a model
4 employer for people with disabilities and
5 employment-first state. We're the boots on
6 the ground, making this work happen, making
7 these changes at the local level -- but we
8 need your help.

9 There are 41 state-funded centers
10 across the state who have been drastically
11 underfunded for too long. This is despite
12 the rising cost of doing business and the
13 increased demand for our services. Thanks to
14 strong support from the Legislature, we have
15 made some gains in recent years and are
16 currently funded at \$16 million. We're
17 requesting a total funding of \$18 million,
18 which is an increase of only \$2 million.
19 When you divide that by 41 centers, it's less
20 than \$50,000 per center.

21 We're also seeking your support to get
22 ILCs included in the human services COLA to
23 help our funding maintain pace with inflation
24 moving forward. The work of ILCs is very

1 much aligned with that of our other human
2 service partners, but we have not been
3 considered eligible because of our placement
4 in the State Education budget. We're
5 competing in the same labor market and having
6 the same difficulty recruiting and retaining
7 staff.

8 We know there was strong support in
9 the Legislature last year to have us added,
10 but unfortunately the final budget did not do
11 that, so we've missed out on the COLAs from
12 2023, which was 5.5 percent -- 4 percent last
13 year, and now this year's Executive Budget is
14 proposing 1.5 percent.

15 A bill has been introduced by
16 Assemblymember Hevesi and Senator Persaud to
17 add additional providers, including ILCs, so
18 we would urge you to include that
19 legislation, along with the \$2 million
20 increase, in the final budget. And the bill
21 number is Assembly 8437.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

23 MR. LOPEZ: Chairs Benedetto and
24 Krueger and other members of the Legislature

1 her today, thank you for this opportunity to
2 address you. My name is John Lopez. I'm the
3 president of the New York State Coalition of
4 853 Schools and the executive director at
5 Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health's
6 New York Center.

7 For any members unfamiliar with our
8 coalition, we represent approved private
9 nonprofit agencies supporting public school
10 students in our special education programs.

11 To begin, I would like to express our
12 membership's appreciation for the ongoing
13 support from the Legislature to our schools.
14 While funding for our schools is provided by
15 the state outside of the budget through an
16 administrative rate process called the
17 tuition rate methodology, it is because of
18 the Legislature's support that students with
19 disabilities educated in our schools have
20 been supported on par with their public
21 school peers.

22 We continue to advocate for this
23 investment in parity so we can deliver
24 educational opportunities that our students

1 deserve. However, we know one-time
2 investments in our schools will not
3 strengthen the fiscal viability of our
4 programs. Our coalition has long advocated
5 for reforms to the rate methodology, and we
6 were thrilled to see Governor Hochul include
7 1.4 million in her Executive Budget proposal
8 for the State Education Department to develop
9 a new rate methodology.

10 Until this new methodology is
11 implemented, interim plus rates must be
12 authorized in a manner that allows schools to
13 fully realize all the state investments by
14 authorizing rate growth even when schools are
15 operating under a temporary tuition rate due
16 to backlogs at the State Education Department
17 or Division of Budget.

18 Though the Legislature was
19 instrumental in getting administrative
20 approval for these interim plus rates, as
21 alluded to earlier, in implementation the
22 growth has not been compounded for several of
23 our schools that don't have these current
24 rates. For these schools, the 11 percent

1 increase that was included in their interim
2 rates was dropped out before the 6.25 percent
3 increase could be added back. Essentially
4 they're seeing about a 5 percent cut. It's
5 hard to imagine that that was the intent
6 behind these historic investments, that it
7 would be a rate reduction.

8 It's critical we address this issue
9 now, as a number of our school programs are
10 going to face another potential cut as we
11 anticipate growth to our schools will be less
12 than 6.25 percent.

13 Lastly, the Paycheck Protection
14 Program, PPP, was a lifeline in helping many
15 of our schools ensure they could remain
16 operational despite uncertainty during the
17 pandemic. Unfortunately, due to language in
18 the 2020-2021 enacted budget, the state is
19 treating this PPP funding as offsetting
20 revenue in the year when the loan was
21 forgiven. As a result, schools that accepted
22 these funds will see their rates
23 significantly diminished.

24 The special education sector is the

1 only sector where PPP funding is treated in
2 this manner. So we're asking for your
3 assistance in meeting with us so we can
4 examine solutions to address this critically
5 important issue.

6 Once again, thank you for your support
7 to our students, families and staff. Your
8 advocacy remains critical today, and we look
9 forward to working with you.

10 MS. LEVINE: Thank you for the
11 opportunity to speak with you. My name is
12 Randi Levine, and I'm policy director of
13 Advocates for Children of New York.

14 As an organization focused on students
15 whose needs are too often overlooked, we echo
16 the calls for increased support for
17 state-approved nonpublic schools serving
18 students with disabilities, as well as
19 preschool special education programs. More
20 information about this topic and a few other
21 specific proposals are in our written
22 testimony.

23 I want to focus my limited time today
24 on the big picture and what's at stake for

1 students in this year's budget. Over the
2 last few years, school districts received an
3 unprecedented infusion of federal COVID-19
4 stimulus funding, allowing them to invest in
5 a number of critical education initiatives.
6 While school districts have used part of this
7 funding for short-term expenses directly
8 stemming from the pandemic, they're also
9 currently using this funding for much-needed
10 long-term programs, many of which the state
11 has historically underfunded.

12 New York City alone is using around
13 \$1 billion in federal stimulus funds to
14 address student needs that existed long
15 before the pandemic and are not going away.
16 Among other things, New York City has used
17 the stimulus funding to double 3-K enrollment
18 and open new preschool special education
19 classes to help address a longstanding
20 shortage of seats for preschoolers with
21 disabilities; hire 450 school social workers;
22 increase the number of community schools and
23 expand restorative justice programming; hire
24 60 school preschool psychologists to address

1 delays in the evaluation process for students
2 with disabilities; bolster supports for
3 students with dyslexia; hire 75 coordinators
4 to work in homeless shelters, helping
5 students living in shelters get to school and
6 access educational support; open new
7 bilingual programs for English language
8 learners and improve access to translation
9 and interpretation services for immigrant
10 families, and much more.

11 We work with families every day, and
12 we have seen the ways that these education
13 initiatives are making a difference for some
14 of New York City's most marginalized
15 students. But unless you, our state leaders,
16 identify funding to replace the expiring
17 federal funds, each of these programs could
18 be significantly rolled back or eliminated
19 five months from today.

20 Unfortunately, instead of stepping up
21 to provide increased resources to help school
22 districts at this critical moment in time,
23 the Executive Budget proposal, as you know,
24 includes \$400 million less in school aid

1 statewide than the state's own projection
2 from the midyear financial plan. For
3 New York City alone, the proposed changes to
4 the calculation of the Foundation Aid
5 inflationary factor would result in the city
6 getting \$130 million less than it would
7 receive without this change.

8 At a time when there is a youth mental
9 health crisis, record high student
10 homelessness, systemic violations of the
11 rights of students with disabilities, and an
12 increase of thousands of newly arrived
13 immigrant students enrolling in New York City
14 schools, we are counting on the Legislature's
15 leadership to reject the change in the
16 inflationary factor and to ensure that the
17 final budget includes a substantial increase
18 in education funding that will allow school
19 districts to continue these critical
20 education programs as their federal funds
21 expire.

22 Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Well said.

24 So -- and I suppose it's still true.

1 So a school in my district where the problems
2 with teacher pay is so out of whack, and they
3 pick up and they leave -- and then, to make
4 matters worse, now they've got to find a new
5 teacher but then the state comes in and says,
6 well, it looks like you don't have a teacher,
7 you're out of compliance, and now you're in
8 big trouble. And that, I suppose, is the
9 case of the schools throughout.

10 Okay. And with it all, how are you
11 doing with teacher recruitment? Mr. Lopez,
12 you going to tell me?

13 MR. LOPEZ: It's brutal. I think
14 someone used the word "brutal" earlier.
15 Yeah, it is tough, for sure.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, thank
17 you.

18 On to Senate?

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 Senator Mayer.

21 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you
22 all very much. I realize just because you're
23 on a panel together doesn't mean that your
24 issues coincide, but that's how it got

1 organized.

2 So Mr. Kelly, just on the issue of
3 capital for 4201 schools, do you -- we
4 allocate the capital and in my understanding
5 it takes a while for it to get out the door.
6 Is it -- can you be frank about the process?
7 Is it working adequately to get capital to
8 the 4201 schools?

9 MR. KELLY: (Mic off; inaudible.)

10 SENATOR MAYER: Your light is not on.

11 MR. KELLY: Okay. The first
12 30 million was given to the schools and the
13 projects, most of them, have been completed.
14 Some schools have not. Of course, the
15 pandemic, the safety -- or the supply chain
16 had an impact on that. But in some of the
17 schools the projects are done and that
18 \$30 million is spent.

19 We are now asking for the second
20 batch, which we'll put into the budget to be
21 continued, and we will use that for capital
22 projects. Our buildings are aging,
23 obviously, but in our case the windows were a
24 huge deal on the lake side of the building,

1 and we were able to replace them. We even
2 had students comment how much better the
3 classrooms were because of the new windows.

4 So it does take time, but we
5 understand that and we're grateful for that
6 30 million.

7 SENATOR MAYER: Okay, that's good.

8 And Ms. Miller, on the COLA for the
9 ILCs, which I remember we fought about last
10 year, without the COLA your salaries for the
11 folks that work there are flat, is that
12 correct? Is there any additional funding
13 outside of the COLA?

14 MS. MILLER: Right, no, correct. The
15 Executive Budget proposes level funding, and
16 then we're not included in the proposed human
17 services COLA. So, I mean, in this, you
18 know, climate it really results in a cut
19 because --

20 SENATOR MAYER: How many people work
21 in ILCs statewide?

22 MS. MILLER: I don't know. I don't
23 have that exact number. I could get it for
24 you. But there's over 50 offices across the

1 state, so a significant amount.

2 SENATOR MAYER: And Ms. Levine, a
3 question. I know one of the things that your
4 group has been pushing for is some kind of
5 effort to deal with the cutoff of federal
6 funds. You have a big ask on that number, I
7 realize. But we're fighting to get what we
8 think is due in school funding. What is the
9 number that you're seeking for the -- sort of
10 the substitution of state funds for the
11 federal COVID funds?

12 MS. LEVINE: The New York City
13 Department of Education alone is using around
14 a billion dollars this year in expiring
15 federal funds to fund long-term programs that
16 will still be needed. We are not under any
17 illusion that the state is going to pick up
18 that full tab, but we certainly hope that the
19 state will contribute and help New York City
20 and other school districts continue these
21 important programs.

22 SENATOR MAYER: Because they're
23 recurring expenses, notwithstanding that they
24 weren't supposed to be, but they had to use

1 them that way. Or they chose to use them
2 that way.

3 MS. LEVINE: They used -- they chose
4 to use them for programs that we very much
5 needed before the pandemic and still need
6 today.

7 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. Thank you very
8 much.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
10 Assembly.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Mr. Ra.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.
13 Thank you all for your patience.

14 Mr. Kelly, you've been coming before
15 us for so long that I think I can read your
16 mind, and I think maybe you wanted to comment
17 on the Interagency Coordinating Council on
18 Services to Persons Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard
19 of Hearing when you were cut off.

20 MR. KELLY: Thank you. I did have
21 this down to 2 minutes and 58 seconds, but
22 you were right on the money, so that was
23 good.

24 (Laughter.)

1 MR. KELLY: Yes, the interagency
2 council that Governor Hochul has proposed on
3 January 17th, our association is in favor of
4 that council and we feel that it's important
5 that our schools -- and we believe the
6 council's recommendations should be developed
7 in partnership with the Legislature.

8 Now, we are meeting with that council
9 on March 15th, the 4201 Schools Association.
10 So that's where we are in terms of that.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great.

12 You talked about retention,
13 recruitment and all of those things, which I
14 know have been an issue for years. So
15 certainly, you know, any additional funding
16 that we can do in that regard, and certainly
17 with regard to the 853s and, you know,
18 finally getting ourselves to a good place
19 with regard to the rate methodology would go
20 a long way. Because I know we've heard for
21 years about, you know, these are difficult
22 educational settings and, you know, it's a
23 calling and then people, you know, have to
24 make a difficult decision to do what's best

1 for their family, which is hard to fault
2 somebody for.

3 But it would be great to live in a
4 world where we can provide, you know, at
5 least a very comparable salary to people who
6 are working with the students that attend
7 these special education schools.

8 So I just thank you all for your
9 continued advocacy.

10 MR. KELLY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Liu.

12 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.
13 Thank you all for your testimony.

14 Randi, I figured maybe you can take a
15 minute to explain your idea for the state
16 helping our school systems with the cutoff in
17 federal funding.

18 And I believe your plan used the
19 precedent that -- the precedent from the
20 state essentially bailing out the MTA last
21 year, to use that as an analogy to help the
22 school system. If we could do it for the MTA
23 last year, we should be able to do it for the
24 school systems, right? Do you want to expand

1 on that?

2 MS. LEVINE: Sure.

3 We think that the state has a role to
4 play in helping to continue these vital
5 programs, and the state should be exploring
6 every funding possibility possible so that
7 New York City and other school districts
8 don't have to cut these important programs.
9 When a family loses a 3-K seat or when
10 students lose their school social worker,
11 families and students don't care who
12 originally funded that program or that
13 service.

14 We heard members today talk about the
15 need for more social workers, for more
16 community schools, for more early childhood
17 education, for preschool special education
18 seats. Those are all programs that will be
19 rolled back, potentially, unless we find
20 funding -- and we hope that the state will
21 step in and help.

22 SENATOR LIU: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ranker Smith.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chair. And thank you all for joining us.

3 You started off the testimony thanking
4 us. And while we appreciate being thanked,
5 the proposal from the Governor to fund -- to
6 keep the funding flat, I don't know if that's
7 necessarily something to be thanked for. So
8 hopefully we'll be able to increase that, and
9 especially in a system that has historically
10 been, in my opinion, underfunded. And you've
11 mentioned some of these issues. You
12 mentioned some of the most recent with the
13 PPP loans.

14 Could you give us kind of a quick
15 recap of kind of what you would say the state
16 of special education schools are in New York
17 State? And if you have any indications of
18 trends or how we're doing with the students
19 that you're serving.

20 MR. KELLY: I can certainly comment in
21 terms of 4201 schools. We're very proud of
22 our staff. They're highly qualified, highly
23 certified. Unconditional love to our
24 students. I mean, to me that's huge, every

1 day.

2 In terms of outcomes, we're proud of
3 our outcomes. We're proud of our attendance
4 rate. Some of our schools are residential
5 schools. But we have students who do really
6 well on their Regents testing, advanced
7 Regents, and we have students who do well on
8 the alternate assessment. And we celebrate
9 both of them equally at our schools.

10 So our schools are -- the students
11 come in, they're language-deprived. And, you
12 know, you could imagine, with some of the
13 students coming in now, they're even more
14 language -- their families are
15 language-deprived. But miracles happen at
16 our schools. I mean, I'm not being
17 Pollyanna. There are miracles that happen at
18 our schools every day. I mean, I've seen
19 kids come in and, you know, after seven
20 months they're saying -- didn't know English,
21 no nothing, no sign, nothing -- and they're
22 asking me to get them a job when they turn
23 18. You know, Hey, Tim, what about a job?
24 you know, can you get me a job? I want to

1 make money, I want to be a productive
2 citizen.

3 So we have a rigorous curriculum at
4 our schools in the DeafBlind and
5 physically -- severely physically disabled,
6 but we have great outcomes. Rigorous
7 curriculums.

8 MR. LOPEZ: I would just add too, I
9 think, you know, there's a lot of pride in
10 the work that our schools accomplish, and
11 among those staff. But I would also say that
12 we're fragile right now. It's been a
13 struggle. And certainly as you hear, the
14 teacher shortage, workforce shortage in
15 general, it's much more than just teachers.
16 In the public schools, you know, we're
17 feeling that as well. And we're competing
18 with public schools because our staff will go
19 there and use us as a starting ground, a
20 training ground, so to speak.

21 So yes, we're proud, we're thankful of
22 the support, but definitely we're fragile at
23 the same time.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay, thank you.

1 And I think you hit the nail on the head in
2 terms of the fact that educators across the
3 state have stories from their career of great
4 things that have happened; you have that
5 every single day. So thank you.

6 MR. KELLY: Mm-hmm. It's true. And,
7 you know, I start with thanks, because
8 through the years the changes that you
9 legislators, the legislative branch have
10 made, have made great impacts on our students
11 and their families. So thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Senator Robert Jackson.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Hi. Thank you for
15 coming in. I appreciate listening to your
16 testimony so that I can have a holistic point
17 of view and not just focus on New York City.

18 I mean, even when I was talking to my
19 colleagues, especially on the other side
20 of -- when I say the other side, you know,
21 the Republicans -- you know, we're standing
22 united in this, and that's a good thing, in
23 order to restore this money.

24 But obviously listening to you with

1 the schools that need it for children that
2 are deaf, blind or disabled -- I mean, my
3 brother-in-law is totally blind due to
4 retinitis pigmentosa. I brought him here
5 from Tanzania, East Africa, when he was 19.
6 He's 63. He's a licensed social worker, and
7 he's run 23 New York City marathons.

8 So when you give people because they
9 have an impairment or a disability -- they
10 can do anything that you -- that they want
11 to. And that's an example. I've run the
12 last two with him as his guide. And people
13 ask me, What time are you gonna finish? I
14 say, Whatever time he finishes.

15 (Laughter.)

16 SENATOR JACKSON: Because I'm a guide.

17 But Randi, I want to say to you, thank
18 you for giving this (indicating paper), the
19 impact of these -- you know, if the federal
20 money is not replaced, that I'll see. And I
21 sure hope it's replaced, and I will do
22 everything I can in working with our
23 colleagues here in order to replace the money
24 so that these people -- 28 social workers,

1 restorative justice programming at
2 13 schools -- now, this is all in my district
3 that she's put this in there.

4 And I had asked earlier whether or not
5 some of your flyers or your statements are
6 out there so we can have those as a point of
7 reference. So this is very good, and I'm
8 going to go -- this is a coalition called
9 Emergency Coalition to Save Education
10 Programs: Call to Action, signed by more
11 than 160 organizations. That's coming
12 together and organizing and getting the job
13 done. So hopefully that's what we will do on
14 behalf of all of you and the people that you
15 serve.

16 Thank you all for coming in.

17 Thank you, Madam Chair -- Chairs,
18 rather.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
20 Assembly.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Chairman
22 Santabarbara.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Thank you.

24 I want to also add my thanks to all of

1 you for the work that you do in our
2 communities. My son is at a residential
3 program. He's 22. He's been dealing with
4 challenges of autism his entire life. So the
5 work that you do can't be understated. You
6 literally change people's lives. I've seen
7 it with my son. The supports and services
8 that he receives really changed his life, and
9 he's on a path -- a good path because of work
10 like the work that you do.

11 But I also see the staffing issues at
12 the program. I see sometimes there's new
13 staff, and that does affect what -- it does
14 affect the individuals that are there to be
15 there for programming or for learning or for
16 whatever the case may be. So it is something
17 that we need to prioritize in the budget. I
18 think we all agree on that here. We're
19 trying to get more funding for staffing. The
20 shortages -- sometimes there's just vacant
21 positions and, you know, people are doing
22 more work trying to make up for that vacancy.

23 I do want to -- I also want to agree
24 with the mental health support services that

1 was mentioned earlier. I do want to support
2 that. And I'm going to be advocating for
3 that in this budget as well. I think that's
4 a very important component in all of our
5 schools. In these schools and in all of our
6 public schools as well, that's been a
7 tremendous need.

8 One question for Lindsay on the
9 ACCES-VR program. We've had some legislation
10 in the past, and that program has changed a
11 little bit over the years. I just want to
12 get your feedback on how that's working and
13 maybe some other improvements that are
14 needed.

15 MS. MILLER: Yeah, that's a good
16 question. I mean, I certainly think there
17 are still barriers at the local level. I
18 think my members can speak a little bit
19 better to what some of those barriers are.
20 But certainly in terms of I think the success
21 rate in getting individuals employment
22 supports and successful employment, we can be
23 doing better in New York State.

24 So -- but I can get back to you, or

1 with your office.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Yeah, that
3 would be great. And there's always room for
4 improvement, and we'd like to hear that,
5 whether it's legislation or something in the
6 budget.

7 And, you know, as far as workforce
8 goes, there has been more opportunity that
9 I've seen in my community for people with
10 disabilities than we've seen in years past.
11 And because there is a shortage, I think
12 people are getting an opportunity to take
13 these positions. And I think that more and
14 more companies are actually looking to hire
15 people with disabilities.

16 So it's a good trend. I just want to
17 make sure that our systems in place are
18 helping that along and providing those
19 opportunities as well.

20 MS. MILLER: Yeah, and I think that
21 this administration has made that a priority.
22 So I think we're hopeful that there's changes
23 coming.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Great.

1 Thanks for being here today.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Senator Chu.

4 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

5 Thank you all for being a strong
6 advocate for those families who really,
7 really need uplift, support and carry them,
8 because sometimes it's really hard for them
9 to come out and voice. I really appreciate
10 all your work.

11 Mr. Kelly, can you talk about the
12 4201s? My understanding, the financial
13 structure, how we fund the 4201s is -- it's
14 different from other special ed programs.
15 Like does this model work, or could you help
16 me understand the --

17 MR. KELLY: So years ago we got one
18 lump sum. But a few years ago, underneath
19 Governor Cuomo, we changed the funding system
20 to where the school districts pay a per-pupil
21 cost. So in other words, we are a middleman.
22 We bill the districts for the cost of the
23 tuition, they subtract the per-pupil cost
24 from their student, whatever it might be, and

1 then the state reimburses the school district
2 for that money.

3 SENATOR CHU: Does this model work, or
4 is there any impact on how you operate?

5 MR. KELLY: We have a great
6 relationship with the districts, and most of
7 the -- or all of the 4201 schools do. So
8 there haven't been any billing issues or
9 anything that have come to my attention. So
10 I would say the 11 districts have strong
11 relationships with the school districts --
12 the 4201 schools have strong relationships
13 with the school districts that they serve.

14 SENATOR CHU: Thank you.

15 Randi, I actually want to bring to
16 everyone's attention a couple of months ago I
17 had dozens of families actually reach out to
18 my office, send me postcards, call my office,
19 really express their serious concern about
20 4410s, they're going to lose their federal
21 funding, they're going to lose their
22 teachers, the teacher assistants, the
23 therapists, the staff.

24 I am very -- thank you for being a

1 strong voice today to say, you know, billions
2 of dollars because of this pandemic in
3 federal help, we could actually address those
4 supports to the long-overdue service to the
5 families. Of course we don't want to roll it
6 back. But before -- can you tell us, before
7 we didn't have this money. How did we handle
8 those situations for our families? If we
9 lose those families, what are we talking
10 about here? What's the impact?

11 (Time clock chiming.)

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry about that.
13 So if you'd like to follow up with her
14 afterwards.

15 MS. LEVINE: (Nodding.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senate -- oh, no,
17 you are the Assembly.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: We are the
19 Assembly.

20 Assemblywoman Walsh.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Thank you very
22 much.

23 My question is mostly directed to
24 Mr. Lopez and the 853 schools. So my

1 question is, when was the last time that
2 there was -- I know that they're talking
3 about doing the methodology tuition study and
4 everything, and they're kicking that up to
5 2027, under the Governor's proposal.

6 When's the last time that was updated?

7 MR. LOPEZ: As I understand, the
8 advocacy to start looking at and redesigning
9 the tuition rate has been going on for
10 30 years. So a little longer than I've been
11 involved.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Thirty years.

13 MR. LOPEZ: Yeah.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Okay.

15 MR. LOPEZ: So I don't think it's ever
16 been looked at, certainly not in recent
17 years.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Have there been
19 increases over the last 30 years, or has the
20 tuition been set and not changed in that
21 time?

22 MR. LOPEZ: There have been increases
23 recently. There have been years where we've
24 had zero for sure. We can get you the

1 breakdown year over year.

2 But there was 11 percent the year
3 before last, 6.25 the last year. So under
4 the past two years with Governor Hochul we've
5 seen historic investments. And that's part
6 of the appreciation we've been expressing.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Got it. Because
8 I would think that -- well, I was troubled by
9 the idea that the study itself was going to
10 be delayed, because I know that, you know,
11 everyone's experiencing issues with, you
12 know, affordability and inflation and all of
13 those pressures.

14 And, you know, I mean just in my
15 district -- I mean, I was just looking at the
16 list of 853 schools. I mean, The Charlton
17 School, you know. And locally -- oh, and
18 Oak Hill. And then Vanderheyden and
19 Northern Rivers, St. Anne's, St. Catherine's.
20 I mean, all of these schools that are doing
21 just remarkable work. And I'm glad that
22 there have been investments in these schools
23 because the work is really, truly
24 transformational for the students that really

1 need it and the families that really need the
2 intervention.

3 So I want to thank you for the work
4 that you do to support them.

5 And then I guess my last -- by way of
6 comment, really, is on the employment issue.
7 So I happen to have a 31-year-old who is on
8 the autism spectrum, and thank God our family
9 was able to create a job for him.

10 The unemployment, underemployment rate
11 for individuals on the autism spectrum is
12 really dismal. I think that the state could
13 do, should do, needs to do an awful lot
14 better. I think that they're a hugely
15 untapped resource. And for all that
16 everyone's always complaining they can't find
17 anybody to work, I know that there are a lot
18 of individuals, including my son, that want
19 to work, that enjoy working, and every day is
20 a good day at work for my son. He really
21 loves it.

22 So thank you for the work that you're
23 doing, and I really look forward to working
24 with you to hopefully enhance what we're

1 doing for this group of individuals that
2 really would be very dedicated and really
3 great workers. So thank you.

4 MR. KELLY: If I could just comment
5 real quick --

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Please.

7 MR. KELLY: -- we do hire, the 4201
8 schools, a lot of our alumni. And it's
9 really great to see the student go through
10 the school, go maybe get their, you know, TA
11 certification and then come back and work at
12 the school. And that is applicable to all of
13 the schools.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: That's
15 fantastic. That's fantastic. Thank you.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
17 Simon.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chair.

20 And thank you for your testimony.

21 Randi, I've already talked to you.

22 So, you know, we've talked about the
23 4201 and 853 and the 4410 schools. And one
24 of the challenges -- and I noticed in the

1 Governor's budget that there was a certain
2 flat funding for 4201 except there were six
3 schools that weren't getting a certain
4 amount. And I know we sort of divided that
5 up in terms of certain schools needing
6 certain kinds of funding, or perceived to be.

7 So (a) I'd like to understand your
8 response to that. And then the other thing
9 is we've talked about hiring and retention,
10 and it would be helpful perhaps to talk about
11 what kinds of salaries you actually have.

12 I know when I taught at Perkins, I
13 started at \$9500. After 25 years I'd be at
14 14 (laughing). So that was a long time ago,
15 but still -- not a lot of room there.

16 I'd like you to address that issue as
17 well because I think that's a significant
18 recruitment as well as retention issue.

19 MR. KELLY: Right. Like I had
20 commented, there are teachers who leave our
21 schools to go to a district with sometimes
22 between a twelve and \$25,000 pay difference,
23 depending on their certification and their
24 education and the other things that go along

1 with the pay grade at the district.

2 That's a fact. So we're behind. I
3 know in New York City it's even a greater gap
4 than it is out in Western New York.

5 In terms of the schools, the funding
6 to the 4201 schools, some of the members of
7 the Assembly gave their district school,
8 their school within their district, money to
9 meet the needs of that school, that 4201
10 school. So that is between that elected
11 official and that particular 4201 school.

12 Does that answer your question?

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Not entirely,
14 but that's a table talk.

15 MR. LOPEZ: Just to add, on the
16 recruitment piece too, certainly on the
17 teacher side, you know, teacher shortages and
18 our competition with public school salaries
19 is a factor. But for our support staff,
20 paraprofessionals, we're competing with the
21 private sector and Dunkin' Donuts and Walmart
22 and, you know, businesses like that.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So the salary
24 levels are that low.

1 MR. LOPEZ: Salary -- yes, they're
2 that low.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

4 MS. LEVINE: And for preschool special
5 education programs, 4410s, in New York City
6 today we have hundreds of young children
7 sitting at home, in violation of their
8 rights, who have an IEP-mandated right to a
9 preschool special education class but don't
10 have one because of the difficulty that the
11 community-based organizations have hiring
12 teachers.

13 And I will just say, going back to our
14 expiring stimulus dollars, the New York City
15 Department of Education actually invested
16 some funds to make it a little bit better,
17 and that funding is going away in June.
18 There are already hundreds of children
19 sitting at home; we don't want the problem to
20 get worse.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblywoman
23 Pheffer Amato.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Okay,

1 I'm just going to continue this part of the
2 conversation. Thank you for all the work
3 that you do.

4 You know, HeartShare is in my
5 district; I have many other schools
6 throughout my district, or my children in my
7 district go to schools just outside.

8 So is there an analysis that you have
9 that shows that difference in salary to be
10 equitable to the city salary, let's say, and
11 how much money you would need in your
12 budgets, infused in, to be equitable to
13 those? Do you have numbers on those?

14 MR. KELLY: We do. The 4201 schools
15 do. And we can get that to you.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I think
17 you all should submit that so we know the
18 difference -- like as a request, you know
19 what I mean?

20 And so I feel -- this is just giving
21 me a little bit of a soapbox -- that, you
22 know, you're doing the work in training the
23 person that comes in, if it's a
24 paraprofessional and/or a teacher, and then

1 make it our call to action here to make sure
2 that there's equity, at least across the
3 board. But these students, these children
4 deserve everything -- I want to say, Randi,
5 you're passionate, and everything you said,
6 we agree with. I agree with. That they're
7 shorting and they're not getting the services
8 they need, they're home, they're not getting
9 their evaluations.

10 And I know in HeartShare that they're
11 not even getting the full amount for
12 evaluations. So if we can get the
13 evaluations done, half these kids would get
14 help. And that should be funded from the
15 state level.

16 MALE PANELIST: I agree.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
18 Assemblymember.

19 That ends this. But let me say,
20 before you guys go, I understand -- Mr. Ra
21 told me that Tim Kelly, you're retiring?

22 MR. KELLY: I am. Forty-two years.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: You should
24 retire, sir.

1 MR. KELLY: Oh, no, I'm a youngster
2 down here. I get it. I get it. Over here,
3 I guess.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Listen. You
5 are retiring, you have been doing this for so
6 many years, your efforts have been admired by
7 many and the effect of your efforts has been
8 noticed and benefited the students that you
9 advocate for. They should be indebted, and
10 you will be remembered and sorely missed.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. KELLY: Thank you. Thank you.
13 Can I end it with "Go, Bills"?

14 (Laughter.)

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Next panel,
16 please come on down. This is Panel No. --

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: D.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: -- D, as we
19 continue forward. This is the New York State
20 Council of School Superintendents; the New
21 York State School Boards Association; the
22 Association of School Business Officials;
23 New York State Parent Teacher Association;
24 the Rural Schools Association; and BOCES of

1 New York State.

2 Okay, gentlemen, gentleladies, thank
3 you very much for coming. Okay, Mr. Lowry,
4 are we going to begin with you?

5 MR. LOWRY: Thank you, chairs and
6 committee members. I am Robert Lowry, deputy
7 director of the New York State Council of
8 School Superintendents. Thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify today. And more than
10 that, thank you for your leadership and
11 resolve in finally achieving full funding of
12 Foundation Aid.

13 I'd like to use my time now to make
14 three points. First, the proposed changes to
15 Foundation Aid undermine a great achievement
16 in public policy. You've heard half the
17 state's school districts would experience
18 year-to-year cuts in Foundation Aid, not just
19 smaller increases. And close to a fifth of
20 districts would see cuts of 10 percent or
21 more.

22 All districts would be negatively
23 affected by the proposed reduction in the
24 inflation factor. As one superintendent

1 observed: It would be fine to factor in
2 inflation from 10 years ago if our districts
3 and our employees could go back in time and
4 buy what we need at prices that prevailed in
5 2014.

6 Second, past actions create
7 expectations for the future, and this
8 proposal marks an abrupt change in state
9 policy. It said that recent increases were
10 not sustainable. But we repeatedly cautioned
11 school officials that as full funding was
12 achieved, and as inflation moderated, those
13 increases would moderate significantly. And
14 they have, from 12.3 percent this year to
15 3.9 percent for the year ahead, if
16 current-law formulas are followed.

17 We're grateful for the increases that
18 your budgets delivered. And our surveys show
19 that they've been able, schools, to do more
20 for students. But for 40 percent of
21 districts, those increases over the last
22 three years did not keep pace with inflation.

23 It's also true that some districts
24 have lost enrollment, and that's caused them

1 to fall onto save-harmless. But virtually
2 all districts say we are doing many more
3 things to help families and children with
4 needs beyond academics. That's the
5 number-one theme we hear from superintendents
6 when we ask them what is most important for
7 the public to know about what schools are
8 experiencing.

9 In any event, save-harmless is not
10 new. It's been around for decades. There
11 was no talk of a need to cut save-harmless
12 last year or the year before. In fact, the
13 state went beyond that and provided 3 percent
14 minimum increases.

15 Finally, we do need to work at
16 updating the Foundation Aid formula. The
17 Educational Conference Board this fall
18 outlined a two-pronged approach to doing
19 that. SED can model some changes now for
20 consideration. Other changes would require
21 funded research by the department.

22 And part of this exercise does need to
23 address districts not on the formula, those
24 that are on save-harmless. For some, actions

1 needed to ensure that their students have
2 access to a full range of learning
3 opportunities could encompass strategies for
4 regionalization and consolidation, as well as
5 funding.

6 But merely cutting aid to those
7 districts, as this budget would do, would do
8 nothing to ensure that those children have
9 the opportunities we would want for our own
10 children, and would only imperil them
11 further.

12 So thank you for your time, and I look
13 forward to your questions.

14 MR. FESSLER: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Brian Fessler with the New York State School
16 Boards Association. Chairs Mayer, Krueger,
17 Benedetto, committee members, appreciate the
18 opportunity to offer our response and
19 reactions to the budget proposal on behalf of
20 the 676 member school boards we serve.

21 We join in the sentiment you've been
22 hearing throughout the day today. Across the
23 state, school board members are surprised and
24 ultimately opposed to the Foundation Aid

1 proposal in this year's budget proposal.

2 We're frustrated and disappointed that
3 the Executive Budget both pulls back on full
4 funding of Foundation Aid and eliminates the
5 save-harmless provision for hundreds of
6 districts across the state. Between the
7 elimination of save-harmless and the
8 suppressed growth for the rest of the
9 districts in the state due to the arbitrary
10 reduction in the current-law formula's
11 inflationary factor, the proposal is more
12 than \$400 million below full funding of the
13 formula.

14 The save-harmless is an important
15 school funding strategy that ensures that no
16 districts receive less Foundation Aid than
17 they did in the previous year and that
18 recognizes that districts face increasing
19 costs each year. And it's a critical part of
20 ensuring adequate and equitable opportunities
21 for all our state's public school students.

22 You know, in crunching the numbers for
23 the 337 districts that would experience
24 \$167 million worth of Foundation Aid cuts, we

1 see that 61 districts have a Foundation Aid
2 cut of at least 20 percent. Ninety districts
3 have a Foundation Aid cut of at least
4 \$1,000 per student. A hundred districts have
5 a Foundation Aid cut that is at least
6 2 percent of their total General Fund
7 expenditures. A hundred districts with a
8 Foundation Aid cut have more than half of
9 their students on free or reduced-price
10 lunch. One hundred eighty-five districts
11 with a Foundation Aid cut have a combined
12 wealth ratio or a district wealth factor
13 below 1, meaning below state average wealth.
14 And finally, 125 districts would receive less
15 Foundation Aid under this proposal than they
16 did in 2019-'20, five years ago.

17 These cuts must be restored,
18 save-harmless must be preserved, and full
19 funding of the formula must be continued.

20 Now, while we have plenty of
21 frustration with the Foundation Aid proposal,
22 it's certainly important to note the things
23 that we do like, including complete funding
24 of expense-based aids, continued attention

1 and investments in student mental health,
2 investments in cybersecurity, and technical
3 adjustments to both pre-K funding and a small
4 adjustment to transportation aid for
5 zero-emission buses.

6 Finally, as is written in our
7 testimony, we're further hopeful to see
8 action on other important issues, including
9 investments in Career and Technical Education
10 through our BOCES and some in-district
11 programs for non-component districts;
12 restoration of prior-year aid claim funding;
13 a truly universal school meals program; and
14 much-needed reforms to the zero-emission
15 school bus transportation plan, as we have
16 recommended with some of our partner groups
17 here today.

18 Thank you very much.

19 MR. WHITE: Good afternoon. Dan
20 White, district superintendent, Monroe 1
21 BOCES, representing BOCES of New York State
22 and our 700 member districts.

23 Thank you for the opportunity, and
24 good to see all of you again. Much of what

1 we are going to say you can have in our
2 written testimony. Much of what we'd say
3 about Foundation Aid you've heard all day
4 today, and for a lot of very good reasons.
5 And sometimes it takes the air out of the
6 room, and we appreciate your attention to a
7 number of other very important issues as
8 well. I want to point out a couple.

9 Number one, the Executive Budget does
10 speak about mental health access in schools.
11 You have heard all day as well about the
12 mental health crisis we have in schools and
13 communities, and I know you know that in many
14 communities, students' access to mental
15 health exists through the school building.
16 So we are fully supportive of that.

17 We're fully supportive of looking at
18 enhancing community schools. I've spoken
19 about that with this body for a number of
20 years. Those direct monies going to services
21 for students and families are truly
22 impactful, and they are very, very important
23 to keep going.

24 Lastly, a broken record, I'm sorry,

1 for the last 10 years I've been before you
2 talking about enhancing Career and Technical
3 Education support by New York State.

4 This body and both one-house budgets have
5 supported that. We thank you for that. It
6 has not made it past the cutting-room floor,
7 so to speak, at the end of the budget.

8 But our colleagues at United
9 Federation of Teachers and New York State
10 United Teachers spoke I think very eloquently
11 about the impact of Career and Technical
12 Education across the state. Whether you're a
13 kid in a rural district or suburban district
14 or urban district, it works, it's important.
15 We ask you to reconsider that proposal, to
16 put that in your one-house budgets again. We
17 think that is exceptionally important.

18 I'm going to stop and save a little
19 bit of time and pass it to my colleague.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CECHNICKI: Thank you. Good
22 afternoon. My name is Brian Cechnicki. I'm
23 the executive director of the Association of
24 School Business Officials in New York,

1 representing nearly 3,000 members across the
2 state in nearly every BOCES and district who
3 work in the operations and finance of
4 schools.

5 I'm pleased to join my colleagues
6 today and really greatly appreciate your time
7 in hearing our concerns.

8 I'd like to focus on two key points
9 from our written testimony. The first has
10 been repeated many times here, so I'm not
11 going to belabor it, other than, you know,
12 this is not simply districts receiving less
13 of an increase; over half the state is
14 receiving an actual cut year to year. I
15 think looking at \$168 million in the context
16 of 35 billion in aid is easy to sort of
17 dismiss as a small amount, but the way that
18 this budget is cutting those districts is
19 devastating.

20 I think one way to think about it is,
21 you know, these cuts are being justified as a
22 result of declining enrollments in districts.
23 But if you look at the cuts as a percent of a
24 district's budget, if you look at the top

1 20 impacted districts from that lens, those
2 districts are losing \$19 million as a result,
3 because on average over the last 10 years,
4 they've lost 10 students per year.

5 Put another way, 20 of the smallest
6 districts in the state are losing \$19 million
7 because they've lost one student per year per
8 grade for the last decade.

9 For losing that few number of
10 students, this cut is taking away between 13
11 and 48 percent of their aid and 6 to
12 12 percent of their local budget. The last
13 time districts were cut like this, we were in
14 the midst of the worst economic downturn
15 since the Great Depression, and there was no
16 tax cap in place that was making local
17 revenue generation more difficult.

18 The Division of Budget says the
19 economy's direction in the coming months,
20 quote, "can be characterized as slow but
21 continuing economic growth at lower inflation
22 without rapidly rising unemployment." Does
23 that really sound like the time to be gutting
24 a number of school districts and cutting aid

1 from half the districts in the state? It
2 certainly doesn't to me.

3 The second point relates to prior-year
4 adjustments. I know this is a wonky,
5 esoteric school finance term, but it's
6 important. Bottom line, the state owes
7 \$305 million to districts across the
8 state due to some state aid reconciliations,
9 including \$132 million to New York City.
10 When the reconciliations result in the
11 district owing money to the state, the state
12 takes it right away. But when the reverse is
13 true and the state owes it back to the
14 districts, it goes into a queue that gets
15 paid by appropriation.

16 This means that the building and
17 transportation aid forgiveness legislation
18 that this Legislature has passed in recent
19 years as a part of the budget has not been
20 paid to a number of districts because it's
21 sitting in that queue.

22 The Governor's budget for the fourth
23 year would not have appropriation for this
24 purpose, which means that under our analysis,

1 districts would be waiting 17 years from
2 today -- if this appropriation was
3 restored -- to get that money. And New York
4 City would have to wait 19 years.

5 We've posted a tool on our website at
6 schoolbiz.info that explains the prior-year
7 adjustments and when you can expect to
8 receive that money if this appropriation is
9 restored. But even more important is fixing
10 the injustice of how that reconciliation is
11 treated.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: Good evening. I am
14 Kyle Belokopitsky, executive director of the
15 New York State Parent Teacher Association.
16 And with our president, Helen Hoffman, I am
17 proud to represent our 225,000 members and
18 the families of our 2.6 million
19 schoolchildren.

20 Thank you to the chairs, Legislature,
21 Commissioner Rosa, SED and the Regents, for
22 your continuing commitment to our children,
23 families and educators. Those educators and
24 schools do incredible things for our children

1 and students each and every day. And in the
2 past years we thanked the Governor here too.

3 It is the state's responsibility to
4 support our students. Sadly, this budget
5 does not do that. At a time when our
6 children struggle with food insecurity,
7 poverty, mental health, academic intervention
8 needs, needed support for migrant services,
9 students with disabilities, homeless
10 students, English language learners, this
11 Executive Budget shockingly cuts.

12 This proposal will cause irreparable
13 harm to some of our most vulnerable students.
14 It devalues children and the work that
15 educators do each and every day, and it
16 raises the possibility of not giving students
17 the support they need to succeed. Sadly, we
18 thought we didn't have to fight for equality,
19 equity and fair funding anymore for our
20 schools. Alas, in looking at the school aid
21 runs, nothing could be further from the
22 truth.

23 And while there are a few things in
24 that budget we do like -- which you'll find

1 in our written testimony -- we must point out
2 that high-needs school districts carry
3 50 percent of the share of the cuts. And the
4 cuts to some of our school districts are
5 drastic: Andes, 46 percent. Putnam,
6 48 percent. Edinburgh, 48 percent. Port
7 Jefferson, 41 percent. Lawrence, 38 percent.
8 Copake-Taconic, 33 percent. And in some of
9 our poorest struggling school districts like
10 Mount Vernon, they are cut \$2.9 million.

11 Senator Mayer, you asked previously
12 what this practically means. Well, we asked
13 that question too. And in my colleagues'
14 words, from PTA's teachers and school
15 leaders:

16 "We will have to cut our literacy
17 support."

18 "Sadly, arts and music and programs
19 that aren't mandated."

20 "I will have to cut any extra mental
21 health support we added in past years."

22 "We will likely have to cut STEM
23 programs, as they are costly."

24 "Right now we're looking at anything

1 over mandated AIS."

2 "We are cutting extra support for
3 students with disabilities over any mandate,
4 and some of our SE at work" {ph}.

5 And this last one: "Our cut is
6 40 percent. Kyle, I can't answer you. I
7 really don't have a solution that doesn't
8 truly hurt our entire program. I don't know
9 what to do. I saw the runs and I cried."

10 Every parent in a family has a dream
11 for their child. It is our job to help them
12 be dream-makers, ensuring that every child --
13 no matter their zip code, ethnicity, ability,
14 gender identity or race -- has the
15 highest-quality 21st-century education to
16 provide success in college, career or life.
17 This budget doesn't create those dreams for
18 those children. And for that, I am truly
19 sad.

20 We thank the Legislature for their
21 continued commitment to our students, and
22 know that we all will fight alongside you
23 each and every day to correct this wrong.
24 Together, we can support children, raise

1 awareness, and make every child's potential a
2 reality.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. LITTLE: Friends, I'm Dave Little
5 from the Rural Schools Association. I'm here
6 because 305 school districts don't fit in the
7 room.

8 (Laughter.)

9 MR. LITTLE: I want to harken back to
10 one of the first things this morning.
11 Senator Krueger, one of my personal heroes in
12 the Legislature, had a great comment. She
13 said, "Don't begrudge New York City the money
14 to address the migrant issue, because New
15 York City is the economic engine that is
16 largely paying for much of what the state
17 does in total."

18 And one of the benefits of having been
19 around now longer than the Capitol
20 building --

21 (Laughter.)

22 MR. LITTLE: -- is that I remember
23 when New York City was in fiscal distress and
24 it was the upstate rural finances that were

1 able to back the bonds that brought them out
2 of that distress.

3 When we got to the Great Recession,
4 you'd think that the State of New York would
5 have returned the favor -- and instead, it
6 largely turned its back on the second-largest
7 outward migration in U.S. history, second
8 only to the Dust Bowl of the Depression.

9 So for the Governor now to have the
10 gall to say that those people who are doing
11 the hard work of staying -- we didn't help
12 you when your children were being uprooted
13 from their schools and their friends and your
14 families had to seek their livelihood
15 elsewhere. We didn't help you then, but now
16 that you've decided to stay, we're going to
17 give your kids less money to try and pursue
18 their future in New York State -- is
19 disingenuous and untoward.

20 Everybody here has said this is a
21 normal year with normal deficits and normal
22 revenues, and we're treating it like the
23 crisis with the Gap Elimination Adjustment
24 when we started taking money back from

1 schools. I don't understand the rationale
2 behind it unless it's political, unless this
3 is to get you to encourage negotiations on
4 housing that she was unsuccessful in
5 negotiating -- or to merely keep my
6 colleagues and I from calling for rational
7 revisions to the formula like student mental
8 health, including that in the formula, or
9 eliminating the artificial floor for poverty
10 now that we have such dramatically increased
11 poverty in the future.

12 We have legitimate things that we
13 would otherwise be talking about that we're
14 now forced to simply try and save
15 save-harmless and the inflationary figure
16 that were part of your accomplishment. And
17 the Governor has now taken the very first
18 opportunity after the Court of Appeals said
19 you've done your work, you've finished full
20 funding of the Foundation Aid formula, it's
21 okay to drop the lawsuit, and she took the
22 first opportunity to deconstruct this
23 singular accomplishment of the Legislature.

24 I would ask only what you folks have

1 always done, which is fix this. Fix it going
2 forward. Give our kids all across the state
3 the opportunity for the future to remain in
4 this state.

5 Thanks, folks.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very
7 much for all your testimony. It was
8 certainly appreciated. We understand your
9 concerns. It has not fallen on deaf ears.

10 One question. Mr. Cechnicki, you're
11 the School Business Officials person, huh?
12 Tell me, what are the qualifications for
13 that? I mean, is there a title, I'm going to
14 go to school for this and become a --

15 MR. CECHNICKI: No, that's a great
16 question. So there's really two pathways to
17 become a school business official. There is
18 a civil service process based on local county
19 civil service exams, so each county has
20 qualifications for those.

21 There's also a certification process
22 that is created by the state, implemented
23 through higher education programs, so there's
24 a number of colleges around the area.

1 Earlier there was some conversation about
2 Saint Rose; they were a prominent provider
3 for these certifications.

4 So many different avenues for folks to
5 come in. We have people that come out of
6 finance, we have a couple of people who have
7 moved from Wall Street into school districts.
8 We have some people who have come right out
9 of high school and decided this is what they
10 want to do.

11 Oftentimes they're doing other similar
12 work, whether it's in accounting or maybe in
13 other operational-type things, and they just
14 sort of fall into the opportunity to work in
15 a school. So it's really a patchwork of
16 taking civil service exams or going through
17 the cert process.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: So let's
19 assume the vast majority of these business
20 officials are wonderfully qualified, okay.
21 Some may come into your job in a particular
22 school district because they might be a
23 friend of somebody; is that possible?

24 MR. CECHNICKI: Well, I mean, between

1 the -- certainly through the civil service
2 process, you know, they're going through --

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Obviously not
4 that.

5 MR. CECHNICKI: And to the extent
6 that, you know, folks are certified, they've
7 gone through, you know, that whole process
8 of, you know --

9 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I'm sure of
10 that. But to get the job in the first place,
11 do they have to have these -- this
12 certification?

13 MR. CECHNICKI: It's one or the other.
14 Either you get hired through the civil
15 service process or districts do opt to
16 hire --

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: So they have
18 to have some sort of a diploma, we'll call
19 it.

20 MR. CECHNICKI: Yes. Yeah, right, of
21 some type.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you very
23 much.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Senator Shelley Mayer.

2 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you all, and
3 appreciate the passion you bring to it.

4 You know, there are two issues that we
5 really have not addressed fully today that
6 have been used in this conversation. One is
7 the enrollment decline, which Brian, you
8 addressed. And the data I see shows the
9 state has had, over a period since 2017 to
10 2023, about a decline of 200,000 students,
11 very gradually each year. Nothing
12 remarkable. And in fact the New York City
13 chancellor told us they have an increase in
14 enrollment, and I know some other districts
15 do as well.

16 And the other issue you've heard is
17 about reserves. Some reserves, over
18 4 percent.

19 So, one, I wish you could address --
20 one, I would just say with respect to
21 enrollment decline, has there been any
22 conversation with the executive about sort of
23 how long-term to address enrollment decline?
24 Which is a national problem and is not unique

1 to New York at all and was exacerbated by
2 COVID, unquestionably.

3 Has there been any conversation about
4 how we address the need for consolidation or
5 other kinds of efforts to change schools with
6 a substantially declining enrollment?

7 And I don't want to use up all my
8 time, so speak fast, please.

9 MR. LITTLE: I'll step up on the
10 soapbox just because it's a personal thing
11 with me.

12 SENATOR MAYER: I know.

13 MR. LITTLE: I went to a regional high
14 school 50 years ago. Regional high schools
15 in every state around us exist. They're
16 successful. They outperform us, quite
17 honestly.

18 And the fact of the matter is that you
19 don't have to go any farther than 30 miles --
20 it was a brilliant strategy, to put either a
21 community college or a SUNY school within
22 30 miles of everybody in New York State.

23 And the regional high schools that I
24 went to are run -- were run by Illinois State

1 University, which was a teacher's college,
2 and UConn. Okay?

3 We have a dearth of enrollment at our
4 SUNY campuses and community colleges. They
5 need students. We need regional high schools
6 to provide rural students in particular the
7 educational opportunities that are
8 provided -- no pun intended -- as a matter of
9 course to our urban and suburban students.

10 And so we have a BOCES system that is
11 primed to operate regionally. We have
12 facilities that are waiting to be used, and
13 yet we somehow haven't gotten together in a
14 way that pulls this off, and we try and
15 cobble together a system of how to pay --
16 somehow figure out how to still have a
17 4th grade with eight students in it that
18 maybe used to have 29 students in it, but
19 you've still got to have 4th grade.

20 SENATOR MAYER: Understood.

21 Okay, I didn't get my reserves
22 question, but someone else can maybe ask
23 that. Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Assembly.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ranker Smith.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

4 Proud to be a PTA member, so thank
5 you, Kyle, for everything you do. I'm happy
6 to be represented.

7 But today I'm really interested that
8 you're here, Brian, with respect to the
9 school business officials, because these are
10 the folks that I've been on the phone with
11 for the last several days. They are
12 literally freaking out because -- and I'm
13 looking at, on the State Education Department
14 website, April 30th to May 7th school
15 districts have to have their budgets
16 available for the public. They have to have
17 a budget hearing between May 7th and
18 May 14th, and a budget vote on May 21st.
19 That's statewide.

20 Assuming, you know, our state budget's
21 on time, which that's a large assumption to
22 make, that would mean that April 1st we would
23 have the enacted school aid runs. Which it
24 could be two weeks after that. It could be

1 three weeks after that. We don't really
2 know.

3 How are school districts planning?

4 Because right now, I've got to be honest, all
5 of us in the Legislature are telling our
6 schools, Remain calm. But that is not a
7 budget figure that they can plan on, and the
8 school districts that you're dealing with
9 that you represent are looking at massive
10 cuts. That's not even -- you know, it's one
11 thing if they knew flat funding or one thing
12 if they said, okay, you know, maybe a
13 3 percent increase or a 2 percent increase
14 and maybe we only got a 1 percent increase.

15 But these figures, you know, they're
16 asking, Are we wasting our time or should we
17 start, you know, closing buildings, firing
18 people. Hundreds of teachers in my district
19 are looking -- may have to look for other
20 work if this --

21 MR. CECHNICKI: No, absolutely. In
22 fact, I wish I had teed this question up to
23 you. We actually just yesterday had a
24 webinar with about a hundred members across

1 the state on this topic. And we have a lot
2 of business officials who were not around
3 during the GEA and the Great Recession, so
4 this is really the first time they're dealing
5 with that.

6 So we had that panel of some veteran
7 folks, and really the conversation has been,
8 especially for districts with a large cut,
9 you gotta plan for both, right? You have to
10 plan that that money's not coming back --
11 despite all your best efforts, right -- from
12 a budget standpoint, because there is really
13 going to be not enough time. And especially
14 if they're going to have to look at laying
15 off folks; those layoff notices are going to
16 be coming right around the time that you're
17 passing this budget.

18 So everybody's looking at this
19 differently, but we've been, you know,
20 telling people really plan that this is
21 happening. It may not, but you can't go into
22 April in your final budget process thinking
23 that this money is going to come back if it
24 doesn't.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: And by the way,
2 that entails a lot. And I wish I had more
3 time to ask our teacher union representatives
4 that were here. But I know there will be
5 conversations -- I don't want to speak about
6 different conversations that I've heard of or
7 been made privy to. But you're talking about
8 bargaining units that your school districts
9 represent, perhaps being asked to open up
10 contracts that maybe their members thought
11 were settled for many years in the future.
12 Things of that nature.

13 Closing a school district. Typically
14 it would take two years. I have a school
15 district nearby me that is looking to rush --
16 and even with that they're looking at an
17 \$8 million shortfall proposed here -- to
18 close the school. Which again, to do it in a
19 relatively short period of time will only
20 save a million dollars. That's still
21 7 million more that they have to account for.

22 So thank you for your work.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Senator O'Mara, I believe you had your

1 name on the list.

2 SENATOR O'MARA: Yes, I did. Thank
3 you.

4 Good evening. Thank you all for your
5 testimony. I think I'm in complete agreement
6 with everything everybody said.

7 Following up on Senator Mayer's
8 question that didn't get answered -- time ran
9 out -- the reserves. And reserves in excess
10 of 4 percent. What feedback have you gotten
11 from the Executive on that, or what's your
12 response to that? And there's different
13 reserve funds. Is she talking about reserves
14 that may be designated for particular
15 purposes, or is she talking about just
16 general reserve that got's a 4 percent thrust
17 on it?

18 What do you have to say about the
19 reserve issue?

20 MR. LOWRY: Personally I've only read
21 the Governor's comments, comments from the
22 Budget Director today. They appear to be
23 rolling up both restricted and unrestricted
24 reserves. There is a limit on unrestricted

1 reserves for school districts of 4 percent.

2 We point out municipalities have no
3 percentage limit. Independent authorities
4 would suggest something anywhere between 5
5 and 10 percent. Back in December the state
6 comptroller, Tom DiNapoli, speaking to a
7 Western New York newspaper, said he would not
8 object if the Legislature raised it to
9 something like 6 percent.

10 Part of my observations, it feels like
11 4 percent is a relic from a time when state
12 and school district finances were a lot more
13 stable and predictable than they have become.
14 So that's one issue.

15 Another point: School districts look
16 to build reserves for the same reason the
17 Governor is doing it. And I credit her for
18 doing that. We are very dependent as a state
19 on volatile revenues, and that means that
20 school aid is dependent on those volatile
21 revenues.

22 But the superintendents and business
23 officials and boards look to build reserves
24 to deal with things like unpredictable cuts

1 in state aid. And all districts right now
2 are dealing with a known fact, that the
3 federal COVID relief assistance is ending.
4 It has to be fully committed early next year.

5 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

6 And, you know, I have a general
7 understanding of accounting, and I know that
8 general accounting principles say it's good
9 practice to have reserves -- whether it's
10 government or whether it's private industry,
11 to have that.

12 Just quickly, I raised an issue
13 earlier today that a bunch of my
14 superintendents are raising, and that is
15 impending significant increases in health
16 insurance costs. What are you seeing as far
17 as anybody out there negotiating yet? I
18 mean, I'm hearing 20 to 40 percent.

19 MR. WHITE: I can address some of
20 that, because BOCES do run health insurance
21 consortiums, and it's regionally dependent in
22 a lot of cases, Senator, I think as you know.

23 Certainly there are concerns with
24 that, though. We are -- health insurance

1 consortiums tend to beat the so-called state
2 average for -- but those state averages are
3 going up, and they're getting well into the
4 double digits. It's a concern, certainly,
5 and it is one thing that school districts are
6 struggling with and we're trying to track and
7 find solutions for.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 Sorry, I have to cut you off.

10 MR. WHITE: That's okay. Sorry.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Walsh.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Thank you very
14 much.

15 So briefly, the zero-emissions school
16 bus mandate, what are you hearing from the
17 groups that you represent? I mean,
18 personally I think that 2027 is completely
19 unachievable. I think that it is a
20 budget-buster for any school districts that
21 are putting that out.

22 I'd love to hear your thoughts and
23 what you're hearing, because we have a bill
24 that one of our colleagues is introducing or

1 has introduced to roll it back for the next
2 10 years, to align it with the state and
3 their mandate. Because our feeling is why
4 should the schools have to go first.

5 But I'd like to give you some time to
6 talk about this issue.

7 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, I just wanted to
8 jump in first because the Rural Schools
9 Association did a dozen rural-issues forums
10 across the state, and this, behind student
11 mental health, was the highest concern that
12 was expressed -- not only by the school
13 districts but we had people from all of the
14 community coming to these, including people
15 that run the grid.

16 And we had testimony in multiple
17 locations that said: Quit worrying about how
18 much it's going to be to put in charging
19 stations and whether or not the buses can
20 actually do these runs in the winter up the
21 mountains and get back there -- I can't get
22 you the power. We recharge the grid at
23 night, and I don't have the capacity to do
24 that right now, to get school buses all

1 charged up overnight.

2 So we obviously -- this is
3 aspirational and we need to recognize that
4 it's that. Certainly when you have school
5 districts that raise \$72,000 under a tax cap
6 each year, you can't say that they've got to
7 buy half-a-million-dollar buses. Right?

8 We've got to figure out some form of
9 reimbursement, some form of grant proposal
10 other than, hey, the federal government, you
11 can apply to them. Because we've got -- in
12 rural schools, we've got superintendents
13 driving those buses. There aren't grant
14 writers sitting there waiting to take federal
15 money in on this, on the off chance that
16 it'll offset these first initial costs.

17 You're talking about a permanent
18 program for these school districts. If the
19 state is going to pursue it, it needs to
20 treat it like that. And very little guidance
21 has been provided thus far about how school
22 districts can count on sustained funding.

23 Again, I was the Senate's local
24 government and home rule counsel when we

1 mandated that everyone had to cover their
2 municipal water supplies. And
3 municipalities, many of them did, and they're
4 still paying on bonds despite the fact that
5 the mandate doesn't exist anymore. Their
6 people have lost money on that, based on
7 that.

8 We need more structure and we need
9 more certainty than that with this issue.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Thank you very
11 much.

12 Anybody else? I've got 14 seconds.

13 MR. CECHNICKI: I would just add it's
14 a state guidance piece. Our members are
15 ready to do the work to figure this out. A
16 lot of answers that we were expecting to come
17 from state agencies are not there.

18 And it's often "Go talk to your
19 utility." Right? Do we want 700 districts
20 talking to the utility companies? The state
21 really should be stepping in and doing that.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jackson
24 for a question.

1 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, first let me
2 thank you all for coming and testifying and
3 giving me perspectives about some of the
4 districts that you represent. I live in
5 New York City, for my entire life.

6 But my question is if you sat and
7 listened to the testimony like we have, and
8 you may have heard some of it --

9 MALE PANELIST: All.

10 SENATOR JACKSON: All of it.

11 Do you feel that we have to organize
12 and you have to communicate with your
13 membership in order to communicate with their
14 elected representatives? Because I would
15 assume that they know, but, you know, we have
16 to be able to just really quickly organize
17 them in order for our collective pressure --
18 one from the Legislature, others from the
19 constituents and the providers.

20 It's so important that we do this.
21 And so I just want to know, and I guess have
22 a commitment that you're going to be reaching
23 out to all of the people and leaders that
24 you're dealing with so that we can get this

1 money restored, so that our children -- and
2 people don't have to be laid off and even
3 thinking about they're going to lose their
4 jobs.

5 MR. LOWRY: First of all, I'd say all
6 of us email, converse every day, text message
7 among ourselves. Yesterday I spoke to over a
8 hundred Long Island superintendents. In
9 about 18 hours I'm supposed to be in Buffalo,
10 talking to another sixty or so.

11 And what we have stressed is -- first
12 of all, a lot of superintendents and business
13 officials, they're new. If their experience
14 is limited to the last two or three years, we
15 assure them, that's not typical. What we're
16 doing now is more like the normal routine.

17 It's early. A year ago we didn't
18 receive the Governor's budget until this
19 date, February 1st.

20 But you do have to advocate. You
21 know, you have been -- you and your
22 colleagues have been encouraging in weeks
23 past leading up to this, but we have stressed
24 to them: You do need to follow through, you

1 do need to advocate on this, and that is
2 not -- you know, that is not out of the
3 ordinary. It's part of your job as a
4 superintendent or a school district leader.

5 MS. BELOKOPITSKY: Thanks. And I'll
6 add I vow to you that we will let each of our
7 225,000 parent and family and educator
8 members know that it is now their job to call
9 Governor Hochul's office and to email her
10 office and to tell her that this is
11 unacceptable and that we must support our
12 children.

13 And we next week will be activating
14 our email alert system on this issue. So I
15 apologize to you all, because you will be
16 getting those emails too. But we will make
17 sure that our members know that you are
18 supportive of our proposal.

19 We are having two advocacy days
20 scheduled here with our members. We are also
21 having all of our members meet locally with
22 their legislators and gubernatorial offices.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

24 MR. FESSLER: One quick thing I'll

1 say. You know, usually we're spending time
2 the first week or two after budget digesting,
3 informing members. This year, I think for me
4 it was the opposite. You know,
5 instantaneously school board members calling,
6 emailing, before I could finish kind of
7 summaries and analysis for the entire
8 membership. So I think that shows the
9 engagement so far.

10 Thanks.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think I'm the
12 last Senator.

13 I want to thank you all. I appreciate
14 the comments. I think really my point
15 earlier today was we represent the entire
16 State of New York. The Legislature believes,
17 whoever's elected us, we represent
18 19.5 million New Yorkers, and we sink or swim
19 together or apart. We have to be together.

20 I appreciate all of your work. All
21 during the day we kept hearing, and including
22 some of you, that the numbers the Governor
23 gave us or in their runs, et cetera, aren't
24 consistent with what you believe and know to

1 be the math for your specialty area or your
2 district.

3 It would be very helpful to get us
4 more information, because we want to hold
5 those numbers up against the Governor's
6 numbers and say, Prove that the people on the
7 ground are wrong. Because I think those
8 numbers are wrong. But having the data is
9 very valuable.

10 So in any way that you can format it
11 that will be helpful to us, that will be
12 valuable. Yes, of course, have everyone in
13 the world call and yell at us, we get it.
14 But actually having data that we can use in
15 negotiations with the Governor would be
16 exceptionally valuable. So thank you very
17 much all for being here.

18 MR. CECHNICKI: I would point you to
19 schoolbiz.info. We've got a bunch of stuff
20 out there already for you, easy to get to.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Thank you.
22 Assembly.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel, thank
24 you very much for being here all day. I

1 think many of you are and have been.
2 Hopefully, go home and go to sleep. Okay?
3 Thank you very much.

4 Panel E, the No. 7 group coming up
5 today: The New York Library Association; the
6 New York State Association for Computers and
7 Technologies in Education; the New York
8 School Bus Contractors Association; the
9 New York Association for Pupil
10 Transportation; the Healthy School Meals for
11 All New York Kids Coalition; and the New York
12 Schools Nutrition Organization.

13 (Pause.)

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Welcome. And
15 I'm sure your testimony is going to be fine,
16 so let's not waste any time. Is it going to
17 be -- are you Maxwell?

18 MR. PRIME: Yes, I am.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Maxwell Prime?
20 Maxwell Prime -- it almost sounds like an
21 actor's name.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MR. PRIME: Appreciate that, sir.

24 (Laughter.)

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Maxwell, go
2 right ahead.

3 MR. PRIME: All right. Well, I have
4 the privilege of serving the New York Library
5 Association as their director of government
6 relations and advocacy. Thank you for
7 providing me with the opportunity to testify
8 on behalf of our state's libraries, library
9 systems, and the more than 10 million
10 New Yorkers who hold library cards.

11 I begin by acknowledging the
12 relatively favorable position of library
13 funding in this year's Executive Budget, with
14 a proposal that includes 102.1 million for
15 State Library Aid, 34 million for Library
16 Construction Aid, and a new allocation of
17 \$3 million for NOVELny.

18 While New York's library community is
19 grateful to the Legislature and to
20 Governor Hochul for recognizing the need for
21 library investment, these allocations remain
22 insufficient. Even with the Executive's
23 proposed \$2.5 million increase, Library Aid
24 would still fall \$2.5 million short of what's

1 statutory under Education Law. Meanwhile,
2 flat funding for Construction Aid constitutes
3 just 1.9 percent of estimated statewide need.

4 Our libraries and library systems are
5 vital institutions, foundational in lifelong
6 learning. They advance literacy, promote
7 equity in education, and bridge gaps in
8 access to critical resources. With adequate
9 funding, our libraries can innovate and
10 develop ways to serve the rapidly evolving
11 needs of their patrons. But without it,
12 they'll struggle to even maintain the core
13 services that they already perform.

14 As such, NYLA requests \$147.1 million
15 for State Library Aid, 69.4 million for
16 Construction Aid, \$11 per pupil for
17 Library Materials Aid, and we support the
18 \$3 million for NOVELny. The State Library
19 Aid program is the primary source of funding
20 for New York's library systems, which provide
21 shared services and resources to each library
22 in New York. Their efforts ensure that every
23 community and every New Yorker has access to
24 quality library materials and services.

1 Unfortunately, three decades of
2 sustained underfunding has stretched system
3 resources as far as can be expected without
4 breaking. Substantially greater investment
5 is required if they are to maintain current
6 services despite soaring operational costs
7 and emerging community needs.

8 NYLA requests, as I said, 69.4 million
9 for Library Construction Aid. Years of flat
10 funding have rendered the program stagnant,
11 and with each successive year this case just
12 gets worse and worse. The Division of
13 Library Development estimates the current
14 need at 1.75 billion, with over half of
15 New York's libraries over 60 years old.

16 For Library Materials Aid, currently
17 school districts are only eligible to receive
18 up to \$6.25 per pupil, and that level has
19 remained flat for 17 years. District costs
20 have gone up, and the average cost of a
21 hardcover book is \$26.25. That is not
22 sufficient if we are to comply with the
23 literacy initiative that we're looking at and
24 to actually serve student needs.

1 We also request \$3 million for NOVELny
2 that was included in the Executive Budget.
3 NYLA supports the Executive proposal for the
4 continuation because, without action, the
5 funds to operate these essential e-resources
6 programs will lapse on June 30th of this
7 year, and that would constitute a substantial
8 blow to digital and educational equity in our
9 state.

10 On behalf of New York's library
11 community, I thank you and implore the
12 Legislature to invest in our state's
13 libraries so that your constituents, our
14 patrons, and our communities can thrive.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

16 DR. DELCORVO: Good afternoon, ladies
17 and gentlemen of the Legislature. Thank you
18 for the opportunity to testify today.

19 My name is Dr. Amy DelCorvo, and I'm
20 the chief executive officer and executive
21 director for the New York State Association
22 for Computers and Technologies in Education,
23 NYSCATE.

24 NYSCATE is a nonprofit professional

1 organization representing educators and
2 administrators. We work with countless
3 organizations statewide and nationally to
4 enhance education through the appropriate use
5 of technologies, primarily through
6 professional development.

7 It has been such a pleasure meeting
8 with many of your staff members and
9 yourselves over the past year since our last
10 testimony. The dedication to our profession
11 is admirable, and we are here to ask that it
12 continue.

13 So why exactly are we here today?
14 NYSCATE had the opportunity to utilize
15 one-time federal CARES Act funding and
16 partnered with NYSED to offer professional
17 development courses online to all teachers in
18 New York at no cost. Courses were developed
19 and facilitated by practicing educators,
20 aligned with state standards, with an
21 expectation of quality that reflected an
22 understanding of New York's regional
23 variations and needs. Courses were made
24 available to all educators, again at no cost,

1 through an online learning management system.

2 Each course ranged from three to
3 18 credit hours. They were all eligible for
4 CTLE credit, which is required by every
5 teacher to maintain their professional
6 certification. In addition, all courses were
7 written in multiple languages, adhering to
8 the New York State PD standards and guiding
9 principles of CTLE.

10 Since the program conclusion there
11 have been thousands of educator requests to
12 continue to access the courses, as well as an
13 expansion of courses to include updated
14 initiatives such as literacy, assisted and
15 adaptive learning technologies, civic
16 engagement, ELL and MLL.

17 Teachers are struggling. This ask is
18 to allow teachers to enhance their skills,
19 build professional networks, and meet their
20 professional certification requirements at no
21 cost when and where it is convenient for
22 them. A small example of this: Every
23 teacher needs to have a total of 15 credit
24 hours in MLL or ELL. This is a way for them

1 to maintain it, get it at no cost -- again,
2 when they can do it.

3 Although our is less than \$2 million,
4 which is I know a fraction of what many of my
5 colleagues are asking for, the impact is
6 great. By putting this in the one-house
7 budgets and ultimately the enacted budget for
8 program continuation, the impact will be felt
9 across the entire state in every district and
10 in every city that you all represent.

11 As my colleagues from UFT and NYSUT
12 stated earlier, teachers do and will take
13 advantage of PD. We've proved this. Let's
14 empower all teachers with the professional
15 development they need, when they need it, all
16 developed by New York State educators for
17 New York State educators.

18 Let's maximize our state dollars.
19 We've heard what a struggle it is today
20 across the board. This is a reasonable ask
21 with a longstanding, huge impact.

22 Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Tom?

24 MR. SMITH: All right, good evening.

1 My name is Thomas Smith. I'm the president
2 of the New York School Bus Contractors
3 Association and the chief operating officer
4 of Suffolk Transportation Service, based in
5 Suffolk County, New York.

6 I'm here today proudly representing
7 the New York School Bus Contractors
8 Association. We are an organization
9 comprising 200 contractor members that
10 provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective
11 student transportation services to 85 percent
12 of the school districts in New York. In
13 addition, school bus contractors employ
14 50,000 people with good-paying union jobs
15 with benefits, and operate roughly 30,000
16 school vehicles in New York State.

17 I want to thank all the members of the
18 Joint Committee on Education for affording
19 the New York School Bus Contractors
20 Association the opportunity to present an
21 overview of our '24-'25 budget
22 recommendations.

23 We appreciate the positive working
24 relationships we have with the Legislature,

1 the Governor, the school districts we serve,
2 and the over 45,000 professionals who work to
3 make sure our students are provided a safe
4 ride to and from school each and every day.

5 School buses are and have always been
6 the safest way for children to travel to and
7 from school. New York State is well on its
8 way in transforming the school transportation
9 sector, requiring all school buses purchased
10 after 2027 to run on electricity and
11 replacing all 50,000 diesel-fueled or
12 gas buses in the state with electric vehicles
13 by 2035.

14 As many of you know, our members are
15 at the forefront of that movement running
16 electric school buses throughout the state,
17 and have worked closely with NYSERDA on the
18 zero-emissions roadmap. In addition, my
19 company, Suffolk Transportation in Bay Shore,
20 New York, is currently running 11 electric
21 school buses, so I would be more than happy
22 to answer any questions in relation to the
23 operation of these vehicles.

24 Despite the significant advantages of

1 electric school buses, the up-front purchase
2 price has emerged to be the greatest
3 obstacle, along with infrastructure
4 challenges. These electric buses can cost
5 three times or even greater compared to a
6 traditional diesel school bus. Fleet
7 operators often just can't afford the
8 up-front costs, even with grants and other
9 subsidies.

10 In addition, we are learning that the
11 different available grants are not likely
12 stackable. And while the trend is clear --
13 electric vehicles continually get cheaper --
14 the funding gap for now remains too great for
15 many, and parity is not certain.

16 One creative way to speed up the
17 conversion is by eliminating the sales tax
18 associated with the purchase of new electric
19 school buses and parts. On average, more
20 than \$8,000 of sales tax is charged for each
21 new diesel school bus that is on the road.
22 The costs associated with this tax, as well
23 as the taxes on school bus parts and fuel, is
24 passed along from the transportation

1 providers to school districts.

2 School districts, funded by both local
3 property taxpayers and New York State itself,
4 are bearing the cost of funding its own tax.

5 NYSBCA members --

6 (Time clock chiming.)

7 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

8 MR. CHRISTOPHER: I'd like to thank
9 the chairs and the members for allowing us to
10 speak today. My name is David Christopher,
11 and I'm the executive director of the
12 New York Association for Pupil
13 Transportation.

14 First I'd like to add a few words in
15 support of the associations and the folks who
16 have talked today about the save-harmless
17 state aid provision. That's not in my
18 written testimony; however, it's certainly
19 important.

20 We fully support restoration of the
21 save-harmless provision and ask the
22 Legislature to reinstate this funding in the
23 state budget to avoid drastic budget cuts
24 that will impact our school districts and

1 students, and particularly school
2 transportation services.

3 I was around when GEA happened, and I
4 saw what happened to school transportation
5 operations. And in this time the industry is
6 experiencing a severe bus driver shortage,
7 and the mandated electric bus transition
8 budget cuts to transportation departments
9 will be devastating.

10 Next, I'd like to speak to the school
11 bus driver shortage problem. We're very
12 disappointed to see the Executive Budget did
13 not renew the state retirement earnings cap
14 waiver, which allows state retirees to
15 continue working in the public sector once
16 they have earned over \$35,000. This waiver
17 is currently in place and due to expire in
18 June. The waiver is important to school
19 districts to retain school bus drivers and to
20 attract new retirees to the job. We ask for
21 legislative support to reinstate that waiver.

22 Next I'd like to share some thoughts
23 on the zero-emissions bus transition. The
24 industry continues to be very concerned about

1 the mandated dates of implementation, and we
2 hope the mandated dates will be revisited.

3 To assist the industry in
4 transitioning, we recommend the following.

5 First, we fully support the
6 Executive Budget proposal to enhance state
7 aid where grants and vouchers are awarded for
8 zero-emission vehicles and equipment. We ask
9 the Legislature to support this as well.

10 We continue to recommend formal pilot
11 programs to be established and sufficiently
12 funded to provide useful long-term
13 operational and cost data to the industry, to
14 provide a model for all schools to make this
15 transition in the future in a planned-out and
16 cost-effective manner.

17 We recommend the state provide state
18 aid funding for engineering transition
19 studies to school districts that are not
20 eligible for grant funding. And we support
21 the proposed funding to SED to provide
22 additional staffing to approve infrastructure
23 permits in a timely manner.

24 Lastly, we recommend that the state

1 revisit the 12-year state aid payment term
2 for state aid on electric bus purchases and
3 leases, and align the payment term with the
4 useful life of a bus. The 12-year
5 reimbursement is a disincentive to transition
6 our bus fleets.

7 Thank you for the opportunity to share
8 these thoughts and recommendations, and I'll
9 be glad to answer any questions you might
10 have.

11 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: Good evening, and
12 thank you for the opportunity to testify.

13 I'm here today on behalf of the
14 Healthy School Meals for All New York Kids
15 Coalition, representing over 285
16 organizations that remain steadfast in our
17 advocacy for statewide school meals at no
18 cost.

19 Thanks to the leadership of this
20 Legislature, New York has taken a historic
21 step towards expanding free school meals.
22 Last year's investment delivered immediate
23 and necessary relief to over 347,000 students
24 who newly gained access to free school meals

1 this school year. We're grateful to
2 Governor Hochul for allocating 145.6 million
3 to sustain this funding for this expansion in
4 her Executive Budget.

5 Still, this falls short of a true
6 statewide Healthy School Meals for All
7 policy. More than 320,000 students across
8 660 schools were excluded from last year's
9 expansion. Those left behind primarily are
10 in areas of high cost of living, like on
11 Long Island and in the Hudson Valley, where
12 families are struggling but schools cannot
13 meet the strict eligibility criteria of the
14 new state subsidy.

15 In some school districts only one or
16 two schools -- but not all -- qualify. So
17 children in the same neighborhood or even in
18 the same household may not share the same
19 access to school meals. This creates an
20 inequitable and confusing dynamic for school
21 communities.

22 There's a perception that the
23 remaining families and schools are affluent
24 and do not need this state investment. The

1 reality is that in the schools left behind, a
2 family of four earning just \$56,000 a year --
3 far below a living wage in New York State --
4 is over-income for free school meals. And we
5 know that hunger exists in every community.

6 Means-testing children for access to
7 meals is a broken system that perpetuates
8 stigma and leaves kids hungry. Children from
9 families making too much to qualify for free
10 meals often avoid eating to avoid a free
11 school meal debt for their families. Even
12 families that do qualify are often deterred
13 by stigma, especially in those communities
14 that are perceived as wealthy.

15 Eight states have now established
16 permanent statewide free school meal
17 policies, including our neighbors in Vermont
18 and Massachusetts. New York must be next,
19 and New York voters agree. A recent poll
20 found 77 percent of voters support state
21 funding for universal school meals because
22 it's a commonsense policy. Universal school
23 meals support students' physical and mental
24 health, improve attendance, help students

1 perform better on standardized tests in
2 reading and math.

3 Perhaps most importantly, universal
4 school meals can support food security for
5 the nearly one in six New York kids who face
6 food insecurity, and save our families an
7 estimated \$150 per month per child in food
8 costs.

9 Our coalition strongly urges the
10 Legislature to include an additional
11 90.4 million allocation to close the gap and
12 fully fund a statewide school-meals-at-no-
13 cost program in the final budget.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. KENNEALLY: I'd like to thank the
16 committee for allowing me to give testimony
17 today.

18 My name is Patrick Kenneally. I'm a
19 school lunch director in the Capital Region,
20 and the public policy chair for the New York
21 School Nutrition Association.

22 The funding of healthy school meals to
23 all children in New York is not merely an
24 economic consideration, it's a human

1 imperative and a reflection of the values
2 that define how we look at our next
3 generation.

4 In my culinary career I have witnessed
5 the magic that happens when a shared meal
6 becomes a catalyst for conversation,
7 understanding, and compassion. Yet working
8 in school nutrition has made me very aware
9 that not every child has the privilege of
10 enjoying such moments without the gnawing
11 ache of hunger.

12 It is an injustice that paints the
13 canvas of our shared experience, a challenge
14 that demands our collective attention,
15 empathy and action. When we speak of school
16 meals for all, we're not just talking about
17 filling stomachs -- we're talking about
18 fueling minds with the sustenance needed to
19 learn, grow, and to thrive. It's a pledge to
20 eliminate the stigma attached to our broken
21 meal policy, to foster equity amongst our
22 youth, and to lay a foundation for a future
23 where no child faces the daunting shadow of
24 an empty lunch tray.

1 The role of school meals transcends
2 the confines of the cafeteria. It is a
3 cornerstone in the foundation of our
4 children's health, academic performance, and
5 overall well being. Yet we put an
6 income-based stipulation on a student's
7 ability to have access to those meals in our
8 schools.

9 We see time and time again that the
10 financial stability of a family does not
11 equate to food security for the child. As
12 guardians of the educational experience for
13 young minds across the state, this committee
14 bears a profound responsibility to ensure
15 that every child not only receives the
16 intellectual tools to succeed, but also the
17 physical nutrition needed to thrive.

18 Our broken meal system not only
19 shortchanges the ability of students to reach
20 their potential, it hamstring the financial
21 resources of our school districts obligated
22 to cover unpaid meal debt in the lunch
23 program, forced to use general funds that
24 could be better utilized to educational

1 experience, hire teachers and aides, and
2 improve buildings.

3 With the USDA changing the CEP
4 threshold to 25 percent, we saw an increase
5 of 347,000 students gaining access to
6 universal meals. We are left with
7 660 schools containing 320,000 students that
8 are still part of a biased meal program.

9 Currently our state boasts an
10 impressive 88 percent coverage of meals for
11 students. That's a B+ in our efforts. We
12 strive for excellence in academic performance
13 in New York, and if school-managed meals play
14 a central role in that pursuit, a B+ is
15 unacceptable. Anything short of an A+ is a
16 shortchange of our children. An A+ is a
17 future where every child, without exception,
18 has access to the nourishment they need to
19 thrive academically, physically, and
20 emotionally.

21 Eight states have already made this
22 critical investment. New York has the
23 ability to set a standard not just for
24 academic excellence, but for compassion,

1 equity, and social responsibility by funding
2 universal meals for all.

3 Thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you all
5 for your testimony.

6 Listen, I'm up here and I'm just
7 running my mouth off making light of your
8 name, Maxwell. Okay? And I apologize, I
9 meant no -- it's a nice name. And I looked
10 down at your title, director, government
11 relations and advocacy -- I believe that's
12 the exact title my daughter has. She works
13 for the Queens Library. So an awful lot of
14 respect for you, sir, and what you do.

15 MR. PRIME: I believe I know who your
16 daughter is.

17 (Laughter.)

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Tom, the bus
19 contractors. We just had somebody in here,
20 okay, testifying, and he's saying that the
21 timeline for electric buses -- it's not real,
22 it can't be done, and so on.

23 You're the contractors. Do you agree
24 with that?

1 MR. SMITH: Umm --

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: You agree with
3 that? That was a yes?

4 MR. SMITH: It's a very challenging
5 timeline, for sure.

6 To just set the record, we are a big
7 fan of the electric vehicles. We think it's
8 a good way to move. But a lot of challenges
9 out there. You know, technology has not been
10 dialed in to be reliable. And a lot of
11 evolving components. Infrastructure is
12 probably the hardest component out of it.

13 I think originally we thought buses,
14 buses, buses, but it really came down to how
15 do we dismantle our yards, how do we function
16 with parking criteria, do we have power at
17 the sites? So there's a lot going on. Even
18 the OEMs will have trouble delivering,
19 because it's not just New York where they're
20 delivering electric vehicles, it's -- you
21 know, California is very big, and other
22 states as well.

23 A lot of challenges in front of us.
24 You know, I think a phased-in plan would be

1 something more digestible than all at once,
2 with that -- 2035 is one of the most
3 challenging components. And even with us,
4 you know -- we're applying for funding. It's
5 not always guaranteed. So a lot of
6 challenges ahead.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
8 Tom.

9 Senate?

10 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Senator Shelley Mayer.

12 SENATOR MAYER: So first I have a
13 question of Tommy and David on school buses,
14 and I've raised this with Tommy.

15 What has been your experience in
16 dealing with NYSERDA as sort of the state
17 agency that is sort of the coordinator? Has
18 that been satisfactory? And do you feel that
19 you've gotten enough information for the
20 questions that you have about access to
21 power, access to parts, costs, reimbursement,
22 et cetera?

23 MR. SMITH: So we were on their
24 committee developing the roadmap, so we did

1 have some points we were able to weigh in a
2 little bit. You know, I felt that one of the
3 best components of the electric buses was
4 that we purchased 11 units ourselves and were
5 able to develop an education there. So that
6 was helpful, and that was helpful also giving
7 information to NYSERDA.

8 So they put together a lot of good
9 information. I think that the roadmap does
10 not give a definitive -- I think they push it
11 a little bit down the line because they know
12 the mandates are challenging and there's a
13 lot of components that are going into this,
14 and there's also a lot of unknowns.

15 So I think they did as best they
16 could, but I also think that we have to see
17 time march on to see what will happen. I
18 think time will tell where we end up.

19 SENATOR MAYER: Just -- all right, I
20 think I asked this before. Do you feel you
21 have sufficient clarity about which expenses
22 will be paid for by the feds under the
23 Inflation Reduction Act or any other federal
24 bill?

1 MR. SMITH: I would say that I do not.

2 SENATOR MAYER: Right.

3 MR. SMITH: And I would say that it's
4 challenging to understand what you may be
5 able to obtain, for sure.

6 SENATOR MAYER: Yeah, understood.
7 Okay, we'll work on that.

8 Then Jessica and Patrick, thank you
9 for your advocacy. Thank you for last year
10 helping us get as far as we got. And Patrick
11 particularly, thank you for talking about it
12 beyond just the hunger issue, as a school
13 issue, and I think it's extremely important.

14 Are all of the school lunch or
15 nutrition people involved in your coalition,
16 Patrick, the association?

17 MR. KENNEALLY: Yeah.

18 SENATOR MAYER: Does that include the
19 City of New York? Or they are already in the
20 community school -- I mean, I know they have
21 community eligibility. But do you have all
22 the urban districts on board with you?

23 MR. KENNEALLY: Yeah. And most of the
24 urban districts are already part of this --

1 SENATOR MAYER: I know.

2 MR. KENNEALLY: And they're part of
3 the -- at the 40 percent.

4 But yeah, we have great relationships
5 with all of them.

6 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. And Jessica, do
7 have the relationship with the PTAs and the
8 parents in these schools?

9 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: Yes.

10 SENATOR MAYER: And are they weighing
11 in on the subject?

12 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: Yes. Our
13 coalition of over 285 organizations includes
14 PTA, all members of the ECB, along with
15 groups throughout the cities and areas -- it
16 was really encouraging to see other areas
17 that already have universal -- all hands on
18 deck to make this a reality for all New York
19 kids.

20 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you
21 very much.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Assembly?

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Chairman

1 Santabarbara.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Okay, thank
3 you all for being here.

4 I want to thank Jessica and Patrick
5 for your advocacy on school meals. I
6 completely agree with you. That's something
7 I'll be fighting for in the budget as well, I
8 think it is important. I see the schools
9 that do have it, what an impact, and change
10 does happen.

11 It ties in with the community school
12 discussion we had as well, making sure that
13 kids have the things that they need to get
14 ready to sit in a classroom and get ready for
15 learning.

16 Max, thanks for being here. Max has
17 been in my office quite a bit lately since I
18 received my new assignment as chair of the
19 Libraries Committee. We actually worked on a
20 piece of legislation together that is now
21 introduced, and I just wanted to talk a
22 little bit about that, about streamlining the
23 construction aid, increasing the flexibility
24 in the system, and making sure that

1 underserved areas are getting more of that
2 aid.

3 Could you just talk about that bill
4 and how important it is to the libraries in
5 our state?

6 MR. PRIME: Yeah. So that bill would
7 really address the overall issue. You know,
8 the biggest issue that's there is the funding
9 aspect of things. And of course, as I said,
10 we're advocating for \$69.4 million there.

11 The current statewide need, as I
12 mentioned in my testimony, is \$1.75 billion.
13 So of course wouldn't dream of receiving
14 that.

15 But what that bill that you're talking
16 about would do would remove some of the
17 boundaries on how that aid can be allocated
18 on the system level. And so basically
19 that -- there's a current cap at 50 percent
20 of an allocation to a system on how much of
21 the money that goes to that system can be
22 awarded to projects eligible for 75 percent
23 or -- or above 75 percent match. Those would
24 be the economically distressed communities.

1 And so currently you can only award
2 50 percent of the total system allocation
3 there. So if you have a system that has a
4 ton of projects that are eligible for that
5 match, you can't conceivably actually award
6 them that way. So that would help get rid of
7 that issue.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: So I
9 haven't talked to the Governor's office on
10 that. Maybe it has something to do with the
11 budget, I don't know. But certainly that
12 would address the construction aid issue, and
13 I hope that we can get that passed.

14 I've got a little bit of time left. I
15 just wanted to talk to you about the ebook,
16 the digital materials. That seems to be an
17 issue as well. The renewal fees seem to be
18 driving up costs for libraries. Could you
19 just touch on that?

20 MR. PRIME: Yeah, and so there is an
21 overall issue with the cost of ebooks for
22 libraries. The purchase price is higher than
23 for the general public, of course, but
24 there's an issue with the terms that come

1 with those contracts.

2 They're not a one-time purchase. It's
3 a kind of metered access. So you might have
4 to buy at a higher price the same ebook, you
5 know, every year or once every, you know,
6 20 circulations -- which is not the period of
7 time that a physical book wears out. And so
8 it continues to just drive up costs, and it's
9 just not a great use of resources.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: There is a
11 piece of legislation on that as well that I'm
12 working on.

13 MR. PRIME: Wonderful.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

15 Senate?

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Chu.

17 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

18 I have two questions for my libraries.
19 Good to see you here, Max.

20 The first one, I just want to touch
21 base on the construction aid. Because from
22 the budget, the Governor's proposal does not
23 even meet the -- it's not even 2 percent of
24 the need. And what you are asking is not

1 even 4 percent of the need.

2 So could you tell us, give us some
3 example -- like what's our construction need
4 here? Like give us some example. What are
5 you looking for for those 69.4 million?
6 What's it going to do?

7 MR. PRIME: Absolutely.

8 And so the construction aid is really
9 varied across the state. But I know a lot of
10 people might imagine it, you know, as
11 sparkling brand new libraries all across the
12 state, but really it's about often health and
13 safety updates -- becoming ADA-compliant, new
14 HVAC systems. It's about roof repair -- or
15 roof replacements, because you need to
16 protect the things that are actually inside
17 the library so you don't have to replace
18 those as well.

19 But those issues are mounting. Half
20 of our libraries are 60 years old. And every
21 year that there's not the investment that's
22 made there, an existing structural issue will
23 get worse and worse and worse. It gets more
24 expensive to try to address, and then you

1 have to ask for more money to address it.

2 SENATOR CHU: Absolutely.

3 Regarding the digital materials, so I
4 just want to share my personal experience. I
5 borrow, like, digital books from our public
6 library, and usually the wait is between one
7 month to three months at least.

8 It's just how crazy, like, this long
9 wait is, how we patrons cannot access those
10 digital materials. And I just want to see if
11 you are able to feed us any information about
12 what the percentage of our digital materials,
13 than the hard copies -- how short we are in
14 terms of access to those digital materials.

15 MR. PRIME: So in terms of overall
16 digital materials on the public library side,
17 I know that it's -- you know, well, I don't
18 have a specific percentage. I can say that
19 the demand for those surged during COVID.
20 People found ebooks, there was a way that
21 they could access materials without having to
22 physically go to a library, and they found
23 they really liked doing that. It makes it a
24 lot more accessible for them.

1 And so it's driven up the interest.
2 And when you're driving interest in something
3 that's more expensive than your typical
4 resources, and you have those limitations we
5 just talked about on the metered access,
6 whether it's in terms of a fixed period that
7 you have access to that book that you've
8 bought or a number of circulations, and you
9 have to keep purchasing it again and again
10 and again, you know, it really limits what
11 you can buy for those.

12 And so you do see frustration amongst
13 the community that -- like you're talking
14 about. You're not even the first legislator
15 who's mentioned to me the frustration of not
16 being able to get ebooks just by going to
17 their local library. And so that's certainly
18 an issue that is pervasive in our state.

19 SENATOR CHU: I appreciate that.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 Assembly?

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes.

23 Apparently we've had a late substitution.

24 Assemblymember Walsh is going next.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Well, guess what
2 I'm going to ask about.

3 (Laughter.)

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: I've been asking
5 about these EV buses all day. I think I must
6 be channeling Mr. Palmesano, I don't know, my
7 colleague who couldn't be here today.

8 So I think you raised a really
9 interesting point about the cost of
10 infrastructure. It's a lot more than just
11 the cost of the buses themselves. So one of
12 the school districts that I represent was
13 recently -- that has a fleet of over 200
14 buses on campus -- they were told that they
15 would need a substation on their campus that
16 was going to be to the tune of like
17 \$30 million to build this thing.

18 I mean, how is that even feasible? I
19 mean, I know that there's some grant monies
20 that are -- like the Environmental Bond Act
21 and stuff that's been released to try to
22 defray some of the costs. But that's just
23 one school district. That's one school
24 district in the state.

1 So anyway, I think you make a very
2 good point about saying it's not just the
3 buses. And I have nothing against electric
4 vehicles. I bought just one this summer;
5 it's great. But, I mean, to make this a
6 statewide mandate that's going to be clicking
7 in so soon is very problematic with me.

8 And then I really wanted to thank
9 Mr. Christopher for your comment about the
10 waivers and the bus driver shortage. That's
11 a really good point. We hadn't heard that
12 today, and I think that that is very
13 important. And I would say, in addition to
14 making sure that the waiver gets extended, to
15 increase the amount of money that people can
16 earn and still be able to take these
17 positions. Because there is an -- I mean, we
18 know what an incredible shortage there is.
19 So thank you for raising that point.

20 And I just wanted to, in the time that
21 I've got remaining, see if there's anything
22 that we didn't ask you about this particular
23 issue that you'd like to make sure that we've
24 heard. I know you have your written

1 testimony, but is there anything else we need
2 to know?

3 MR. CHRISTOPHER: Regarding EVs --

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Yes.

5 MR. CHRISTOPHER: -- or waivers?

6 Well, I think --

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: Or either.

8 Either one.

9 MR. CHRISTOPHER: I think the electric
10 bus issue is a big issue out there. And when
11 we're talking about save-harmless aid going
12 away, how do we even think about doing an
13 electric bus transition?

14 I can tell you -- and Tom's a big
15 player in the electric bus field -- the
16 electric bus works well once it's installed.
17 But the cost of doing this is just
18 outrageous. And you've got one example
19 there. Another example is in the Rochester
20 area, a brand-new facility costs hundreds of
21 millions of dollars to build, and they can't
22 put electric buses on their site because of
23 space and cost.

24 So it's a big nut to crack, and that's

1 why we suggest let's do the pilots, collect
2 information, work with NYSERDA to make sure
3 that information is correct, and get the
4 costs and the operational data out there for
5 school districts to make good decisions.

6 Because right now they're making
7 decisions -- they're building it as they're
8 going along, and that's problematic. And
9 there's some mistakes being made, and that's
10 not the right thing to do with this kind of a
11 major transition.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALSH: It's time to fix
13 them. Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Mic problems.)
15 Senator Tom O'Mara. Oh, excuse me.

16 Senator Dean Murray.

17 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,
18 Chairwoman.

19 I have a couple of questions for a
20 couple of you, so I'm going to start with
21 Max. So if we could keep the answer a little
22 quick so I can get to the second one in three
23 minutes.

24 You referenced in your testimony the

1 consistent underfunding of Library Aid. Now,
2 we talked about the Foundation Aid being
3 fully funded last year for the first time. I
4 can't remember when libraries were fully
5 funded. The exercise every year is the
6 Governor sweeps some money and cuts the
7 funding. The Legislature scratches and claws
8 to get it either back, maybe even, or a
9 little bit of an increase at most. And we
10 fall short, and here we are far behind.

11 How much would it take, in your
12 estimation, to really get libraries fully
13 funded?

14 MR. PRIME: So if you're talking about
15 the gap since the beginning of the program,
16 it's around \$207 million. Which is about
17 twice the amount of the largest annual award
18 that Library Aid has ever received. So it's
19 a considerable amount.

20 And 154 million of that has come in
21 the last 15 years or so.

22 SENATOR MURRAY: Well, hopefully we
23 can scratch and claw a little harder this
24 year, so -- but thank you.

1 And to Jessica and Patrick, first,
2 thank you for all you're doing. And thank
3 you for our positivity in saying thank you
4 for what we got last year, because frankly
5 I'm disgusted that we fell short. There's no
6 excuse.

7 We have kids -- as you said,
8 320,000 New York kids are going hungry
9 everyday because we didn't come through,
10 because we didn't come up with enough. And
11 we're talking about maybe 90 million to close
12 the gap? That's -- that is just -- that's
13 disgraceful.

14 But I want to talk about -- you
15 mentioned the fact that people think that
16 those that didn't get it this time are
17 affluent. You know, they're the rich ones,
18 it's okay. Even if that were true -- which
19 it's not, coming from a guy who was raised by
20 a single mom that worked three jobs, we were
21 on food stamps, we were on public assistance,
22 I was a recipient of the free and reduced
23 breakfast and lunch program -- there's a
24 stigma. Anybody who says there isn't is

1 crazy. There is.

2 Those left unfed right now are facing
3 that stigma. Can you talk to that, please?

4 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: So -- absolutely
5 right. When we see schools that have
6 implemented -- and luckily we've been able to
7 see schools implement universal school meals
8 over the last 10-plus years in New York
9 State, thanks to some federal provisions, and
10 more largely so now in New York. And we see
11 that low-income kids eat more often, and that
12 participation increases.

13 Not quite at the same rate as those
14 kids newly gaining access and those kids who
15 were avoiding meals for accruing debt. That
16 is a huge issue. Luckily, we've been able to
17 tackle that with the investment this year.
18 We'll see less school meal debt, but it's
19 still very prevalent for schools. And
20 children are not eating, knowing -- and
21 trying to balance that budget for families.
22 It's unfair.

23 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you very much
24 for your work.

1 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: Thanks.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 Assembly?

4 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: You're still
5 on, Senate.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So
7 Senator Tom O'Mara.

8 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you. Thank you
9 all for your advocacy here this evening.

10 On the electric bus issue and the -- I
11 guess the timeline. You know, I think we're
12 all aware that there are supply chain issues,
13 both in the buses themselves but also in the
14 infrastructure and the electricity grid to
15 get there.

16 You know, I'm hearing from utility
17 companies about the lengths of time just to
18 get the transformers and that type of
19 infrastructure equipment to come in, let
20 alone the price of that. And I've got school
21 districts saying it's going to be \$10 million
22 or more just for that.

23 What are you hearing on, I guess most
24 importantly, the timeline and your

1 discussions with utilities on their ability
2 to even provide the electricity to the
3 bus garage location to begin with? And then
4 secondly, if you have time, what is your
5 estimate of the overall increase in cost
6 going to be to school districts leasing your
7 services?

8 MR. SMITH: Okay, speaking for a
9 colleague that's in our association in the
10 Orange County district, they've got a couple
11 of yards that they may actually have to
12 consider about moving depots, because they're
13 not been able to ever get the power correctly
14 needed to fuel that yard to capacity. So
15 some challenges there.

16 Maybe some places where the power is
17 readily available, but able to move or change
18 transformers could be somewhere up to a
19 year and a half to get that job done. A lot
20 of planning. And not just even getting a
21 transformer in and putting wires on the yard,
22 also just the chargers themselves. You know,
23 a lot of challenges with some of the
24 technology there, and making sure those are

1 set up and dialed in correctly with software.

2 You know, it takes a little bit of
3 time, too. You know, a decent learning curve
4 on that front.

5 Costwise, I think what we see here in
6 the electric vehicles, as technology improves
7 and more of these become the regular product,
8 we're going to see basically a bell curve and
9 the prices drop. We're excited that the
10 maintenance component of the vehicles is
11 going to be a much simpler operation for us,
12 that we can modify our shops to be less of a
13 dynamic repair shop to more of technology.

14 And we see it being costly in the
15 beginning but then, as time rolls out, to be
16 a better product. Especially as technology
17 advances.

18 SENATOR O'MARA: Well, would it be
19 less costly over time, then, to let this
20 market develop further --

21 MR. SMITH: Correct.

22 SENATOR O'MARA: -- so that those
23 costs are coming down, rather than the school
24 districts funding the most expensive part of

1 that curve?

2 MR. SMITH: Yeah, it's -- we're going
3 to depend on the grants to come through and
4 to be able to help us with infrastructure and
5 product purchases.

6 And then as that eases out and the
7 OEMs are producing more as a regular product,
8 we see the bell curve -- I think there was a
9 group, WRI, that had details on that model.

10 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 I think we -- Senator -- any other
13 Senator was waiting? No? All right, then, I
14 do have just one question for you.

15 Dr. DelCorvo, so in 2014 we did a
16 bond act in New York for \$2 billion for
17 technology and computers for schools. I
18 asked about it for many years, because the
19 money didn't seem to be going out the door.
20 In fact, my last notes I can find are that in
21 2020 we'd only spent about half of it.

22 Do you know, is there still money out
23 there available for school districts to draw
24 down on? Do you know what happened to the

1 rest of that money?

2 DR. DELCORVO: From that funding? I
3 cannot speak officially for the State
4 Education Department, but it would definitely
5 come through -- through that area.

6 We work across -- one thing I did not
7 mention, we're a -- there's no cost for
8 NYSCATE. We work across every agency in the
9 state. We work with not only the
10 Library Association, the Big 5, New York
11 City -- that's what's kept what we do afloat.

12 So we were part of that and advocating
13 for the \$2 billion bond act, but we were not
14 the lead agency on that.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So my staff just
16 shared with me that actually it was called
17 the Smart Schools Bond Act at the time, for
18 2 billion.

19 DR. DELCORVO: Correct.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: He's reporting
21 that we still have 200 million left. I think
22 we want to get that out the door to all those
23 schools.

24 DR. DELCORVO: We only need 2 for what

1 we're looking at for the PD. But we will
2 advocate any way to get those dollars out.
3 We advocate for every district in the
4 state -- public, private, charter,
5 independent. That's what NYSCATE does.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And they were all
7 eligible, as I remember --

8 DR. DELCORVO: That is correct.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- from the bond
10 act language.

11 DR. DELCORVO: That is correct.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I personally
13 believe, what are we sitting on that for,
14 10 years later, when there's --

15 DR. DELCORVO: If that's a charge,
16 I'll take it. I'll go and find where that
17 money is.

18 (Laughter.)

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right. We'll
20 talk with the staffer later on. He'll follow
21 up.

22 DR. DELCORVO: Absolutely. Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Then I think the
24 Senate's done, so I want to thank you all.

1 Oh, excuse me. Robert Jackson.

2 SENATOR JACKSON: With respect to
3 the -- (inaudible; mic off.)

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Put your mic on.
5 Oh, there you are.

6 SENATOR JACKSON: -- is New York City
7 included in that? Or they're already on
8 everyone can have free breakfast and lunch?

9 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: I'm sorry, could
10 you --

11 SENATOR JACKSON: Is New York City
12 included in your activities? Or is it
13 outside of New York City, that New York City
14 already has breakfast for all?

15 MS. PINO-GOODSPEED: So New York City
16 is offering free meals to all students fully
17 with federal reimbursements, so -- because of
18 the threshold of poverty in the school
19 districts.

20 However, there are many New York City
21 groups that are in coalition with us and
22 supportive of that.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Now we're done, I

1 think.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

3 Panel, thank you very much. Jessica,
4 you started your testimony today by saying
5 "good evening." We've gone from "good
6 morning" to "good afternoon" to "good
7 evening." To tell you the truth, I can't
8 wait to say "good night."

9 (Laughter.)

10 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: But I thank
11 you very much for your testimony.

12 PANELISTS: Thank you.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Next panel:
14 Teach NYS; Agudath Israel of America;
15 New York Charter School Association; and
16 New York City Charter School Center.

17 (Discussion off the record.)

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Is it Sydney?

19 MS. ALTFIELD: It is.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, Sydney.

21 MS. ALTFIELD: Present.

22 Are we good?

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: You can start.

24 MS. ALTFIELD: Thank you, everyone.

1 Good evening, Senator and Chair Krueger,
2 Chairs Benedetto and Mayer, distinguished
3 members of the Assembly and Senate here
4 today. And a refuah schlema for -- a good
5 hope she recovers -- Chair Weinstein.

6 I'm here on behalf of 370,000
7 nonpublic school students that make up about
8 15 percent of our student population here in
9 New York State. Now, usually when I come to
10 talk to you I like to talk about the amazing
11 things going on in our schools like STEM and
12 arts and music, but unfortunately today I
13 have to use my time to talk about the
14 security of our Jewish and Islamic students
15 at this moment in time.

16 Since October 7th, anti-hate crimes --
17 or hate crimes, for that matter -- have risen
18 330 percent and have demoralized and hurt all
19 of our schools, from Jewish schools to
20 Islamic schools to faith-based schools across
21 the spectrum. We did a survey, and we saw
22 that security costs raised 47 percent since
23 October 7th in all of these schools.

24 I never thought in my lifetime that a

1 school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan
2 would make their boys cover their kippot,
3 their kippahs, their hats with baseball hats
4 before leaving to go to Central Park for
5 recess. I never thought in my lifetime that
6 there would be schools shuttering their doors
7 on a "day of rage" because parents did not
8 feel safe sending their kids to school
9 because the schools did not have adequate
10 security for such a day.

11 I never thought in my lifetime that we
12 would be asking parents for \$750 extra on
13 tuition, extra on security, because the
14 school just cannot meet the needs.

15 I never thought in my lifetime that I
16 would look a rabbi of a school in the eye
17 when he told me he only had enough funds for
18 security guards for two days left in his
19 budget roll.

20 I never thought that we would be at
21 this moment, but we are here. And
22 unfortunately, the Governor's budget did not
23 increase security funding for our schools in
24 the Nonpublic Schools Safety Equipment Grant

1 program, which funds out \$45 million, and
2 we're asking for a doubling of that at
3 \$90 million. This will catastrophically
4 change the way that the antisemitism tax, the
5 Islamophobia tax is taxed on our communities,
6 and it is enough that this is happening to
7 our families and that the financial burden of
8 such a basic need, a basic right of security,
9 is taken off the shoulders of these
10 communities.

11 Thank you so much.

12 RABBI SILBER: Okay. Good evening,
13 everyone, Chairs Krueger, Mayer, Benedetto.
14 And again I wish a refua shlema; we'd like to
15 see Chair Weinstein back soon.

16 I also want to wish a speedy recovery
17 to our friend Jim Cultrara. As you know, Jim
18 had some health issues, he's not here
19 tonight. He has been a fixture -- I call him
20 the dean of the nonpublic school advocacy --
21 he's been a fixture at this table, we've been
22 together many years. So we hope he's back
23 soon.

24 You know, I represent Agudath Israel

1 advocating for the nonpublic schools and the
2 yeshivas, and Sydney was very eloquent. She
3 really, you know -- I don't know if it's
4 really necessary to repeat much.

5 I wanted to say about yeshivas in
6 general, a quick word on yeshiva education.
7 There's many misconceptions on yeshiva
8 education. Yeshivas are not monolithic.
9 Many yeshivas are among the highest-scoring
10 schools in the Regents exams across the
11 state. Others will have more emphasis on
12 Judaic studies. But by almost any measure,
13 they're highly successful at producing
14 graduates who have success in almost every
15 field.

16 In communities populated by yeshiva
17 graduates, there's almost no violent crime or
18 illegal drug usage. They also by and
19 large -- my written testimony indicates
20 that -- they are by and large financially
21 successful.

22 Also, as indicated, as Sydney
23 mentioned, the nonpublic school students make
24 up about 15 percent of the total school

1 population. And the schools -- we save
2 billions of dollars for the state. Parents
3 pay willingly. That's their choice. And yet
4 the funding we receive is less than 2 percent
5 of the education funding.

6 Let me go through some of the
7 priorities. Again, Sydney was more than
8 eloquent on the security situation. Let me
9 just add, as we know, of course, since the
10 Hamas attack, the terrorist attack in Israel,
11 how hate crimes have gone up. I ride the
12 subway every day, and I have -- you know, I'm
13 a big guy, a little benign, I kind of just
14 keep my eyes open and I'm a little more
15 careful about my surroundings personally.

16 Many of our schools that we represent
17 have a majority of their student body on
18 scholarship, so they won't have to choose
19 between educational enhancement or security
20 upgrades. Again, we ask the same request,
21 doubling the money of the NPSE security grant
22 from 45 to 90 million.

23 Let me talk for a moment about
24 Mandated Services Aid. We thank the

1 Legislature. Last year -- as you know, I was
2 here last year and we spoke about there was a
3 problematic language in the budget last year
4 that would have kept the mandated services at
5 the amount allocated. Thankfully that
6 language was removed. But there was a
7 4 percent shortfall last year in the mandated
8 services allocation. And based on last
9 year's budget, we are anticipating another
10 4 percent shortfall this year.

11 Thankfully the Governor put sufficient
12 money in the budget of \$234 million, which
13 will be sufficient to cover the two-year
14 shortfall and enough for the current claims.
15 We ask the Legislature to please make sure
16 that money stays in the enacted budget.

17 We have no other requests. As in my
18 written testimony, I want to just add to the
19 previous panel on the universal school lunch
20 initiative. We've been part of that
21 coalition. I was here the other day, I met
22 somebody the other day advocating for it.
23 Last year it was a great start, 135 million,
24 we covered many schools. Let's finish the

1 job and fully fund it this year.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. BARKER: Good evening, Chairs
4 Krueger, Weinstein in your absence, Mayer,
5 Benedetto and distinguished members of the
6 Legislature. Thank you for the opportunity
7 to provide testimony.

8 I'm going to be brief, because we've
9 all heard a lot today. My name is Fatimah
10 Barker. I'm the current interim executive
11 director of the New York Charter Schools
12 Association. We are a nonprofit that
13 supports over 350 charter schools across the
14 state, and those schools have the privilege
15 of serving over 170,000 students across our
16 state.

17 I want to start by saying I think we
18 agree on two things. We here at the
19 association support NYSUT's request for a
20 thoughtful review and improvement of the
21 Foundation Aid so that it supports students
22 who need it the most.

23 The second thing I think we all agree
24 on is that we support the State Ed

1 Department's request for funds to ensure
2 rigorous and high-quality authorizing.

3 And I'll end by encouraging this body
4 and the State Ed Department to consider the
5 lens of equity and student need as decisions
6 around resources are made, including
7 facilities and transportation.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. MERRIMAN: This September will
10 mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of
11 the first charter school in New York City:
12 Sisulu-Walker Charter School in Harlem. I
13 don't think anyone back then -- certainly I,
14 who was present -- could imagine that
15 25 years later 142,000 students in New York
16 City are enrolled in charter schools.

17 And charter schools are doing right by
18 them. In fact, more than one-third of
19 Black kindergartners in public schools in
20 New York City are enrolled in charter
21 schools. That's their choice of the public
22 school for them.

23 Charter schools are no longer an
24 experiment; they're a proven way to increase

1 student achievement and obviously to give
2 choice to families. As such, it's long past
3 time to address the inequities in funding
4 that exist.

5 It is an acknowledged fact that
6 charter schools' funding on a per-pupil basis
7 trails their district counterparts. In 2017,
8 the Independent Budget Office found the gaps
9 ranged from between 1,000 to 5,000 per pupil,
10 depending on whether a school was collocated,
11 receiving rental assistance, or those schools
12 that are neither collocated and don't receive
13 rental assistance. And there's every reason
14 to believe that those gaps have grown in the
15 last six years.

16 While there should be equity across
17 the board, the gaps between non-collocated
18 charter schools that do not receive rental
19 assistance and their traditional counterparts
20 are especially troubling. Sisulu-Walker is a
21 prime example. For 25 years it's had to use
22 its operating funding, digging deeply into it
23 to pay for its capital expenses.

24 It's well past time that that be

1 fixed, and that rental assistance in New York
2 City be extended to all charter schools. I
3 therefore urge you to include that in your
4 one-house budget proposals, to phase in
5 rental assistance over time.

6 In closing, let me just say
7 charter schools and traditional schools
8 differ in some respects, but the challenges
9 they face are really the same -- teachers and
10 leaders struggling to create safe, orderly
11 environments where learning can take place,
12 and balancing that to make sure that their
13 schools welcome all students. Dealing with
14 the migrant issues and not having the
15 personnel that ideally the staff would have
16 to do it, or trying to close the learning
17 gaps, both those from COVID and those we
18 unfortunately have lived with for decades.

19 Sometimes they succeed spectacularly.
20 Sometimes some charter schools don't, and
21 they don't meet the high standards they have
22 set for themselves. But I --

23 (Time clock chiming.)

24 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Panel, thank

1 you very much for your testimony here.

2 Just to go back, let me ask a quick
3 question, Mr. Merriman. You mentioned in
4 your testimony the migrant crisis that we
5 have in the City of New York and really
6 throughout the entire State of New York. Do
7 you have any statistics on the charter
8 schools that -- how many migrants have they
9 been handling?

10 MR. MERRIMAN: It's hard to know
11 exactly, because in the computer system they
12 don't mark them, obviously, for reasons of --
13 you know, because of ICE. So they don't want
14 to identify them.

15 But I think we have some stats. I
16 will send them to you.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Please. That
18 would be interesting.

19 Senate?

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Mayer.

21 SENATOR MAYER: First, thank you,
22 Sydney, particularly for your passionate --
23 and you know so many of us support the
24 increase of the NPSE grant to 90 million.

1 How many Jewish schools did you survey
2 to get this increase from 598 per pupil in
3 security before October 7th to 854 after?

4 MS. ALTFIELD: Seventy-five.

5 SENATOR MAYER: Seventy-five Jewish
6 schools around the state?

7 MS. ALTFIELD: Around the country.

8 SENATOR MAYER: Oh, around the
9 country.

10 MS. ALTFIELD: The majority being here
11 in New York.

12 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. And I know you
13 don't represent generally Islamic schools,
14 but have you checked in with them and do they
15 have a similar issue?

16 MS. ALTFIELD: Yes. Yes. We -- while
17 I don't fully represent them, we work hand in
18 hand. I was on the phone with them just
19 yesterday. Almost all the meetings we've
20 been doing have been together, hand in hand,
21 and they also have the same issues.

22 There was actually a story, I didn't
23 have time to say it, but of a hijab being
24 ripped off of a student as she walked out of

1 school, and there was no guard there to stop
2 it.

3 SENATOR MAYER: And do you know
4 whether, you know, public schools that have a
5 large number of either Islamic or observant
6 Jewish students have also experienced much
7 higher security costs post October 7th? I
8 assume that's so.

9 MS. ALTFIELD: Within public schools?

10 SENATOR MAYER: Yes.

11 MS. ALTFIELD: I'm not a hundred
12 percent sure, but I'm happy to get that
13 information for what's been happening within
14 public schools.

15 But what I can say is that there's
16 been a lot of discussion of parents either
17 pulling their kids because they don't feel
18 safe in public schools, or pulling their kids
19 from Jewish schools to go back into public
20 schools. And it just seems, as a Jewish
21 person here in New York, there doesn't seem
22 to be a safe place at the moment.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO:

24 RABBI SILBER: Sorry, Senator, if I

1 can jump in on that, if that's all right --

2 SENATOR MAYER: Yes.

3 RABBI SILBER: Again, I know only
4 anecdotally, but I have heard from public
5 school parents and children -- I'm sorry,
6 teachers and children, both public school
7 teachers and schoolchildren, who have that
8 fear, who have been -- so there is -- again,
9 it's only anecdotal, I don't have any studies
10 or numbers on it, but certainly it's there.

11 SENATOR MAYER: And can I ask, in the
12 charter school community, where I know some
13 of the charters have a significant number of
14 Islamic students in the City of New York and
15 I think in -- and certainly in Yonkers as
16 well -- has that been an issue for you?

17 MR. MERRIMAN: I haven't heard of
18 anything. But we'll look into it and get
19 back to you.

20 SENATOR MAYER: Have you?

21 MS. BARKER: No.

22 SENATOR MAYER: Okay. And with
23 respect to Mr. Benedetto's question, do you
24 know whether the schools that you represent

1 have taken some of these new migrant
2 children? If so, do you know how many?

3 MS. BARKER: I don't have the exact
4 number, but I can get back to you on that.
5 They definitely have. We have a consortium
6 that meets monthly virtually, and we've been
7 talking about ways to service students
8 better, so I know that they are in our
9 schools.

10 SENATOR MAYER: How would they
11 initially -- I may be running out of time.
12 Just I had a question about how they would
13 find you, but --

14 MR. MERRIMAN: We gave a list to DOE.

15 SENATOR MAYER: Oh, you're on the DOE
16 list. Okay. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblymember
19 Pheffer Amato.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Good
21 evening. Thank you for your testimony.

22 Going back to the security question,
23 when it comes to schools and the biggest
24 expense, tell me about the security guards.

1 I know that they're really only paid for two
2 hours of an entire day, right? That's from
3 one of the grants that we have, correct? One
4 of the grants that you could apply for in a
5 competitive grant.

6 RABBI SILBER: Well, there's a
7 New York City grant that provides -- there's
8 a New York City grant that does provide -- it
9 doesn't fully fund most -- and first of all,
10 it's only for schools that have 300 students
11 and above. So schools below that are not
12 eligible.

13 And even though that have, it only
14 funds one or two. I don't know the exact
15 numbers, but it certainly doesn't fully
16 fund -- it helps, but it doesn't -- not fully
17 adequate --

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: They're
19 paid for two hours a day, is that correct,
20 Sydney?

21 MS. ALTFIELD: I think it's the full
22 day.

23 RABBI SILBER: The full day, yeah.

24 MS. ALTFIELD: It's the full day in

1 New York City.

2 But for the New York State program,
3 the NPSE program, it is a per-pupil
4 allocation. So the allocations that are
5 being given out to schools, even if you have
6 a thousand kids in the school, it does not
7 even come close to cover, at 45 million, a
8 full guard, and it probably covers about
9 two hours of a guard, is what you're getting
10 at.

11 And with your question to the
12 percentage of guards, that 47 percent
13 increase, 66 percent of that increase is
14 being paid to guards.

15 So the majority of our schools are
16 looking for ways to pay for guards. Not all
17 the programs in the state budget, such as
18 Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes,
19 that does not allow for guards to be used for
20 that money. So it's only NPSE money at this
21 moment.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Great.

23 And then other measures of security.
24 So is it locks on doors or different cameras

1 and that's not fully funded, that's where the
2 extra is coming from?

3 RABBI SILBER: I know that the NPSE
4 has a large usage. Security, safety, and not
5 only guards. And it's a per-pupil
6 allocation. It's easier for a lot of
7 schools -- it is a -- you know, look on the
8 state website, there's a -- it even goes
9 through critical capital -- and now the
10 latest, it allows for critical capital needs
11 also to enhance safety and security. So it's
12 a very wide range of usage.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Senator,
14 to your answer that Hillcrest High School --
15 Senator Mayer isn't back there -- so
16 Hillcrest High School, a public school,
17 really alerted people. And I will say as
18 a -- in my district, which has a lot of
19 Jewish people and work in both public and
20 private school, yes, there has been a height
21 of increase, by phone, letter writing,
22 calling, specifically for their safety and
23 concern and for their children.

24 So just give us a little bit more

1 insight in the 41 seconds about what the
2 parents and the expenses on the parents and
3 what's going to happen, how that's going to
4 balance for the parents.

5 MS. ALTFIELD: Sure. So there's -- I
6 already know of multiple schools that have
7 already asked parents for more money, to send
8 in more money.

9 A school in particular, I spoke about
10 it, is \$750 per student. They asked a few
11 weeks after October 7th. There's a school
12 that has a new guard in front of their
13 school; that costs \$1200 a day. They're
14 going in the red. And they said next year
15 they are scared for what to tell their
16 parents of what they're going to ask for.

17 And then there's another school that I
18 spoke to that is cutting arts and music
19 programs in their school and after-school
20 programs, just to cover the cost of an extra
21 guard, because parents don't feel safe to
22 send their kids unless it's there.

23 (Time clock chimes.)

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: The

1 increase to 90 will cover -- I just forgot my
2 thought -- yup. Thanks.

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator John Liu.

4 SENATOR LIU: Madam Chair, thank you
5 very much.

6 I just wanted to say that this panel
7 always comes to our hearing every year and
8 they always stay until almost the end, so I
9 am deeply appreciative of this.

10 For my pal Jim Merriman, Jim, I thank
11 you -- or, I'm sorry, James, you have
12 mentioned there was supposed to be -- for the
13 charter schools, you know, you mentioned that
14 this is 25 years now. It's no longer a pilot
15 program.

16 But from the very beginning of charter
17 schools in New York, it was supposed to be a
18 way to find innovative practices and then to
19 adopt them for public schools. What's an
20 example of an innovative practice in charter
21 schools that has been shared with and adopted
22 by public schools?

23 MR. MERRIMAN: Sure. So we have two
24 instances where New York City Department of

1 Education brought in two charter school
2 networks to provide professional development
3 around teacher feedback as well as getting
4 kids to college and through college, and used
5 both philanthropic and NYCDOE funds to
6 provide development across a whole CSD.

7 SENATOR LIU: A whole what?

8 MR. MERRIMAN: Community school
9 district.

10 SENATOR LIU: Okay. So you're talking
11 about one of the 32 community school
12 districts in New York City.

13 MR. MERRIMAN: I mean, there are a
14 number of other practices. It's up to the
15 school district to put them into place:
16 Longer school day, longer school year,
17 starting earlier. Those are practices.
18 They've been around. It's up to the district
19 if they want to adopt them or not.

20 SENATOR LIU: So -- so what you're
21 suggesting is that charter schools have
22 shared these ideas and the public schools
23 didn't want to implement them, for the most
24 part?

1 MR. MERRIMAN: I can't speak for the
2 public schools. I know that everyone knows
3 about these practices, and we've talked about
4 them forever and a day.

5 SENATOR LIU: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. MERRIMAN: You're welcome.

7 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

8 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: I think the
9 Assembly has closed out.

10 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Chu.

11 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair.

12 Rabbi Silber, just want to touch base.
13 You mentioned the mandated services. Could
14 you elaborate, what are those services? And
15 is there any, like, difficulties or
16 challenges when those families of a school,
17 when they try to access or provide those
18 services? Is it a hardship? Is the IEP also
19 included?

20 RABBI SILBER: Yeah, certainly.

21 Mandated services are basically
22 reimbursement for the mandates that are
23 placed upon schools, whether it's pupil data,
24 testing, and other assessments. This

1 program's been around 50 years, and there are
2 state mandates and the state reimburses
3 schools for the mandates. By statute, they
4 need to be fully reimbursed for the cost of
5 the mandated services.

6 Yes, schools depend on them. Schools
7 depend on them for payroll. Last June, when
8 schools were short 4 percent, you know --
9 when the schools are budgeting, they know the
10 money comes in May and June. They depend on
11 that month to make their payroll, and schools
12 had difficulty.

13 IEPs don't really cover special ed.
14 It still doesn't go into the IEP area, yet
15 it's the largest source of funding for
16 nonpublic schools. And traditionally it's
17 been funded at the full amount, and again we
18 are -- you know, we just heard last week from
19 State Education that when the budget's
20 enacted they'll be able to fully fund the
21 shortfall from last year.

22 SENATOR CHU: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Robert
24 Jackson.

1 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, good evening
2 everyone. It's already seven -- almost
3 7 o'clock. So thank you for coming in.

4 Obviously safety and security is the
5 number-one issue. When people ask me, What
6 are your priorities, I say the safety and
7 security of the people that I represent, in
8 their homes, in our communities -- not just
9 one community, but all the communities.

10 There's too much violence going on
11 everywhere, in my opinion. And I won't get
12 into the worldwide situation, but -- so I
13 just wanted to let you know that. And
14 whatever can happen to make sure that people
15 are safe and secure is the most important
16 thing, so.

17 And how much are you asking the state
18 if they can give, to give?

19 MS. ALTFIELD: To double the NPSE
20 funding from 45 million to 90 million.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: And that's funding
22 that they gave to nonpublic schools?

23 MS. ALTFIELD: All nonpublic schools.
24 It's a per-pupil allocation, so it's given

1 equally to everyone.

2 SENATOR JACKSON: Let me turn to the
3 charter schools.

4 Can you tell me how many students in
5 New York City or New York State -- because is
6 it for -- are you here representing the
7 entire state as far as charter schools are
8 concerned?

9 MS. BARKER: Yes. My organization
10 represents the state, and James's represents
11 the city.

12 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay, so there's two
13 organizations here representing the state.

14 If I can -- later on, I would like to
15 send you some requests for information as far
16 as numbers. And you'd be able to respond on
17 that, is that correct?

18 MS. BARKER: Yes.

19 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Because I
20 heard from some superintendents or people
21 from Syracuse, from Rochester, from Buffalo
22 on the impact of the percentages of
23 charter school students and what have you and
24 so forth, and so ...

1 And in New York City, I'm going to be
2 asking the same thing of you.

3 But I just disagree with the fact that
4 New York City is the only city that has to
5 pay for charter school space. In my opinion,
6 that is something that happened going back
7 when the -- under the Bloomberg
8 administration or under the Cuomo
9 administration here in government. And I
10 don't think that that's right.

11 Just like I fight every single day to
12 make sure that -- even today, in talking
13 about the cuts that the Governor's putting in
14 the school. I'm from New York City. I
15 advocate for New York City, but I also
16 advocate for all children, because all
17 children deserve a good education. And I've
18 said to my colleagues in the Republican
19 sector of the State Legislature that we have
20 to work together to try to get that money
21 restored.

22 So I'll be sending you information.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 The Senate is closed.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Then, panel, I
3 thank you very much for your testimony.

4 MS. BARKER: Thank you.

5 MR. MERRIMAN: Thank you.

6 MS. ALTFIELD: Thank you.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: It certainly
8 was well taken. And continue to fight the
9 good fight.

10 Our final panel, but certainly not the
11 least: The Alliance for Quality Education;
12 the New York State Community Schools Network;
13 the Education Trust-New York; the YMCA of
14 Greater New York; and YAFFED.

15 Now, I'm looking at my paper and I've
16 got five people -- it threw me off
17 completely.

18 (Laughter.)

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Okay, we will
20 begin. Go ahead.

21 MS. MARCOU-O'MALLEY: Okay. I think
22 this is on, right?

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes, it is.

24 MS. MARCOU-O'MALLEY: Well, thank you,

1 Chairs Krueger, Mayer, Benedetto, for giving
2 us this opportunity here.

3 I have a whole testimony written up.
4 I have a whole oral part written up. I am
5 not going to repeat all that you heard today.

6 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Tell us your name.

7 MS. MARCOU-O'MALLEY: My name is
8 Marina Marcou-O'Malley, thank you.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MS. MARCOU-O'MALLEY: I am the interim
11 co-executive director of the Alliance for
12 Quality Education. I have been at this for a
13 while. This is probably the 15th year that
14 I've been -- or 16th -- that I've been
15 sitting here, either listening or giving
16 testimony.

17 So I will just say that it is unreal
18 to me that I'm again here talking about
19 Foundation Aid, five months just after the
20 school year started with full funding.

21 You heard everybody reject the
22 Governor's proposal to change the CPI, to
23 eliminate the save-harmless, and I will tell
24 you that -- and you will see this in my

1 testimony -- 50 percent of the cut to
2 Foundation Aid is to high-needs districts,
3 but it's also to school districts that
4 educate 80 percent of Black and brown kids
5 and English language learners.

6 That is another layer here that is --
7 that we need to uplift, because they're the
8 same kids that we have been shortchanging for
9 years, and they're only kids once, so this is
10 their education. Let's not go back to what
11 used to be.

12 I will also tell you that -- you've
13 heard everybody talk about community schools,
14 how great they are, and talk about how
15 mayoral control needs to be negotiated
16 outside the budget. All of that was done by
17 our colleagues in the education community,
18 and we advocate for the same.

19 And I would be remiss if I didn't
20 raise another issue here, even though it is
21 probably not under your committee's purview,
22 but it's worth raising. As a state we have
23 options. We have options of raising revenue,
24 and we need to use them. Because if we do

1 not invest in our state, then who will? And
2 we need to make sure that we protect those
3 who need protecting, like kids first and not
4 anyone else.

5 So I would encourage you to think
6 about that. And I am hopeful and encouraged
7 to see all of you united against this
8 Executive Budget. It's something that I
9 haven't seen before to this extent, and I'm
10 glad to see it. So we stand with you. And
11 you'll be hearing from us, that's for sure,
12 and so will the Governor, Senator Jackson, to
13 your point about organizing.

14 So thank you so much for giving me
15 this opportunity.

16 MS. BAYTEMUR: Good evening, and thank
17 you for having me here.

18 My name is Chelsea Baytemur -- can you
19 hear me?

20 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Yes.

21 MS. BAYTEMUR: Okay. Thank you, good
22 evening. It's been a long day.

23 My name is Chelsea Baytemur, and I am
24 director of policy and advocacy with the YMCA

1 of Greater New York. But today I'm here
2 actually to represent the Emergency Coalition
3 to Save Education Programs, which is made up
4 of 160 organizations that have come together,
5 as you've heard from some of my colleagues
6 earlier, to urge New York State elected
7 officials to help us identify funding to
8 sustain essential programs that were funded
9 with federal stimulus COVID-19 dollars that
10 are sunset to expire in September.

11 So as you've heard all day, the
12 New York City Department of Education alone
13 spent around \$1 million per year to pay for
14 supports and programs that are needed in the
15 long term -- so not just during the crux and
16 the height of the pandemic, but today, next
17 year, the year after that. And some of the
18 ways that New York City used this funding was
19 to double the number of young children that
20 were able to participate in pre-K; hire
21 450 social workers; increase the number of
22 community schools from 266 to now 421 --
23 which is the first time we've ever had that
24 many in New York City; supporting

1 Learning-to-Work programs; expanding
2 restorative justice; hiring 60 school
3 psychologists -- the list goes on and on and
4 on.

5 And I know some of you have met with
6 members of our coalition throughout the last
7 couple of weeks, so you have
8 district-specific data available to you. And
9 for those of you that don't, I'm happy to
10 follow up and share that information.

11 So why I'm here today, like
12 Randi Levine said earlier, we're urging you
13 for your help to have a substantial amount of
14 funding go into the education system, not
15 just for New York City but New York State in
16 general. Because it's not just a New York
17 City problem, it's a New York State problem.
18 A lot of districts use this funding to
19 support, again, not just programs that were
20 needed during the height of the pandemic, but
21 also to fill in the gaps in other places
22 where they exist -- whether that was
23 staffing, whether that was increasing access
24 or expediting accessibility to some of our

1 most vulnerable communities.

2 And you all have a copy of our call to
3 action, and I'm happy to answer any questions
4 should you have any. Thank you.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Next.

6 MS. MORGAN TETTEH: Hi, good evening.
7 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
8 today on behalf of the Community Schools
9 Network. My name is Trudy Morgan, and I'm
10 the policy director of the New York State
11 Network for Youth Success.

12 I know a lot has been said throughout
13 the day about community schools, and we know
14 that community schools play a crucial role in
15 helping to address barriers that students
16 face in their learning, health, and overall
17 well-being by providing holistic and
18 integrated support of all students.

19 It's been over 10 years since the
20 state invested to scale the community school
21 strategy through the Community Schools Grant
22 Initiative. And building on the success of
23 the pilot, the state invested funds in the
24 community school strategy to help struggling

1 and persistently struggling schools.

2 In 2016, the state doubled down on its
3 commitment to the community school strategy
4 by suggesting the use of the strategy to
5 high-needs schools through the community
6 schools set-aside.

7 The community schools strategy
8 recognizes the needs of the whole child, the
9 whole teacher, the whole family, the whole
10 community, and works to meet those needs in a
11 collaborative, strategic, and coordinated
12 way. This coordination leads to a strong
13 return on investment, as you heard early on,
14 of about \$7 -- or even up to \$14 -- for every
15 dollar invested in a community schools
16 coordinator.

17 Now, we have bright spots like
18 P.S. 197 The Ocean School, in Queens, which
19 has been a community school for almost
20 10 years now, in partnership with the
21 Child Center of New York, where the two
22 organizations function as one. In just the
23 first three years, they witnessed a decline
24 in chronic absenteeism and notable increases

1 in ELA and math state test scores.

2 Yet our investment has flatlined. We
3 haven't seen an additional dollar allocated
4 by the state to the community schools
5 strategy since 2019. We want to thank the
6 Legislature for including funds in the
7 one-house bills in the last two years for
8 community schools categorical aid. But this
9 is the year we need to get it into the final
10 budget.

11 Our ask this year is for a
12 \$100 million investment in the community
13 schools categorical aid to grow bright spots
14 like P.S. 197.

15 No one wants to be forced to do
16 something they don't want to do and don't
17 understand. And not only that, then they
18 complain about it, they find reasons to
19 dislike it, they half-heartedly implement it
20 without fidelity, and call it a field
21 experiment. That's why we think this money
22 should go to districts that not only need the
23 money most, but want the chance to implement
24 a community school strategy now.

1 For that reason, we are asking for
2 language that will allow districts to decline
3 the funding and send it to the next eligible
4 district on the list. They need a chance to
5 say "not yet." Then these districts that opt
6 in can grow, and with the support of the
7 community schools technical assistance
8 centers they can {unintelligible} methods and
9 share their learnings with their peers in
10 neighboring districts, and over time the
11 understanding and demand will grow. And we
12 ask that the categorical aid grows too.

13 All schools deserve the chance to
14 reach their full potential so all students
15 can reach theirs. All students deserve the
16 opportunity to implement the community school
17 strategy.

18 Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: The Education
20 Trust.

21 MR. SMINK: Good evening. My name is
22 Jeff Smink. I am the interim executive
23 director at The Education Trust-New York. We
24 are a statewide advocacy organization focused

1 on educational justice and equity for
2 students of color and students from
3 low-income backgrounds across the state.

4 We really feel that we're at a
5 critical crossroads in K-12 education right
6 now. While the pandemic has faded from the
7 headlines, we know that our schools,
8 students, and families are still feeling the
9 effects.

10 There was a recent article in the New
11 York Times about a study from
12 Stanford University that showed that the gap
13 between students from rich and poor
14 communities has widened significantly since
15 the pandemic, and that the students most at
16 risk are those in poor districts. The
17 article concludes by saying some children may
18 never catch up and could enter adulthood
19 without the full set of skills they need to
20 succeed in the workforce and in life.

21 At EdTrust-New York this is something
22 we're deeply concerned about, particularly
23 for the students that we care most about. To
24 avoid this, we believe that state leaders

1 must act with urgency to ensure that all
2 students are provided with the skills and
3 resources necessary for future success. That
4 includes but is not limited to evidence-based
5 instruction in reading and math, robust
6 pathways to post-secondary opportunities
7 beginning in middle school, among other
8 things.

9 So to help meet this moment, we're
10 urging legislators to focus on the following
11 priorities in this budget.

12 Starting off, early literacy is our
13 top priority. Some of you were at our launch
14 event earlier this week for the New York
15 Campaign for Early Literacy, which is a
16 statewide movement around this issue. We
17 believe -- and research supports -- that all
18 children can learn to read with the right
19 support. Yet in New York, less than
20 40 percent of Black and Hispanic students
21 were proficient on the last state test in
22 ELA. That's unacceptable when we know how to
23 teach reading.

24 And we need to address this by a

1 combination of state and local action that
2 ensures schools and teacher preparation
3 programs are aligned with the science of
4 reading, which is something that's been
5 talked about today.

6 We support the Governor's proposal to
7 provide \$10 million to train educators, but
8 we also think that's not enough. And we urge
9 the Legislature to include an additional
10 \$20 million in their one-house budgets that
11 will provide additional support to meet these
12 goals around early literacy and the science
13 of reading.

14 We also support high-impact tutoring,
15 which can be a key intervention to support
16 academic acceleration in reading and math,
17 particularly as students continue to recover
18 from the impact of interrupted instruction.

19 It can also level the playing field.
20 We know that many students in affluent
21 districts across the state are accessing
22 private tutoring outside of school, and we
23 think that all students should have access to
24 that type of support.

1 Finally, we're supporting two other
2 more post-secondary and high-school-related
3 priorities. One is around universal FAFSA
4 completion. There's several proposals out
5 that would do that. And then, finally, we're
6 very supportive of dual-enrollment programs
7 that would provide students with
8 opportunities to earn college credit in
9 high school.

10 So thank you.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

12 And Ms. Weber, we've given you the
13 honor of being our last testifier today.
14 Take us home.

15 MS. WEBER: I am honored to be here
16 and represent YAFFED, as the executive
17 director of YAFFED. We're an organization
18 that advocates for education for
19 Hasidic children.

20 I want to be clear, we advocate for
21 the yeshivas that have been underperforming,
22 a large percentage of which was recently
23 investigated through the Department of
24 Education. We're talking about a population

1 of students larger than the entire
2 school district in Yonkers and Buffalo
3 combined. Conservative estimates put these
4 students between 60,000 and 80,000 across the
5 state, in schools that are not providing them
6 with any education of what is a sound, basic
7 education.

8 I myself am a mother of 10 children,
9 all of whom have attended Hasidic yeshivas.
10 My six boys who attended schools in New York
11 State were not given the opportunity to get a
12 high school diploma. They're all adults;
13 none of them have a high school diploma.

14 I want to bring across three points
15 during my short testimony.

16 Number one, we support the funding of
17 mandated services in regards to substantial
18 equivalent education. Okay? Schools will
19 bear the brunt of reporting back to their
20 local school authorities. We want the money
21 to stay in the classrooms, and there should
22 be funding allocated for this.

23 Number two, I want to report to you
24 that the regulations that were voted on in

1 September 2022 are rolling out, with mixed
2 success. We have heard about schools that
3 are upping the quality of their education,
4 while others have made it very clear that
5 they will not be cooperating.

6 We're concerned about the various
7 accreditation agencies that were given the
8 right to accredit these schools, and that
9 needs to be reviewed carefully, in addition
10 to other issues with the regulations that we
11 are working on now to put a memo together to
12 report back to the Board of Regents.

13 There is also an issue that we would
14 like to bring to your attention. Many of
15 these students are functionally illiterate --
16 cannot speak, read, or write English. They
17 are in high school. And right now we're
18 going to -- this new curriculum is going to
19 be rolling out, which is wonderful, but what
20 happens to those students who are currently
21 teenagers and young adults who will not be
22 able to catch up in time? We need to provide
23 for them supports. Currently at this time
24 there is nothing available in the entire

1 state that is culturally responsive to these
2 students.

3 I have a 22-year-old son. His friend
4 decided he wanted to get a high school
5 diploma, went to Brooklyn College, attended
6 the first class to get his high school
7 equivalency, could not follow along.

8 There are countless stories like that.
9 There needs to be something responsive for
10 these students.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 Let me ask a question, Mr. Smink -- I
14 got that right? You gave us stats on reading
15 and writing and so many people who don't. Do
16 you happen to have any stats on those who are
17 in prison, okay, who cannot read or who have
18 LD?

19 MR. SMINK: Yes, there's unfortunately
20 a very clear link between not being able to
21 read and future incarceration. There's a
22 study out showing 85 percent of those in
23 prison are actually illiterate. And there's
24 also a big connection with dyslexia as well.

1 So absolutely a very, very clear
2 connection between those two things.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
4 sir.

5 Senate?

6 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Mayer.

7 SENATOR MAYER: Well, first, thank you
8 all for being very patient. I think the
9 value of it is that you heard there really
10 was a consensus of views about many of the
11 issues you've raised.

12 One thing we didn't talk about which
13 several of you have raised is both childcare
14 and early childhood, as a subject that is
15 really part of the lower education
16 conversation. So I know AQE has been active
17 on that, and I know the consortium. And I
18 think all of your groups are talking about
19 early childhood.

20 But I just would encourage you,
21 because it is mixed in with education from
22 our -- the way we have it divided here in the
23 Legislature -- to make sure that this voice
24 is heard to our Children and Families

1 Committee as well as the Education Committee,
2 so that the issues of early childhood are
3 included in the budget conversation as well.

4 And then -- so for my friend Beatrice
5 Weber, I wonder if you had any conversation
6 or insight into the situation in East Ramapo,
7 where the traditional public schools are
8 facing substantial financial challenges. And
9 the Jewish schools also have their challenges
10 as well, but there is a long-term structural
11 problem there that we really have to address.

12 And I wonder if you have any insight
13 into that.

14 MS. WEBER: So we've been having
15 ongoing conversation with activists in that
16 district. We believe that all students are
17 suffering there.

18 We have the -- you know, the schools,
19 the students in yeshivas, a large percentage
20 of them are not getting the sound basic
21 education. And the public school students
22 who we've heard horrific -- a horrific
23 situation: The lead in the water, they can't
24 drink the school water; they have to go to

1 high school for six years in order to be able
2 to graduate because there are not enough
3 teachers.

4 We believe this is an issue that needs
5 to be dealt with holistically, and that's why
6 we're in very close conversation and have
7 joined some coalitions working on the issue
8 there. There's a lot of suggestions in terms
9 of what needs to be done and how it can be
10 done, and we're in conversation to see how we
11 can help and ensure that all students in that
12 district, the 75 percent of the yeshiva
13 students, 35,000, and then the public school
14 students as well.

15 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Chairman
17 Santabarbara.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Thanks,
19 everyone, for being here. I know it's been a
20 long day. I thank you for your testimony.

21 I want to give a shout out to the
22 YMCA. We're meeting with you guys I think
23 next week in our office. But in Schenectady
24 County, we love our YMCA. We rely on

1 you guys for so many programs. And I was
2 just looking through the website earlier --
3 you're running the camps, health and fitness
4 programs, and all of the events you guys are
5 always there sponsoring and being a part of
6 the community. So I want to thank you for
7 that.

8 But I also want to ask you, you know,
9 how the programs look. I know there were
10 some locations that either had to close down
11 temporarily or haven't reopened yet, even,
12 stemming off the COVID period.

13 What are -- are the programs back
14 online? How are we doing across the state,
15 and what could we do in the budget to help?

16 MS. BAYTEMUR: Thank you for your love
17 of the Y. Always good to hear.

18 So I represent New York City's YMCA,
19 so all 24 branches across the boroughs. I'm
20 definitely happy to get back to you with some
21 stats from across the state. We love all of
22 our Ys, but I can only speak to the 24 in the
23 five boroughs.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: Oh, all

1 right. All right.

2 MS. BAYTEMUR: But still -- we love
3 the excitement.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN SANTABARBARA: We still
5 love our Y. Thank you. Thank you.

6 MS. BAYTEMUR: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Liu.

8 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 I just wanted to thank them for
10 staying with us for the entire hearing.
11 You're last, but certainly not least.

12 And by the way, we're about three
13 hours earlier than normal.

14 (Laughter.)

15 SENATOR LIU: So congratulations.

16 And congratulations to you, Marina,
17 for taking on the helm of AQE.

18 MS. MARCOU-O'MALLEY: Along with the
19 kids.

20 SENATOR LIU: Along with the kids.

21 Say hello to Zakiyah.

22 (Laughter.)

23 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Assemblymember
24 Simon, did I see your hand up?

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: You did.

2 Just to prolong the torture of your
3 being here.

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So I want to
6 thank all of you for your testimony.

7 I want to thank you, Marina, for the
8 great briefing you did on the budget, and
9 clearly everybody agrees with you.

10 And community schools, we love it, we
11 just need more of them.

12 So EdTrust, I guess one of the
13 questions I have is I know you're doing a
14 large campaign and reaching out to people and
15 parents to get them to sign on. What are you
16 going to be doing with that information?

17 Once you get -- let's say you get
18 100,000 people signing up, what will you do
19 then? How will you be able to partner with
20 those of us who are sort of moving that goal
21 forward both legislatively and otherwise?

22 MR. SMINK: Absolutely. Yes, so we
23 have over 80 partners right now across the
24 state, New York City to Buffalo, and really

1 anticipate we'll be doing monthly meetings,
2 sharing best practices, but also hopefully
3 equipping them so that they're able to meet
4 with their Assemblymembers, with their
5 Senators, you know, throughout the process,
6 both to advocate at the state level but also
7 to advocate at the local level for their
8 school districts, with their community
9 partners.

10 So we're really excited to bring them
11 all together. And there's a lot of silos, a
12 lot of partners, and they've never -- we've
13 never really brought them all together. And
14 to Senator Mayer's point, we also have early
15 childhood folks, we have summer and
16 after-school folks, so it's really a holistic
17 group.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: May I suggest an
19 ambassador corps, people in the schools doing
20 this work --

21 MR. SMINK: Yes. Absolutely.

22 SENATOR MAYER: -- that know that, can
23 help communicate --

24 MR. SMINK: Yes. Absolutely.

1 SENATOR MAYER: -- in a different way,
2 that'll be excellent.

3 MR. SMINK: Absolutely. And we have
4 teachers, superintendants, that -- we were
5 talking just about that earlier, yes.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

7 MR. SMINK: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Robert
9 Jackson.

10 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you all for
11 hanging in there.

12 Jeff, I just had a question. I think
13 that you had mentioned in your
14 presentation that -- is it the ask of
15 \$10 million, or double that, is that correct?

16 MR. SMINK: Triple, technically.

17 (Laughter.)

18 MR. SMINK: An additional \$20 million
19 on top of the 10.

20 SENATOR JACKSON: And where would that
21 be used at, overall? In what geographical
22 area?

23 MR. SMINK: So all across the state.
24 And specifically, we'd want to expand on the

1 professional learning. I think the current
2 investment would serve about 20,000
3 elementary teachers, which is about a third
4 of the state. So we want to expand that.

5 And then we'd also be interested in
6 providing grants to school districts to
7 purchase evidence-based instructional
8 resources, particularly if they're already
9 using non-evidence-based resources.

10 SENATOR JACKSON: And if I wanted to
11 know more about the Education Trust, what's
12 the website?

13 MR. SMINK: It's "edtrustny.org".
14 "E-D-Trust" --

15 SENATOR JACKSON: "E-D-Trust"?

16 MR. SMINK: "NY.org".

17 SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry. Say that
18 again.

19 (Laughter.)

20 MR. SMINK: That's no problem. So
21 add, like, "ED."

22 SENATOR JACKSON: "ED."

23 MR. SMINK: And then "Trust,"
24 T-R-U-S-T.

1 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

2 MR. SMINK: Then "NY," all one word,
3 ".org". Dot-org.

4 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

5 And Chelsea, with respect to -- you
6 said you represent nearly -- you're here for
7 the entire state, but you represent really
8 New York City, right?

9 MS. BAYTEMUR: Right. I'm from the
10 YMCA of Greater New York, but I'm here today
11 representing the Emergency Coalition to Save
12 Education Programs that Randi Levine
13 mentioned earlier.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Oh, okay.

15 MS. BAYTEMUR: So the Y is one of the
16 160 organizations that signed on. So you
17 might see me a lot, I wear a lot of hats.
18 I'm from the Y, but --

19 (Laughter.)

20 SENATOR JACKSON: I got the
21 information. And there's a website also that
22 shows all of the organizations and more
23 information.

24 And the same question for you, Trudy.

1 New York State Community School Network, is
2 there an ask? And what's the ask?

3 MS. MORGAN TETTEH: Yes. So we are
4 asking for \$100 million in categorical aid.

5 (Laughter.)

6 MS. MORGAN TETTEH: For a start, yes,
7 that's what we're asking for.

8 SENATOR JACKSON: One hundred million
9 dollars -- I'm sorry, go ahead.

10 MS. MORGAN TETTEH: In categorical aid
11 for community schools.

12 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

13 And Beatrice, let me ask you, you know
14 my involvement with YAFFED -- I've said that
15 any institution that is falsely certifying
16 that they're providing a holistic education,
17 that they should, you know, basically cut off
18 their funds because they're not telling the
19 truth. They're committing fraud if in fact
20 they're receiving money and saying they're
21 doing something and they're not.

22 But I know your aim is to make sure
23 that your children -- the children that you
24 represent, and all, have the type of

1 education so they can take care of themselves
2 and their families.

3 MS. WEBER: Absolutely. It would be
4 devastating if the schools aren't able to
5 continue doing their good work. They do work
6 in communities. It's important that the
7 education that they provide be culturally
8 responsive, but they also need to provide a
9 sound, basic education.

10 And we know that's possible because
11 there are many schools of all religions
12 across the state providing a good education
13 within their religious context.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
15 Ms. Weber.

16 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
17 Assembly?

18 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Ms. Pheffer
19 Amato.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Thank
21 you. Thank you, everybody.

22 First, Trudy, thank you for the shout
23 out. P.S. 197 is in my district, it's my
24 school, I work there, and the childcare

1 center does amazing work on the peninsula.
2 So thanks for giving them a shout out. And I
3 think 100 million is just fine --

4 (Laughter.)

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: -- to
6 community schools. So thank you for that,
7 and I believe in them. So let's fund them.

8 Ms. Weber, if I could just ask you,
9 you referenced yeshivas that fail. What do
10 you say about the yeshivas that succeed? To
11 me, it's rhetoric about -- that appears to
12 imply that Jewish schools are failures, but
13 schools in my district thrive. So why do you
14 paint such a broad stroke?

15 MS. WEBER: I specifically point out
16 that we represent the yeshivas that don't
17 perform well, and in fact our hope is --

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: (Mic
19 off; inaudible.)

20 MS. WEBER: We represent the children
21 in those schools. And in fact our hope is
22 that the yeshivas that are performing well
23 will provide insight, input, and coaching and
24 training to those schools who are not doing

1 well.

2 And I think the fact that there are
3 yeshivas that are doing well, where you have
4 the boys that are taking Regents Exams and
5 doing well on those exams, that should be a
6 model for all yeshivas across the state. And
7 that is -- that is my hope.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I agree.
9 The Regents are working on that, right?
10 That's with the new equivalency. And I think
11 they've offered to work with all of those
12 schools, PEARLS and other groups have offered
13 to tutor. And if you're not doing your job
14 right, then funding shouldn't be there for
15 you, just like any public or other nonpublic
16 schools.

17 MS. WEBER: Absolutely. I think -- I
18 think the idea that religious schools,
19 Jewish schools across the state, the ones we
20 specifically work on, the Hasidic schools
21 that are currently not providing a sound,
22 basic education, start doing that. In a
23 similar model to some of the schools in your
24 district, that would be wonderful. And

1 that's what we hope for.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I just
3 think that rhetoric just, you know, promotes
4 antisemitism in that when we don't give the
5 full picture to say, yes, schools are
6 achieving and some schools are failing. Just
7 like in the New York City school system. You
8 just quoted numbers that schools are failing.
9 So let's just paint it so people have a full
10 understanding of the possibility that it's
11 not just Hasidic schools that are failing.

12 MS. WEBER: It's a percentage of the
13 schools. A significant percentage of the
14 yeshivas.

15 But again, I agree with you. Some of
16 the yeshivas in this state are from the top
17 schools, and I wish -- I wish that my
18 children could have benefited from a top
19 education, but they did not, because many of
20 the schools do not.

21 Many of the yeshivas are not providing
22 a sound, basic education. And should be,
23 again, similarly to what you have in your
24 school district. But that's not what's

1 taking place in many communities. In
2 Williamsburg, in Borough Park, in Monsey, in
3 Kiryas Joel, in those schools, those
4 students -- you have high school students
5 that cannot read and write English.

6 That is not acceptable, okay? When I
7 speak up for these children, that has nothing
8 to do with antisemitism, does not stoke
9 antisemitism. In fact, I speak up on behalf
10 of these children. I speak up for the
11 well-being of these children. And I am
12 grateful that the Board of Regents --

13 (Time clock chiming.)

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Finish.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
16 Ms. --

17 MS. WEBER: -- took on their cause and
18 developed a system by which the local school
19 authorities will know how to deal with these
20 schools and make sure that they are compliant
21 with the law.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you,
23 Ms. --

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I look

1 forward to advocating with you.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: -- Ms. Weber.

3 I appreciate -- did a --

4 (Off the record.)

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: I feel
6 like you're in a bar and the lights are going
7 to flicker and we're going to be -- "Last
8 call," "Last call".

9 (Laughter.)

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN PHEFFER AMATO: Last
11 call, Mike.

12 Sorry, Senator.

13 (Laughter.)

14 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: I do want to thank
15 all of you for being here and for your --

16 (Time clock chiming; laughter.)

17 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Who's your friend
18 every day in these budget hearings? Yo.

19 (Laughter.)

20 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Sorry. I wanted to
21 thank all of you for your very important
22 work.

23 And yes, the theme is making sure that
24 all of our schools are providing the

1 education our children deserve and need.

2 And I, as a Jew, have worked with
3 YAFFED. I can guarantee you they are not
4 antisemitic. That there are many great
5 Jewish day schools and yeshivas in this, the
6 City of New York and the State of New York.

7 But there is a real issue out there,
8 and the Board of Regents has confirmed it.
9 The City of New York, through audits, even
10 then it took 100 years, has finally confirmed
11 it. We did put new rules into place.

12 And I think what YAFFED is here
13 saying, or Beatrice is here saying on behalf
14 of her organization, is we need to make sure
15 that this gets done correctly. Because the
16 fact is that we do have generations of
17 children -- not just in yeshiva schools, but
18 in other schools as well -- that are not
19 getting the education they not only deserve,
20 but they need, if they hope to accomplish
21 anything and not spend their lives in poverty
22 and without opportunities for themselves and
23 their families.

24 So she has a hard job. I've seen it

1 over and over again. But I'm very glad -- as
2 they all do; I didn't mean to diss anyone.
3 But we have to help make sure that we are
4 doing the right thing for everyone's children
5 and that we're using state money
6 appropriately.

7 So with that, I also, I think on
8 behalf of the Senate, want to thank you all
9 for being the last panel and for sticking it
10 out with us all day.

11 (Scattered applause.)

12 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: So thank you very
13 much.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you.

15 Last panel, congratulations. Thank
16 you very much for being here. We appreciate
17 it. And continue to do the good work that
18 you do.

19 On behalf of the State Legislature, we
20 will end this round of the 2024 Education
21 hearings, and we thank all the panelists for
22 sticking all day through. It's been a long
23 day, but it's been a good day.

24 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Adjourned.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for being
4 the guest star.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN BENEDETTO: Thank you. We
6 did great.

7 (Whereupon, the budget hearing
8 concluded at 7:32 p.m.)

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