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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**

**Opening and Co-Location of
New District 9-14 at Q435/MVB HS**

October 23, 2013

5:30pm

1 [START RECORDING]

2 [Background noise]

3 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Good evening everyone.

4 We are going to get started. Just as a

5 reminder, if you wish to speak during the public

6 comment section of tonight's agenda you should

7 sign up at the table outside of the auditorium.

8 Again, if you wish to speak during public

9 comment, please sign up at the table outside of

10 the auditorium. Speaker sign up will close

11 about 15 minutes after we officially get

12 started. Thanks.

13 [Background noise]

14 MS. HARRIS: Good evening. Good evening.

15 My name is Melissa Harris and I will serve as

16 the facilitator for tonight's joint public

17 hearing. This is the joint public hearing of

18 the Department of Education Community Education

19 Council District 26 and the School Leadership

20 Team of Martin Van Buren High School to discuss

21 the proposed opening and co-location of new high

22 school 26Q315 at Martin Van Buren High School in

23 building Q435 beginning in the 2014-2015 school

24 year.

25 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and

1 transcribed. As a reminder, if you wish to
2 speak during the public comment portion of
3 tonight's agenda, we ask that you sign up at the
4 tables outside of the auditorium. We're going
5 to close the speaker sign up in about 15
6 minutes.

7 All panel participants were asked to be here
8 no later than 6:00 p.m. Now that we have
9 started, if a panel participant arrives late, he
10 or she will be given time to speak at the first
11 opportune moment. We want to be respectful of
12 everyone's time here this evening. There may be
13 elected officials who arrive at different times
14 throughout the evening. If they wish to speak,
15 we'll do our best to accommodate them at the
16 first opportune moment. Those who are here at
17 the start of the public comment segment will be
18 permitted to speak first.

19 Tonight's format will include a presentation
20 of the proposal and presentations by hearing
21 participants, followed by public comment.
22 Saying it one more time, just as a reminder, you
23 should sign up for public comment if you wish to
24 speak this evening. Each public comment will be
25 allotted two minutes. You will be notified when

1 you have 30 seconds remaining and when your
2 time is up.

3 I would like to now introduce the panel
4 which has been assembled for this evening's
5 joint public hearing. Excuse me. I have a lot
6 of paper up here. Principal Sam Sochet.

7 MR. SAM SOCHET: Sochet [fixes
8 pronunciation].

9 MS. HARRIS: Sochet, excuse me, sir.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. HARRIS: CEC representative Jeanette
12 Segal, Alan Ong, Susan Shiroma, Jamie Alvarez-
13 Isas, Anastasia Politis [phonetic], CCHS
14 representative Alex Lee, SLT representatives
15 Latchman Persaud and Frank Betchon [phonetic].

16 MR. FRANK BANCONE: Bancone.

17 MS. HARRIS: Bancone, I'm sorry, sir. I'll
18 get better throughout the evening. And District
19 26 Superintendent Anita Saunders, as well as
20 High School Superintendent Juan Mendez.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. HARRIS: We have already been joined by
23 State Senator Tony Avella.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. HARRIS: I'm sorry. I also missed Ricky

1 Chan, the CEC vice president.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. HARRIS: Okay. And I see City
4 Councilman Mark Weprin's name here, as well as
5 State Assemblyman David Weprin's name on this
6 sheet as well.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. HARRIS: We've also been joined by
9 Deputy Borough President Barry...

10 MR. BARRY GROZENCHEK: Grodenchik.

11 MS. HARRIS: Grodeeshack [phonetic].

12 MR. GROZENCHEK: Grodenchik.

13 MS. HARRIS: Grodenchik. I'm sorry,
14 everyone. Please forgive me. I'm sorry Deputy
15 Borough President. I'd like to now turn the
16 program over to Superintendent Juan Mendez, who
17 will present the Department's proposal.

18 MR. JUAN MENDEZ: Thank you. Good evening
19 everyone. This is a joint public hearing of the
20 Department of Education Community Education
21 Council and the School Leadership Team of the
22 proposed opening and co-location of the new high
23 school 26Q313 with Martin Van Buren High School
24 26Q3--435 in building Q435 beginning in the
25 academic year 2014-2015. I am Queens Side

1 School Superintendent Juan Mendez.

2 We have asked District 26 Community
3 Education Council and the School Leadership Team
4 of Martin Van Buren High School to participate
5 in this joint public hearing. The purpose of
6 this hearing is for you to provide comments
7 about the proposal. The New York City
8 Department of Education is proposing to open and
9 co-locate a new district career and technical
10 early college and career high school 26Q315 in
11 this building, Q435. 26Q315 will be co-located
12 in Q435 with Martin Van Buren High School, an
13 existing high school serving students in grades
14 9 through 12. A co-location means that two or
15 more organizations are located in the same
16 building and they share common spaces like
17 auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

18 The early college program is designed to
19 give students the opportunity to learn--to earn
20 an associate's degree free of charge and to put
21 them on a post-secondary pathway potentially
22 leading to career track employment within the
23 computer science and business technology
24 industry. 26Q315 will partner with SAP, a
25 multinational software corporation that makes

1 enterprise software to manage business
2 operations and customer relations. 26Q315 will
3 also be partnered with Queensborough Community
4 College, which is one of 23 colleges within the
5 City University of New York, CUNY higher
6 education system.

7 Concurrently, the Department of Education is
8 planning to reduce the enrollment at Martin Van
9 Buren High School beginning in September 2014
10 over a four-year period. By 2017-18 academic
11 year, enrollment at Van Buren will decrease by
12 approximately 200--420 to 460 students, so that
13 it will serve between 1,585 to 1,625 students at
14 scale in 9 through 12 grades. The enrolment
15 reduction is intended to provide an opportunity
16 for Van Buren to concentrate in a smaller cohort
17 of students and allow for new school options to
18 develop in building Q435. The Department of
19 Education does not anticipate reducing Van
20 Buren's enrollment if the proposal to co-locate
21 26Q315 is not approved.

22 If this co-location proposal is approved,
23 the new school will serve students in grades
24 nine--in the ninth grade, beginning in the 2014-
25 2015 school year, and will add one grade level

1 every year until the school reaches its full
2 grade span of 9 through 14 grade in the year
3 2019-2020, serving approximately 630 through 690
4 students.

5 In academic year 2019-20, once 26Q315 has
6 reached full scale, it is projected that there
7 will be approximately 2,215 to 2,315 students
8 served in this building Q435, yielding an
9 estimated building utilization rate of
10 approximately 96 to 100% using the Department of
11 Education's standard calculation. However, this
12 standard rate is likely overstated because it
13 includes 150 to 170 students in grades 13
14 through 14.

15 If the proposal is approved, the high school
16 seats that will be lost as a result of the
17 enrolment reduction at Martin Van Buren will be
18 recovered by the new seats generated and created
19 by the opening of 26Q315. The proposed co-
20 location of 26Q315 is part of the Department of
21 Education's central goal to create new school
22 options that will better serve current and
23 future students, and the community at large, and
24 to provide another options for students. Thank
25 you. I will now turn the program back to Ms.

1 Harris.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. HARRIS: I now invite the School
4 Leadership Team from Martin Van Buren to give
5 their presentation.

6 MR. LATCHMAN PERSAUD: Thank you and good
7 evening. My name is Latchman Persaud. I'm the
8 parent of a tenth grader here at Martin Van
9 Buren High School. I live in Queens Village,
10 which is part of the Van Buren's zoned
11 community. Let me also say I'm the president of
12 the Parents Association. As a parent, a parent
13 leader, and a member of this community, I'm very
14 pleased with how this administration under Mr.
15 Sochet has made tremendous progress in this
16 school. And we're not just talking about - - .

17 [Applause]

18 MR. PERSAUD: We're talking about creating a
19 nurturing learning environment to give kids a
20 chance to succeed. This new administration
21 under Mr. Sochet has been working with parents
22 and community leaders to forge a better Van
23 Buren. I say we give them the chance.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. PERSAUD: Now, both this current board

1 and the previous parent's association board
2 was very disappointed to learn that the school
3 administration, the new school administration
4 was not given a chance to fully implement their
5 plan. We were blindsided by this proposal,
6 which as a parent and as a parent leader were
7 just new in June.

8 Now, this has been fast tracked to be
9 ratified in October without the parents and
10 community knowing the full impact of this
11 measure. How will a city based program like the
12 premed and the engineering programs which is
13 slated for Van Buren be affected? How will the
14 arts and music be affected? With these
15 concerns, the Parents Association board met at
16 its October meeting and we presented the co-
17 location proposal. And after reviewing the
18 proposal the board voted unanimously to oppose
19 this proposal and to take it to our general
20 membership meeting.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. PERSAUD: Now, in our October 21st
23 general Parents Association meeting, we
24 represented the proposal to our membership and
25 it voted unanimously to oppose this proposal.

1 Not one parent agreed with this proposal.

2 And while, you know, the P-TECH and CTE
3 programs are great programs and we're not
4 against it, we don't think it's the right time
5 to co-locate another school at Martin Van Buren.
6 If anything, let's work on implementing a P-TECH
7 and a CTE program under the current
8 administration. So, for the public record, on
9 behalf of the Parents Association and on behalf
10 of the parents we want to say we oppose this
11 proposal. Thank you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. ROSITA LETTO: Good evening. My name is
14 Rosita Letto. I'm an SLT member in DC 37. I've
15 worked the switchboard for four years. I just
16 want to give a little insight of an experience--
17 experiences that I've had with parents. I just
18 want to give a little insight on the experience
19 I've had with some parents, lots of parents
20 who have called and I answered the phone calls.
21 Angry parents calling, saying "I have just been
22 to the enrollment center. They're telling me I
23 cannot send my son to Martin Van Buren. I want
24 to speak to the principal. My daughter went to
25 that school. She graduated. My nephew

1 graduated. Why is it that I cannot go to
2 Martin Van Buren?" I directed her to the
3 administration.

4 I didn't know what was going on but, seeing
5 what's going on now, I guess I now know why--
6 whether they were steering students away from
7 our school, I don't know why but now I know the
8 reason. And I hope that it doesn't happen.
9 Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. BANCONE: I'd like to welcome you to--
12 welcome you, and I appreciate the fact that all
13 of you have taken time out to come out tonight.
14 My name is Frank Bancone and I am the UFT
15 Chapter Leader here at Martin Van Buren for the
16 past eight years.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. BANCONE: All right. I've been a
19 teacher here for the past 23 years. If you have
20 not--if you're not aware of it, Martin Van Buren
21 High School has suffered a steady decline over
22 the past decade. We have been neglected by the
23 Bloomberg administration, the DOE, and have been
24 forced to endure a destructive school
25 administration. The signs of neglect--

1 [Applause]

2 MR. BANCONE: The signs of the neglect were
3 clear to all but Mayor Bloomberg and the DOE.
4 Ten assistant principals in ten years in
5 guidance, advanced placements courses cut,
6 foreign language programs shuttered because of
7 vindictiveness, successful honors program sliced
8 to a fraction, voices of dissent threatened and
9 forced to leave, successful elective programs
10 cut out, sports programs forced to have no home
11 games because they made too much noise, our
12 school of excellence has been reduced to a mere
13 shell of its former glory by a school system
14 that has plotted its destruction.

15 Now these so-called educational leaders say
16 we need competition to solve the issue the
17 school faces. Rather than supporting Van Buren,
18 the Bloomberg DOE says it's time to co-locate
19 another school in the Van Buren building.
20 Martin Van Buren High School was finally given a
21 new administration in Principal Sochet.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. BANCONE: He has made it our school's
24 mission to reverse the mistakes of the past
25 principal. Under the new administration, Martin

1 Van Buren High School is restoring advanced
2 placement classes, honors programs, and foreign
3 language programs. Martin Van Buren is putting
4 in new programs that look to the future.

5 We are restoring sports programs and putting
6 the needs of the athletes in the forefront.
7 Martin Van Buren is allowing the coaches to put
8 in programs that will instill school pride. We
9 are now allowing the student body to attend
10 games which prior administrations did not allow,
11 once again instilling school pride. We are now
12 having--we now have more afterschool events for
13 students and making Martin Van Buren a hub of
14 activities for our school community. This
15 turnaround of programs will make the school a
16 desirable location for the students. We are
17 just getting started.

18 Why is co-location for Van Buren High School
19 and District 26 wrong? The co-location that is
20 said by the Bloomberg DOE to have little effect
21 will have a huge impact on District 26 starting
22 next year. The underutilization of Martin Van
23 Buren High School can be reversed quickly.
24 Under the Bloomberg DOE plan, Martin Van Buren
25 campus will have approximately 2,300 students

1 and no room to grow because of co-location.

2 When Martin Van Buren becomes more
3 desirable, we'll be able to increase our school
4 student population. Martin Van Buren as a
5 single school can easily hold 3,500 students, if
6 not more. This will allow easing of the
7 overcrowding at the other District 26 high
8 schools. What else does Martin Van Buren have
9 underway to make it more attractive? We have a
10 partnership with Long Island Jewish High School
11 that will make our new premed program thrive--

12 [Applause]

13 MR. BANCONE: --and become more desirable
14 for District 26 students. The program is slated
15 to start in September 2014. Martin Van Buren
16 High School is also slated to have a pre-
17 engineering program. The program--

18 [Applause]

19 MR. BANCONE: The program will have a
20 partnership with colleges and a private
21 engineering firm. This will all--there will
22 also be a forensic science program that will
23 prepare students to begin careers in both law
24 enforcement--

25 [Applause]

1 MR. BANCONE: How will co-location impact
2 these programs? The Bloomberg DOE said there
3 will be no impact. I'm here to tell you that
4 there will be an impact. Fewer students equal
5 less money. Less money means fewer teachers.
6 We have specific needs that may not be met
7 because of the decline in budget. Martin Van
8 Buren High School was recently awarded a four
9 million dollar grant to help the school move
10 forward.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. BANCONE: The Bloomberg DOE will tell
13 you that the grant will not impact the school.
14 However, the grant was put into place and has
15 specific goals and objectives spelled out. The
16 grant is calling for a hiring personnel to help
17 launch new programs. The Bloomberg DOE will be
18 preventing the school from using those monies by
19 limiting the student population. The Bloomberg
20 DOE will tell you that Martin Van Buren High
21 School will cut elective offerings. This is the
22 first truth of the Bloomberg DOE impact
23 statement.

24 At Martin Van Buren, we have a four-year
25 program in place for both arts and music. The

1 program now includes AP art. These programs
2 will be scaled back due to the Bloomberg DOE's
3 desire to have more school competition. The
4 new--the new school that the Bloomberg DOE
5 wishes to co-locate at Martin Van Buren High
6 School will have new computers and technology.

7 What will this mean for the students at
8 Martin Van Buren High School? Ancient
9 technology and the feeling of neglect. This is
10 how the Bloomberg DOE feels about the Martin Van
11 Buren student body, good enough for them but not
12 for you. This will lead to frustration and
13 negative competition within the building. To
14 quote Lincoln, "A house divided against itself
15 cannot stand."

16 [Applause]

17 MR. BANCONE: Thanks, Mayor Bloomberg, for
18 destroying Martin Van Buren High School. Why is
19 the DOE doing this instead of focusing on
20 improving the existing Martin Van Buren High
21 School? I can answer this in one word,
22 politics. The Bloomberg DOE believes that the
23 teachers are the problem and the smaller schools
24 have less teachers and therefore less problems
25 within the teacher--with the teacher's union.

1 In other words, they would love to do away
2 with many aspects of our contract, like the
3 limited high school class size of 34. Bloomberg
4 has said we would be better off if we had less
5 teachers and class sizes of 70. This flies in
6 the face of all research. But, just like the
7 bully he is, he will do whatever it takes so he
8 can get his way.

9 I will be turning the program over to Mr.
10 Patel, who will speak about the new programs
11 which will be affected by the Bloomberg DOE
12 decision, and after that to Mr. Greenspan, a
13 proud alumni of Van Buren High School, to
14 discuss how this will affect the student
15 population. Thank you.

16 [Applause]

17 MALE VOICE 1: Check, check, check. Sanjay?
18 Check.

19 [Chanting]

20 MR. SANJAY PATEL: My name is Sanjay Patel.
21 I'm the director of the special science programs
22 that you just heard about previously from Mr.
23 Bancone. What I'm unable to fathom is that why
24 do we have these programs at the same time we
25 have a co-location school. There is no logic in

1 this. We were asked to initiate this project.
2 Then why put this--why put these programs in
3 place? I want to show you what strides we have
4 taken in place in the past one year. Here is
5 the first segment.

6 [Applause]

7 [RECORDING: MALE VOICE: Sort of both had
8 this vision of what should--what the school
9 should start to look like it and this is it.
10 This is exactly what it should look like. It
11 should be colorful.]

12 MALE VOICE 1: It's okay. You don't want to
13 hear him anyway. Does she have an input for
14 that?

15 [RECORDING: MS. AGNES CHUNG: With the
16 images of historical figures, students and
17 faculty of Martin Van Buren High School are
18 trying to represent the new face of the changing
19 school. Principal Sam Sochet - - Antonio
20 Montalvo [phonetic] spearheaded the project.

21 MALE VOICE: We sort of both had this vision of
22 what should--what the school should start to
23 look like it and this is it. This is exactly
24 what it should look like. It should be
25 colorful. It should be evolving. And the

1 people that you use behind us. These are all
2 famous people that we know but they all to
3 overcome some tremendous set of obstacles in
4 order to achieve that. MS. CHUNG: The school
5 recently jumped some hurtles of its own. The
6 school was able to improve a full letter grade
7 on its progress report from Department of
8 Education D into a C in the last year. DOE
9 bases such grades on performance of - - tests,
10 attendance, and more. MALE VOICE: The whole
11 idea behind the project is to make the learning
12 environment something that's [applause]. MS.
13 CHUNG: The students say it's exciting to know
14 they are painting over their school's past and
15 leaving a positive mark with their handiwork.
16 MALE VOICE 1: This has truly motivated
17 everybody around the school and it's pushing us
18 in a positive direction. MALE VOICE 2: Just
19 knowing that's going to be here for like ever,
20 it just feels really good. FEMALE VOICE: Every
21 time I walk through the hallways, I see the
22 lockers, I feel special. People like it. MS.
23 CHUNG: It took 35 students less than two months
24 to paint these portraits across 80 lockers and
25 they won't stop there. Plans are to paint all

1 the lockers in the school. MALE VOICE: We're
2 going to still keep going with historical
3 figures. We're going to move on towards the
4 music department where we're doing famous
5 musicians. And then we're going to move on to
6 famous writers and we're going to move on to
7 famous artists. We're basically going to try to
8 cover all of the subjects that we teach in this
9 building. MS. CHUNG: The paintings also
10 promote Van Buren's new college ranked programs,
11 another way for the school looking to change for
12 the better. In Queens Village, Agnes Chung, New
13 York One]

14 [Applause]

15 MR. PATEL: Okay. As you saw from the New
16 York 1 clip where we are moving forward. I just
17 want to give you an idea. This was the signing
18 of our medical program, medical research program
19 at Long Island Jewish Medical Center. And this
20 was one of the first real research where
21 students will be doing clinical research with
22 doctors and with patients. So this is a huge
23 step forward in the transformation or rise of
24 our school. Currently we have three students
25 that are working in the hospital and will be

1 doing research with the doctors within a week
2 or so.

3 Next, what I want to show you is the
4 specialized programs we have. The first one is
5 a pre medical program and this one is a true
6 emulation of medical school. The type of
7 program we have here, the students will actually
8 get somewhat of an overview what it would feel
9 like to be in medical school. They will be
10 taking courses not just here, which are related
11 with medicine, but they will also be taking
12 courses at Queensborough Community College,
13 represented as CUNY.

14 We have a program for PCT, patient care
15 technicians, which is a certificate that they
16 receive when they finish a program. We have an
17 EMT program. And of course as I spoke
18 previously clinical research at Long Island
19 Jewish Medical Center and the pre medical
20 college credits through CUNY.

21 Currently we are working with QCC, which is
22 CUNY. But just so you know the professors are
23 coming from QCC and they are going to be taking
24 college courses here at the high school and as
25 well at the campus. The other program we have

1 is a pre engineering program. Just today,
2 just some good news is that we have solidified
3 engineering courses which the students will be
4 taking from here at Martin Van Buren High School
5 taught by professors. So that is another stride
6 we have moved forward.

7 [Applause]

8 MR. PATEL: So what is the difference
9 between what the CTE is doing and what we're
10 doing? I don't understand. Can the DOE explain
11 that? I want to hear the explanation because
12 we're doing the same thing. Why put in another
13 school? Let us do it. We are doing it.

14 [Applause]

15 MR. PATEL: I want a real rationale what
16 we're doing wrong if we're doing what the CTE is
17 supposed to do. There has been no rationale.
18 It's just been a bunch of what we talk, what we
19 say, you know, bubble talk, high talk. To me
20 it's no talk.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. PATEL: Okay. To move on to the
23 engineering program, we're one of the only
24 schools other than Bronx Science that I'm aware
25 of currently that has two robotics teams, Bronx

1 Science.

2 [Applause]

3 MR. PATEL: And thank you to Mr. Greenspan
4 and some of our alumni that we will be soon
5 partnered with private corporations in which our
6 students will be able to do internships. So
7 this is a great time moving forward again.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. PATEL: And we've moved forward. The
10 CTE program hasn't gone anywhere yet. We're
11 already in the business. They're at zero scale.
12 Next, the city--sorry, I'll just move on. We
13 are partnered with NYU Polytechnic also for
14 workshops and engineering. What more can we
15 offer? The CET's program, will they be able to
16 do the same thing? It's questionable, very
17 questionable.

18 Next, of course we said college credits to
19 CUNY right here in our high school. Next we
20 have the law and forensics program. In this one
21 we are also partnered with CUNY, of course John
22 Jay College of Criminal Justice. We have
23 students currently taking college courses there.
24 Will the CET program have this? Will the CET
25 program have this? It's a big question.

1 MULTIPLE VOICES: No.

2 MR. PATEL: No. So what are we doing?

3 We're offering a variety of subjects, a variety
4 of fields. What kind of fields? The ones that
5 are in demand today in our society.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. PATEL: Okay. Next, the computer
8 business program is another one we solidified
9 today with the CUNY college almost signed. It's
10 all pretty much signed and sealed. The kids
11 will be--I'm sorry. I hit the wrong key. The
12 students that take this course are going to take
13 a computer credited course here at our school.
14 They'll earn up to three college credits, all
15 paid for through our funds. And again the CET,
16 where are they with this? See, they would have
17 to take the college courses at the campus. We
18 offer it here. It saves time, safety, also
19 transportation.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. PATEL: I want to see the CET do what
22 we're doing. That's the big question I have for
23 them. Okay, thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. JEANETTE SEGAL: Good evening. My name

1 is Jeanette Segal. I am the CD--CEC
2 president.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. SEGAL: Thank you. I'm just going to
5 interrupt the presentation for a bit. I'm going
6 to say a few words and then I want to turn it to
7 Councilmember Mark Weprin. But just a few words
8 from my point of view. I would like to thank
9 you all for coming and express your concerns and
10 thoughts on the DOE proposal for the co-location
11 of Martin Van Buren with the new 26Q315 high
12 school. Martin Van Buren has been a school that
13 has been neglected for a long time and
14 unfortunately has had a negative impact to the
15 community.

16 Finally, a year ago, Martin Van Buren was
17 presented by the DOE with a new principal.
18 Principal Sochet has started a turnaround. He
19 has brought a partnership with a variety of
20 different entities to bring choices to the
21 students and community. I believe he is having
22 a positive impact and a word--and the word is
23 starting to get spread. I was at a high school
24 fair and heard a parent tell his daughter, "Did
25 you look at Martin Van Buren?" So the word is

1 spreading. Good things are happening at
2 Martin Van Buren.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. SEGAL: I wonder how much the DOE has
5 helped Mr. Sochet with the turnaround. Maybe
6 he's had as much input as the communities and
7 parents have had on putting this proposal
8 together. It is unfortunate Martin Van Buren
9 has been failing for so many years and nothing
10 has been done. It is unfair to think in one
11 year a person change a school overnight.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. SEGAL: I understand the community's
14 frustration with the situation. The community
15 wants to see more District 26 kids in Martin Van
16 Buren or in the new school, the CTE program.
17 They want the children attending Martin Van
18 Buren to feel a sense of connection to their
19 community. Therefore, the question is where are
20 the kids that are slated to go to Martin Van
21 Buren, where are they going now. The DOE noted
22 that the zoned kids are not choosing Martin Van
23 Buren as a choice, first choice. Only 6% of the
24 kids choose Martin Van Buren as first choice.
25 Well, maybe because they've been turned around

1 by the DOE website. Is that--if that is so,
2 where are they choosing to go?

3 The conversation on multiple meetings
4 throughout the years I have been involved with
5 in trying to get a new school into District 26
6 to alleviate the overcrowding at Cardozo,
7 Bayside, and Francis Lewis. We know this is not
8 a DOE priority since the schools are performing
9 well. But back to the community's desire to
10 have local kids attend the local schools, is it
11 correct to assume that the new school, a CTE P-
12 TECH type of structure, would be desirable to
13 these district families? Can we assume that P-
14 TECH in Crown Heights Brooklyn has the same
15 issues and the same dynamics as this district?
16 Did P-TECH get the community zone kids into
17 their school? Has the graduates, sorry, not
18 yet, potential graduates reaped the benefits and
19 have been hired by the perspective companies and
20 institutions? And has the Crown Heights
21 community reaped any of the benefits of this
22 change?

23 We don't have an answer. These are the
24 questions that I would like to see answered. I
25 know and read about this wonderful information

1 that the partnerships like P-TECH bring to
2 children and families, but I truly believe that
3 it is misguiding to say that the partnerships
4 like this is what Martin Van Buren needs. I
5 believe--

6 [Applause]

7 MS. SEGAL: Thank you. I believe the
8 community will not get the zoned kids to come to
9 a smaller technical school. I truly believe
10 Martin Van Buren and the new school will still
11 be getting the over-the-counter kids, as so
12 labeled by DOE. I believe that you will be
13 diminishing the current Martin Van Buren school
14 since the resources are not going to be shared.
15 I believe that the DOE will not handle this
16 properly. I believe crime and property damage
17 will continue. I believe that the new school
18 will not fix or benefit and work with the
19 community. I truly believe that. I believe the
20 DOE will never grant zoned kids priority and we
21 will not reap the benefits.

22 I wonder what the big rush is here. We have
23 a community on children at stake here. Why
24 bring in something that will diminish, not
25 enhance, the school or community? Why not take

1 the time necessary to properly plan a
2 turnaround that will work? Or is it that
3 getting another new school under this current
4 mayor's administration resume worth jeopardizing
5 our children? Thank you. And now I would like
6 to introduce Councilmember Mark Weprin.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. SEGAL: Oh, yes. Oh, sorry, sorry,
9 sorry, sorry. Actually Senator Avella was here
10 first. I am so sorry.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. HARRIS: You have to let me do the
13 facilitation.

14 MS. SEGAL: Okay.

15 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

16 SENATOR TONY AVELLA: First of all, it's
17 good to see such a good turnout here tonight for
18 this. I remember about a year and a half ago
19 when I was first elected to the state senate I
20 came to this school because people, parents,
21 community residents had concerns about the
22 school. And I remember walking through what was
23 almost like a dead atmosphere under the previous
24 principal. And I did something that very few
25 elected officials will do, and that's I called

1 for the resignation of the principal because
2 there was clearly no leadership in this school.
3 Well, that got done.

4 [Applause]

5 SENATOR AVELLA: And DOE put in who I have
6 to say is one of the best principals I've ever
7 had the chance to meet, Sam Sochet.

8 [Applause]

9 SENATOR AVELLA: And what he has done--you
10 know, in the last, you know, few weeks we've
11 talked about turning this school around. Sam,
12 you have already turned this school around.
13 You, the teachers, your staff, the parents, and
14 the kids, you are making this school what it
15 always was years ago. What has--what DOE is
16 doing today with this proposal is a knife in the
17 back to all of us, most importantly to the
18 students and the parents.

19 [Applause]

20 SENATOR AVELLA: You saw the presentation
21 here. He and his staff and the teachers here
22 have come up with great programs that people--
23 that the students will want to enroll in,
24 graduate from, and go onto great careers. To
25 collate a school here is an absolute disgrace

1 and, as some people have already alluded to,
2 just one more indication of how Mike Bloomberg
3 wants to destroy the school system.

4 [Applause]

5 SENATOR AVELLA: Why is the mayor insistent
6 on doing as many co-locations as he can in the
7 last, what, nine weeks he has in office? If
8 anything, these type of decisions should be left
9 to the new administration because no matter
10 who's the mayor it's going to be different.

11 [Applause]

12 SENATOR AVELLA: And I know there are some
13 members of the community who feel that, oh, if
14 we have this specialized school in here that's
15 going to benefit the school and the neighborhood
16 kids. Well, that's not been the experience with
17 DOE. What happens is they bring in a
18 specialized high school and they slowly decrease
19 the services for the regular high school, in
20 this case Martin Van Buren. We saw that at
21 Jamaica High School. They brought in
22 specialized school after specialized school, and
23 then disenfranchised every student there who
24 became second class citizens. That's what will
25 happen here and it's your kids that are going to

1 be the second class citizens.

2 [Applause]

3 SENATOR AVELLA: And if you think--you know,
4 if you listen to DOE, "Oh, this is going to
5 improve the neighborhood," it is not because
6 local kids will not be able to go here. They
7 will not have preference. They will pull from
8 all over the city. This is not going to help
9 Martin Van Buren. It is not going to improve
10 anything. What it will do is stop the good work
11 that is already occurring here. Martin Van
12 Buren has the opportunity, under Sam and
13 everybody else involved in this, to be one of
14 the best high schools in the city. Let's make
15 it so and let's stop this nonsense with co-
16 location.

17 [Applause]

18 COUNCILMEMBER MARK WEPRIN: Thank you very
19 much. My name is Mark Weprin and I'm the city--

20 [Applause]

21 COUNCILMEMBER WEPRIN: Oh, thank you, City
22 Councilmember for Martin Van Buren High School.
23 As many of you know, I'm very invested into our
24 local public schools. I live in this community.
25 I have three children, ages 5 to 17, and if you

1 don't believe me there's one woman in this
2 room who taught all three of them--two in
3 kindergarten and one in pre K--without
4 embarrassing her, Phyllis Burke [phonetic]. And
5 I mean no one cares more about what goes on in
6 Martin Van Buren High School than I do because I
7 live in this community. I have children who are
8 going to public school.

9 And I want to talk about this co-location
10 because two years ago actually, you know, we
11 wanted to address the overcrowding problem at
12 Bayside High School and at Francis Lewis and
13 Cardozo. And the fact that nobody, very few
14 kids from District 26 and Middle School 172 in
15 particular, had no kids ask to go to Martin Van
16 Buren High School at the time. And it was a
17 real problem.

18 So I met personally two years ago with the
19 chancellor and said, "Listen, we need to make
20 changes at the school. We need to bring
21 programs into the school, into Martin Van Buren
22 High School, that will attract those kids at
23 172. Let's start that process going. Let's
24 have a dialogue with the community."

25 And guess what? The DOE did what it did

1 best. It kept the community and the parents
2 out of the process. They didn't call me. They
3 didn't talk to me. And we did on our own--I
4 mean they did move out the principal. We spoke
5 to them and they said "We're going to--this
6 principal is going to be leaving at the end of
7 the next year," and he moved that principal out.
8 And that was a good first step because we got
9 Sam.

10 And I don't want to get Sam's head too big,
11 but Sam had his heart in the right place and
12 cared about these programs. But I said we need
13 new programs in and they didn't provide them.
14 Although Martin Van Buren, Mr. Patel brought in
15 his program in health career services and
16 natural behavioral sciences. And I was pleased
17 to reach out to Long Island Jewish Hospital to
18 help bring in a program that the DOE wasn't
19 necessarily with us on but then decided to come
20 on board for the Long Island Jewish Medical
21 Center for their pre medical program. These
22 science courses are exactly what this community
23 wants and this community needs.

24 [Applause]

25 COUNCILMEMBER WEPRIN: You know, and Mr.

1 Sochet has made an enormous progress. You
2 know, there are now 200 students approximately
3 from District 26 that Mr. Sochet has brought
4 into this school from Martin Van Buren High
5 School.

6 [Applause]

7 COUNCILMEMBER WEPRIN: And we want a lot
8 more. We want a lot more. You know, the
9 chancellor, the reason they're stuffing all of
10 these co-locations in in these last few weeks of
11 the administration is not just to mess with the
12 teachers. That may be part of it but it's also
13 to destroy local community schools. They don't
14 want zoned schools. If it was up to this
15 chancellor, no District 26 kid would be zoned
16 for Martin Van Buren High School or any of the
17 local high schools, including Bayside, Francis
18 Lewis, and Cardozo. They don't want zoned
19 schools.

20 That's just the way that this chancellor
21 wants. He wants ultimate school choice and no
22 one's house or any location is any benefit to
23 getting into a school. The DOE has squandered
24 this opportunity to put a school, a program in
25 here that made sense. And then--and they

1 wouldn't--they never spoke to us. I'm looking
2 at a group of parents here in the CDC. They
3 never spoke to us once.

4 I don't know how all of you heard about this
5 co-location. We heard it on the rumor mill and
6 I said, "It can't be." I mean nobody said
7 anything. I spoke to the chancellor directly.
8 Nobody has talked to us. But it was like a
9 rumor that spread and in the dark of night they
10 snuck this program in here and they are trying
11 to force it down our throats.

12 And I know it sounds seductive that this
13 program, you know, may be a great program for
14 our school. It's sort of what we talked about
15 doing to put it within Martin Van Buren High
16 School, so Sam Sochet can help bring those kids
17 and make them attractive. That might be a great
18 idea but for them to sneak this in, isn't it at
19 all suspicious that all of a sudden after two
20 years of having that meeting at Tweed [phonetic]
21 now they're snipping this in right before he's
22 leaving office?

23 [Applause]

24 COUNCILMEMBER WEPRIN: There's something
25 wrong with that and we are making enormous

1 progress and it may be--I'm not going to go--
2 it may be a program like a CTE program would
3 make sense in this building, under this man's
4 leadership. That would help attract students.

5 This man has made an effort to bring in kids
6 from 172. He went to 172, which is nothing
7 that--something that his previous principal
8 never did during their high school days. He had
9 to compete with some other impressive principals
10 from Bayside and others, but he did a great job
11 of trying to make the case and maybe that works.

12 But if a new school, if a new program within
13 Martin Van Buren makes sense today, it will make
14 sense in a few months when the new mayor is in
15 place as well. So we need to work together to
16 try to fight this because them stuffing this in
17 at the last minute without being thought out--
18 and I have no idea if one District 26 kid will
19 apply to this school.

20 So those who think this is great for
21 District 26, I have no idea. So let's talk
22 about it. How about having any open
23 discussions, any meeting with the elected
24 officials? They have ignored us. They ignore
25 the parents, and they ignore you. So that's

1 what you should be mad about. And working
2 together with a new administration we're going
3 to make sure our voices are heard for a change.
4 Thank you.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. HARRIS: I know invite the School
7 Leadership Team to continue their presentation.

8 MALE VOICE 2: How you doing everybody?

9 [Applause]

10 MALE VOICE 2: Thank you for that. I don't
11 have--I am not the most intelligent or informed
12 individual in this room right now and I think
13 everyone covered most of what I would have said
14 anyway. So I just want to add a couple of
15 things. I'd like to add a little bit of love
16 and a little bit of stats. First, a little bit
17 of love to the graduates who came out, always
18 coming back to support our schools.

19 [Applause]

20 MALE VOICE 2: Iris, Iris, Jason, Jasmine,
21 you guys are so wonderful, Josiah. I'd like to
22 show a little love to Bobby here. And, Mr.
23 Friedrich, we might have a difference of
24 opinions but it's nothing but respect,
25 gentlemen. Nothing but respect, nothing but

1 respect for you. Okay? Difference of
2 opinions, but nothing but respect. We know the
3 marginal population of our school, the marginal
4 population gives you a hard time and we do
5 apologize for that, but co-location is not going
6 to help you. It's not going to help you.

7 [Applause]

8 MALE VOICE 2: I'd like to add one little
9 stat. The current--the current cohort, the
10 group of freshman who went to sophomores, the
11 current articulation rate of that class is 74%.
12 Okay. That means that 74% of our students from
13 freshman to sophomore currently have all of
14 their credits and are on track to graduate.
15 That is a stunning statistic in comparison to
16 what the past few years have been and it is an
17 indication of the hard work that the teachers,
18 Mr. Sochet, and all of the people who work in
19 this building have been doing to make progress.

20 Co-location is a slap in your face for hand
21 picking this gentleman. It's a slap in your
22 face and a slap in everyone's face who works
23 their butt off, blood, sweat, and tears, to make
24 the school what it is. And all of a sudden--I'm
25 sorry, I'm getting emotional and I know I

1 shouldn't. I'm sorry. But that's what it is.
2 It's politics. It's nonsense and I will fight
3 for this building to the day I die.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. I now invite the
6 CEC and CCHS to give comment.

7 MS. SEGAL: Okay. We're going to pass down
8 the microphone and just the members who would
9 like to speak continue.

10 MS. SUSAN SHIROMA: Okay. Good evening. My
11 name is Susan Shiroma and I am one of two parent
12 leaders who are the Queensborough president
13 appointees to the Community School District 26's
14 Community Education Council. These Community
15 Education Councils are the government sponsored
16 advisory bodies that replaced the old community
17 school boards many years ago, shortly before
18 mayoral control was initiated.

19 You, the public, do not go to the voting
20 polls to vote for Community Education Council
21 members. It is the parent leadership groups in
22 each school in District 26 who vote as to who
23 sits up here on the CEC. Your Community
24 Education Council has no real power over what
25 happens to our schools, but we are still written

1 into the Education Law as having decision
2 making roles in zoning issues and the New York
3 City Department of Ed is required to engage us
4 when it comes to co-locations in our school
5 community. This is why the DOE is calling this
6 joint public hearing with the CEC.

7 Let me be clear. We are here tonight to
8 voice our opinions on the co-locations of a high
9 school into the building that DOE calls Martin
10 Van Buren High School. We are not here tonight
11 to say what's wrong with Martin Van Buren High
12 School. We are here for two reasons. One, to
13 determine if Community School District 26 wants
14 this specific new high school to be placed
15 within the district boundaries. And, two, to
16 determine if we want this new high school placed
17 inside the building that is called Martin Van
18 Buren.

19 You will hear statements tonight from the
20 audience that may confuse you as to who the
21 school community is. Who actually lives, works,
22 and prospers in School District 26 and in the
23 Martin Van Buren High School community? Tonight
24 you will get the answers to the following
25 questions. Who are our civic association board

1 members? Who sits on our local co-op boards?
2 Who are the people on your community board who
3 represent children who attend Martin Van Buren
4 High School? Who is the UFT? Who is the
5 community school superintendent? Who is the
6 Queens High School superintendent? Who are the
7 families zoned for Martin Van Buren High School?
8 Who are the PTA leaders in District 26? Who is
9 the CEC? And who represents the Citywide
10 Council on High Schools? And who are the people
11 who live in Queens Village and Glen Oaks anyway,
12 who live next to Martin Van Buren?

13 Now, I don't want us to forget about the
14 most important people here tonight. They are
15 the public high school students who commute many
16 miles each day to Martin Van Buren High School.
17 These are the young people who will be described
18 as the 96% of the schools current population who
19 live outside our Community School District 26
20 boarders.

21 My youngest child is 17. He would
22 absolutely agree with me on this point. These
23 Martin Van Buren High School kids have just as
24 much community right to a quality public school
25 education in a safe neighborhood and in a safe

1 school as my own son does. My statements to
2 you tonight are based on many years of volunteer
3 service on CEC 26 and two years of service on
4 the Citywide Council on High Schools where I
5 participated each month in public hearings on
6 high school issues.

7 In two years of service on the Citywide
8 Council on High Schools, I have heard every
9 single parent complaint about our high school
10 system, and I have heard every single DOE policy
11 response to the issues that parents, students,
12 and teachers raise. And I certainly do know
13 that Queens has a consistent shortage of high
14 school seats. I don't think this new school is
15 going to solve that problem.

16 Now, my home address is zoned for Jamaica
17 High School. This is a high school that our
18 city has eliminated for failing our children.
19 The current new high schools that the DOE placed
20 on the Jamaica High School campus were
21 ultimately not an attractive option for my
22 children. If my children applied to the new
23 high schools, they would be competing with
24 eighth graders from all over Queens and all over
25 the city. At this time, the new high school

1 proposal gives no guarantee or preference
2 based on whether or not you're a District 26 or
3 resident.

4 In my role as a CEC member tonight, I cannot
5 in good faith support the Office of Portfolio
6 Development's request to place a new high school
7 into District 26 and to collate that new high
8 school into Martin Van Buren High School.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. SHIROMA: I have five reasons that I
11 think this is not a good thing. Reason one, the
12 New York City DOE planning process was flawed
13 because DOE never asked the community what kind
14 of new high school we wanted sited in District
15 26. Office of Portfolio Development has not
16 included the school communities in any
17 discussions of what kind of high school we want
18 developed for this school district. Our CEC has
19 stated publically for many years that our middle
20 schoolers need a new high school for District 26
21 students that will fit the needs of this
22 community.

23 A vocational or career technical education
24 school was never on the table with us as a high
25 school that we wanted brought into this

1 district. This placement came as a complete
2 surprise to the CEC. It was especially
3 surprising to us because for the last two years
4 we've heard at public meetings many good stories
5 coming out of Martin Van Buren High School and
6 the new principal and staff are turning the
7 school around.

8 Now, just a reminder here, many of the
9 residents in District 26 do not actually attend
10 local schools because we can't get our kids into
11 Bayside High School, Cardozo High School,
12 Francis Lewis High School, Townsend Harris High
13 School, or the Queens High School of Teaching.
14 We seek placement in the specialized science
15 high schools and the art and music high schools
16 or we have to send our kids to - - high schools
17 such as BARD or the American Studies of High
18 School on the other side of Queens. A handful
19 of us are going to send our kids to Thomas
20 Edison High School.

21 In my neighborhood of Jamaica, the kids I
22 know who did not get into specialized high
23 schools or Townsend Harris found spots in Long
24 Island City High Schools or they had to travel
25 to the High School for Environmental Studies in

1 Manhattan. Several of us ended up paying
2 tuition at one of our Queens high school or at
3 Kew-Forest. I highly doubt these parents that I
4 know will send their child to a CTE program,
5 even if the program promises an associate's
6 degree in six years. These families dream of a
7 four-year college education for their children.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. SHIROMA: Reason two that this is not a
10 good idea, the new high school does not favor
11 District 26 students and District 26 residents.
12 The proposed new high school does not have a
13 zoning or admissions process that favors
14 applicants from District 26. I might consider
15 the school if the admissions process guarantees
16 a seat for District 26 students or District 26
17 residents. I don't trust the DOE enough to know
18 that when they say "We'll take your suggestion
19 back to central," that we're going to get a
20 positive response.

21 Now, the EIS states the school will open to
22 students citywide with a preference for Queens.
23 This is not acceptable from the viewpoint of the
24 CEC 26. Our newest District 26 high school is
25 the Queens High School of Teaching, and at this

1 high school the DOE gives preference to
2 District 26 and District 29 students.

3 Now, for those in the community who say
4 Martin Van Buren High School is too insulated
5 and too far away from public transportation, I'm
6 going to tell you this. I checked the current
7 DOE directory of high schools and it actually
8 lists more bus routes to take you very easily to
9 this school than it did in the 2008 or 2009
10 directory. If you can get to the F subway train
11 in Queens, you can get to Martin Van Buren High
12 School very easily.

13 Reason three, the DOE is flawed in thinking
14 that a reduced budget at Martin Van Buren High
15 School based on a reduction in students will not
16 hurt the school. The EIS statement implies that
17 Martin Van Buren High School will have fewer
18 electives and fewer club and afterschool
19 activities after the collated school adds a
20 great level each year.

21 The EIS statement says Martin Van Buren High
22 School's budget will be reduced based on a
23 process that targets a decline in its
24 population. My public school parent experience
25 tells me a reduced budget always has a

1 detrimental effect of the next year on classes
2 like AP classes, electives, clubs, sports, and
3 other activities. This is especially going to
4 be detrimental to the school's new small
5 learning communities. The school will need to
6 cut programs.

7 Now, Martin Van Buren will continue to be
8 used by the DOE as a high school dumping ground.
9 The school may have to accept more OTC students
10 each year during the enrollment period. The EIS
11 indicates that there is an increasing number of
12 OTC students, literally thousands in Queens who
13 require placement. I don't see where a new high
14 school that can only accept 100 to 115 students
15 tops each year can accommodate this need in
16 Queens and this community for thousands of
17 placements. It's the dumping of students in
18 this community that I think all of us object to.
19 Our students are not going to be--our schools do
20 not turn away students in need. So why doesn't
21 the DOE do more to assist Martin Van Buren High
22 School to return to what it used to be?

23 [Applause]

24 MS. SHIROMA: I actually wore my Francis
25 Lewis High School ring and it's my hope that

1 Martin Van Buren graduates will be able to
2 wear their high school rings proudly. Now,
3 barring that, I want to suggest that the DOE
4 should ask the CEC to work with MS 172 and PSIS
5 266 to find common ground to rezone those
6 students to a high school the community will
7 send its kids to.

8 Point four, my thoughts on the new school or
9 any new school proposed by the DOE. I'm going
10 to have to quote the president of the Citywide
11 Council on High School here. The DOE sells a
12 dream. The proposed school is modeled after P-
13 TECH in Brooklyn which was started in 2010. I
14 don't think P-TECH has yet graduated a full
15 twelfth grade component and it hasn't yet
16 reached grades 14. I don't like to put my tax
17 dollars into models until I see a track record
18 of success.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. SHIROMA: Now, I have to tell you my
21 understanding from our CEC meeting this past
22 September when I asked where the money was
23 coming from, why was there a need to site a new
24 high school in our district, is that there is
25 pressure from the highest office in Albany to

1 site this second version of P-TECH. Now, the
2 EIS statement makes it clear to me that a
3 funding agreement has not yet been signed by
4 anyone to say who will pay for the Queensborough
5 Community College tuition.

6 I kind of lost faith this week in the Office
7 of Portfolio Management's attention to detail.
8 This past Tuesday I was pretending to be a
9 Martin Van Buren parent trying to find out what
10 was happening in the school. So I used Google
11 and Google took me to the Office of Portfolio
12 Development's website where they listed the date
13 of this joint hearing as last month, 9/23/13,
14 and not 10/23/13. The minute we called the
15 office, the DOE changed the website in ten
16 minutes. Five--it's true. I have handouts
17 here from what their website looked like an hour
18 before they changed the date of this program.

19 Question five--reason five, lastly on co-
20 locations perhaps we should have asked the CEC
21 29 members to be here tonight. A quick scan of
22 the local news tells me that there is much
23 dissatisfaction south of Hillside Avenue as to
24 co-locations and their effects on our public
25 schools. The time is not now for District 26 to

1 accept a co-location. Do we really want to
2 open up the doors in District 26 to more of
3 these co-locations? We need more time to
4 discuss this. Thank you.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. ALAN ONG: Good evening. My name is
7 Alan Ong. I'm a CEC member, new to everything
8 here, but Susan said everything. So everything
9 just sounds fishy. Give MVB, the principal a
10 chance. Thank you.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. JAMIE ALVAREZ: My name is Jamie Alvarez
13 and I'm a member of the CEC. And the same
14 thing, I think Mr. Sam Sochet deserves an
15 opportunity to show to the community and not
16 allow Bloomberg policies to destroy our
17 community here, 26 in Queens.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. RICKY CHAN: Good everybody. My name is
20 Ricky Chan. I'm CEC 26 First Vice President.
21 You know, tonight we can, you know, debate the
22 merits of this P-TECH program. We can debate
23 the benefits of co-location, but my biggest grip
24 is, you know, the process in which the DOE took
25 to select this location for this program.

1 In my opinion, the process was broken. It
2 was very arbitrary. I think it was non-
3 transparent and, you know, even Bill De Blasio,
4 the democratic candidate for our next mayor
5 called for a moratorium on co-locations because
6 that process was just so broken. I think it was
7 said earlier tonight that perhaps we should give
8 this some more thinking before rushing into this
9 decision that's going to affect many of the
10 kids, you know, in the school.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ALEX LEE: Good evening everyone. My
13 name is Alex Lee. I am a member of Citywide
14 Council on High School. I have no idea why DOE
15 do not listen, parents, teacher, student. We
16 are not happy with their co-location. So please
17 listen to parents. They say parents partner of
18 school but they do not listen. Thank you.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. LUCY VIECCO: Good evening. My name is
21 Lucy Viecco [phonetic]. I'm a CEC member as
22 well. And this evening I think we have to keep
23 in the forefront our children, and that's one of
24 the things that we--I don't see that's happening
25 with the co-location of our schools. So, to

1 make it short and sweet, let's make sure this
2 co-location doesn't happen because we need to
3 keep our children in the forefront.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. HARRIS: I thank the panelists for all
6 of their comments. We have now concluded the
7 formal presentations and will start public
8 comment. I ask speakers with numbers one
9 through ten to line up behind this microphone
10 right here. Speakers with number one through
11 ten. I believe when you came in and you signed
12 up you received a little salmon colored paper.

13 So just as a reminder public comment will be
14 limited to two minutes per person. You will
15 receive a signal when you have 30 seconds
16 remaining. You will also receive a signal when
17 your time is up. Oh, I'm sorry. Just one
18 second. Is the microphones--is the...

19 [Pause]

20 [Applause]

21 [Chanting]

22 MR. FRANK SURIANO: All right. Teacher at
23 Martin Van Buren for 19 years and I have to say
24 that there's really no room intellectually and
25 even physically for this co-location. We heard

1 from everyone how it just doesn't make sense.
2 Co-location will lead to student conflicts.
3 Students will see one school with certain
4 benefits they do not have. Co-location will
5 create inequality within this building. I hope
6 it never comes to fruition and again I believe
7 it's just total nonsense. It's got to stop.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir. If possible,
10 when you get up to speak, if you can just say
11 your name into the microphone? Thank you.

12 BRIAN: Good evening. My name is Brian and
13 I'm a resident of Queens Village. And, most
14 importantly, I am a class of 2008 graduate of
15 Martin Van Buren.

16 [Applause]

17 BRIAN: It is because of my time here at
18 Martin Van Buren, because of its academic
19 programs, its afterschool programs, its sports
20 programs, that I was able to graduate from
21 Martin Van Buren and move on to college and
22 graduate from college. It is a school that my
23 father has graduated from, my brother has
24 graduated from, dozens of family, friends,
25 neighbors have all graduated from. And it's

1 because of the school that we were on the path
2 to success to college and to working.

3 And I want to say that I do not believe that
4 co-location is the answer. We have seen tonight
5 that while Martin Van Buren was on a downward
6 spiral it has begun to change under the new
7 administration, under the teachers and
8 administrators and the new principal. And I
9 fully believe that Martin Van Buren will turn
10 around and be back on the track to its former
11 glory. And while we thank the opportunity for
12 co-location, we say no to co-location. Thank
13 you.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

16 MR. OWEN RUMELT: Good evening. My name is
17 Owen Rumelt and I'm a proud member of the Martin
18 Van Buren High School class of 1977.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. RUMELT: As a Van Buren student, I
21 received one of the best educations that was
22 available in New York City, notwithstanding
23 triple session and corresponding large class
24 sizes, even amidst financial crisis, my
25 classmates and I were benefit--able to benefit

1 from top educators a breadth and depth of
2 courses in a challenging environment to go on
3 and do great things. I went on to Stony Brook
4 University and the George Washington University
5 School of Law. Other classmates went on to med
6 school, engineering, other fields, and are
7 leaders in their industries. Why am I here?
8 Because I represent concerned alumni, thousands
9 of us. We are the ones who are tired of hearing
10 that Martin Van Buren is referred to as a
11 failing school. This is the same school that
12 produced two Nobel prize winners.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. RUMELT: That's right, two, more than
15 any other non-specialized high school in the
16 city. In fact, this school has produced many
17 accomplished graduates and in the short time I
18 have here I will not take your time to explain
19 what the students have done here. But these are
20 just--this is just a start. We are concerned.
21 We know what can be done here. We know that we
22 have new leadership here and you have to give
23 that leadership a chance. Right now a group of
24 alumni have come together. We have partnered
25 with an organization called Summer Share--Summer

1 Search. We are introducing new leadership
2 development programs.

3 Starting this month with the sophomore class
4 is a comprehensive program designed to help
5 students through the years in high school and
6 beyond. Summer Search has a solid track record
7 for success and clear, measurable impact. We
8 have formed an association with major New York
9 charitable organizations to develop resources
10 that will assist the school in fundraising, to
11 support new programs, and access the alumni
12 network for mentors, advisors, and needed
13 resources. The same effort will be used to
14 source internships from students from the vast
15 pool of alumni. My time is up. I have a lot
16 more to say but I'm going to keep this very
17 brief and I'd appreciate it if I have 30
18 seconds. Re-locate--co-location is another word
19 for elimination. We cannot let this happen.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. RUMELT: You cannot bring in a new
22 administration. Give that administration a
23 chance. You have alumni who want to work to
24 restore the school to the greatness it once was
25 because we know it can happen and it can only

1 happen if you do not let co-location end that
2 dream.

3 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir.

4 MR. RUMELT: Thank you very much.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. HARRIS: Just as a reminder, I have
7 already called numbers one through ten. I've
8 already called numbers one through ten. So,
9 just as a reminder, if you have numbers one
10 through ten you should have--you should be in
11 that row right over there. Next speaker, number
12 four? Number five? Number six? And please say
13 your name.

14 MS. JASMINE MORGAN: Jasmine Morgan.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. MORGAN: Sorry.

17 MS. HARRIS: It's on.

18 MS. MORGAN: Hi. My name is Jasmine Morgan.
19 I graduated in 2010.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. MORGAN: Yeah, hi. I just wanted to say
22 that I'm one of those students who although I
23 don't live in the physical community I did
24 travel two hours to get to this school every
25 day. And at the time it started at 7:00. I

1 don't know what the time is now but I would
2 say that's dedication to be a part of this
3 school.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. MORGAN: And I'd also like to add that--
6 to say that co-location would improve the
7 school. Whereas you're obviously cutting into
8 shared resources it's only going to take away
9 from the opportunities the children who are
10 attending this school currently have. The
11 programs that are being put into place now--oh,
12 sorry. The programs that are being put into
13 place now are only going to help to give the
14 children here more opportunities. And by adding
15 another school you're taking that away. I guess
16 that's it. Thanks.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number seven?
19 Seven?

20 MS. SHARON KAUR: Thank you. Okay. Hello,
21 my name is Sharon Kaur and I'm currently a
22 junior in Martin Van Buren High School.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. KAUR: Okay. First of all, I would like
25 to say that--you know, they say that prepared

1 speeches are always the best speeches, but
2 honestly I say let's just speak from the heart.
3 Right?

4 [Applause]

5 MS. KAUR: I've been in this school for the
6 last two and a half years and I've got to say
7 that honestly I love it. Like I absolutely love
8 being a part of the MVB community. And the
9 thought of like--you know what? Honestly, the
10 last ten years our school hasn't been in the
11 best shape that it could be in. But you know
12 what? With the guidance of Mr. Sochet we're
13 actually making some progress. So for this co-
14 location to happen it's just like, you know
15 what, we're finally, you know, climbing out of
16 this rut we've been dug into by the DOE.

17 And you know what? We finally have a
18 chance, so why aren't we being able to take the
19 chance, you know? Like our voices should be
20 heard. And, on top of that, like if people want
21 to come to this school and they're going to be
22 turned away so this new technical school could
23 be allowed in, that's not fair. And I would
24 just--got to say I love MVB and it should stay
25 MVB.

1 [Applause]

2 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number
3 eight? Number eight?

4 MR. GEORGE ETIENNE: Good evening everyone.
5 I know I don't have a lot of time. I'm going to
6 try to get to the main points about everything
7 for tonight. Listen, my name is George Etienne
8 and I'm a class graduate of '09. So now I want
9 to say that coming into the school I didn't know
10 what I was getting myself into. I started off
11 as a private--you know, as a private schooler
12 from the times in pre K to eight. So this was
13 something totally different for me. Over the
14 course of time, having to move up from class to
15 class, grade to grade, it's allowed me to
16 realize how much, you know, hard work and
17 dedication that these teachers, my teachers, my
18 counselors have put out for me, whether they
19 want to or not.

20 But the thing is that, you know, I don't
21 think that what they're trying to do now is
22 going to help. You know, without these teachers
23 and these counselors and what they've done for
24 me, you know, I wouldn't be standing and being
25 able to express my thoughts to you guys and to

1 everybody else tonight. You know, I have my
2 art teacher that's allowed me to be able to no
3 longer stay in the shadows but allow me to
4 express myself. I have my English teachers
5 that's allowed me step up here now, being able
6 to actually speak to--you know, to you all. I
7 have my--I have a math teacher of course that's
8 allowed me to, you know, enjoy math that much
9 more. I have so much other things that I want
10 to say and I only have so little time. But like
11 right now if they have something going good for
12 them now, why stop it? Allow them to flourish.
13 Allow them to grow.

14 [Applause]

15 MR. ETIENNE: You know, many people in
16 chance only have one shot and this is the only
17 shot they have, then let them take it. Don't
18 stop them. Allow them to grow. Don't hold them
19 back. All right?

20 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

21 MR. ETIENNE: We can do it. Martin Van
22 Buren class of '09, let's go.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker with ticket
25 number nine?

1 MR. JOSIAH PIERRE: Good evening everyone.
2 My name is Josiah Pierre and I'm a proud 2009
3 graduate of Martin Van Buren.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. PIERRE: Now, first off, I'd like to say
6 it's been four years since I stepped into the
7 school and nothing is insipid about it. The
8 flavor is still good and this is what I love
9 about this school. Now, when I was in junior
10 high I didn't have, you know, a good appealing
11 grade average, grade point average. But Martin
12 Van Buren, I was fortunate enough that this
13 school took me in. So what happened is when we-
14 -when it comes four years later from 2005, 2009
15 and I graduate, this school has done so much for
16 me, the students, faculty, Mr. Greenspan the
17 greatest coordinator of student affairs that
18 this school can possibly have.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. PIERRE: I was put into remedial English
21 when I first came in but great teachers like Ms.
22 Freed [phonetic], Ms. Turman [phonetic], Ms.
23 Lowenthal [phonetic], they built me up to be the
24 person that I am right now. And I'm extremely
25 thankful for that. What co-location is going to

1 do to the school, it's going to create a--some
2 kind of dichotomy that I wouldn't want to
3 understand and I truly believe will be extremely
4 bad. You cannot--you cannot like take this kind
5 of vote to put co-location in the school.

6 Now, what I'm really asking for, you know,
7 under the leadership of Principal Sochet--I'm
8 meeting him for the first time. I actually can
9 see. I hear--I heard great things about him and
10 to know the things that he has done for the
11 school, it makes me proud to know that I'm a
12 graduate of Martin Van Buren. Now, I had
13 somebody before me, Sharon, the eleventh grader.
14 I want into the school and meet with someone
15 with such intellectual exuberance it just makes
16 me say "Wow, we are carrying on tradition." And
17 it makes me feel great to know that this comes
18 out of Martin Van Buren. We have to take a
19 stand against co-location and that's all I have
20 to say.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number ten?
23 Those with numbers 11 through 20, numbers 11
24 through 20, you can start to make your way to
25 that second row over there, speakers number 11

1 through 20.

2 MR. ALAN KRAUSS: Okay. My name is Allen
3 Krauss. This is my tenth year teaching at
4 Martin Van Buren. I'm also the internship
5 coordinator. I just want to reinforce a couple
6 of comments that have already been made. I
7 have--out of all the presentations I've been to--
8 --I've been to a couple of the presentations,
9 I've never heard anybody say how this is going
10 to help the current MVB students. Okay. We're
11 talking about future students. This is not
12 going to help our current MVB students.

13 They're talking about sharing resources.
14 Okay. What resources are they going to be
15 sharing? They're going to be taking our
16 resources, not only money and teachers and
17 sharing space. As an internship coordinator,
18 I'd love if they would share some of the
19 opportunities that will be there. I doubt
20 that's going to be happening very much.

21 It's going to hurt the new MVB programs.
22 Okay. It's going to be competing with these
23 programs. Why do we have to compete with the
24 programs that we're trying to create? As I
25 heard from the Education Council over there,

1 this is not what District 26 needs. Nobody in
2 District 26 is asking for this P-TECH school
3 that I could see. It's just very convenient to
4 put it here. Okay?

5 What this district needs is a school that's
6 going to alleviate the overcrowding in Cardozo
7 and at Francis Lewis. These kids in District 26
8 are not looking to go to a two-year community
9 college. They're looking to grow and go into a
10 specialized--into a nice four-year program. One
11 last thing is the DOE seems to be stressing this
12 school choice. Okay. Let's make 500 schools.
13 School choice is not the answer. When we went
14 to school, I went to Bayside High School, the
15 strong community high school is what you need.
16 Okay? Let's take the schools in the
17 neighborhood. Let's get the kids to go to the
18 schools in the neighborhood. Let's make Van
19 Buren a strong school.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. KRAUSS: Okay? 100 kids won't make the
22 difference. Okay. Thank you very much.

23 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number 11?

24 MR. JULIO RESSI: My name is Julio and I am
25 currently a freshman here in Van Buren. I just

1 have a few things to say. One thing is if it
2 wasn't for Mr. Sochet I wouldn't be in this
3 school today. Also, if it wasn't for Mr.
4 Greenspan most of the clubs that we have today
5 won't be happening. And for teachers that I
6 have like Mr. Johnson [phonetic] whose been
7 teaching global history--

8 [Applause]

9 MR. RESSI: --been helping me through all
10 these--through the few months I've been having.
11 And also my final thing, 20 years ago my mom
12 graduated from this school and she told me to
13 say this. Co-location is the wrong thing to do
14 for Van. It's wrong for Mr. Sochet because if
15 it happens Mr. Sochet might have to share his
16 job with another principal. Thank you.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number 12?

19 MR. JERRY WIND: Good evening. My name is
20 Jerry Wind. I'm President of the Bellerose
21 Hillside Civic Association and the proud father
22 of a graduate from Van Buren who graduated in
23 the mid '90s. A couple of years ago, I and
24 other community leaders and elected officials
25 were contacted by Mr. Sam Sochet, who took over

1 as principal of Martin Van Buren High School.
2 We met and he outlined his plans to restore Van
3 Buren to its former outstanding status. We
4 understood that due to years of neglect by its
5 former administrations this would not be a quick
6 process. We have seen significant progress
7 being made since Mr. Sochet arrived.

8 Now, the Department of Education wants to
9 collate--excuse me, co-locate a new school
10 within Van Buren's building. They have promised
11 an exciting new program called P-TECH, which can
12 lead to a free associates degree. I have read
13 many good things about this program and have
14 concluded that this can be a good thing for the
15 children of our community. However, while I
16 would like to see this program here, I do not
17 want it implemented at Van Buren's expense. Mr.
18 Sochet should have the opportunity and adequate
19 resources to continue his good work. Thank you.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number 13?

22 MR. DAVID MORSE: Before I start, I would
23 like to know who is here from the Panel for
24 Educational Policy.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Nobody.

1 MR. MORSE: Is anyone here from the Panel
2 for Educational Policy?

3 [Pause]

4 MR. MORSE: Is anyone here from the
5 Department of Education that I could talk to,
6 address to? Because I don't need to preach to
7 the choir, which is what it's going to be.
8 There's no one here from the PEP? Hello?
9 Anyone from the DOE here?

10 MS. HARRIS: So, sir--

11 MR. MORSE: [Interposing] Are you kidding
12 me?

13 MS. HARRIS: So, sir--

14 MR. MORSE: [Interposing] This is
15 ridiculous. Well, I'll say what I was going to
16 say but you know what? Again, I'm talking to.
17 Who am I talking to?

18 MS. HARRIS: Please speak into the
19 microphone.

20 MR. MORSE: I want to talk to the decision
21 makers.

22 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

23 MR. MORSE: Who? So they're--

24 MS. HARRIS: [Interposing] Please speak into
25 the microphone.

1 MR. MORSE: They're going to watch the
2 tape?

3 MS. HARRIS: All of these meetings are
4 recorded and then transcribed.

5 MR. MORSE: Okay

6 MS. HARRIS: And then the public comment
7 analysis--

8 MR. MORSE: [Interposing] I got you.

9 MS. HARRIS: --is then turned over to the
10 Panel for Education Policy, which reviews it in
11 advance of--

12 MR. MORSE: [Interposing] I apologize. I
13 thought I wouldn't be emotional but I guess it--
14 my name is David Morse. I'm a graduate of
15 Martin Van Buren High School. And eight years
16 ago I became a teacher and I was fortunate
17 enough to get a position here at Martin Van
18 Buren High School. This building holds 3,000
19 people easily, yet the Educational Impact
20 Statement says the maximum is 2,300 and
21 immediately calls for the reduction starting
22 next year in 2014, the reduction in the number
23 of students at Martin Van Buren High School. So
24 it really makes me question what the true
25 purpose of this co-location is.

1 I don't think--I don't think it's going
2 to--I don't think it's going to be to better the
3 school necessarily. I don't know. I think
4 they're--I think they're going to--it's a
5 prelude to take over the whole school.

6 That's what happened at Jamaica High School.
7 I was there at a rally a few years ago. They
8 had one school there, one school had started and
9 we were already being told that that one school
10 with very few students had more resources than
11 the rest of what was left of Jamaica High
12 School. And of course now it's gone.

13 I have a friend who teaches at Flushing High
14 School. Right? And she said there are two
15 academy schools there now. The school is
16 terribly overcrowded. They fight for sharing
17 common space. There's disdain for--she says
18 there's disdain from the two academies for the
19 old--what's left of Flushing High School.

20 So I'm just not sure how co-location is
21 necessarily going to be really, really good.
22 One last comment, the fundamental problem we
23 have in our city school system is a voluminous
24 number of at risk students. And all the
25 Department of Education seems to be doing is

1 shuffling them around to different schools,
2 not fixing it.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. MORSE: Okay. Thank you very much.

5 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir.

6 [Applause]

7 MS. HARRIS: Number 14, speaker with number
8 14? Just as a reminder, I did call a block of
9 numbers 11 through 20. If you have numbers
10 between 11 through 20, you should be sitting in
11 that second row. Number 14?

12 MR. BOBBY SCHER: Hello. Good evening. My
13 name is Bobby Scher and I am the Board President
14 of Bell Park Manor Terrace, a large co-op
15 community consisting of 850 families on 47
16 acres. We are directly adjacent to the school
17 and are practically velcroed to Van Buren. I
18 can assure you that we are clearly affected by
19 Van Buren's activities more than anyone. I love
20 my community, my neighbors, my home, and I have
21 a very special fondness and love for Van Buren
22 where I graduated here in 1970.

23 That being said, in my wildest dreams I
24 never thought that a school in District 26 would
25 ever fall from grace so consistently for so many

1 years. I never thought that my complex would
2 have to spend in the six figures for security
3 cameras strictly for one reason only, the out of
4 control students who violate our private
5 property, whether it be trespassing, violent
6 fighting, drugs and alcohol consumption, or
7 damaging our property. It's an unnerving and
8 very costly problem.

9 I never thought that in this eastern Queens
10 neighborhood I would have so many dealings with
11 police and school safety personnel. Van Buren's
12 decade long decline with its failing report card
13 and poor graduation history speaks for itself.
14 And it kills me to say it. It hurts me. It's
15 decline has taken its toll and the community has
16 desperately been looking for a cure.

17 Students in the P-TECH program will have the
18 opportunity to get a free two-year college
19 degree and be aligned with a major corporation
20 which could eventually lead to a job and a very
21 important fact. Van Buren is the only high
22 school in Queens to have been chosen for P-TECH,
23 the school that President Obama is visiting this
24 Friday in Brooklyn. I have spoken with many
25 local parents about P-TECH. They all express to

1 me that they would send their kids to the new
2 P-TECH school, knowing that it would be located
3 with the existing Van Buren students. This is
4 what they're telling me.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Where are they?

6 MR. SCHER: As it stands now--there are too
7 many of them to be here. As it stands now,
8 parents are upset that their children are
9 traveling long distances to other schools when
10 Van Buren is so close by. The facts sadly speak
11 for themselves. 96% of all the local area
12 students refuse--their parents refuse to let
13 them go to Van Buren as it exists now. The Van
14 Buren brand is totally negative now. Perception
15 is everything. On October 16th, I attended a
16 civic meeting which was held in anticipation of
17 this very open meeting. At the end of this
18 meeting, we took a vote. The final vote,
19 unanimous in favor of supporting P-TECH with one
20 abstention. The aggregate of our--

21 [Background noise]

22 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me.

23 MR. SCHER: Excuse me.

24 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me.

25 MR. SCHER: Respect.

1 MS. HARRIS: Please continue.

2 MR. SCHER: The aggregate of our coalition
3 represents 70 to 80,000 residents. Isn't that
4 telling, politicians? 70 to 80,000. We want
5 students who want to learn and excel. Being in
6 the Van Buren advisory board, I am clearly
7 aware--I'm almost finished--that there are a
8 number of students who now go to Van Buren and
9 want to learn and succeed and they shouldn't be
10 lumped in with uncaring students.

11 But remember perception is everything and
12 Van Buren right now has a bad rep. The
13 community has suffered long enough. I believe
14 that P-TECH and Van Buren can co-exist and P-
15 TECH will greatly enhance the school in
16 restoring a learning culture and once again
17 become the school of excellence that it once
18 was. We want--we want and need P-TECH, the very
19 program endorsed and praised by the President of
20 the United States. I thank you for your time.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

23 MR. DICK LOPEZ: My name is Dick Lopez. I
24 am a member of the North Bellerose Civic
25 Association. I'm going to give my time to the

1 next speaker, Rhonda Kontner.

2 MS. RHONDA KONTNER: Good evening. My name
3 is Rhonda Kontner and I am President of the
4 Royal Ranch Civic Association. I am speaking on
5 behalf of some of the communities and civics
6 that are zoned for Martin Van Buren High School.

7 This past Monday, I and another community
8 member visited the P-TECH program currently in
9 operation in Brooklyn. Apparently we are in
10 good company since President Obama will be
11 visiting the program on Friday. We spoke about
12 the--he spoke about the program in his State of
13 the Union speech. He indicated programs like
14 this better prepare students so they are ready
15 for a job. He feels this is a model program and
16 is looking to replicate it throughout the
17 country. On our visit, we were very impressed
18 with the program.

19 Although the school is located in an inner
20 city area and has a metal detector, the
21 atmosphere was very welcoming. The students we
22 saw appear to be motivated and engaged in
23 learning. There are currently 335 students in
24 the program, and this is year three. The
25 attrition rate has been very low with them

1 losing some students in the first year but not
2 many after that. Citywide attendance average is
3 92%. Their attendance rate is 94% currently.
4 This is a public school and the teachers belong
5 to the UFT. The students attend the program
6 from 8:35 a.m. to 4:06 p.m. to accommodate the
7 extended program. Students who meet the
8 academic requirements in math and English can
9 begin taking college courses taught by college
10 professors as early as grade nine. The P-TECH
11 program in Brooklyn has seen a growth in parent
12 participation with PTA meetings having between
13 30 and 50 parents attending, and parent teacher
14 conferences being well-attended.

15 We feel that this program will have a
16 positive effect on Martin Van Buren's
17 enrollment. Martin Van Buren has been a failed
18 school for many years and has been largely
19 abandoned by the community. Sam Sochet, the new
20 principal, has had a positive effect on the
21 beginning of the turnaround of Martin Van Buren.
22 We support him and applaud his efforts.

23 We also feel that having the P-TECH program
24 will have a complimentary effect on his program
25 and the changes he is trying to implement. Many

1 people have said they speak for us as a
2 community. We are here tonight to speak for
3 ourselves, the community zoned for Martin Van
4 Buren High School. We want this program and
5 support it. Thank you.

6 [Applause]

7 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number 19?

8 MS. LISA HITCHCOCK: Hello. My name is Lisa
9 Hitchcock. I'm an art teacher here at Martin
10 Van Buren High School for the past seven years.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. HITCHCOCK: I'd like to start out by
13 saying that if this co-location happens it will
14 all but destroy the art and music program that
15 we've made such great strides with in the past
16 years to improve the school, improve the
17 surrounding communities. There is a petition
18 that was recently started on Change.org against
19 the proposed co-location of this school, and I
20 would like to read into the record some of the
21 comments that parents, alumni, and students, and
22 community members have made who couldn't be here
23 tonight.

24 Michelle Ramnerine [phonetic] from Queens
25 Village, New York, "I want to preserve my

1 daughter's school. I need to know that a
2 school--that as a school Martin Van Buren is
3 properly funded, offering programs for honors,
4 scholars, and AP students, along with art,
5 music, etcetera. The building may be large but
6 it is not fair for existing students to have
7 programs, classes, and teachers phased out to
8 make room for another school and its students.

9 Also, Martin Van Buren has a place in the
10 history of Queens Village. Let's keep it that
11 way before it is phased out of existence with a
12 different institution in its place. Also, I am
13 very concerned for my daughter's safety. MVB
14 has been a safe school for her and her fellow
15 classmates. Introducing additional students
16 into the school can cause safety issues.
17 Overcrowding of classrooms is another end result
18 which is a distraction from learning for all
19 students. Keep MVB High School as one school,
20 Martin Van Buren High School."

21 Another community member from Richmond Hill,
22 "Co-location baffles me. Why not just make the
23 whole school good under one administration? We
24 don't collate hospitals, post-office, courts or
25 anything else. Why schools? It forces

1 administration and teachers to fight over
2 resources. Don't we want to work together for
3 all children?"

4 A parent from Queens, New York, "I would
5 like this six year CTE program brought under the
6 auspices of Martin Van Buren High School.
7 Principal Sochet should be allowed additional
8 time to turn the school around before a new
9 school is located on the campus."

10 Another community member from Queens,
11 Village, "This school is rich in culture and
12 history, and making great strides towards
13 becoming a truly viable and competitive academic
14 institution. Co-location will completely
15 destroy all efforts this school has been
16 making."

17 Another parent from Queens Village--oh, my
18 time is up.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speakers with
21 numbers 21 through 30? Speakers with numbers 21
22 through 30, you can start lining up at that
23 second row over there.

24 MR. ALIM GAFAR: Good evening and thank you
25 for giving me this opportunity to speak. My

1 name is Alim Gafar and I'm here on behalf of
2 the District 26 President's Council. The
3 President's Council is comprised of PTA
4 presidents or their delegates from the
5 district's public schools. I also sit on the
6 Education Committee as a member of Community
7 Board 11, and serve at the Board of CPAC, a
8 citywide parent education group. My parents
9 live here in the community and my younger
10 brother is a Martin Van Buren alum.

11 I'm not here to castigate, as others have so
12 far, the mayor or the DOE. And while I do not
13 oppose locations as rule, the council and I
14 object to this co-location on several grounds.
15 The proposed co-location, while providing
16 attractive educational options, do so without
17 regard to resolving district and community
18 needs. We believe that the decision to co-
19 locate the new school within Martin Van Buren
20 was not made in the spirit of cooperation with
21 the community and its educational stakeholders,
22 the parent leadership bodies, the community
23 boards, and local administrators including the
24 school's principal were not part of the early
25 decision--I'm sorry, the early discussion

1 regarding this co-location.

2 In fact, the notice given about the co-
3 location came about the end of the 2013--2012-
4 2013 school year, ensuring little public input
5 over the summer. And while some of the civic
6 associations support the school locate--the co-
7 location, they overlook the fact that the co-
8 located school is not primarily a neighborhood
9 school but one open to applications across the
10 city, with only preference given to borough
11 students, not necessarily students from the
12 neighborhood or immediate zoned areas.

13 To those of us who live here, we have
14 children in the school. We're involved in
15 school issues. The issues facing District 26
16 are overcrowding in our neighborhood schools,
17 lack of real involvement in the placement of the
18 schools and programs in our district, reduction
19 of zoned seats, and the derailment of an ongoing
20 turnaround effort.

21 The turnaround that Principal Sochet was
22 tasked with performing is underway and has
23 demonstrated favorable results as measured by
24 DOE. Co-locating another school in the building
25 sends a signal, whether intended or not, that

1 it's perceived as a lack of confidence by the
2 future--by the Department the future of Martin
3 Van Buren.

4 Okay. The school sounds promising. We
5 understand the motivation to co-locate quickly,
6 but the implementation here so soon after the
7 start of the turnaround threatens Principal
8 Sochet's efforts. Given ten years of neglect
9 and decline, we expect a few years of
10 constructive support as the school improves. I
11 hope you take this to heart.

12 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: As a reminder, I have called
15 speakers with numbers 21 through 30.

16 MR. BOB FRIEDRICH: Okay. My time--number
17 21 was deferred to me. My name is Bob Friedrich
18 and I'm the President of Glen Oaks Village. We
19 are the largest garden apartment co-op in New
20 York with 3,000 families all zoned for Martin
21 Van Buren. Decades of failure have transformed
22 this school from a school having deep
23 communities ties into one where 96% of its
24 student population comes from outside the local
25 community. Yes, 96%. By any objective measure,

1 that is failure.

2 The thousands of families living in my
3 community and around us are distressed over
4 sending their kids to Martin Van Buren. The
5 justifiable fear that permeates this decision
6 will continue to keep local families away until
7 a successful turnaround is achieved, one that
8 includes a safe school environment and local
9 school population eager to learn exactly what
10 the P-TECH co-location proposal is designed to
11 do. The P-TECH co-location initiative is
12 designed to fast track the turnaround of this
13 failed school.

14 Last week's civic leaders from nine of the
15 largest civic associations in eastern Queens,
16 representing thousands of families actually
17 living here in the zoned community for Martin
18 Van Buren voted unanimously to support the DOE's
19 P-TECH proposal. Even if Sam were a miracle
20 worker, the negative perceptions of MVB are
21 indelibly etched in the minds of community
22 parents who will not send their kids here.
23 Decades of decline and an F rating for
24 environment over the past two years have created
25 a perception, if not a reality, that MVB is a

1 dangerous place to be with an equally poor
2 learning environment.

3 Whether these fears are founded or not, the
4 fact remains that only 4% of local parents are
5 willing to send their kids here. By any
6 objective measure, as I said, that's a
7 definition of failure and a reality we live with
8 every single day. Most of the teachers here go
9 home but we live here every single day. The
10 only possibility of getting community parents to
11 even consider, to even consider sending their
12 kids here would be if they were convinced that
13 P-TECH is truly a separate school, separate
14 teachers, classes, curriculum, principal,
15 separate start and finish times. Only then
16 would community parents be willing to take a new
17 look at the school without the trepidation they
18 currently feel. Remove the co-location
19 component and you have set the program up for
20 failure.

21 There is no denying that Sam Sochet is very
22 popular with our community and has had some
23 success raising the school report card from a D
24 to a C. But, more than a decade of decline has
25 made the job of turning around the school

1 mission impossible for one man alone. Local
2 parents and their children simply don't have the
3 luxury to wait more years for MVB to transform.
4 P-TECH will provide our kids and family budget
5 with a two-year free two-year college education.
6 The company that's partnered with P-TECH is
7 committed to hiring graduating students.

8 It's simply inexplicable that the folks
9 here, most that don't even live in our
10 community, seek to deny our community and our
11 families this opportunity. Handled properly,
12 which means giving local students priority
13 admission to the new P-TECH, will attract not
14 only students eager to learn but parents from
15 the local community, which is a necessary
16 ingredient for a successful turnaround. This
17 will help change the learning environment and
18 dynamics at MVB and over time increase student
19 enrollment as the parents' perception and stigma
20 of the school diminishes.

21 The P-TECH co-location is a catalyst for a
22 new learning culture at the school. It's a
23 win/win for students. It's a win/win for
24 parents. And it's a win/win for the community
25 and it's a blueprint for success that will

1 restore Van Buren to its academic excellence.

2 Let me be clear.

3 [Background noise]

4 MR. FRIEDRICH: Let me be clear.

5 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me. Excuse me.

6 [Background noise]

7 MS. HARRIS: I ask that we all remained
8 respectful this evening. Thank you.

9 MR. FRIEDRICH: I hope they didn't teach you
10 that in school. Decorum is important. Let me
11 be clear.

12 MS. HARRIS: Sir.

13 MR. FRIEDRICH: I can't--I can't finish if I
14 get--if they keep shouting.

15 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me. Excuse me everyone.
16 Please, thank you.

17 MR. FRIEDRICH: It's up to you to control the
18 audience.

19 MS. HARRIS: However, sir, your time was up
20 30 seconds ago. By the way, if you do have
21 written comments--

22 MR. FRIEDRICH: [Interposing] This is the
23 last sentence.

24 MS. HARRIS: If you do have written
25 statements, you can submit them to me so that

1 they can be submitted to the record, to the
2 PEC.

3 MR. FRIEDRICH: Thank you. Thank you. Let
4 me be clear.

5 [Background noise]

6 MS. HARRIS: You spoke for four minutes.
7 Excuse me, sir.

8 MR. FRIEDRICH: Some--Sam.

9 MS. HARRIS: Okay.

10 MR. FRIEDRICH: Sam, I think you need to get
11 your teachers in line.

12 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me everyone, please.

13 MR. FRIEDRICH: Sam, can you please get your
14 teachers in line.

15 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me, sir. Mr. Friedrich?

16 MR. FRIEDRICH: I can't. They're shouting.

17 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me everyone.

18 MR. FRIEDRICH: Okay. Let me be clear.

19 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me. This--

20 MR. FRIEDRICH: [Interposing] The families
21 that live in this community want this program
22 for their kids and they want it now. Thank you.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. HARRIS: Number 23? Oh, okay.

25 MR. WASHINGTON SANCHEZ: Good evening. My

1 name is Washington Sanchez. I represent
2 teachers, paraprofessionals--

3 [Applause]

4 MR. SANCHEZ: --social workers, guidance
5 counselors, secretaries, and a lot of other
6 people that work every day with children. We
7 believe in rules and regulations. That's what
8 we do a lot every single day. So we don't quite
9 understand how a gentleman who was allowed to
10 have two minutes ended up speaking for four and
11 five minutes.

12 MS. HARRIS: Actually, someone deferred
13 their time. Sorry, Mr. Sanchez.

14 MR. SANCHEZ: And then--and then the
15 gentleman gets offended when there is a public
16 reaction. Okay? I want to--first of all, could
17 I have a show of hands who is a teacher here?
18 Who is an educator? Who deals with children on
19 a daily basis? Thank you because for the last
20 ten minutes--for the last ten years--for the
21 last ten years the DOE has abandoned this
22 school.

23 [Applause]

24 MR. SANCHEZ: And just when--just when this
25 school finds the leadership that is necessary to

1 turn around the school, the DOE comes in and
2 says "I'm going to put another school in there."
3 So that we fight for the resources. It is a
4 lie. It is a lie, as it was presented the other
5 day at the SLT, that the system has over 1,000
6 schools that are co-located. No, that's not
7 true. That's taking into account District 75
8 programs. They're not schools. Okay?

9 It's also a lie that co-location works. And
10 when the young lady from the Department of
11 Education was asked, well, you know, tell me a
12 school that works, you know, pointed out a
13 school in Brooklyn. Look. I'm from Queens. I
14 don't know Brooklyn but I'm going to tell you
15 that today I was at Far Rockaway High School.
16 You know what? In Far Rockaway High School they
17 don't have a library anymore. You know why?
18 Because they have four schools and they can't
19 afford between the four of them to pay for a
20 librarian or to keep up with the cost of having
21 a library. And that is a shame. It is a shame.

22 And for anyone--and, look, I don't live in
23 the community but I don't believe that anybody
24 should be questioning me, my dedication, because
25 I do not happen to reside across the street from

1 this building. And that's why I applaud every
2 single one of you who whether they live here in
3 this community or not for the last ten years
4 under the horrible leadership they came in and
5 educated all children, all children. And the
6 last ten seconds I'm going to say that many,
7 many decades ago it was settled that separate is
8 not equal.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. We'll have speaker
11 number 25. Just as a reminder, there is two
12 minutes per speaker. I know in the case of a
13 couple of speakers that have come before people
14 have volunteered to defer their time, thereby
15 giving those speakers four minutes.

16 However, the gentleman that is sitting right
17 here in the front, he does alert the speakers to
18 when they have 30 seconds remaining and when
19 their time is up. So I ask that we all be
20 respectful of one another's time this evening
21 and when you have 30 seconds remaining if you
22 can try to wrap up your comments so that when
23 your time is up you can just move on to--we can
24 move on to the next speaker and everyone that's
25 here tonight will have an opportunity to speak.

1 As a reminder, I notice there are people
2 with their statements written out. Feel free to
3 give them to me so that can also be entered into
4 the record. Sir, please proceed.

5 MR. NAGAS RAM RAMGARIB: Good afternoon,
6 everybody. Good evening. My name is Nagas Ram
7 Ramgarib. I live in Queens Village. My zip
8 code is 11428. I am the past president of the
9 Queens Village Civic Association. I am
10 presently on the Board of Trustees for the
11 Queens Village Civic Association, and I also am
12 a member of Community Board 13. I'm speaking
13 for Queens Village Civic Association.

14 As a parent with two kids, two grown kids
15 who were in 1980, '82, had to attend a high
16 school, I did everything in my power for them
17 not to attend this school. One went to
18 Hillcrest High School, believe it or not, and
19 the other went to - - High School. Why?
20 Because it was a failing school. I was scared
21 for my kids' safety coming to the school.

22 On evenings, after school is let, if anybody
23 who lives in Queens Village go down to the next-
24 -the Popeye or the Burger King, the McDonalds,
25 you would see the graduates from this school

1 conduct and carry on over there. We as
2 parents and senior citizens are afraid to attend
3 those establishments during that time.

4 I will not--if I do have--my granddaughter
5 is ten and I will not--I would do everything in
6 my power now, and I live in Queens Village, I
7 will not send her to this school. I do hope
8 that the Board of Education, this message goes
9 back to them that we in Queens Village Civic
10 Association had a vote a week ago and we voted
11 unanimously to support the co-location. Thank
12 you very much.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir. Number 26?
15 26? 27?

16 MR. ANTHONY KLUG: Good evening everybody.
17 My name is Anthony Klug and I'm a special
18 representative with the Office of High Schools
19 for the United Federation of Teachers.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. KLUG: It's a pleasure to be speaking to
22 you tonight and I speak in special deference to
23 our students and parent, as it's obvious that
24 everyone in this room, every single person in
25 this room obviously just wants what's best for

1 our children. The problem is we have
2 different opinions on how that would be
3 achieved.

4 So what I began to do is just even in my
5 chair think about what is a school. And, as
6 educators know, as students know, as parents
7 know, a school is a living thing. It's an
8 organism. And, like any living thing, without
9 continual support and succor it will not thrive.
10 It will die. What we're asking here for
11 tonight, for this school, for all our schools,
12 is more support, more assistance, so again it
13 can thrive and not die.

14 Now, if I'm a parent here, I'm thinking--if
15 I had a ninth grader in Van Buren right now.
16 Maybe I'm a parent. I'm thinking--I'm maybe a
17 future parent of the perspective school that's
18 to be here or somewhere else. How do I want
19 that school to succeed? How is that school
20 going to succeed? It needs to succeed
21 unencumbered, as said here time and time again.
22 It cannot be competing for space. It cannot be
23 competing for resources. It needs its own
24 space, its own propriety to thrive on its own,
25 and that's just not happening here.

1 So I look forward to coming back to a
2 meeting with the same people in this room where
3 we can ask a different question. Not will
4 bifurcating this community improve it, because
5 we all know it--well, most of know it won't.
6 But the question is what can we do to give this
7 school three robotics teams? What can we do to
8 give this school the CTE programs and activities
9 necessary for the students of this community and
10 others to learn, grow, and prosper, because
11 those are going to be our brothers and sisters
12 around the corner or next door, or across the
13 street or river that we will be living with?
14 Thankfully. All right.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number 28? 28?
17 29?

18 MS. JACKIE FORRESTAL: Good evening. My
19 name is Jackie Forrestal and I'm the - -
20 Secretary for the Hillcrest Estates Civic
21 Association in Jamaica. I am here tonight to
22 speak against the proposed co-location at Martin
23 Van Buren High School. Because of school
24 choice, all communities in Queens and all
25 schools are affected by the actions of the

1 Department of Education here in our borough.
2 Co-location is a problem for many reasons. It
3 creates a loss of space and resources for the
4 host school and it creates conflict in the
5 workplace for the teachers and staff. Who gets
6 the best lunch period? Who is going to use the
7 gym? The labs, the library? You may be
8 surprised and shocked to know that these may
9 even disappear with the need for space for the
10 new school.

11 Most of all, co-location creates a
12 displacement of teachers, those professionals on
13 whom students have come to rely in their days in
14 school. With less than two months until Mayor
15 Bloomberg's departure, ask yourself why is the
16 DOE moving forward with these co-locations
17 throughout the city when they have proven to be
18 so destructive and divisive. Students in one
19 local school said, after a co-location was
20 imposed on them several years ago, that they
21 felt left out for the birds to feed on,
22 overlooked and discarded, as they saw the new
23 small school that they shared space with take
24 over their classrooms and join their teams,
25 while enjoying substantial resources that the

1 whole school was consistently denied.

2 Martin Van Buren has begun to turn around
3 under the new leadership and it should be given
4 every opportunity to continue moving forward
5 with its own education initiatives. To the DOE,
6 I say say no to this destructive policy and
7 instead promise Van Buren High School the
8 support, resources, and opportunities that you
9 argue the new school will provide. Pull this
10 plan from next week's PEP schedule. Find P-TECH
11 its own building and keep Martin Van Buren for
12 the VB's. And, as I heard tonight, there is
13 support for this plan to be here under Principal
14 Sam Sochet. Perhaps they should rethink this.
15 Keep--find P-TECH its own building. Keep Martin
16 Van Buren for the VB's. Thank you. And I'm a
17 proud member of the--

18 [Applause]

19 MS. FORRESTAL: --alumni--

20 MS. HARRIS: [Interposing] Thank you.

21 Speaker number 30?

22 MS. FORRESTAL: --class of '63.

23 MS. HARRIS: Speaker number 30? Go over to
24 that microphone over there.

25 MR. MIKE O'KEEFE: Thank you. My name is

1 Mike O'Keefe. I am the President of the
2 Creedmoor Civic Association on Bellerose. After
3 extensive discussion, our executive board
4 believes that the P-TECH program would be
5 valuable for our community but we believe it
6 should be run under Martin Van Buren's high
7 school administration. We are very pleased--

8 [Applause]

9 MR. O'KEEFE: We are very pleased with
10 Principal Sochet's efforts to improve Martin Van
11 Buren. An example of his initiatives is the Sir
12 Isaac Newton Science Program. This program
13 includes study in the fields of law and
14 forensics, medical careers, anthropology, and
15 robotics. As good as these programs will be, we
16 are concerned with the low rate of school
17 participation among families in the surrounding
18 communities.

19 We believe that the P-TECH program with the
20 added incentives of a free associates degree and
21 possible job and internship opportunities in the
22 computer field would spark interest among local
23 students, while at the same time increasing
24 public awareness of the Van Buren's special
25 programs. We believe that greater utilization

1 of Martin Van Buren by local students would
2 improve the school's effectiveness and security.

3 We are concerned that the co-location method
4 of implementing the P-TECH program would result
5 in less efficient use of resources and possibly
6 impair the efforts to improve Martin Van Buren.
7 We continue to--hope to continue to work for the
8 improvement of Martin Van Buren High School with
9 school administration, faculty, students,
10 elected officials, and members of the community.
11 Thank you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir. Assemblyman
14 Weprin unfortunately was unable to attend this
15 evening, so he's asked that his representative
16 give comments on his behalf.

17 MR. ANTHONY LEMMA: Good evening everyone.
18 My name is Anthony Lemma, I'm the Director of
19 Community Relations for Assemblyman David
20 Weprin. Unfortunately, Assemblyman Weprin
21 couldn't be here tonight, so I'm going to read
22 his statement to you, and thank you very much
23 for allowing me the opportunity to speak.

24 The reason I am here tonight is to oppose
25 the co-location of a new school at Martin Van

1 Buren High School.

2 [Applause]

3 MR. LEMMA: Earlier this month, the Panel
4 for Educational Policy approved 17 new proposals
5 to co-locate schools in existing school
6 buildings, including opening 12 new schools that
7 are set to take effect in the next school year.

8 One of the first issues that needs to be
9 addressed with the proposed co-location at
10 Martin Van Buren High School is the lack of
11 transparency in the process and the reasons for
12 the Department of Education rushing, rushing to
13 put a second school in this building. It seems
14 the Bloomberg administration is rushing these
15 co-locations before the next administration
16 takes office. All of the schools dealing with
17 the issue of co-location need to be thoroughly
18 examined to determine if co-locating the school
19 is the best plan for the school to thrive.

20 The problem lies that there is a clear
21 disconnect between the Department of Education
22 and the community. Parents, teachers, community
23 leaders, and students have only been consulted
24 after the Department of Education issued their
25 proposals. Parents and community members

1 deserve to be informed and have greater
2 involvement in the school's decision making
3 process.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. LEMMA: None of these plans for co-
6 locating Martin Van Buren High School are taking
7 into account the amount of space needed to
8 accommodate all of the current students or the
9 space needed to ensure that all of the essential
10 programs are maintained to meet the new core
11 curriculum standards. Now, we know that didn't
12 happen at Jamaica High School and we know that
13 didn't happen any place else.

14 The proposed new co-location would eliminate
15 500 seats at Martin Van Buren. The proposed co-
16 location's co-located school, which will be
17 publically funded yet independently operated, is
18 intended to encourage innovation and improve
19 student performance. The proposed plan would
20 create a new six-year school, which would open
21 next fall and give students the option to earn
22 two-year degrees from Queensborough Community
23 College, and do internships in the business
24 technology sector.

25 There is no reason why Martin Van Buren

1 can't have this program integrated into the
2 school's curriculum. Martin Van Buren is home
3 to a variety of programs partnered with
4 businesses and colleges in the area. Martin Van
5 Buren is one of the two schools in New York
6 State that has been renowned--that has the
7 renowned Physics First program. Along with
8 Senator Avella and Councilman Mark Weprin, we
9 supported the school in creating a premed
10 program at North Shore LIJ. Under the
11 leadership of Principal Sam Sochet, Martin Van
12 Buren has finally begun to turn around and make
13 progress.

14 [Applause]

15 MR. LEMMA: On the annual school report
16 card, Martin Van Buren increased a grade.
17 Unlike some of the comments that that didn't
18 seem to matter, you had a principal here for the
19 past eight years that this place was going right
20 down the tubes. The DOE knew that this place
21 was going down the tubes. All of my colleagues
22 in the community, all of the civic leaders, how
23 many times did we sit here? How many meetings
24 did we have speaking and yelling about the
25 principal that was here before? Yet nobody

1 listened. Where was Walcott then? Riding
2 his bicycle up and down Hillside Avenue? But he
3 certainly wasn't here.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. LEMMA: Often, when schools undergo co-
6 location, one of the schools receives
7 preferential treatment. The issues that can
8 arise from co-location are overcrowding, unsafe
9 hallways, inadequate resources, and tensions
10 over sharing space and equipment with the other
11 school in the facility. The schools often have
12 to compete for the use of shared areas such as
13 cafeterias, gyms, auditoriums, playgrounds, and
14 hallways. The co-located school will draw away
15 essential resources from the already underfunded
16 traditional school, depriving students of
17 library time, school equipment, playground
18 space, and other resources. Co-locating the
19 school will reduce resources and funding on
20 programs that are vital to the school's
21 achievement and success.

22 Parents have the right to have their child
23 attend a community school. The students of
24 Martin Van Buren deserve the best education
25 possible. Martin Van Buren is one of the few

1 community comprehensive high schools that
2 provide real choices with exciting--with a
3 curriculum for students and Queensborough
4 Community College partnership program can be
5 incorporated at the Martin Van Buren without
6 having a co-located school.

7 On behalf of the northeast Queens community,
8 which Assemblyman Weprin represents, and the
9 students, parents of Martin Van Buren, we will
10 not allow this reckless reorganization to occur.
11 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak
12 this evening.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, sir. I ask that
15 speakers with numbers 31 through 41--31 through
16 41 line up on that second row right there.
17 Speakers with numbers 31 through 41. Number 31?
18 Please proceed.

19 MR. JASON RAMDAT: Hi, my name is Jason.
20 I'm a graduate from the class of--

21 MS. HARRIS: [Interposing] Please speak into
22 the microphone.

23 MR. RAMDAT: Hi, my name is Jason. I'm a
24 graduate from senior class of 2010 and a current
25 resident of Martin--a current resident of Queens

1 Village. I'm also a family member of a
2 student that's applying to high school
3 currently. This past weekend we attended a high
4 school fair. I did not sway her in any way. We
5 went to multiple high schools and she decided to
6 choose Martin Van Buren High School where the
7 premed program is currently about to begin in
8 the next school year.

9 I believe that co-location will ruin the
10 school and take away opportunities for her to
11 gain the experience that I had attending Martin
12 Van Buren High School. So I ask the DOE and
13 whoever is in charge to not put another school
14 in Martin Van Buren High School.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number 31? Excuse
17 me, 32. Speaker number 32? Speaker number 33?

18 MS. MINA RASHID: Hello. My name is Mina
19 Rashid. I'm a proud graduate of 2011 of MVB
20 High School. Can I get a hoot, hoot?

21 [Applause]

22 MS. RASHID: Okay. First off, I'd like to
23 let you guys know that when I first came to Van
24 Buren I was petrified. I don't actually live
25 that far from Van Buren and I remember, right,

1 the year before I actually was enrolled here
2 there were actually a bunch of high school
3 people running through my backyard to go behind
4 and they were attacking my house, which wasn't a
5 great experience at first. But through the
6 years, even though we didn't have much, when I
7 graduated I only had two AP classes. I was
8 supposed to take AP bio and AP calculus but of
9 course that gets cut down because it didn't
10 really work out for us.

11 So even though we didn't get that much
12 privilege as you guys do now, or whoever goes
13 here at this moment, I am so happy that this
14 principal came because I see a difference. I
15 really do. I see there is less violence. There
16 is no fights here, practically nothing. You
17 guys always forget that within like--I know as
18 someone mentioned the grade was a D throughout
19 the years. No one said anything but all of a
20 sudden this principal comes in out of nowhere
21 per se, so to speak, and just brings it up to a
22 C. Do you know how much effort that takes for
23 this huge high school with so many kids? No one
24 even puts that into thought. Why put another
25 school when it's doing so well? Like I don't

1 understand that.

2 And also the fact that you guys are putting
3 a CTE program that's going to give you an
4 associate degree, who would want their kids to
5 have an associate degree and think that they're-
6 -that they're going to make it in life? You
7 want them to have a better education. You want
8 them to go to graduate school, Ph.D., med
9 school, dental school. But you're telling me,
10 oh, yeah, you'll get a free education with an
11 associate degree in God damn high school.
12 Really? That's all I have to say.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: Number 34? 34?

15 MS. IRIS LEURG: Hi. For those who don't
16 know me. I'm Iris, the senior treasurer and
17 graduate of class of 2010. Martin Van Buren is
18 not a school that needs to have co-location.
19 With all the lessons that I have learned here, I
20 would not have thrived to be the person I am
21 today. As a proud alumni of Martin Van Buren
22 High School, I'll never forget how the teachers
23 and faculty try to motivate us to do the best
24 that we can do.

25 To this day, they mean than more--they mean

1 more than just a faculty or teacher member to
2 me. They are my family. I would like to thank
3 Ms. Hitchcock for bringing us all here together.
4 Thank you for all your hard work, for creating
5 the petition and the Facebook page. I am here
6 today to protect my school--no, not my school, I
7 mean my home.

8 Lastly, I would like to say once again I'm a
9 proud alumni of Martin Van Buren High School
10 from the Glen Oakes community and I'm happy to
11 say I love you Martin Van Buren. Thank you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number 35? 35?
14 36?

15 MR. FRANK TONER: Thank you. My name is
16 Frank Toner. I'm President of the Rocky Hills
17 Civic Association. It's the association that's
18 kind of like on the eastern side of Van Buren.
19 Bobby Scher before said that he had the civic
20 that was most affected by Van Buren and I guess
21 I'm number two. We're the--we surround the
22 other half of you.

23 I just want to say that P-TECH has really--
24 the more I've learned about it, it's more
25 impressed me as a phenomenal program. If I were

1 a parent and I had a child and my child could
2 go through two years of college without paying,
3 what an incentive that is. That's just a
4 tremendous thing. So it would be--you'd be kind
5 of crazy not to want to have a program like
6 that.

7 That being said--except one other thing
8 about P-TECH. I wish I knew a little bit more
9 about the corporate involvement and how that
10 influences the whole program, but that's another
11 issue. The DOE has not particularly told us a
12 lot and has not communicated very well.

13 The prior principal, not to belabor this,
14 it's just used as an example, when I first
15 became president of my association I met with
16 her and I had to drag her out to my association
17 meeting. And she was asking me, "Are people
18 going to yell at me?" It's so different with
19 Sam Sochet here. And I have to say his name
20 keeps getting mentioned but, you know, the other
21 people I've dealt with, Mr. Greenspan and Gus
22 most of the time, I've been very impressed with
23 all of them. But he's opened up the school and
24 it's a community school.

25 I'm a civic leader. Community is a big

1 thing for me. That really means I wish
2 everybody in our community went here. But if
3 you want to have a school that is functioning as
4 a unit, that the children themselves can call a
5 community and be proud of and work together, to
6 me it's got to be under one leadership, just one
7 leadership, just one principal.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. TONER: Okay. That's fine. Thank you.

10 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. HARRIS: Number 37? 37? 38?

13 [Applause]

14 MR. BRADLEY STEVENS: All right. My name is
15 Bradley Stevens. I am an alumnus of 2012. And,
16 you know, I've heard so much tonight about
17 safety of the school and how great the program
18 is. I concur that the program, if possible--
19 which I'm sure it's completely possible--it
20 should be implemented into Van Buren and
21 integrated into the school itself and not made a
22 separate school unless, as was suggested, there
23 is really an agenda to close the school. Then,
24 you know, you can't really do much there.

25 In regards to safety, I think it's important

1 to remind everyone that what the students do
2 outside of the school is not--the school is not
3 responsible for it. Not every student is going
4 to be an upstanding citizen. You'd hope as much
5 would be true but it's not. The reality is not
6 always ideal and a program itself cannot solve
7 every single problem, especially safety.

8 It really seems that the program is designed
9 to bring in a certain type of student and to
10 push out all the rest. And I think that was
11 mentioned before. You know, separate but not
12 equal, you know, was removed a long time ago.
13 And, as Mr. Bancone mentioned, a house divided
14 against itself cannot stand. And splitting
15 resources between two schools is completely--
16 it's just...I lost my train of thought. That's
17 okay. I'm done.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Number 39? 39?
20 Number 40?

21 MR. WILLIAM MORGAN: Hi everyone. Thanks
22 for coming. I just want to know do we have any
23 former or current Martin Van Buren students in
24 the room? Could you stand up, please? Could
25 you please stand up?

1 [Applause]

2 MR. MORGAN: You know, these are the faces
3 of America. This is America. These are great
4 kids who've done great things, who lead our
5 country into great places. Principal's done the
6 same thing here. After ten years of a nightmare
7 we finally have some terrific leadership, with
8 innovative fashion forward ideas in education
9 and academics. I heard a nightmare about
10 Flushing High School and I also remember someone
11 making a suggestion earlier about separate but
12 not equal, and that was Mr. Washington Sanchez.
13 Segregation in Jim Crow died a long time ago
14 and--

15 [Applause]

16 MR. MORGAN: And I heard that the new
17 classes in the new school, oh, they have laptops
18 and they have smart boards and all amenities and
19 modern tech. And the kids who were there for a
20 few years wonder, "Well, what happened to us?
21 How come we don't have it? Aren't we Americans
22 too?" It's a free public school education for
23 everyone, not that one part of the school should
24 get more than the other.

25 And it's similar also to what went on with a

1 friend of mine's mother in Nazi Germany.
2 When it came time to pray, the Jews had to go in
3 another room. And search and frisk, it seems to
4 be endemic to the mayor's policies on people in
5 the urban areas of socio-economic problems, and
6 our kids seem to overcome it. They seem to be
7 willing to do well and try hard and succeed.
8 And the greatest kids I've ever met are the kids
9 from Martin Van Buren, who have changed my
10 life's experience and I think they're changing
11 the world every day. Thank you very much.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Speaker number 41?
14 Number 41? Okay. Well, we have now concluded
15 the public comment portion of this evening's
16 joint public hearing. We thank you for the
17 comments that you gave this evening. All
18 comments that we've heard here will be shared
19 with the Panel on Education Policy, which will
20 have its meeting on October 30th, 2013, at 6:00
21 p.m., at Prospect Heights Campus in Brooklyn,
22 New York, to vote on this proposal.

23 The email address and phone number where
24 comments can still be made is D 26 proposals,
25 with and S, at schools, with an S, dot nyc dot

1 gov. Or you can call telephone number 212-
2 374-7021. I thank you all for coming. This
3 joint public hearing is officially adjourned.

4 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2 The prior proceedings were transcribed from
3 audio files and have been transcribed to the
4 best of my ability.

5
6 Signature: 

7 Date: October 25, 2013
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