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

Freedom Academy High School

February 25, 2013

5:30 P.M.

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. OLIVIA ELLIS: We're about to begin so
3 have a seat. Good evening, my name is Olivia
4 Ellis, and I will be the facilitator for the
5 joint public hearing. This is a joint public
6 hearing for the Department of Education
7 Community Education Counsel and School
8 Leadership Team to discuss the proposed closing
9 of Freedom Academy High School 13K509 at the end
10 of the school year 2012-2013. Tonight's
11 proceedings will be recorded and transcribed.
12 Before we begin the hearing, we ask that anyone
13 who wishes to speak during a public comment
14 portion of the hearing, please sign up at the
15 table outside. Sign up will end at 6:15. If
16 you have a question that you want to be
17 addressed during the question and answer portion
18 of the agenda, please write the question on the
19 index cards provided at the back and submit them
20 to the volunteer by the table. Only people who
21 signed up will be able to participate in the
22 public council. All the panel participants who
23 asked to be here no later than 5:30 p.m. Now
24 that we've started if a panel participant
25 arrives late, he or she will be given a time to

1 speak at the first opportune moment. We want
2 to be respectful of everyone's time. Prior to
3 tonight's hearing, CEC13 confirmed that a
4 representative from the CEC will be present and
5 participating in tonight's hearing. However, at
6 3:51 p.m. today, February 25th, David Goldsmith
7 of the CEC informed at the OP that he will not
8 be participating in tonight's hearing as a
9 representative of the Community of Education
10 Counsel, citing that the CEC's objection to
11 phase out and to closure proposals in general,
12 and the DOE's decision to close of Freedom
13 Academy. There may be elected officials who
14 arrive at different times throughout the
15 evening. If they wish to speak, we will do our
16 best to accommodate them at the first opportune
17 moment. Those who are here at the start of the
18 public comment segment will be asked to speak
19 first. As you will see, the full agenda is
20 described on the posters around the room. The
21 format for tonight's joint public hearing will
22 include a presentation of the proposal and
23 presentations by hearing participants followed
24 by public comments. Speakers should have
25 already signed up at the sign-in table in the

1 lobby. Public comments can be no longer than
2 two minutes each. The time will be strictly
3 followed, and speakers will be informed when
4 their designated time has ended. There will be
5 a question and answer period. Members of the
6 audience if you have a question please write
7 your questions on the index cards that were
8 supplied at the sign-in table when you arrived
9 this evening. While the public comments are
10 taking place, staff members will organize those
11 questions into categories and get them ready for
12 Q&A period. Some questions will be asked
13 directly from the index cards, and others will
14 be batched under headings in order to avoid
15 repetitiveness. Even though all the individual
16 questions will not be addressed in the forum
17 tonight, answers to questions will be posted on
18 the DOE's website prior to the panel meeting.
19 If at the end of the hearing you still have
20 questions, we encourage you to direct them to us
21 by calling the phone number on the bottom of the
22 fact sheet or sending them to us via email to
23 the email address provided on the fact sheets.
24 I would like to introduce a panel that has been
25 assembled for this evening's joint public

1 hearing, so Stephanie Chancellor, thank you,
2 Superintendent, Karen Watts, school Principal,
3 Alyson Forde for the Academy, SL representative
4 Katherine Russell, SLT representative, Charles
5 Cunningham and SLT representative Natalie Port
6 [phonetic]. - -. I will now turn the program
7 over to the Deputy Chancellor, David Weiner, who
8 will present the proposal.

9 MR. DAVID WEINER: Thank you, Olivia and
10 good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you
11 for being here. This joint public hearing is
12 convened to discuss the proposed closure of
13 Freedom Academy High School. For the purposes
14 of this hearing, I will refer to Freedom Academy
15 High School as Freedom Academy from this point
16 forward. The decision to close Freedom Academy
17 is a difficult one, and we do not take this
18 decision lightly. We examined many factors and
19 data before we proposed a course of action. We
20 engaged families and community members in a
21 discussion about what is and what is not working
22 at the school before determining whether closure
23 is appropriate. All of us count on our school
24 to provide high quality education to students.
25 And we must hold all schools to the same

1 standard of excellence because every child in
2 this city deserves the best possible education.
3 When a school isn't serving the students well,
4 we have to take action to ensure that current
5 students don't fall even further behind, and
6 that future students will have a school that
7 will prepare them for success in college and in
8 the workplace. I want to acknowledge the
9 students who are here and the families who feel
10 their children are being well served by Freedom
11 Academy. Tonight we will hear some of those
12 success stories, and we honor those, but we also
13 need to consider the other students for whom the
14 school is not serving as well. And who have not
15 experienced the same success. These students
16 deserve better. As I mentioned earlier, we'll
17 be discussing the proposed closure of Freedom
18 Academy. Freedom Academy is located in School
19 Building K, 906 at 116 Nassau Street in
20 Brooklyn, NY. Freedom Academy is a high school
21 currently students in grades 9 through 12 and
22 admits students through the citywide high school
23 admissions process. On January 17, 2013 the
24 Department of Education published a proposal to
25 close Freedom Academy based on its longstanding

1 performance struggles. This proposal discusses
2 the track record of Freedom Academy, and why the
3 DOE believe that closure is the only option for
4 the Freedom Academy community. Freedom
5 Academy's performance data indicate that the
6 school has struggled. For example, graduation
7 rates have been declining since the 2009-2010
8 school year. Last year Freedom Academy's four
9 year graduation rate was just 50%, well below
10 the citywide average of 65.5%. Freedom Academy
11 earned an F on its most recent progress report,
12 including F grades for student progress and
13 school environment. This is the second year in
14 a row that Freedom Academy has earned an F on
15 its progress report. Families have also
16 expressed concerns about student safety.
17 Freedom Academy ranks the bottom 5% in terms of
18 parents feeling that their child is safe at this
19 school, according to parents' school survey.
20 Given the school's data, the DOE believes that
21 only the most serious intervention with closure
22 of Freedom Academy will remedy its longstanding
23 struggles. Rather than gradually phase out, the
24 DOE is proposing to close Freedom Academy at the
25 end of the school year because the school serves

1 so few students. The phase out will leave the
2 school with a few students who adequately need
3 instructional, programmatic and operational
4 need, so closure is the most appropriate
5 intervention. There is more than sufficient
6 capacity in high schools throughout the borough
7 and the city to accommodate Freedom Academy
8 students. Before we move to the public comment
9 section of this meeting, I would like to briefly
10 discuss the closure proposal and current Freedom
11 Academy students. If the closure proposal is
12 approved, Freedom Academy will close at the end
13 of the 2012-2013 school year. Current 12th grade
14 students who are on track to graduate will
15 complete high school at Freedom Academy provided
16 they continue to earn credits on school and pass
17 their required regents exams. All other
18 students at Freedom Academy will enroll in a
19 different Brooklyn high school next year or a
20 high school near a borough of residence. The
21 DOE will work closely with families to find
22 placement for all Freedom Academy students. The
23 office of school of enrollment will match
24 students to seats based on family preference and
25 seat availability. There is sufficient seat

1 capacity in other Brooklyn schools to offset
2 the proposed closure of Freedom Academy. Thank
3 you in advance to all of those who have shared
4 with us tonight their feedback on these
5 proposals. We look forward to hearing your
6 comments and questions.

7 MS. ELLIS: Thank you, David. Our next
8 presenter will be from the School Leadership
9 Team, Katherine Russell.

10 [Background noise]

11 MS. ELLIS: Are you able to hear her?

12 FEMALE VOICE 1: No, we can't hear her.

13 [Background noise]

14 MS. KATHERINE RUSSELL: Okay, good afternoon
15 everybody, - -. I've been in this school for
16 three and half years now - ---

17 FEMALE VOICE 2: [Interposing] We can't hear
18 you. Can you turn it up?

19 [Crosstalk]

20 MS. RUSSELL: - - on the board, and my
21 concern about closing the schools is that I have
22 son that's in 12th grade, and with the regents
23 for both world history and U.S. history, I'm
24 find it a real hard test to pass. Now with the
25 proposal of the closure of the school, my

1 concern is my son going to another school that
2 he has to get familiar with next year. I'm
3 hoping that he does pass, but if he don't, this
4 is my concern. The reason why I chose this
5 school is because it's a small environment and a
6 close knit family. We don't have a whole lot of
7 parents participations, but what I see when we
8 do have our PTA is the children are so well
9 involved with the curriculum that they have,
10 that I can't see where this school should be
11 closing. I'm really baffled that parents - - if
12 the children are coming up, then I feel that
13 this school is doing something right. I will
14 suppose that if you are going to do something,
15 and if the school has to go, please - - the
16 school, and that's what I have to say everybody,
17 thank you.

18 MS. ELLIS: Thank you.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. ELLIS: Our next speaker will be from
21 CCHS, City of Our Counsel High School, Brooklyn
22 representative, Marianne Busso [phonetic].

23 MR. MARIANNE BUSSO: Thank you. My name is
24 Marianne Busso. I'm a parent on the Citywide
25 Counsel for High School. I'm the Brooklyn

1 representative. I am parent whose child who
2 attends a Brooklyn school, and that's how I am
3 eligible to be a Brooklyn representative. So
4 I've been to another closure hearing, which was
5 a large high school, which they planned to
6 actually make smaller schools similar to this
7 one. So their timing is ironic if they're
8 closing a small school here that where the city
9 has threatened to close larger ones and create
10 environments like this. The positive is that
11 the six year graduate rate is 85%.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. BUSSO: Some children need more time,
14 and, therefore, it would be best that everybody
15 is measured with the four year graduate rate,
16 but we know that's not possible. So I don't
17 believe that the school should be punished, and
18 I don't think it is beyond repairable in terms
19 of beyond our control to repair some of these
20 afterschool programs, which their principal has
21 already put in place, also extra tutoring to try
22 to get the graduation rate higher. So the
23 funding is also the other option that was
24 proposed by the state what they proposed in
25 accordance with the state they offered two

1 options. One is closure, and the other one is
2 extra funds and extra support for the school, so
3 I don't think it's beyond repair, that funds and
4 extra support can help the school achieve.
5 Since we are going from dismantling large
6 schools to create a school like this--and this
7 one already exists--let's try to save this one.
8 So give it extra funds, give it time, then, if
9 all else fails, closure may be an option, but
10 nobody's proven that, that opportunity was given
11 to this school. So we shouldn't be quick to
12 rush because of the real estate. Another issue
13 is the building doesn't have the lease furnished
14 here, but they're sure that can be worked out
15 real state options, but what is best for the
16 students is to stay together, to continue the
17 education. The staff is providing as much
18 support as they can, and I'm sure they're
19 willing to provide if need be and give them this
20 opportunity not for closure but more fundings
21 and remove it from the closure list, thank you.

22 [Applause]

23 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. We have now
24 concluded the formal presentations. As a
25 reminder, please keep your comments to two

1 minutes. DOE staff member in the front will
2 be keeping time and will alert you when 30
3 seconds are remaining. We want to make sure
4 that everyone's voices are heard tonight. We'd
5 like to call the speakers numbers one, two
6 three, and at this time, the speaker sign-up is
7 closed.

8 MR. SCHULMAN: Yes, hi, my name is Mr.
9 Schulman. I'm a law teacher at Freedom Academy.
10 I'm also an attorney who practiced for six
11 years, and on behalf of the teachers, I think
12 it's fitting that I'm the first teacher because
13 this is all about the school. This is all about
14 the students, and that's who the teachers
15 represent the most, and I feel, like, during
16 this process I've been only a year and a half,
17 but I can definitely tell that progress has been
18 made and support has not been given to the
19 effects that when us and the community grow and
20 grow and grow like they promised. A couple
21 positives at the school--because I know I have a
22 limited amount of time--we just created an honor
23 society for 170 students, an honor society at
24 our school. Again, the partnerships that we've
25 grown--

1 [Applause]

2 MR. SHERMAN: It's a big deal, yes. We've
3 also grown our partnerships again. The law
4 program was almost dead, and now that I've been
5 here in the last - - but - - but we have a busy
6 attorney that comes in every month to work with
7 students, work with the freshman, and
8 opportunities you can't get at different
9 schools. We have an English teacher who's
10 extended beyond belief, who does a wonderful
11 job. I mean these students I don't know if they
12 didn't have us my question is where would they
13 get other people to do what we do every day,
14 where would they be, and that's my concern.
15 It's more than just, okay, you got an F. You
16 know, there's a lot behind the scores. The
17 things that I want to also emphasize is that,
18 you know, since December 7th last year 2012, we
19 didn't get network support from, you know, all
20 things they said they were going to do. There
21 was no one here to - -. There's no one here
22 giving us a Spanish teacher. There's no one
23 here doing all the other things that I see on
24 the news other schools are closing, and why do
25 have to have the same fate. The final thing is

1 in 2013 right now what are you going to do in
2 the next four and half months to help the
3 students here to really get them to wrap up
4 'cause I want them work every day energetically.
5 And the kids know that, and they appreciate it,
6 but what are you going to do in a whole room
7 people here, and it's just, well, look at the
8 score, there is nothing we can do. There is
9 something we can do, thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. JEREMY MONTGOMERY: My name's Jeremy
12 Montgomery and I'm the new Executive Director of
13 20/20 Visions of Schools. I was called last
14 year by the then Parent Teacher Association
15 President in November, who was outrage that
16 Superintendent Watts explicitly Watts said she
17 had no interest in hearing from the students as
18 the decision whether to close the school was
19 being made. It was a horrifying attitude to
20 take into a process like this. The students are
21 the most vested stake during that decision. If
22 it's the wrong decision, and they subsidize the
23 wrong decision for the rest of their lives, and
24 their voice was completely overlooked and
25 disregarded. And so beginning last fall

1 students were given an opportunity through not
2 only our organization but other community
3 partners that helped to create a platform for
4 them to speak into the process to a degree, and
5 as they spoke into the process, the DOE
6 repeatedly promised that if the decision was
7 made not to close the school, that it would come
8 with additional supports funds, resources,
9 personnel, none of which materialized in the six
10 months after that decision was made last
11 January. And so for an entire six month period,
12 the school operates under the specter of empty
13 promises, as well as the threat of closure, and
14 then people wonder the following fall when the
15 report is made based on last year's performance
16 metrics why things didn't improve. Not only was
17 the disregard of students so blatant last year,
18 but this year when the decision gets made in
19 January they told them in a bum rush kind of
20 sneak attack two weeks before the regent's exam
21 in the DOE's headquarters, right. Those who are
22 entrusted with the interests of student show up
23 in a building like this and pronounce that every
24 student and every teacher, everybody attached to
25 the Freedom Academy community is a failure, and

1 they said good luck on the regent's exam.
2 That is such an outrage, yet that is the policy
3 and the process, and how it played itself out in
4 a community like this. The request and the
5 opportunity that we have is change the process.
6 There are people in here--as evidenced by a six
7 year graduation rate of 85%--when the
8 overwhelming majority of freshman come in to
9 two, three, four grade levels behind
10 academically, of course, they're not going to
11 graduate in four years, and yet Freedom has a
12 track record of turning them around and of
13 preparing them for success after six years. The
14 DOE should be celebrating that if anybody would
15 be seek me any addition time I'd be happy to
16 continue to lay out why - ---

17 [Applause]

18 [Background noise]

19 SUSIE ANN: - - thank you. - -. Perfect.
20 My name is Susie Ann, and I bet most of you have
21 not gone to my website. Karen, have you gone to
22 my website? Thank you very much. All right, I
23 brought an internship program in this school,
24 and I have been coming to this school for a year
25 and a half. I work with the teachers, I work

1 with Ms. Forde, and I am in the classroom
2 believe it or not. I came here because the kids
3 asked me to come here, and I continue coming to
4 the school because they asked me. Believe it or
5 not Freedom Academy kids are national watch
6 children. They are in national papers. They
7 are nationally watched. Wall Street Journal
8 watches them, Business Week watches them, and
9 also some small places, like, Jewish Women watch
10 them. My children write. They write about what
11 it's like to be in Brooklyn and being in a
12 closed high school. They write about their
13 feelings. I also bring special programs. I'm
14 happy to be announcing that I'm bringing a dance
15 program into the school two days a week. I am
16 also bringing additional tutoring into the
17 school, and I'm also bringing other experience.
18 By the way this is not costing the DOE a cent.
19 What I bring to this school is pure love, and
20 those children need an education. We have a 9th
21 grader who is 19 years old. He reads at a
22 grade two level. Answer that. We have children
23 that have education needs. I announced this the
24 other day it is 2013, we educate children. We
25 do not close schools. There are partners like

1 me--

2 [Applause]

3 SUSIE ANN: --who - - coming to this to this
4 school. I don't belong here. I come from
5 another world, and I will not, not allow these
6 children to be disappearing. These children
7 deserve an education, and their parents are not
8 here because they can't. They haven't graduated
9 college. They haven't the education, or they're
10 not from here, or they're in jail. Stop
11 pipelining, change to this an education system.
12 Allow people like me to come here and Jeremy and
13 educate these children and not go to jail and
14 give them opportunity, opportunities for 2013,
15 not just 2004, not 2008. Those things do not
16 work anymore. This is 2013 we educate our
17 children. Do you understand? We educate, and
18 we do not throw children into 60 different
19 schools. It does not work.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. ELLIS: Numbers four, five and six.

22 [Background noise]

23 MR. TOM BENTON: My name is Tom Benton
24 [phonetic], and I'm the district rep of the
25 United Federation of Teachers for the basis I'm

1 also a high school teacher at Stanton Island
2 Tech, and I object to everything that's been
3 going on over the last eight years. It's just
4 abomination, and I'm glad you didn't hand me
5 that microphone because it's just a metaphor and
6 microcosm of everything that's been going on,
7 the new infantilization, all right, the taking
8 away of any kind of power. When we hear - -
9 over there to talk about what's wrong with
10 government, and he says that it has freed us
11 from the--what does he say--the special
12 interests, like, parents, teachers and kids it's
13 true. None of us have any voice, and this is a
14 good symbol of it the fact I can't even hold a
15 microphone in my hand. What am I going to do
16 with it, start beating people over the head? We
17 know we're angry enough, but that's not what
18 we're here for. We're not here to beat people
19 over the head. We're here to speak about the
20 abomination that's been going for the last ten
21 years.

22 [Applause]

23 TOM: I'm just furious about that, and you
24 don't give me that microphone. I'm just so
25 infuriated. What am I five years old, and I

1 can't stand her with my own microphone. It's
2 a disgrace, and I'll tell you something I teach
3 history, and I ask the kids all the time, look
4 back, and ask yourself what side would you have
5 been on. And I don't like to use extremes for
6 history, like, slavery, civil rights movement or
7 Nazism or something like that. I don't want to
8 bring it up because there are good people on
9 both sides who think they're doing the right
10 thing, but I'm telling you they're doing the
11 wrong thing, and in 10 years, 20 years history
12 will judge. And I'm just so proud that I'm here
13 with you teachers, with you advocates for
14 students. And in 20 years--

15 [Applause]

16 TOM: --one of the programs that, that mayor
17 fixing to build a statue in City Hall Park.
18 He's not getting any statue. His approval
19 rating right now in education is about 19%.
20 There isn't anything that we can do that's going
21 to bring it down any lower than that. For god
22 sakes how low can it possibly go? He don't give
23 a damn 'cause he's got \$20 billion dollars in
24 his pocket, okay, but I'm telling you that
25 what's happened here is wrong, okay. This is

1 building what's happened in the last three
2 years mold's grown, water coming through
3 ceilings. There was a time you couldn't even
4 get a drink of water in the building, and kids
5 being educated in this kind of environment. It
6 is a disgrace, okay. That's not the question.
7 There are larger issue here of a total failure,
8 a Mayor's who's a failure, a Chancellor who's a
9 failure. People will just go along, running
10 dogs who don't give a damn about anything except
11 their careers, and I'm just so pleased when it's
12 all said and done that I'm going to be able to
13 sleep well and say you know something I was on
14 the right side of that.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. ELEANOR ANDREW: Thank you so much. My
17 name is Eleanor Andrew, and I'm the
18 representative of the CSA, and to quote the
19 gentleman who spoke before me, CSA feels that
20 this is really an outrage that Principal Forde
21 has not been afforded all the opportunities to
22 bring the school to where it should be. It's
23 amazing that we have a staff of caring people
24 led an administration that truly cares for
25 children, who did not really get a fair shake so

1 far, that we expect them to achieve at the
2 same level of children who have everything going
3 for them. If we want to do what's right for
4 children, then, we must give schools like this
5 another chance to do what all there needs to be
6 done, thank you.

7 [Applause]

8 [Background noise]

9 MS. PAT SULLIVAN: I'm Pat Sullivan. I'm a
10 teacher, mentor and coach for the school, and
11 just like the full moon shining from the window
12 through to us, a lot of light comes into this
13 room, and it comes into this school from all the
14 people--the parents that are here, the students--
15 --including those waiting to speak to you too--
16 that'll stay around and give a lot of support
17 and all you community members. The staff in
18 this building include not only the teachers but
19 the support staff, and all have been here for a
20 while. I'm only here few years, and as a
21 retired teacher, I wanted to continue to work
22 and work with schools and work with the
23 students. This is a school that the principal
24 and other administrators are dedicated to do
25 extraordinary things. Maybe you remember in

1 your grade school or elementary school
2 teachers would meet together at some same period
3 of time, a common planning time. That's an
4 elementary school motto, but it works in a small
5 school just, like, you want to move to smaller,
6 caring communities, and it's working in this
7 high school, where teachers give up their time
8 to help support one another in their classes,
9 there's peer visits, with working on curriculum
10 together, so that's extravagant. I've worked in
11 many schools for a long career and part of
12 career at the teachers' center support and
13 training, so I'm glad to bring those experiences
14 and look at the differences. A school where
15 students come to us without high expectations
16 are never high expectations here, where they
17 have to achieve both science and in mathematics
18 and English and social studies. They give all
19 the curriculum at a highest level and say you
20 can do it. It might take you a little longer.
21 It might take you a little longer still, but
22 everyone's expected to get there, and our
23 students do, so we really commend both the
24 academic staff, the support staff, the
25 administrators, and parents who know they can't

1 always be present are - -. They come. They
2 want to know what's going on, and the guidance
3 can also tell you about all the phone calls
4 they're having all of the time as teachers go
5 back and forth, so we do the professional
6 development. We do personal development of the
7 students - - which is the goal of education in
8 everything, and this school should not be closed
9 for doing that job successfully, even if it
10 takes a little longer for them to do it, thank
11 you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. ELLIS: All right, so there is no number
14 seven. That's been crossed out, so I will call
15 numbers eight, nine and ten.

16 MR. DAVID GOLDSMITH: Hello, everyone, I'm
17 the person that - - for today's hearing. I am
18 the CEC 13th president, but tonight because of a
19 decision made by our executives on a working
20 session, the substance was that we really
21 couldn't in good conscious participate in this
22 proceeding. I come here as a lifelong D13
23 parent and a parent activist, and I can tell,
24 you know, elaborate a little bit on the reasons
25 for the 13th decision not to take part. We heard

1 F, F and triple F. We don't have a lot of
2 confidence--as probably most people here--I
3 would imagine most people as DOE would admit
4 that the grading system that we have for schools
5 is suspect. We all know, everyone in this room
6 knows a school that got an A that, eh, it's not
7 really an A, or we know schools that got Fs that
8 are, oh, maybe that's really a D or if they
9 really knew the whole story. Now we're assured
10 by the DOE that they don't just look at the
11 grade, but that's all I hear from them was F, F
12 and F. The other thing is, you know, parents
13 say--and we say it over and over again--it is
14 known how to make great schools. We say fix our
15 schools don't close them okay.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. GOLDSMITH: - - we've seen it over and
18 over again. In District 13 we've seen it. We
19 saw a little school that was failing beyond
20 comprehension. It was called PSA. We saw a
21 PSA. We saw a 256. We saw many other schools
22 that were on the borderline, 9 and 11 and now
23 it's at 67, which has done a great turnaround -
24 -. When we roll up our sleeves, and we decide
25 to collaborate and fix the problem and serve the

1 children, it gets done. This is not an
2 unknown. This is not a mystery. If there's a
3 problem in this building, we support success in
4 the building. We don't--I've got how many
5 seconds? 30 seconds I'm using up my time. The
6 point is when there are problems we know what to
7 do. Do we have the intention and the will to do
8 it. We said so any failure in this building is
9 a failure that we at CEC have to take some
10 responsibility for, but all of us--and
11 especially those decision makers out, those ones
12 that go to schools and re-hang shingles--you
13 know, this is a failure of all of us not --, so
14 let's just stop the game playing and get down to
15 business and serve our community.

16 [Applause]

17 DIANE: My name is Diane. I'm a delegate
18 from the FDR High School in Brooklyn with
19 respect to a turnaround last year, so I know all
20 too well the kind of distraction that is
21 unleashed on a school community when the
22 existence of the school is threatened. I think
23 I'm here today 'cause I think it's very
24 pertinent that this isn't about just one school,
25 it's about all of our schools. I've been

1 several of the schools.

2 [Crosstalk]

3 [Applause]

4 DIANE: I've been to several of these
5 hearings, and - - the exact thing verbatim over
6 and over and over again, and, it ignores every
7 single detail about a school. They have
8 millions of stories. The heart and soul of
9 school, which I think people here have very
10 eloquently talked about it, and I think it's we
11 have to very clear that it's not our schools
12 that are failing. It is the Department of
13 Education that is systematically--

14 [Applause]

15 DIANE: --are failing our schools. It's not
16 - - sign you up for failure and punish you guys
17 for what we do, and this has happened to
18 hundreds of others. I think the deal of when
19 people can sit here and listen to this, listen
20 to people plead for their school over and over
21 again, knowing full well this decision has
22 already been made, I'm sorry, this is not a real
23 hearing. This is a sham. Nobody in chief is
24 listening.

25 [Crosstalk]

1 [Applause]

2 DIANE: - - official policy voted against
3 the recommendation of the Mayor, never, okay,
4 and I think we have to be clear that when we
5 talk about this, you know, we should be
6 listening to what parents, teachers and students
7 are saying. If we want to talk about data,
8 let's look at the real data. Only 13% of New
9 Yorkers still support mayoral control. That has
10 everything to do with these policies, everything
11 to do with them. The scorch earth policy that
12 has destroyed our schools, and they continue to
13 do so, and, again, this is why I think we should
14 listen because the reality is and that if it was
15 up to people of New York, it wouldn't be this
16 school that's closing, it wouldn't be any school
17 because of the Department of Education - -
18 closing out - -.

19 [Applause]

20 DIANE: You know, I'm honored to be here
21 among the fighters, so this is not the end of
22 the fight. It's the beginning of a fight. It's
23 time for all us who actually have a real stake
24 in the educations in this country to come
25 together and take back the kind of, you know, to

1 fight real education reform for quality public
2 schools for all, and, again, for the agenda
3 education - -.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. GLORIA BRANDMAN: Okay. Hi, my name is
6 Gloria Brandman, and I have to teach over at
7 PS307. I'm the chapter leader there, and I have
8 been in district 13 for my entire career, and I
9 have seen a lot of things going on, a lot of
10 good things and a lot of ugly things. And these
11 hearings are the ugliest thing that I have seen
12 in the last eight years, and I heard somebody
13 say that the school closing is the best
14 intervention. Intervention is not closing the
15 schools. Intervention is supporting the school
16 giving funds, giving extra staff to do the
17 intervention work that's what kids really need,
18 so to say that the best intervention is closing,
19 that is a total lie. And I agree that these
20 meetings really are a farce, and I'm glad to
21 hear people here who are looking at me, they are
22 listening to me, but when they go to the PEP
23 meeting, we know what they're going to say.
24 They're going to say close that school. A lot
25 of good things have been said, so I don't want

1 to repeat. The 85% graduation rate for six
2 years is excellent, but the DOE only uses the
3 data that it wants to use, and it manipulates
4 the data to no end. These school report cards
5 are total inaccuracies and barely uses it. They
6 use it to close schools. They use it to fail
7 our kids, and they use it to close schools for
8 many reasons that have nothing to do with
9 education. I've heard that this building is
10 rented. It's very expensive. Well, guess what,
11 there's a lot of free space in the neighborhood.
12 PSA just got an annex in West - - House High
13 School. There's lots of room, so they got a new
14 middle school in that building. There is a
15 charter school at PS287. They're not paying any
16 rent, so there's still other spaces in this
17 community. You got to think about which item
18 schools that have closed. Let's think about
19 it. Yeah, PSA is looking great now. Who goes
20 to PSA? It's not our kids. PS287 that's a
21 charter school coming in. The charter schools
22 are not getting graded at all, and they're
23 getting graduating in new buildings. They're
24 getting all of the support free rent, so our
25 system has the money it needs, if had the will

1 to save our schools and do the right thing for
2 it. So, again, as I said, the key - - they're
3 controlled by the mayor, and we all know it, and
4 they can say, well, we have to change the
5 governing system in this city. We need to get
6 rid of mayor control. We need to give the
7 control over our schools back to the
8 communities, back to our parents - -.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. BRANDMAN: - - in years past, these
11 students used to travel around the country as
12 part of their law program, so this is not a
13 failure. I can only repeat it. The school is
14 not a failure. This city education policy is a
15 failure, and we have to get rid of mayoral
16 control, thank you.

17 MS. ELLIS: We will now begin or question
18 and answer period. Remember, there will be some
19 individual questions, and others that have been
20 bucketed into categories.

21 FEMALE VOICE 2: No questions.

22 MS. ELLIS: There were no questions. We
23 have heard many significant comments this
24 evening, and we appreciate your feedback and
25 contributions to this hearing. The information

1 will be shared with a panel for education
2 policy, which will have its hearing to vote on
3 this proposal on March 11th, 2013 at Brooklyn
4 Technical High School, 2943 Place, Brooklyn, NY.
5 Public comment can be submitted via email or
6 phone number March 10th at 10:00 a.m. You may
7 submit feedback via phone by calling phone
8 number 212-374-0208 or in writing by email
9 d13proposoals@schools.nyc.gov. This information
10 is also included at the bottom of the fact
11 sheet. Thank you all for coming. This joint
12 public hearing is--

13 FEMALE VOICE 2: [Interposing] We're going
14 to read one question.

15 MS. ELLIS: Okay.

16 MR. WEINER: So we did get one question.
17 We're not going to answer it now, but I will
18 read the question, and then, whoever wrote the
19 question will be able to get a response from the
20 DOE website. But it said why did the DOE Office
21 of School Safety reject the parents plan to
22 improve security without providing a
23 counterplan, and now the DOE cites parents'
24 security frustration against them. So we've
25 identified the question on the record, and we

1 don't have an answer to right now, but I will
2 able to get an answer to it on the website.

3 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. So thank you again
4 for coming out. This public hearing is
5 officially adjourned. Have a good evening.

6 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature

Jessica M. McDonald

Date February 28, 2013