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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Flushing High School - 4/18/12**

1 [START 290_283]

2 MS. MELLISSA HARRIS: This is a joint public
3 hearing of the Department of Education,
4 Community Education Council and the school
5 leadership team to discuss the proposed closure
6 and replacement of Flushing High School.

7 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and
8 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, I
9 remind you, if you wish to speak during the
10 public comment portion of this evening's agenda
11 you should sign up at the table in the rear of
12 the auditorium. Speaker signup will close
13 shortly.

14 If you have a question that you want to be
15 addressed during the community portion of the
16 agenda please write that question on the index
17 card provided at the back and submit it to a box
18 here by the table.

19 Only people who have signed up to speak will
20 be able to participate in the public comment
21 portion of tonight's agenda. All parent
22 participants are asked to be here no later than
23 5:30, - - he or she will be given time to speak
24 at the first opportune moment. We want to be
25 respectful of everyone's time.

1 There may be elected officials who arrive
2 at different times throughout the evening. If
3 they wish to speak, we will do our best to
4 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
5 Those who are here as far as the public comment
6 segment will be asked to speak first.

7 The format for tonight's agenda includes a
8 presentation of the proposal, presentation by
9 hearing participants followed by public comment.
10 Speakers, you should sign up at the table in the
11 rear of the auditorium.

12 Public comments can be no longer than two
13 minutes each. Time will be strictly followed;
14 the speakers will be informed when your
15 designated time has ended. As stated earlier,
16 there will be a question and answer period - - .

17 I just wanted briefly to talk about the
18 question and answer period. If you have a
19 question, each of you should write that question
20 on postcard that is supplied at the table in the
21 rear. While public comments are taking place
22 staff members will organize their questions into
23 categories and get them ready for the Q&A
24 period. Some questions will be asked directly
25 and others will be batched under headed--excuse

1 me, under headings to avoid repetitiveness.

2 Even though all individual questions will
3 not be asked in the forum tonight the answers
4 will be on the website prior to the town
5 meeting. If at the end of tonight's hearing you
6 still have questions, we encourage you to direct
7 them to us by calling the following number, I'm
8 getting ready to give you the telephone number
9 212-374-7621. Again, that telephone number is
10 212-374-7621. Or you can send your questions or
11 comments to us via email at the following email
12 address d25proposals@schools.nyc.gov.

13 I will now introduce the panel that which
14 has been assembled for this meeting for the
15 public hearing. Deputy Chancellor David Weiner,
16 Principal Carl Hudson--

17 [applause]

18 MS. HARRIS: --and the following members--
19 the names are members of your SLT, - - John
20 Doherty, Erin Flanagan--

21 [applause]

22 MS. HARRIS: Before we move to the Deputy
23 Chancellor's reading of the proposal we would
24 like to allow the elected officials who have
25 joined us this evening us to give a few comments

1 because they have to leave here and then head
2 to another meeting following this. So Councilor
3 Newman [phonetic].

4 COUNCILMAN GARY NEWMAN: I appreciate it,
5 thank you all for being here tonight. I
6 represent - - district which is the district
7 immediately to the east of Flushing High School.
8 I am a lifelong member of this community; my
9 family has lived here for five generations, my
10 great, great grandfather built most of the homes
11 in - - Flushing. There was a sign on 162nd
12 Street from 1870 to 1960 that said so this is
13 Flushing ask Mr. Hawing [phonetic].

14 I'm very upset to find myself here tonight
15 at the potential closing of what has been an
16 institution in this community for over 130
17 years. I'm even more concerned that last year I
18 expressed the fact that I was not comfortable
19 with the program that the school is going to
20 embark on as a solution. We--Peter Koo and I
21 indicated at that time that we didn't think we
22 would find ourselves in a good place a year
23 later and lo and behold, we don't.

24 The answer to fixing the school's problems
25 are never to create additional bureaucracies.

1 It is never in the interest--

2 [applause]

3 COUNCILMAN NEWMAN: It is never in the
4 interest of governments or its citizens to spend
5 three to four times as much to create a
6 principal, an assistant principal and a staff
7 for different institutions where there was once
8 one.

9 Clearly from a common sense perspective it
10 is unthinkable to put that money into
11 administration rather than into the classrooms
12 with our students. There's no question the
13 education in the City of New York is the most
14 important thing we can do for our children and
15 for our future.

16 Clearly over the last nine years we have had
17 three different audiences with the Department of
18 Education in which we attempted to solve the
19 problems that are facing us in education and it
20 has not worked, and this particular decision
21 will impact this community in ways that are far
22 more profound than even on the surface can
23 realize.

24 Right now - - high school is at 120%
25 capacity, Cardozo [phonetic] High School is at

1 130% capacity. You've closed Jamaica
2 [phonetic] High School displacing about 30% of
3 those students outside of the four schools
4 you're creating in Jamaica High School, where
5 are they going to go?

6 I have seen a capital plan program for the
7 next five years. There are no new seats slotted
8 to be built in my councilor district through the
9 end of the five-year cycle, where are these kids
10 go to school, there is no if.

11 If every one of my high schools is
12 overcapacity by a significant number and you're
13 now going to displace a large number of
14 students, again, in a school that is already
15 over capacity we do not have - - and on the same
16 token, we're now squeezing our private schools,
17 coming after them with tickets and regulations
18 and fines.

19 What happens when they shut down and those
20 students find themselves in themselves in need
21 of the public education system that already
22 can't handle the number of students it has
23 today?

24 Every parent here, every student here, every
25 educator here is concerned about the future of

1 the city, and certainly my colleague, Peter
2 Koo, whose district the school is in is very
3 concerned, but at the end of the day if we shut
4 this school down, break it into four schools,
5 pay four principals a salary, no disrespect to
6 our principal who is here, and then add four
7 assistant principals and a bureaucracy to run
8 the school, how much money will be left over to
9 actually go into the classroom and take care of
10 our kids?

11 I joined my colleagues in the City Council
12 who have spoken out against this particular
13 plan, I think there has got to be a better
14 solution, and educators should be the ones to
15 find it. We should be working collaboratively
16 with our parents who have been shut out of the
17 equation completely.

18 The community district education councils
19 are completely advisory, they have absolutely no
20 power and they have been effectively blocked
21 from coming in and making suggestions that are
22 enforceable. So I would say if we're going to
23 rethink things we need to rethink them from the
24 ground up and we need to make sure that the
25 students are what come first and not your credit

1 recovery.

2 MS. HARRIS: Councilman Koo?

3 COUNCILMAN PETER KOO: Thank you very much.

4 Hi everyone, my name is Councilman Peter Koo.

5 This is also my district. Before I was

6 councilmember, I have been a pharmacist in this

7 neighborhood over 20 years. So I understand the

8 neighborhood. I am asking the Mayor and the

9 Department of Education to reconsider closing

10 the school.

11 Flushing High School has been in our

12 community for over 130 years. It has been

13 producing a lot of productive members of our

14 community. Today the school is educating mostly

15 immigrant students from all over the world.

16 When they come here they don't speak

17 English, of course you do not expect them to

18 achieve the same standard as other schools, this

19 is an immigrant community, it's not a - -

20 community like Bayside [phonetic] High School or

21 other high schools. So this school has been

22 educating immigrant students for over 130 years,

23 they come here, they learn English.

24 And also the school has been educating a lot

25 of students with special needs. Without this

1 school, where will they go? All these
2 students with special needs, we educate them, we
3 cannot just ignore them.

4 And I hope the Mayor and DOE will keep this
5 school open so that the staff and the teachers
6 can continue their wonderful work at the school
7 and the students can continue going to school
8 here so that they don't have to worry about what
9 school to go next year.

10 For every problem there is a solution, it's
11 up to the Mayor and DOE to make a solution with
12 the help of the PTA and the community leaders
13 here. I believe the school is on a recovery and
14 they're doing much better than before. This is
15 only the second year.

16 When DOE originally asked us about the
17 closure of the school, they gave them three
18 years to turn around. And this is only the
19 second year. So at least you should wait one
20 more year to see how the school is doing.

21 So I'm hoping all of you will support me and
22 we need Flushing High School open [phonetic].

23 [applause]

24 MS. HARRIS: - - to Borough President, Helen
25 Marshall, to the Panel for Education policy,

1 Dimitro.

2 DIMITRO: Good evening ladies and gentlemen,
3 thank you for coming out tonight and thank you
4 for your time. I am--as I was introduced a
5 Queens representative for the Panel for
6 Education Policy known as the PEP. I was
7 appointed by Borough President Marshall four
8 years ago to safeguard the interests of our
9 students and vote on school policy.

10 What I'm about to tell you will come as no
11 surprise, Borough President Marshall supports
12 your school community and opposes the turnaround
13 model and so do I.

14 As you know, Flushing High School was
15 founded in 1875 and is the oldest public school
16 in New York City, and it should be viewed as the
17 melting pot of Queens. History such as this
18 need to continue and the only way we're going to
19 do that is we fight to keep Flushing High School
20 open and get us off this infamous list.

21 As a member of the PEP who will be voting on
22 this proposal, I need to tell you now that I
23 will be voting no on a - - and it's not because
24 of politics but because this is for a policy
25 that lacks long-term vision. We at the school

1 community demand back the educational model
2 that was implemented in September with a proven
3 track record for success. Our message now
4 should be clear to the DOE, enough is enough,
5 Mayor Bloomberg, give us back what was taken
6 away.

7 Flushing High School doesn't want to be part
8 of some school improvement experiment, our
9 school community has suffered enough through
10 budget cuts and increased class sizes, and are
11 not in the market for another DOE band-aid
12 approach to fixing our school. Ten years of
13 mayoral control didn't help fix our school and
14 neither will the turnaround model.

15 On April 16th, the Queens delegation of the
16 New York State Senate hereby signed a letter
17 sending Chancellor Walcott for the eight schools
18 that were slated in Queens to be closed, to be
19 put back on the successful restart
20 transformation model and allow time for them to
21 continue their successful paths to recovery. We
22 have a lot of people fighting for us, folks, so
23 we have to continue this fight.

24 And in closing, I need to tell you that I
25 sponsored the PEP resolution which is on the DOE

1 website that calls for the abandonment of the
2 turnaround model. It will be voted on, along
3 with this proposal, on April 26th and I'm asking
4 that you continue to fight. Come out on April
5 26th to support the resolution and to fight for
6 your school. We need to keep this school open
7 the way it is, Flushing High School, thank you.

8 [applause]

9 MS. HARRIS: And now I will turn the program
10 over to Deputy Chancellor Weiner who will
11 present the DOE's proposal.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR DAVID WEINER: Thank you
13 Melissa and thank you to the other panel members
14 and political figures that spoke. Thank you
15 everyone for coming here today to discuss this
16 very serious issue. This joint public hearing
17 is convened to discuss the proposed closure and
18 replacement Flushing High School.

19 Flushing High School is located at 35-01
20 Union Street in community school district 25 in
21 Queens currently servicing students in grades
22 nine through twelve.

23 On March 5th the Department of Education
24 published a proposal to close Flushing High
25 School and open a new school 25Q363. By closing

1 Flushing and replacing it with a new school we
2 are seeking to rapidly create a school
3 environment that will prepare students for a
4 success, college, work and life.

5 [Background noise]

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: Additionally--

7 [background noise]

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: --the DOE
9 submitted a state [phonetic] application to the
10 SEP to implement the turnaround of the new
11 school. If approved it would make the new
12 school eligible for 1.8 million supplemental for
13 other schools.

14 [Background noise]

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: --students being
16 well served by Flushing High School. Tonight we
17 will hear success stories of things that have
18 happened here at Flushing. There are success
19 stories and we honor those. We also need to
20 consider the many students who started with your
21 students in the ninth grade and have not
22 experienced the same success, they also deserve
23 better.

24 Despite the numerous challenges the school
25 has faced, some data indicates that elements of

1 Flushing High School are worth preserving in
2 the new school. For example, the graduation
3 rate of Flushing High School has seen some
4 improvement in the past few years; it's risen
5 from 54% in the 2008/2007 school year 60% last
6 year. Additionally, the six-year graduation
7 rate of 63%, notably higher than the 2007 six-
8 year graduation rate of 55%. These are
9 successful rates.

10 The DOE released new programs in a push to
11 improve teacher quality, the new schools - -
12 recent improvements to help all students attain
13 success. Unfortunately, graduation rates
14 continue to remain low. In 2010, the number of
15 Flushing's four-year graduation rate was 60%
16 placing it in the bottom one-third of high
17 schools.

18 The DOE progress report measures the
19 progress and performance of students, Flushing
20 earned an overall D on the most recent progress
21 report, a D on student progress and an F on
22 student performance and a D on school
23 environment.

24 [Background noise]

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: --open for

1 public comment, I'd like to briefly discuss
2 the proposal of current Flushing High School
3 students and families - - approved. All current
4 Flushing students will have a guaranteed seat in
5 the new school; this includes all current ninth,
6 tenth, eleventh grade students and well as
7 eighth and twelfth grade students - - beginning
8 from 2012/2013 school year. All incoming ninth
9 grade students - - high school admissions
10 process will automatically be enrolled in the
11 new school.

12 Finally, I want to clarify the process that
13 - - the best possible - - this proposal is
14 approved. There's no former staff that will be
15 removed [phonetic] as a result of this process.
16 This proposal--

17 [Background noise]

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: --pursuant to the
19 City's teacher contract, if this proposal is
20 approved pedagogical staff who apply to work at
21 the new school will be reviewed by a five-person
22 school-based committee. The committee--

23 [Background noise]

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINER: Thank you and we
25 look forward to hearing your comments and

1 questions.

2 [Background noise]

3 MS. HARRIS: We will now - - a presentation
4 by Flushing High Schools' School Leadership
5 Team. The presenters will be John Doherty, Erin
6 Flanagan and Jessica Dimech.

7 MS. ERIN FLANAGAN: The best thing about
8 this tonight--

9 [applause]

10 MS. FLANAGAN: --is that we get to be
11 together. We were told at a meeting that we
12 we're going to--have the decision made on April
13 26th. Then some of us got emails right before
14 the vacation, the timing is impeccable. We had
15 to make a decision regarding the new school name
16 which was a sticking point with me since we all
17 know that the school has been here for Sanford
18 Avenue.

19 We're 137 years strong, we belong. And
20 since really the people that they're blaming,
21 which I think is really sad because we're
22 supposed to be a model for our students, is the
23 teachers. And teachers, I want you to stand,
24 all teachers get up, all my teachers.

25 [applause]

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Now they want to--they feel
2 that we're not living up to our standard of
3 excellence, they want to bring in a crop of
4 talented individuals. Everybody knows that it
5 takes a while to nurture talent. I picked up a
6 basketball when I was eight years old; by the
7 time I was a senior in college I scored 70% from
8 the floor in one game, but that took me 14
9 years.

10 I started teaching three decades ago and I
11 know when I came in and we--most of us came in,
12 we were evaluated and observed on a regular
13 basis. Something happened along the way, and
14 again, we were blamed and we're not here to
15 blame anybody. But I'm also going to say that
16 all of these students that are here today, even
17 though they wanted to change our name, even
18 though they brought in the new principal, no
19 offense to the new principal, and they have to
20 leave Mr. Hudson here, that is so unfair to the
21 students, the disruption, to us, to our
22 livelihood and it's really unfair.

23 Now some--

24 [applause]

25 MS. FLANAGAN: We stayed focused, we started

1 the Danielson Framework immediately and we got
2 it going and we did what they told us to do, and
3 I know that we got more than the two minutes but
4 I'll be done really soon because someone told me
5 that I talk too much anyway.

6 And I also want to say one last thing,
7 counselors which are here and I know you stood
8 up, it's only because they don't blame the
9 counsel, but I'm going to tell you something.
10 It takes one person to save your life and a
11 counselor saved my life in high school. That
12 counselor was my basketball coach and if someone
13 said that my school with my counselor and the
14 other counselor and the teachers were not doing
15 what they were supposed to be doing and took her
16 out of the school, I don't know what would have
17 happened to me, because I didn't have that
18 support at home, okay? I know kids lost their
19 parents; I had a parent die when I was young and
20 this counselor kept me on track and said you're
21 going to college.

22 She made me believe in myself, that's the
23 part that is so injurious to us, is that there
24 will be people--if this goes through kids are
25 going to be devastated to not see the teachers

1 that they really care about. And the
2 counselors and the school aides; stand up school
3 aides, paraprofessionals, because God knows we
4 need more schools aides, we need more support
5 and we're not getting it.

6 So do me a favor, just one last thing and I
7 will be quiet, please restore some of the
8 integrity, please stop creating a scam. These
9 kids can achieve so much more, don't put in
10 things like credit recovery, and the one thing
11 that our new proposed principal said, we are not
12 going to be depending on credit recovery.
13 That's right, that name and that phrase should
14 be taken out of the books. These kids should be
15 pushed to be the best that they can be.

16 MS. JESSICA DIMECH: Before I begin, perhaps
17 one more hand for Ms. Erin Flanagan.

18 [applause]

19 MS. DIMECH: My name is Jessica Dimech; I'm
20 a high school math teacher. I'd like to ask
21 everyone sitting here tonight to take a moment
22 and look around. Here we are, civil-minded
23 community members who are housed within a
24 meeting hall unlike other meeting hall.
25 Although this is more than just a meeting hall,

1 this is Flushing High School.

2 Flushing High School established in 1875,
3 originally built to serve the needs of its
4 community, has continued to do so for 137 years.
5 Flushing High School lived through the days of
6 FDR and the great depression and Flushing High
7 School has grown stronger. Flushing High School
8 has lived through JFK and the changes of the
9 civil rights movement and Flushing High School
10 has grown stronger.

11 You know, Flushing High School watched
12 America elect its first Black president and
13 finally hired our first Black principal Mr. Carl
14 Hudson and Flushing High School has grown
15 stronger.

16 Now when I hear the DOE state that changes
17 have to be made, please listen to a woman that
18 lives and breathes in this school, in Flushing
19 High School changes are being made and Flushing
20 High School will grow stronger.

21 You see, sir, I have read the EIS and then I
22 reanalyzed the AYP. You know what, I looked
23 again at the CEP, all I could think was LOL DOE,
24 we are making the changes you want. You know
25 what, we began those changes, they started here

1 internally, because Flushing High School
2 continues to grow and it continues to change to
3 serve the very first mission statement ever
4 introduced, and that's to serve the needs of
5 this community. Thank you.

6 MR. JOHN DOHERTY: Good evening, my name is
7 John Doherty and have to follow these two young
8 ladies and that's not going to be easy. I'm a
9 parent; I am the PTA President and a member of
10 the SLT.

11 And I'd like to say that growing up a lot,
12 watched a lot of movies but I never thought I'd
13 be in one. Honestly, this is the movie that
14 has--was big in the 80s and 90s. The heartless
15 school board, closing down the school, I think
16 it was 'Lean on Me' and a thousand other movies.

17 And now I have to stand here when actually a
18 couple of people I grew up with, representing
19 not just them but their children, to say,
20 "Please, don't close this school." How sad is
21 that, I'm 44 years old and I have to stand here
22 and say, "Please don't close my school. I like
23 it here, my son likes I here, his friends like
24 it here."

25 I have to ask the representative here, no

1 offense, I do apologize you have to take this
2 because your boss, the boss of all bosses, Mr.
3 Bloomberg, won't show. So I have to ask you not
4 to close my school, I have to ask you to ask the
5 Mayor not to do what he would do at Bloomberg
6 Financial. Because if this was one of his
7 little pet projects, he'd let it fester, he'd
8 let it grow, he'd give it a couple of years to
9 see if it worked.

10 This poor guy, you're thrown a situation
11 said hey, make it work. Well when I started
12 they said we've got to get a new principal and
13 it has to be 60%, he did that and now it's kick
14 rocks, kid, that's not fair to me, that's not
15 fair to these students out here.

16 My son would be a senior next year and this
17 would be his third principal? How in the hell
18 is some kid supposed to get educated when he's
19 not - - administrated? It would be laughable
20 and it was laughable when I watched it on TV,
21 when it was somebody else standing up there
22 saying don't close my school and all the kids
23 banging boards and rocks and standing up and
24 cheering.

25 It was funny when it was in the movies but

1 I'm not a--I'm sorry, I'm not in a movie. And
2 so it's not funny anymore. I just don't
3 understand how a man who made billions used his
4 third term to say how he grew up a single
5 mother--with a single mother and his grandmother
6 scrubbing floors, and how he grew up in New
7 York, how he could do this to a public school
8 education system that raised him. He's taken
9 what made him a billionaire and turned it into
10 crap.

11 Now it's time to tell him, "Cut it out." So
12 I do implore you and I appreciate the time and I
13 appreciate this gentlemen saying that they will
14 stop when they go with the meeting, that they
15 won't do it, and I just want to say thank you
16 all for coming out because if you didn't come
17 out today, there wouldn't be a Flushing High
18 School in September. So thank you very much.

19 One last thing before I go, the Mayor had a
20 phone number, the Chancellor has phone number,
21 they have emails, flood them. Call them at
22 night, blow the switchboard up. Make sure that
23 they know between now and April 26th that you
24 will not tolerate this foolishness anymore.
25 Thank you very much.

1 MS. HARRIS: We have now concluded the
2 presentation for the panel--we have now
3 concluded the presentation for the panel and
4 we're moving to public comment. I ask everyone
5 with the number one through ten to--one through
6 ten to line up behind this microphone right
7 here.

8 If you--when you line up to speak, if you
9 can just use the outer walls and come down the
10 center aisle--or not center aisle, if you can
11 come down the aisle that is directly in front of
12 the mic to line up. Once you finish up with the
13 microphone, you'll just walk towards the front
14 and then back to your seat.

15 You--the first speaker--we actually have
16 representatives of a few elected officials and
17 community leaders. So we're going to ask the
18 two representatives, and Mr. Ken Cohen who
19 represents the NAACP to speak first followed by--
20 --and while they're speaking, we can organize
21 everyone's number appropriately.

22 MR. KEN COHEN: Good evening, my name is Ken
23 Cohen. I'm the NAACP New York State Conference
24 Regional Director for the Metropolitan Council,
25 with 12 branches in New York City and President

1 of the North East Queens branch which
2 represents the school.

3 I have spoken in too many of these hearings
4 in the past seven years. And what I have spoken
5 about is to speak on not to close schools, not
6 to change schools. What you're about to propose
7 or what you have proposed tonight is really no
8 different than education the children are
9 getting right now. And to change the teachers
10 is no different than the teachers--the excellent
11 teachers that are teaching in this school right
12 now.

13 The only thing that it has done in the past
14 seven years is to disenfranchise and confuse and
15 disconnect the students of New York City and the
16 future of the city - - this is our future. Mr.
17 - - we met when you were on your first day of
18 work last year, you haven't even been here long
19 enough to understand the situation in New York
20 City.

21 [Background noise]

22 MR. COHEN: --understand how you think and
23 how they considered that closing schools and
24 disconnecting communities make a difference in
25 positive education.

1 What we have is some excellent teaching
2 going on in this school and every school in New
3 York City that hasn't been closed. What we have
4 is--what we had in the schools that were closed,
5 is the same education they're receiving now.
6 Are you going to change the Math, the English,
7 the Science? All the basic courses that the
8 students need to be--to advance to the next
9 level of education? No. You're just going to
10 repeat and change the practice.

11 We can no longer stand by; the community,
12 the elected officials, the clergy [phonetic] of
13 North East Queens have gathered together and
14 said no to this practice. We're telling you
15 tonight that we're willing to stand firm and we
16 want this audience to say loudly, no, say loudly
17 no.

18 [Background noise]

19 AUDIENCE: Save our school.

20 MR. COHEN: The only thing the DOE has done
21 is put fear in the hearts of people that should
22 be standing up and speaking out for the
23 community education. This is the United States
24 of America, the NAACP for 103 years has spoken
25 for the freedoms of people. This school is the

1 first school in Queens in 1891 to admit
2 African Americans, it has a long--

3 [Background noise]

4 MR. COHEN: --community and what I'm asking
5 them tonight is to stand up and do what's right
6 for the students of New York City and to stop
7 closing these schools but to input the dollars
8 that are needed and the resources and the tools
9 that's needed to make--

10 [Background noise]

11 MR. COHEN: Thank you.

12 MS. HARRIS: - - .

13 MR. MIKE CAPPELLA: Hi good evening. My
14 name is Mike Cappella [phonetic], State Senator
15 Toby Stavisky's office - - but she wanted me to
16 read a prepared statement tonight.

17 Since 1875, Flushing High School has proudly
18 served this ever-growing community. It stands
19 here as a landmark and been placed on the
20 national register. One hundred and thirty-five
21 years later in January of 2010 the Department of
22 Education decided to remove the principal of
23 this transformation model.

24 Under this plan, staff and teachers would be
25 rewarded for increase in student achievement and

1 improving graduation rates. The statute
2 states that the local education agencies must
3 identify and remove those who have potential
4 [phonetic] opportunity that are provided for
5 them to improve their professional practice and
6 have not done so.

7 It takes a student four or five years to
8 graduate, how does the Department of Education
9 then feel two years is ample opportunity to
10 improve? - - are improved regional scores and
11 higher graduation rates. In 2002 the graduation
12 rate was 39%; last year it was 60%, that's
13 improvement.

14 The Department of Education was given an
15 opportunity to remove staff two years ago during
16 the transformation model. It seems the
17 administration believes that firing staff with
18 the added caveat now of changing the school's
19 name will improve the school. The fact is
20 Flushing High School is improved, it is not
21 possible that our students facing their exams
22 while they're--while they study for their - -
23 the Department of Education--that teachers will
24 be worried about finding a job than work on
25 lesson plans.

1 Flushing High School serves one of the
2 diverse populations in New York City if not the
3 country - - a one-size-fits-all solution does
4 not make sense for every New York City public
5 school.

6 Under the transformation model, new changes
7 were made focused on incoming freshmen, - -
8 required improved guidance - - are all provided.
9 How can we mention special needs children - -
10 they're given the opportunity to graduate?

11 Educational change is not a - - . As a
12 former teacher at Flushing High School, I know
13 that it takes time and patience. I have come
14 here today in opposition to this school's
15 closure and opposition to firing the people who
16 have improved this school, and in opposing--if
17 you want children to yoyo, being pulled from one
18 district to the next. We continue to invest in
19 Flushing High School--

20 [applause]

21 MR. CAPPELLA: We continue to invest in
22 Flushing High School and encourage the teachers
23 and the staff who are doing well instead of
24 punishing them.

25 It is time for true parental involvement and

1 we need increased funding for graduate staff
2 and programs and - - and the SAT - - . We
3 should not damage something that is--

4 [applause]

5 MR. CAPPELLA: We should not damage
6 something that is working. When one sets a goal
7 for a child and provides that child the
8 necessary tools any goal is attainable.

9 Firing people and renaming schools is not a
10 solution. At the end of the day the school
11 faces the same challenges, just with different
12 people who won't know our students or our
13 community. Let's continue to work together to
14 improve Flushing High School and not close it.
15 Thank you.

16 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, - - .

17 MS. EVA MORAN: Good evening everyone, my
18 name is Eve Moran [phonetic]. I'm here on
19 behalf of New York State Assemblywoman Grace
20 Meng.

21 Flushing High School has shown substantial
22 improvement over the past few years when given a
23 chance. We all know that in the last three
24 years records show that Flushing High School has
25 improved their graduation rate and performance.

1 Faculty and students have dedicated themselves
2 to the mission of excelling and saving their
3 beloved school.

4 Flushing High School is such an integral
5 part of the community. It is an historic
6 landmark as well as a school that welcomes and
7 helps immigrant students transition into our
8 country.

9 Being a public [phonetic], school it should
10 have all additional support and resources
11 necessary as well as a type of environment that
12 inspires students to succeed. The students and
13 faculty have the right to continue their hard
14 work and progress and not be disrupted; they
15 need all the support available.

16 The Department of Education should
17 acknowledge the improvements made and increased
18 opportunities for these students in a school
19 that still stands strong. All of us here today
20 advocating for what is right, the insensitivity
21 to a place that still stands strong instead of
22 pushing it to make it better needs to be
23 stopped.

24 Thank you so much for your time.

25 MS. EMILY PIAS: Hello, good evening

1 everyone. My name is Emily Pias [phonetic]
2 and I'm representing the office of New York
3 State Senator Jose Peralta. Unfortunately, he
4 along with other elected officials is in Albany
5 and wasn't able to be present here at this
6 public hearing. However, if anyone knows
7 Flushing High School it would be State Senator
8 Jose Peralta as he is an alumni of this school.

9 [applause]

10 MS. PIAS: --educational policy that's
11 currently being proposed. Him and his team of
12 elected State of his delegation, State
13 officials, have put together a letter and sent
14 it to the school chancellor on his stance and
15 his opposition to the educational policy. I
16 just wanted to make a note of that, and once
17 again, the Senator is strongly opposing the - -
18 .

19 FEMALE VOICE: Hello, my name is - - I'm a
20 member of - - associations. I do not support
21 the closing of Flushing High School and do not
22 blame the teachers - - it's been reported that
23 Flushing High School is severely overcrowded - -
24 today increased in the past year alone - - needs
25 to reduce class sizes and increase more classes.

1 [applause]

2 FEMALE VOICE: The number of students and -
3 - with special needs has gone from 75 to 500. I
4 believe - - that the majority of students that
5 don't understand English would fail and would
6 cause other students that understand English to
7 also fail.

8 Teachers must provide additional help to
9 students that don't understand English, taking
10 away teacher time and helping the students that
11 do understand English but need additional help
12 in understanding the material taught and not
13 getting it.

14 The solution is to teach non-English
15 students English first, a requirement English to
16 be learned before integrating and bringing them
17 to the public school classes to comprehend the
18 material taught, and not create additional
19 burden on teachers or other students that need
20 to - - . Thirty-one States recognize English as
21 the official language - - recognize English as
22 the official language - - 30 States, 70% of
23 those states recognize English as the primary
24 [phonetic] language, 20 nations also recognize
25 English as one of our official languages.

1 It is the universal language worldwide,
2 the ability to understand English is crucial to
3 any immigrant's success. Not encouraging
4 foreign immigrants to learn English leaves them
5 at a disadvantage. We should not send the
6 message of an English optional society.
7 Everyone should learn English with their family
8 members to assimilate with others that speak
9 countries' universal language, English.

10 Children must learn English and comprehend
11 what's taught in English before integrating into
12 public schools with students that comprehend
13 English to learn what's being taught. And the
14 other thing is to change ESL classes to read
15 EPL, EOL [phonetic] or EUL [phonetic], English -
16 - primarily for official language or universal
17 language. United States - - as a second
18 language.

19 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

20 MS. MARY CONNELLY: Hi, my name is Mary
21 Connelly. I'm a fifth generation Flushing High
22 on one side and first generation on the other.
23 But the reason I'm here tonight is to speak
24 against closing Flushing High School. My sister
25 graduated from here in the early 60s and my son

1 graduated from here after 10 years in 2012,
2 and I was a member of the executive board and
3 the PTA for many years. And I find it appalling
4 that our children have to be afraid of where
5 they're going to learn.

6 There are so many shifting sands under their
7 feet and - - ready that we have taken stability
8 and the relationships they formed with their
9 teachers which increases their ability to learn
10 and to trust and to go forward. As one of the
11 teachers said about FDR, well, one of the
12 graduates from the school, FDR purchased one of
13 his paintings and it hangs in the White House
14 now.

15 And I think--

16 [applause]

17 MS. CONNELLY: --four elected officials with
18 elected officials have handed out many awards in
19 this auditorium have received some. I've
20 watched my son get inducted into - - where he
21 found his passion for music but he also found
22 his passion for learning. And I don't
23 understand - - learn if it ain't broke don't fix
24 it.

25 [applause]

1 MS. CONNELLY: The thing I don't
2 understand - - to our teachers, to our students
3 who are the most valuable, and our best - - that
4 we have ever had is we're teaching them if it
5 ain't broke, break it. And I just want to say
6 Flushing High School - - anybody in this room
7 and the day of the terrorist attack, my son was
8 a senior in this school and he told me how they
9 went into town and they were watching. Well now
10 - - afraid of the attack from the outside but
11 from the inside of the government, and I don't
12 understand.

13 [applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Just as a reminder
15 public comments must limited to two minutes.
16 Time - - and we will signal you when you have 30
17 seconds remaining and when your time is up. The
18 timekeeper, she's just putting something away
19 but she is sitting right here. So when you have
20 30 seconds remaining, she'll lift up to let you
21 know you have 30 seconds, and then once your
22 time has lapsed, then she'll lift it up again
23 and let you know that your time is up. And so
24 now we already have numbers one through ten
25 already lined up. So if we can just get going,

1 thank you.

2 GARRY: Hi, my name is Garry - - I've been a
3 Special Education teacher for 24 years.

4 [applause]

5 GARRY: -- 1997 because I think what's
6 common knowledge - - the students, the teachers
7 and the parents - - okay? There are many
8 hardworking dedicated people here who put in
9 countless hours to try to help these students
10 well above and beyond what - - okay? Plus as a
11 Special Education teacher the relationships that
12 are built up between students and teachers far
13 outweigh sometimes the - - success, or not only
14 the - - success, it's the relationships that
15 matter--

16 [applause]

17 GARRY: To disrupt student learning in the
18 middle of the spring while the parent - - and
19 the threat of closing our school. How does this
20 help our students? The DOE talks about children
21 first, well it doesn't seem that way to me.

22 I'm going to use the metaphor of a triangle,
23 the triangle represents students, teachers and
24 parents, and if one part of that triangle is in
25 trouble, we've got a problem, if two parts of

1 that triangle is in trouble, you've got a real
2 problem. But I think the real problem is the
3 Department of Education is putting undue
4 pressure on everyone involved and that's created
5 the big problem.

6 The Mayor is - - and is punishing students,
7 teachers and parents for it [phonetic]. I want
8 to say one more thing, education mayors don't
9 close schools, they fix and improve schools. Is
10 that the legacy that Mayor Bloomberg wants? The
11 mayor who closed schools?

12 [applause]

13 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening everyone. I am
14 - - my daughter's a freshman and it's very sad,
15 very sad, and it's very awful - - my daughter
16 she's - - and there's an excellent teacher here
17 that taught my daughter through difficult times.
18 And she's able now to do math, not 100%, but
19 she's able to fly, and now you're plucking the
20 wings, breaking those wings away from the kids--

21 [applause]

22 FEMALE VOICE: They have stayed here at
23 night basketball, charity events, all different
24 kinds of programs. So kids are focused, that is
25 important, to keep kids focused. So when you're

1 saying that the school is failing, that is not
2 true. My daughter, she is first, and the
3 children is first sir, don't ever forget that.
4 Thank you.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. My name is - -
6 and I'm the President of the Student Committee
7 supported by the SASF and the High School Today,
8 College Tomorrow.

9 Flushing High School is a place of diversity
10 where students from different backgrounds come
11 to get an education.

12 As President of the Student Committee I have
13 observed students have the opportunities to
14 express their creativity and thoughts. Students
15 pulling together, community service projects
16 such as walking for breast cancer, the Chinese
17 New Year Parade. New York City, it's my - -
18 cleanup, visiting the - - Memorial, these are
19 all opportunities that students are losing
20 because of budget cuts to afterschool programs,
21 to just sports and arts in schools foundation.

22 Principal Hudson and all Flushing High
23 School teachers have always been there for the
24 students. For example, Principal Hudson took
25 the time to have a meeting with the Student

1 Committee which had a mission statement,
2 'Implementing various mentalities leads to a
3 brighter future'. Principal Hudson gave us
4 permission for peer tutoring and for planning
5 various activities that Flushing High School
6 students wanted to implement.

7 Flushing High School, the oldest public high
8 school - - in the city, the Flushing High School
9 has been in existence for 137 years. Would it
10 be--it would be a travesty to change its name,
11 Flushing High School, yes, I want it to be known
12 as Flushing High School.

13 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening everyone, my
14 name is - - . I am the Vice President of the
15 Student Committee supported by the SASF program,
16 High School Today, College Tomorrow.

17 This is school is very diverse, actually
18 coming from a Latin American country to - - is
19 hard. But Flushing High School has welcomed our
20 diverse community and become a second home to so
21 many of us immigrants. I mean there are more
22 that 40% of our student population are non-
23 native English speakers and they are teachers
24 that help our community of Latinos grow and
25 become powerful enough in order to fight for a

1 better tomorrow.

2 This is significant because coming from
3 Mexico - - and confident that my future will be
4 successful because of all the wonderful and
5 dedicated teachers that we love and support have
6 made our transition to this country possible.

7 I also like it because it has a great
8 history and that history was created in 1875
9 with only seven students. And after 25 years it
10 grew to 218 students. Now today it has 3,056
11 students and enrolled in the school.

12 I feel sad because in the beginning we had
13 21 clubs that were so many, now we only have
14 six.

15 Flushing High School shouldn't be closed
16 because it will change history. That--the great
17 teachers that we have in the school will be
18 replaced or even gone, and this will make the
19 student body lose morale.

20 If Flushing High School is closed I do not
21 want to attend a new school because I do not
22 like when sudden change is put up. I also wish
23 to be the next President of the storybook
24 [phonetic] school Flushing High School. I will
25 be - - closing this school means snatching away

1 our support system teachers that have made a
2 difference like SASF High School Today, College
3 Tomorrow staff, - - Mr. Ron [phonetic], Mr.
4 Newberg [phonetic], Ms. Ron [phonetic] from the
5 - - from the Social Studies department, - - .

6 All of these people have impacted the
7 choices we have made today, the choices we will
8 make tomorrow and in the future. Thank you.

9 MALE VOICE: Good evening, my name is - -
10 and I represent the council and the supervisors,
11 and the administrative staff, principals and the
12 assistant principals in the building.

13 This New York City Department of Education
14 latest attempt to close 26 schools which were
15 already in the process of the - - program is
16 clearly a political maneuver that is not rooted
17 in any sound educational practice. Rather it
18 began as a ploy designed to avoid negotiation
19 with both the CSA and UFT over new principal and
20 teacher evaluation systems.

21 The motivation behind the ploy was to file a
22 turnaround model, a model that does not require
23 principal and teacher evaluation. It allows the
24 city to close and immediately reopen schools
25 under new names, 50% of the teachers would be

1 new, while 50% of the former teachers will be
2 placed in excess in other schools.

3 There is nothing educationally sound about
4 this educational plan. It is being introduced
5 solely for cynical reasons, not to help
6 children. It will not contribute to the
7 development of sound principal and teacher
8 evaluations.

9 Furthermore, removing half the staff from
10 these schools and recruiting replacements from
11 other schools, the New York City DOE will
12 destabilize schools throughout the system one
13 after another, while the union - - you've been
14 listening to, especially those two articulate
15 young ladies in front of me.

16 The most important--the most important was
17 their fiscal cost also. Removing 1,800 teachers
18 from the system where they would make--where
19 they would work as substitutes on a full salary
20 will cost the city approximately \$100 million
21 anyway.

22 And on a personal note, having been a
23 History teacher before I became assistant
24 principal and principal, I look at this room and
25 I think of all the important decisions that were

1 made in this room.

2 And I think it's important that you
3 understand that this may be one of the most
4 important ones ever made. So please, do the
5 right thing.

6 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

7 [applause]

8 LAURA: Good evening, my name is Laura
9 [phonetic] - - . I have been an assistant
10 principal here for 18 years. I am also the
11 Director of the--

12 [applause]

13 LAURA: I am also the Director of the - -
14 CTE side and the EIS have been - - next year.
15 And while everything that people are saying are
16 very valid and they're talking about moving
17 forward, I find it necessary to tell you how we
18 have - - and the persistently low graduation
19 rate and - - persistently low since I'd say
20 2002, is really due to the fact that the former
21 principal here from '98 to 2011 paid no
22 attention to the graduation rate.

23 When confronted by the cabinet with the fact
24 that in 2002 we had a 42% graduation rate, Her
25 response would be - - well, they'll graduate in

1 five years, won't they? Well that's not good
2 enough for the cabinet nor for the DOE. But
3 that was allowed to continue and the philosophy
4 was entrenched with the hiring of an assistant
5 principal guidance to head the most important
6 department in the school who was a social
7 worker. Didn't have any educational background,
8 had never been assigned to a high school, and I
9 say this literally, did not know how to - - transfer,
10 she did not know the graduation requirements,
11 she did not know the course sequences [phonetic]
12 and this continued well into her tenure where
13 she was at a PTA meeting and didn't know the
14 difference between courses taken and courses
15 that's earned on a transfer. And she too went -
16 - credit recovery would have no responses, so if
17 you - - holding us responsible for the mistakes
18 that were made over the course of 12 years.

19 And when we're finally given the opportunity
20 now to move forward, the DOE has decided to
21 close us down, and we are making progress, but--
22 and the - - guidance that--and again I mean this
23 literally, knows how to turn on a computer, when
24 that other person came because she did not know
25 how to turn on a computer and she did not know

1 anything about data. Thank you for your time
2 and - - anything else to say--

3 [applause]

4 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Before we continue
5 to the next speaker, I just want to let you
6 know, I noticed some people have a written
7 statement in their hand. So if you wish to turn
8 your written statement in to me following your
9 public comment, we will submit your written
10 statements to the - - educational policy for the
11 record. Thank you. Please proceed.

12 MALE VOICE: Good evening everybody. My
13 name is - - I'm a resident of this area since
14 1977. And this - - period I've seen a steady
15 deterioration of the education system in New
16 York City. And almost every time and almost
17 every time somebody has tried to improve it,
18 they - - . No - - , no evaluations. Now - -
19 this whole exercise is staged by the union. Why
20 must everybody be in favor of - - , this is not
21 a fair fight - - or for the DOE.

22 We want to know what their plans are, why
23 are they closing the school? Why - - I hear
24 nothing. All I hear is - - I want - - and when
25 his was speaking people were shouting him down,

1 why? That's not right. He has the right to
2 speak just as does everybody - - . He deserves
3 some degree of respect - - at all and then we're
4 allowed two minutes - - go on and on and on - -
5 .

6 MS. HARRIS: Thank you sir. The next
7 speaker.

8 JAMES: Good evening everyone. My name is
9 James - - and - - .

10 [Background noise]

11 JAMES: My name is James - - and I'm a
12 junior at Flushing High School, it's my third
13 year here. Three years - - Flushing High School
14 - - teacher - - loses her job because of lack of
15 teaching ability and this whole plan that the -
16 - is based on the idea that teachers here are
17 incapable of teaching the students and it's
18 wrong. And I feel most embarrassed for myself
19 and classmates who have to come here to defend
20 my teachers who have worked so hard over the
21 past few years to teach me and my peers defend
22 their jobs that they don't deserve this.
23 They've been here working with - - past few
24 years and - - . That's all I have to say, thank
25 you.

1 FEMALE VOICE: Hello my name is - - I'm a
2 junior. Flushing High School is home to
3 students like me and pretty much predominantly
4 the people are also here as well.

5 I feel that this school should not be closed
6 down, you guys as in the adults have all got - -
7 and it's not fair to us to work here - - and
8 taking the responsibility to do it. We have to
9 graduate - - .

10 There are a lot of clubs and there's a lot
11 of teens and you have teachers that are
12 enthusiastic, that actually try to sit the
13 students that sit in back with their headphone,
14 pick them up and actually - - .

15 I feel that a bunch of students are here,
16 they want to learn and you're not giving us that
17 credit, it's not fair. I have teachers like - -
18 and I have teachers like - - , teachers that - -
19 all students needs - - . I was a ninth grader
20 and I was skipping class. I was bad and now I'm
21 good and I'm here today defending the school.

22 Teachers should not have to defend their
23 jobs and students shouldn't have to be here to
24 speak for themselves and the teachers. This
25 school shouldn't be shut down because you feel

1 that you know budget cut or you know, we're a
2 bad school, we don't have a good graduation
3 rate, no it's not fair to us. And I feel like
4 all the - - that are here want the school open,
5 they want the school open.

6 Students and faculty, we love this place,
7 it's a melting pot and it is our home. Thank
8 you very much.

9 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

10 CHRIS: Good evening ladies and gentlemen.
11 I'm Chris - - and I'm a senior at Flushing High
12 School. - - team and I see all my peeps here
13 today; we want to keep Flushing High School
14 open. If you they think you're that you're
15 going to close this school and actually create a
16 new school, you're dead wrong buddy because - -
17 you want some, you're going to have come get
18 some.

19 Now I know that the fact that all my seniors
20 here today with support for me. Ever since I
21 came here, day one, I noticed that all my
22 teachers that I met taught me everything that I
23 know and I think all my friends right here would
24 support me, every single damn one.

25 And in the future--and in the future of all

1 of our students of 2012 and all my friends
2 here, that's sophomores, juniors and freshmen,
3 they're going to have a future in this school,
4 forever. If you think - - good enough well I
5 have a - - everyone here will want to keep this
6 school open because at the end of the day
7 you're going to know what it's going to be like
8 and I think Principal Hudson will be still be
9 principal of Flushing High School. - - thank
10 you.

11 MS. HARRIS: - - .

12 MR. MICHAEL ALBERTSON: Good evening my name
13 is Michael Albertson, I've taught here since
14 2003. My comments to the DOE and the mayor, I'd
15 like to discuss the elephant in the room which
16 is the disingenuity you show in regards to
17 public education. Publicly you - - children
18 first when your actions have shown exactly the
19 opposite. You've gone into - - neighborhoods
20 shut down school after school despite vocal
21 protests from eh students, parents and
22 educators.

23 This - - overrun the schools thus reviving -
24 segregation in our public schools. Every year
25 graduation rates continue to rise and college -

1 - remains abysmally low. The DOE is not
2 preparing our students to leaders; they're
3 preparing them to be worker bees.

4 You would never send your own children to a
5 school like Flushing you have the audacity that
6 you know what's best for ours. Flushing High
7 School is the oldest public school in New York
8 City - - student body. We have great, great
9 students and faculty. - - we know that you've
10 made a decision already this meeting is just a
11 formality; nothing we say tonight will change
12 your minds.

13 So in the end I guess when you put children
14 first, what you really mean is my children first
15 to hell with everyone else's.

16 MS. HARRIS: - - representing - - President.
17 Michael Ward.

18 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening ladies and
19 gentlemen. It is wonderful to see you all out
20 here speaking out on behalf of the school - -
21 Michael Mulgrew the president Untied Federation
22 of Teachers.

23 While it's beautiful to see you out here,
24 it's a shame that you have tonight to defend
25 your school community and to appeal to the

1 Department of Education to keep this school
2 open, a school that has made progress in the
3 absence of any support from the DOE.

4 A school has come together and worked on
5 behalf of these students to make progress, to
6 raise the graduation rate so - - were published
7 today, this school would not be on that list, we
8 all know that right? And we're together,
9 teacher and - - and secretaries and guidance
10 counselors and social workers have worked with
11 students and shown respect and demonstrated
12 commitment to this school community to bring
13 about the kind of education that we know is
14 possible.

15 And so this reprehensible and disgusting
16 that we have to stand here and speak out this
17 evening. But I will say this I won't encourage
18 this of the deputy chancellor this evening. I
19 encourage you to be courageous; I encourage you
20 to listen to the people who are speaking out
21 tonight. I encourage you to look at the data
22 and don't just try to push the data into a model
23 that will support a decision to close the
24 school.

25 When you think about this information that

1 you provided in the data that you've given to
2 this school community and really throw away the
3 proposal to close Flushing High School.

4 [Background noise]

5 FEMALE VOICE: To the principal, every
6 parent, these students so that Flushing High
7 School can continue to grow and prosper as the
8 years go on. Good evening everybody.

9 MS. HARRIS: Number--excuse me. Numbers 11
10 through 21, you can line up right down the
11 aisle, 11 through 21. Number 11?

12 MALE VOICE: My name is - - and I'm junior
13 at Flushing High School. For the last three
14 years I've seen the school change so very much--

15 [Background noise]

16 MS. HARRIS: Hold on a second. We have a
17 student speaking.

18 MALE VOICE: If you didn't hear me before my
19 name is - - and I'm a junior at this school. For
20 the last three years I've seen the relationships
21 being developed all across the school between
22 teachers and students. I've seen it to the
23 point that it's almost as if these teachers
24 become family of these students.

25 And - - since I've been freshman in the

1 school and I've seen the relationship develop
2 as you help everybody get where they need to
3 get. And I just as much as everybody else don't
4 want to see this school closed because when I
5 graduate and I come back, I want to be able to
6 say I graduated Flushing High School.

7 So maybe to protect - - why don't we just
8 accept closing the school and putting everybody
9 in such a bad position, why don't you take the
10 money that used to spend on closing the school
11 to reopening it. Why don't just put it into the
12 community and into the school where it should
13 have been in the first place.

14 Use the surplus money that they say that
15 they have, instead of spending it on taxes and
16 everything put it into the Department of
17 Education - - .

18 Now I know I'm not going to take up not much
19 more of your time but--I already know that
20 you've probably already made your decision. But
21 maybe if you have a change of heart to save a
22 school that's been here for so long, that's
23 created relationships for people, that's become
24 more like a secondary, tertiary family for
25 people, for so many people in this community

1 maybe you'll understand and have a heart, grow
2 a heart maybe and understand what these people
3 are going through.

4 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Okay, I'm a parent with a
6 daughter at Flushing High School - - . She's
7 been here and especially in - - she been--and
8 since this year she's had a teacher who's been
9 very dedicated. Her grades have gone up to an
10 eight, which she's always been failing and I
11 have been astonished by her grade.

12 And most of her grades have been going up
13 and she's had dedicated teachers and I always
14 thought that in the Unites States we're supposed
15 to have freedom of choice for the school we
16 choose to want to go to. Why is the government
17 taking way that right to choose the school we
18 want to graduate and from and decided to - - .
19 Who is Bloomberg to decide to change the schools
20 and our government to change schools - - the
21 right to graduate from.

22 This is where the students want to graduate
23 now and in the future. They don't want to
24 graduate from the school in a different name.
25 This was a--the Unites States that I grew up in

1 that gave me the freedom of choice to choose
2 the school and to choose the education I would
3 like to choose and the school I would like to be
4 in.

5 They're not only closing Flushing High
6 School, other high schools, catholic high
7 schools, private high schools. Why? Why can't
8 they stay open as they is? Why do schools have
9 to be moved to other schools and have to
10 graduate in another school under a another name
11 when you can Flushing High School has been here
12 for 137 years older than my grandmother was when
13 she died 106 years, why can't this stay open
14 more years and longer.

15 MR. ERIC CHASTENOFF: Good evening. My name
16 is Eric Chastenoff [phonetic]. I came to - -
17 thanks to Principal Hudson and Assistant
18 Principal - - they gave me a chance to show that
19 I can be an excellent teacher. And what is an
20 excellent teacher? An excellent teacher is
21 someone who has connections with the students in
22 their class, who has a relationship with them,
23 makes them understand why education is
24 important, watch them progress academically.

25 Now I see the DOE who are basically non-

1 educators targeting such a great school. I do
2 know personally what it is to be targeted and -
3 know. But this isn't about me, this is about
4 the students and the students, they need great
5 teachers and good teachers are experienced
6 teachers. Any study shows that it takes
7 anywhere between five to eight years for
8 teachers to reach their potential, to be those
9 great teachers.

10 Now the school is turning--is going to be a
11 turnaround school, 40% of the teacher's coin in
12 next year will have never been in the classroom,
13 these are not great teachers. Maybe progress
14 down the road they might be but - - education.

15 So you're taking these children who have
16 great teachers and giving them teachers in
17 training in - - and they are going to be - - and
18 their education is going to suffer. So please,
19 this is not - - our school, this need to stay
20 open - - thank you.

21 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

22 MALE VOICE: Good evening Deputy Chancellor
23 - - my name is Jim O'Neill. I'm the president of
24 the Sports and Arts Schools Foundation. Sports
25 and Arts is the largest non-profit working in

1 high schools and after schools programs in New
2 York City. We're working in over 14 schools.
3 Many of those schools are transformation schools
4 like Flushing High School.

5 I personally am involved with the DOE,
6 working with principals to improve those
7 schools. This is not a failing school; this is
8 not a school to be closed among the 26 schools
9 here. And I think what you have to do here is
10 look very carefully at what has happened in
11 Flushing over the last two to three years,
12 especially this year. You've got a wonderful
13 program here; you have a wonderful principal who
14 has really transformed the culture of Flushing
15 High School.

16 This school has a great tradition; it has
17 over 20 athletic teams which I think is the
18 regular number in terms of New York City public
19 schools. There is a pride among the students
20 here about their commitment to academic
21 improvement and participation in the school and
22 keeping Flushing High School open here.

23 What I'm asking you to do here--I do believe
24 this hearing will have some impact on the
25 chancellor. I think Denis Walcott should take

1 another look very carefully at the latest
2 statistics in terms of the improvement at the
3 school. You've heard a lot about the
4 improvement in graduation rates, it's gone up.

5 The High School Today, College Tomorrow
6 program which Mr. Hudson started which involves
7 teachers and sports and arts staff is working.
8 Last year over 98% of our seniors who were in
9 that program are in college. We're tracking how
10 they're doing in college and they're finishing
11 their first and second semesters.

12 We're getting letter of college admission
13 right now, I don't have the totals for the class
14 of 2012 but over 98% of the kids that are in
15 this program. This program has to grow the DOE
16 should be putting more programs like this under
17 the leadership of the team that's running the
18 school. Don't close the school; it's not the
19 right school to close.

20 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker. Okay and numbers
21 21 through 30 you can start - - . Right along
22 that wall and come - - .

23 MALE VOICE: 37 years ago I made that - -
24 and begun my journey towards supposedly most
25 rewarding career - - . Since then I have come

1 to love this profession and I have never
2 ceased to improve with my professional
3 knowledge.

4 All this time during the tenure of my
5 teaching career I only heard pleasant and
6 encouraging things about this profession. I
7 almost the impetuous to keep going and going,
8 however time has its - - . And all of a sudden
9 I feel very discouraged and honestly feel like I
10 have been deceived. I feel as if I am betrayed
11 and now belong to a lie in a profession that is
12 unbecoming, one of good points and respect for a
13 human being.

14 As I understand it Flushing High School has
15 moved from one of sluggish growth to one of very
16 significant growth and the context of graduation
17 rates and individual achievement. This school
18 showed significant improvement in very key areas
19 of achievement in more recent years. In the
20 contest of significant progress in achievement,
21 graduation rates and improve - - . Why should
22 our school enter into a phase of turnaround? Do
23 we want to turn from progress?

24 I think it is wrong to ask our teachers who
25 have been rated satisfactory to reacquire

1 positions that the schools exists and to which
2 they had been doing very well. By removing our
3 teachers in the manner proposed is highly
4 immoral and wrong.

5 I ask of you sir and all those who have a
6 voice in this or are vocal that could carefully
7 ponder on these thoughts as presented today.
8 And find it wise and crucial to rule against
9 closing Flushing High School. Long live
10 Flushing High School.

11 MS. HARRIS: Thank you - - written statement
12 you can turn it in to me and - - education
13 policy. Next speaker.

14 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening everyone. My
15 name is - - and I'm eh teacher - - Flushing High
16 School. Speaking in public has always been one
17 of my worst fears, however tonight my fear is
18 concurred by two major factors. First of all I
19 have to speak out for my colleagues who have
20 given their heart and soul to this school.

21 Most importantly I have supported my
22 students who consider our school as their home
23 away from home. Most of my students sitting in
24 the audience are seniors, three years ago when
25 they left their motherland to start a new life

1 at Flushing High School, they barely spoke any
2 English. However today not only have they
3 successfully fulfilled all their high school
4 graduation requirements but also they will
5 proudly attend college this fall.

6 Even though they won't attend Harvard or
7 Yale to my mind their achievements are more
8 significant than those across - - high school
9 who will attend prestigious college because our
10 students social and academic background is
11 extremely disadvantaged.

12 Besides these students own grade average our
13 school community has also made critical
14 contributions towards their success. For
15 example our - - programs allow them to study
16 different subjects while learning English. Our
17 passionate and caring teachers extend their arms
18 and open their hearts to nurture them and
19 providing the support emotions--

20 [Background noise]

21 MALE VOICE: Valedictorian of the class of
22 2012 of Flushing High School. I have been in
23 Flushing High School for almost four years. As
24 a student I have noticed how much the school has
25 changed and how much the school has suffered.

1 You as politicians have no idea of what our
2 students and teachers have endured.

3 You the members of this panel, Jamaica High
4 School closed not long ago, it was recently we
5 opened as turn school enrolling the top half - -
6 the later half were sent across New York City
7 into other underachieving high schools - - .
8 With the sudden influx of low achievers do you
9 expect to increase our graduation rate? - - but
10 if you do where will these low achievers - - how
11 many schools do you want to mess up?

12 While I have been here, I have met many
13 encouraging teachers and supporting friends.
14 Although this school is not one of the best
15 schools - - I still consider it as my second
16 home. Watching my house being destroyed truly
17 breaks my heart. - - I have no regret and as my
18 friends will always say Flushing High School
19 1875 to 2012, no, it's to infinity. This school
20 - - school. Thank you.

21 MS. HARRIS: Thank you next speaker. Next
22 speaker, could the next speaker come and then
23 we'll talk but can the next speaker come.

24 MR. WASHINGTON SANCHEZ: My name is
25 Washington Sanchez. I'm a representative from

1 the United Federation of Teachers. I will
2 cede my time so that my sister can finish
3 speaking to the community that she has been
4 serving here for years.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Please let me finish last
6 paragraph. Okay - - Flushing High School is not
7 just a sentimental symbol of a high school with
8 long - - in New York City. Instead this is a
9 frontline battle ground to educate the students
10 with special needs. So keeping our school open
11 and keeping the passionate and caring teachers a
12 ultimate and the rationale ending of this
13 chapter. Thank you very much everybody.

14 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. My name is - -
15 to take the numbers out of this equation and I'm
16 going - - very quickly. Every morning I get up
17 at 4:00 A.M. I leave my children in their beds
18 at 4:45, give them hugs and kisses. I drive
19 here for 50 minutes, park my car, take a little
20 walk and then I come to my other family.

21 And I have to say honestly for - - years
22 this school with its students and its staff had
23 become my family and every individual in my
24 family has a story. And what I feel like we're
25 leaving out of this number equation is the

1 story.

2 Any given day I could walk into my office
3 and these students will make me smile and I
4 always smile. Sometimes I don't even feel happy
5 at the beginning of the day but I'm smiling when
6 I see them. In that same week I can hear
7 stories of rape, I can hear stories of - -
8 sexually molested for years who have been in
9 their parents arms while one parent killed
10 another parent. I hear these things on a
11 regular basis. And I am not saying that this
12 should be an excuse for poor academic
13 performance.

14 We all believe that our students have the
15 ability to achieve and to succeed. Right now my
16 children are - - but these are - - they are my
17 family. They can succeed but they need to see
18 the - - working together not fighting against
19 each other towards a solutions that's a win-win
20 situation. As Steven - - puts it in his seven -
21 - that we teach right in this school and all
22 over New York City. - - . It's okay.

23 FEMALE VOICE: Hi my name is - - and I'm a
24 junior at Flushing High School. The - - council
25 - - supported by SAS - - tomorrow. When I was a

1 freshman at Flushing High School I thought
2 that this was just another school where teachers
3 - - teaching and that was it but I was wrong.
4 Teachers have tried so hard. So many teachers
5 use so many methods to--to try to get students
6 to earn. They have tried so many things and I
7 think that it's wrong for you to blame the
8 teachers for--I'm sorry. For flushing - - fail
9 in this.

10 Teachers are not responsible for that. We
11 are partly responsible for our - - . I'm a
12 teenager and most of the time I say I'm going to
13 do something I'm not going to do it. Then it's
14 just change of the name, change of the school,
15 change of the teacher, change of the principal
16 is not going to change. - - but I got teachers
17 that had told me that is not - - that I should
18 keep trying. And I will every day. I - - Miss
19 Brown is - - . thank you so much. The - - that
20 have - - us here have told me when I was a
21 freshman--took me out of my shyness and leading
22 me to become friends with other people and try
23 to get involved and I did.

24 And I have met so many - - people - - high
25 school today college tomorrow. They have taught

1 me so much and helped me in so many ways. - -
2 you say you care about public high school but do
3 you? Do you really care? or are you just
4 putting up a lot of - - for the - - thank you.

5 MALE VOICE: Good evening Flushing High
6 school. I was a Flushing High School graduate
7 back in 1994. Many - - are actually - - in--
8 flying in - - because they're a little nervous
9 but there are quite a few teachers that are
10 still her. From the students - - I was
11 connected to the school as part of the school's
12 community. And while I always had an excellent
13 family at home Flushing High School was my
14 family for four years. From a teachers stand
15 point I'm now on the other side of the classroom
16 but still part of Flushing High School Community
17 and family. However now with the proposed
18 closing of schools my family here at Flushing
19 High School would be broken and torn apart.

20 What message are we sending to our children?
21 Are we telling them to break up a community a
22 family? Are we telling them it's okay to walk
23 away, to turn our backs and abandon them? The
24 powers that be - - mayor they say yes. Well let
25 me tell everyone right now and anyone else who

1 listens we don't need a new family. We don't
2 need a new community. We don't need a new
3 school. I love this family, I love this
4 community and I love Flushing High School thank
5 you.

6 FEMALE VOICE: We will now hear from Mr. - -
7 Junior who is the representative Community
8 Education Council District 25.

9 MR. KENNY COLLIN JUNIOR: As I said my name
10 is Kenny Collin I'm the - - appointee to the CEC
11 for District 25. And I come here today to stand
12 with the stand with the - - with me at the
13 community that I serve and say no to the closing
14 of Flushing High School. We are at a very
15 unfortunate time in this city where have a mayor
16 who feels it's necessary to silence the voices
17 of care and silence the voices of community - -
18 by limiting the powers at CEC, high school
19 councils and community boards.

20 And I think today I think the community has
21 showed up in large numbers - - that we will take
22 that - - and we want to take our communities
23 back. I want to turn my back to the panel
24 really quickly and ask all of the students to
25 stand. From one young person to another I want

1 to applaud you all for being here today. I
2 want to give a special recognition to the
3 students who decided to speak because it's not
4 easy. And I want you guys to continue showing
5 up with your family, your friends and continuing
6 to organize the student body to save our school.
7 Save our school. Save our school.

8 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you. Next speaker.

9 MALE VOICE: Good evening ladies and
10 gentlemen, my name is Clive - - I'm a proud
11 follower of - - . And I'm feeling very proud -
12 - I want to start up by saying on Monday I
13 toured the new - - . Excuse me I'm sorry but I
14 have to say this, I'm just going to say like
15 this. First I want to start by saying that - -
16 the reason--the reason why I say it and I'll say
17 it very quickly, is that if you're going to tell
18 those people that their family and teachers and
19 their students, then you should come down to
20 here in their faces and tell them that. Don't -
21 - come to their face and tell the students and
22 the teachers and the parents that they're a
23 failure. I want to tell you right now, my son
24 is not a failure and if you're going to tell my
25 son he's a failure you're going to go outside.

1 That's one. Two I want to suggest to you
2 that you understand that my son - - I must talk
3 to politicians and do a lot of community service
4 in Queens [phonetic]. Okay, my son is a young
5 man he's is very small that doesn't have to
6 speak in front of nobody--he stays to himself
7 and since he's been in this school the teachers
8 and the students have helped him come out so
9 much that he stood up today and spoke in front
10 of a large audience. And you want to tell me
11 that this school is a failed school [background
12 noise] and I do that every day - - and speak for
13 me all the time and they got to do that--they've
14 got to - - and you're going to stand here or sit
15 here and look at me and tell me that this is a
16 failed school? How dare you? How dare the
17 D.O.E can test [phonetic] like anybody else say
18 this is a failed school? If they can do that
19 for my son and so many other kids, how can you
20 say that they're a failure? You saved one, you
21 saved many. [Background noise] and you're saying
22 that they're a failed school, that they're
23 failed teachers. You're going to transfer here
24 for one year and you want to tell him that he's
25 a failure? You're - - than him, so how do they

1 - - one year in here, my son has taken three
2 years in June [phonetic]. I don't understand
3 people have to hold - - . I won't accept that
4 the deal we did I want you to understand
5 something that if you're going to tell these
6 people that they're a failure, then where do you
7 expect them to go? You take a car and the - - a
8 flat tire, you don't just go and buy a new car--
9 you fix the flat. Okay, what you need to do is
10 start - - the school and start taking all these
11 money and putting them - - where my son sits.
12 Putting that into the schools and do what you've
13 got to do, what the small communities do not
14 work.

15 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you. Next speaker.

16 MALE VOICE: Good evening everyone, my name
17 is James Tunnel [phonetic], I'm a teacher at
18 Jamaica High School. Thank you. Let me take
19 you to the one grievance [phonetic] that I've
20 been hearing at Flushing High School. At
21 Jamaica we've been through this process, we've
22 been through all these two times by the
23 Department of Education and we know it's not
24 pleasant for you students especially the people
25 who are going to be back here next year.

1 They're going to punch the world, they're
2 going to tell you how things are going to be
3 wonderful. Well I'm here to tell you, forget
4 it, it's not happening because [background
5 noise].

6 I'm also here to - - with you. The parent
7 [phonetic] educational policy which is
8 ultimately going to be involved in this proposal
9 is controlled by the mayor. He has eight votes,
10 the boards' president [phonetic] only has five.
11 So they do whatever they want. These are
12 chancellors [phonetic] representatives are here
13 tonight basically because they have to be--
14 because the law requires them to be but they're
15 really not listening in this - - Jamaica, they
16 didn't listen to Brian, they're not listening to
17 - - or anywhere else. We have to take this
18 fight over there hence [phonetic] because it
19 takes the state--the state that ultimately
20 controls education and there are two rules that
21 have been introduced. One state - - one state
22 sent to take the power to close schools I - -
23 because here's majority and the board
24 [background noise].

25 So what we need to do [background noise] is

1 to talk to our state representatives and tell
2 them to get - - it does not work.

3 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you. Next speaker.

4 MALE VOICE: Good evening. My name is - -
5 the president of - - organization for community.
6 Improvements in the students' performance here
7 has continued in the second year in a three-year
8 transformation program that was established by
9 D.O.E. This is defined series of programs
10 [phonetic] 600 additional students and just in
11 the past year. It's an overburdened school with
12 overburdened classrooms and overburdened
13 teachers.

14 Our schools' students population is
15 exceeding [phonetic] despite the high rate - -
16 and you find that 25 percent of the students
17 come again - - graduating the students - - four
18 years is a regular punishment [phonetic] of the
19 students and the teachers in the school.

20 Our high schools - - in civic and business
21 leaders and selected officials all stand
22 together in support of a - - occurring here in
23 the school. Members of high state [phonetic]
24 schools and students from their communities are
25 - - .

1 I expect that the students here have been
2 taught and learnt the value of the democratic
3 government over government by edict. And I hope
4 that you will respond to the wishes of the
5 entire community as well as the students here.
6 These are beautiful kids, they're winners and
7 any attempt to lay them down with anything other
8 is misplaced [phonetic]. Thank you.

9 FEMALE VOICE: [Background noise] speaker.

10 FEMALE VOICE: Hi - - . School is supposed
11 to be about education but it's also about being
12 involved in other schools and together we had a
13 place to go with people we trust. We shouldn't
14 - - whom we know we trust, you're taking away a
15 right to education with your company [phonetic].

16 Our environment is supposed to be fairly
17 safe and bind [phonetic]. I'm a student - -
18 school - - . I know that he's not [phonetic] on
19 the school, someone next from the outside
20 couldn't know what's best for us. What
21 [background noise] our environment we are used
22 to I know we're making the best wishes. We're
23 only saying stand for what you believe in and
24 what's right, don't let anyone take away your
25 right, have the balls, be heard. This will meet

1 more than any one--D.O.E will make a bloomer -
2 - . If you are from the outside you couldn't
3 know anything that's going on here. Try staying
4 for one year and you can take a decision that -
5 -

6 FEMALE VOICE: Next speaker, just go ahead.

7 FEMALE VOICE: Hello. I can take a second
8 to tell all the teachers to stand up please.

9 FEMALE VOICE: My name is Elizabeth I'm - -
10 Flushing High School. Currently - - one of the
11 best - - for students. The D.O.E has not asked
12 the students what we truly need and that as a
13 form of covering up, they gave us two minutes to
14 potentially read for the right to an education
15 that we can be comfortable with.

16 As - - students, Flushing High School
17 teachers and their bright students have taught
18 me lessons that will stick with me for the rest
19 of my life. Our direct population has provided
20 a - - more than you our mayor could ever teach
21 me. So I asked my teachers to take a stand to
22 show you that we can take a stand, that the
23 primary difference I want you to do the same
24 because you're improving [phonetic] high schools
25 you have only - - over teachers - - high school.

1 You're not only affecting us, you're
2 affecting the community. And if you want to do
3 this can you please have the decency to stand up
4 and at least - - and act like you care. Thank
5 you.

6 MS. HARRIS: And now we're going to take a
7 break for about five minutes. It's now 8:10,
8 where we can be back 8:15. Quiet - - , we got
9 information, numbers 30 through 42. 30 to 42.
10 Again, that's number 30 to 42, you can line up
11 right here behind this microphone. 30 to 42.
12 Number 30. Actually, 29, number 23. We'll line
13 up 23, going up.

14 MR. PAUL DEASSO: Good evening, - - . My
15 name is Paul Deasso [phonetic], I am a former
16 student here at Flushing High School, love it so
17 much. Felt great to come back and give back
18 because like the students, there are teachers
19 here that saved me. I had other opportunities
20 to go on to be--to go to Columbia University and
21 the fellowships that I could've done in Long
22 Island University. I said no, I want to come
23 back and give back because this is a true family
24 and true community. I don't know that the guys
25 from the outside understand the preference

1 [phonetic] that we feel.

2 These kids are my family, these kids are my
3 kids. I am - - why I'm here. We all watch them
4 high from - - , we help them to succeed. This
5 to me seems like a hostile takeover, a business
6 ploy, I don't get it. You're not getting with
7 material you're giving the blogs [phonetic],
8 their lives, our lives. Sounds to me like - -
9 high school in January, obviously the other
10 things that people have said prior, the
11 statistics and then all the other information
12 kind of points to it.

13 I do have a question as a teacher, I feel
14 accountable to have my students, unit plans, a
15 beginning, an end, a means for these kids to go
16 from Step A to C, to graduate. What are your
17 plans as the DoE to help these kids? You're
18 changing the school name? What are you doing to
19 help the kids? Are you lowering class signs?
20 Are you changing ratio, the teacher ratio? By
21 providing extra teachers to the students
22 [phonetic]? Well, that is your stuff, that - -
23 . If you're spending the money, spend the
24 money. Thank you for the time.

25 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

1 MS. SOPHIE OAK: Hi, my name is Sophie Oak
2 [phonetic]. I'm a sophomore - - and this is the
3 first school that I came to and I must say this
4 school has been a great, great help to me. The
5 teachers are very amazing, they're excellent
6 teachers and the students put a lot of effort in
7 the - - . This school should not be closed
8 down, this school is like a second family to me.
9 My counselor, my teachers, they're always a part
10 of me. They had me because - - the entire - -
11 tell me that I feel that you can do it. I feel
12 you - - can do it - - my school is the best
13 thing in New York City. I'm going to saying,
14 I'm an African and I believe in this school and
15 I'm proud to be from Flushing High School.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. FRED STEINER: I'm Fred Steiner
18 [phonetic], son of - - for people of France
19 [phonetic]. How many of you are members of the
20 CEC for District 35? Raise your hands please.
21 No one? Not one of you are members of the CEC?
22 Is this a joint hearing of the CEC?

23 FEMALE VOICE: Actually, the CEC was here
24 earlier and chose not to sit on this panel but
25 the member did speak to Mr. Cohen where the - -

1 members--

2 MR. STEINER: Okay. So one member of the
3 CEC out of 12 members, I think that's less than
4 50 percent and that deserves an F for
5 attendance. We - - now propose to - - our
6 voice, it's like a - - hearing. You guys, the
7 parents, the teachers, the students, you should
8 be proud of yourselves because at least you're
9 taking this seriously. More seriously than the
10 CEC and the DoE.

11 MR. JOHN CROW: My name is John Crow
12 [phonetic], I'm director of - - Flushing, I work
13 with the civic, religious and district leaders
14 in Flushing. When Neil [phonetic] said they
15 shouldn't have authorized mayoral control of
16 city schools in 2002, it was not a green light
17 for the Department of Education to do whatever
18 it wants. It was not a green light for
19 dictatorial control based on the exclusion of
20 parents and key members for meaningful
21 participation. It wasn't a green light to
22 stigmatize students and scapegoat teachers. And
23 it sure as - - wasn't a green light to close
24 city's oldest and the first - - school, Flushing
25 High.

1 We've been down this path before. In 2009
2 and '10, the DoE put Flushing High in its list
3 of schools facing closure. After communication,
4 gathered [phonetic] to oppose closure and for
5 the DoE to give Flushing High School three years
6 to transform. They're in the second year of
7 transformation, you're not even giving them a
8 chance to finish their transformation period.
9 They have been increasing the ninth grade
10 promotion grades from 26 percent, the graduation
11 rates, that's - - 41.8 percent, 47.1 percent,
12 49.3 percent, 51.9 percent, 56.5 percent, 60.2
13 percent.

14 This school is trying. This is not a
15 perfect school but we're still making the effort
16 to be a better school but you're not giving them
17 a chance. Despite this improvement, the DoE is
18 now pulling the rug right from under the feet of
19 the students, the teachers who have tried so
20 hard to turn this school around. Instead of
21 being allowed to finished, it's promised to be a
22 transformation period, Flushing High School will
23 now be closed. I'm sorry, I waited a long time
24 to speak, so please give me my time to speak.

25 We're in the educational impact - - because

1 DoE taking responsibility for its own
2 failures. Since the authorization they all
3 control, there has not been one new high school
4 in our area. 12 - - public schools in Flushing
5 are over capacity. Flushing High School itself
6 is 30 percent over capacity. How do you expect
7 students and teachers to succeed in an
8 environment where they face declining resources
9 and - - problem.

10 In deed the closure of Flushing High School
11 fits the same wide pattern of unequal
12 educational policies promulgated by DoE.
13 Students from working class backgrounds, those
14 with special needs and those with limited needs
15 and proficiency are the ones most struck by - -
16 policy of stigmatizing and shutting down - -
17 high school. As NYU professor - - , education
18 in New York City is more likely to--

19 MALE VOICE: Sir, you have to - - to all the
20 speakers that are ready. Thank you very much--

21 MS. HARRIS: As I stated earlier a couple of
22 times, if you have a written statement that you
23 would like to have presented to the panel for
24 the record--excuse me. If you have a written
25 statement that you would like presented to the

1 panel for the record, you can give me that
2 written statement and it will entered into the
3 record.

4 There are other people who have signed up
5 for public comment and we want to hear
6 especially - - time. Next speaker.

7 MR. MARQUES: I'm Mr. Marques [phonetic] and
8 I've been a teacher here since 1998 and I've
9 been here - - for 14 years. So I have seen the
10 school literally from every angle, you haven't.
11 And as a photographer, I'm a part of the - - ,
12 and even the DoE doesn't do that. They are a
13 bunch of liars. We are teachers who have great
14 grades, administrators who have great grades and
15 they're out the door. How dare you? We are the
16 ones that won based on the way or the social
17 security number. It - - numbers and numbers are
18 numbers, that's all you care about, not people.

19 And I'm going to tell the crew [phonetic]
20 right now. I am a homosexual and I am proud of
21 it. I - - and I am - - . All you hear is - - ,
22 all you hear is - - , all you hear is - - stand
23 up the chair and - - . And I'm going to sit up
24 because not much we're the red devils [phonetic]
25 but because the mayor and your DoE couldn't - -

1 . That's what the mayor says.

2 And one more question and I'll be done.

3 Pretend you were forced to go to China and live
4 there and take a test. You write four essays in
5 Chinese and - - in a few months. Just answer my
6 question, are you really going to do them, write
7 four essays in Chinese in four months? Yes or
8 no?

9 CROWD: No.

10 MR. MARQUES: That's the truth, live with
11 it. That's true.

12 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

13 FEMALE SPEAKER: Hi, everybody. My name is
14 - - and I am one of the Flushing High School, I
15 am a math teacher. - - teacher. I'm sitting
16 here telling my personal story but I thought my
17 story will resemble many of the stories that
18 goes behind the scene right here. I work in an
19 average of 60 to 70 hours a week without taking
20 overtime. I hope the other members or the newer
21 members of our staff, I have to say that's it's
22 the hardest job I have ever worked in my life.
23 The hardest job I have ever worked in my life.

24 And in this job, not just the hours I put
25 in. because the way I have to face that one

1 100--about 150 kids that I have to face every
2 day, they come for me and so I have to work my
3 butt for them. According to our contract, we
4 are to be teaching up to 107 students. What
5 that means it is per year, 170 years of human
6 being life that puts in to give me one year of
7 experience of being a teacher.

8 What that means is for my few years of being
9 a teacher, it took hundreds of years of young
10 people's life, Flushing High School students'
11 lives to groom me to be who I am today. That's
12 why I am so humble being here saying I am
13 honored to be a Flushing High School teacher. I
14 don't have pretty much to say but for you to
15 close the school means that you're erasing 215
16 staff members, thousands of years of students'
17 lives invested into our experience teaching this
18 culture of students.

19 I'm not saying other places' teachers are
20 not good. I'm talking about the teachers here
21 that are trained and groomed to cater and
22 nurture students of Flush, students of this
23 community. You are erasing that history by
24 closing our school and by changing our name and
25 changing our number of our school, does not

1 change that fact. And mayor has to stop
2 running this like a business and think of this
3 school as a human being, life. And this is the
4 life of Flushing that we're talking about.

5 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

6 MR. ANTONY JUAN: Okay. My name is Antony
7 Juan [phonetic] and I'm a teacher here at
8 Flushing High School. Today I want to say the
9 fix is in but between the - - . You know, I
10 thought I'd be addressing five people or five or
11 eight mayor's - - and five people from the
12 district. But they say the mayor doesn't even
13 have the balls to send five or one person and
14 the - - person that [background noise] and
15 report - - whatever they said that he was going
16 to do, it fixes.

17 Basically, they want to break up this school
18 and they don't care anything about. But what
19 they don't know about is the kids who come here
20 and students who come here, fourth grade
21 education speaking only Spanish and then in
22 eight years--we're supposed to get them to
23 graduate four years and do eight years work in
24 four and if we're doing it five, it doesn't
25 count. It's a 58 percent graduation in our

1 record, but if you look at five years, that's
2 something way higher.

3 But that doesn't matter because all that
4 matters are numbers. And it doesn't matter that
5 that the fact that Flushing High School came in
6 second place at - - in what, math competition.
7 So like - - it doesn't matter for all that
8 stuff. It doesn't matter that students come in
9 not speaking even English, graduate first in
10 their class and get scholarships to Harvard and
11 stuff like that and just - - five years in a
12 row. It doesn't matter, the fix is in. You
13 guys want to break the school and it's always
14 the teachers' fault.

15 It doesn't matter that we kick goal after
16 goal after goal in math, even though they keep
17 raising goals, they keep raising goals. What
18 matters is that students, it's not--it's the
19 teacher's fault. And so when I was talking
20 about one lady here, she said she supports
21 construction of the school. You know, when you
22 get--we're checking out the paper, you're going
23 to get a restructure, you're going to get the
24 same students here, which 85 percent are great
25 students and 15 percent are working - - right

1 now - - but you're going to get maybe 15 or 90
2 percent of teachers gone instead of new teachers
3 or 10 percent of all teachers. So you're going
4 to get exactly what you want, so good luck to
5 you.

6 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

7 MALE VOICE: Good evening, my name is Mr. -
8 - . I'm here to speak on behalf of High Schools
9 to - - Program, I'm the program manager and I
10 just like to give my voice in support of
11 Flushing High School, the teachers, the
12 principal here, Mr. Hudson [phonetic]. I don't
13 think he's been given the opportunity along with
14 his staff to show what their commitment to
15 changing the perception that the DoE may have
16 had, not just with Flushing High School, with
17 many high schools in the city.

18 I mean, if you're looking for reasons to
19 close schools, I'm sure that you can find them.
20 and if you look closer and you look harder, you
21 can close more schools. And if you looked a
22 little closer and a little harder, you can close
23 even more schools. Where does it stop? But why
24 aren't we looking for reasons to keep schools
25 open.

1 For every reason to be found to close
2 Flushing High School--and I grew up here
3 personally for eight years or more with the
4 after school program. I can give you 50 reasons
5 to keep the school open. The human element is
6 not being factored into the equation and to the
7 guys - - that the DoE is using to close, it's
8 not even - - . You're looking at numbers,
9 you're looking at things that really do not tell
10 the story.

11 We're not telling you about Alex Weir
12 [phonetic], a young man that went to school here
13 from a single parent household that Ms. Farasee
14 [phonetic] Social Studies department had--along
15 with principal Hudson, at the time a math
16 teacher, were very instrumental in helping this
17 young man get a full academic sponsorship to
18 Cornell University. This is DoE - - , no.

19 Scholarship athlete, Jason Blondie
20 [phonetic], do you guys know that name? - -
21 University. The young man come from a
22 partnership in the neighborhood. I mean, these
23 are people, these are real human interest
24 stories, these are real life stories. And I
25 could tell 50 of them, 50 for every year that I

1 was here. those are just the ones that I know
2 about. So I think DoE should absolutely take
3 another look at Flushing High School, see what's
4 going on and give Mr. Hudson and his stuff an
5 opportunity to complete the job.

6 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

7 FEMALE SPEAKER: My name is - - 42, Grey
8 Louise [phonetic] 16th and the common mind
9 [phonetic] - - sit down.

10 DONNY: My name is Donny [phonetic] - - and
11 it's been an honor to teach English here for 20
12 years. First off, I want to - - apologizing for
13 the students, the parents and the whole faculty
14 - - . Since students, first off, you gave the
15 question - - to receive an education and to
16 prepare for the future challenges that await
17 you. you forged strong bonds with your teachers
18 that formed an allegiance with your school, yet
19 now your world has been thrown in disarray as
20 you're being forced to question what happens to
21 the programs that you're involved in, the
22 teachers that you connect and the school that's
23 helped foster your growth as the students and
24 individual.

25 You depend on Flushing High School for

1 continuity and consistency and the Department
2 of Education has decided to forcibly strip that
3 away from you. It's unfair, it's unjust and
4 it's inexcusable. Though Flushing High School
5 has demonstrated growth in areas such as - -
6 sports, improved its graduation rates and also -
7 - promotional rate, these efforts have not
8 redeemed the - - enough by those who run
9 education.

10 To my fellow staff members who I watch day
11 in and out performing to the best of their
12 abilities, I'm sorry for you as well. This
13 year, been asked to effectively teach students
14 all who are having a very real possibility that
15 maybe this year, will no longer be working at
16 this school that we so strongly love and
17 support. And though I personally teach the
18 students and charge me [phonetic] more the
19 political climate that exists outside the
20 classroom, how is one supposed to ignore the
21 reality that we're being told our efforts are
22 not good enough. That those - - I work on till
23 one o'clock in the morning, that's not--they're
24 not engaging enough. That those papers I spend
25 all weekend grading, were not helpful enough.

1 That the energy and that the enthusiasm I
2 bring into this building, my classroom, that's
3 just not good enough.

4 So I ask thee members from the Department of
5 Education - - at this concerned faces of the
6 students, parents and staff and community that
7 have come to support and defend Flushing High
8 School, just what exactly is good enough?

9 MS. HARRIS: Thank you . Next speaker.

10 MAUREEN: Good evening, everyone. My name
11 is Maureen, I actually have a - - here and I'm
12 the Student Organization President of Flushing
13 High School. - - have a question, have - - to
14 me many new experiences and allowed me to
15 accomplish many things. Things that I do not
16 believe I could have accomplished anywhere else.
17 Many people often dismiss our school as an - -
18 flaws and - - to look instead at appropriate
19 achievements.

20 Here at Flushing, we have a star football
21 player - - who has gotten a full high to West
22 Point [phonetic] outside - - . Based on our - -
23 skills out on the field but also on his highly
24 regarded academics. Another student has just
25 received a - - acceptance letter. Students have

1 been published, their - - in the New York
2 Times, has the biggest in all competitions in -
3 - Internet - - university, cue coverage
4 [phonetic] in one of our fifth core SNL
5 [phonetic] there and - - virtual request form
6 and - - up here and Belgium's - - .

7 Look around you. I noticed many of our
8 audience are wearing awareness - - . The red
9 and white stands for our - - colors and the blue
10 color, wear it to save our school. I would like
11 to take a moment to let the people in this
12 audience who have impact on me and others around
13 me. To my principal, who shows his students how
14 hard work and dedication will not go unnoticed.
15 And to all my teachers, classmates and - - who
16 inspired me to do more, be more and want more
17 each day.

18 Flushing High School is - - as underdogs and
19 I am one of those underdogs, it's just who we
20 are. But if this is a true about underdogs,
21 nobody's - - underdogs since then will prevail.
22 Thank you.

23 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

24 MR. IKE ARIZA: Excuse me, sir, can you pay
25 attention for the first time in this meeting.

1 Hello, my name is Ike Ariza, I am a junior in
2 Flushing. I am here to tell you guys in sad
3 reality, we're here in the middle of what I see
4 as a political scheme from part of the DoE and
5 Mayor Bloomberg. What our mayor is trying to do
6 is trying to improve his personal image as a
7 politician.

8 By closing them, this and all those - -
9 underperforming schools, the mayor is only
10 trying to improve the graduation rate on paper
11 only. This will not improve student
12 performance. As one of the staff members of
13 Flushing, Ms. Hussein [phonetic], who's son goes
14 to a Charlton [phonetic] school said, that
15 doesn't work. This was not approved by the
16 strong, this tightly knit community of highly
17 professional and skilled educators and students.

18 We will not be rug rats to make Bloomberg
19 look better, I am not a lie. We will not be - -
20 on and I will be attending Flushing High School
21 for 2012 for my senior year. You say you're
22 here to work in the interest of the students.
23 Well, I'm a students, a proud student. Some are
24 - - our school, go Flushing.

25 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next question.

1 WILLIAM: Good evening. My name is
2 William - - here to say I'm a senior at Flushing
3 High School. My school is Flushing School is in
4 the news [phonetic]. I was on the Red Devils
5 varsity wrestling team where we learned to value
6 teamwork, discipline and are motivated to
7 persevere in all tasks on our way. I also play
8 also saxophone for our Flushing High School jazz
9 band, where we're encouraged to - - express our
10 artistic identities through the power of music.
11 Rock on.

12 And I also recognize our community service
13 is - - club. I'm also a student in leadership
14 where I'm required to take an active role in our
15 society, now and after high school. I am also
16 one of a select few granted with the special
17 opportunity in being placed in our APA Program,
18 covering a wide range of subjects, where they
19 push us to our maximum academic limit and
20 beyond.

21 If you're going to stand here and tell that
22 this is a school that doesn't provide a diverse
23 experience to all the students, then please, I
24 beg you, tell me which one does? Flushing High
25 School is not just a school, it represents more

1 than just any building. - - represents a
2 family, our own small community. It's a
3 foundation for our future and a pretty darn good
4 one if I may say so myself.

5 I am utterly appalled to stand here today
6 and here that the DoE plan of action is to get
7 rid of the teachers and stunt [phonetic] that
8 have nurtured the success of hundreds of young
9 adults and with full hard work continues to do
10 so if given the chance. I refuse to be just any
11 other statistic. I probably stand here and say,
12 I'm a Flushing High School - - . Make some
13 noise for that.

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

15 MR. OSCAR CORTIES: Hi, my name is Oscar
16 Corties [phonetic] and I'm an English speaker
17 but I will not be speaking in Spanish. I - -
18 what I'm saying because you're just - - , okay.
19 [Foreign Language].

20 MALE SPEAKER: My name is Oscar Corties.

21 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

22 MALE SPEAKER: I'm a - - at Flushing High
23 School.

24 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

25 MALE SPEAKER: I'm part of a group of - - .

1 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

2 MALE SPEAKER: I also work with leadership
3 group that I'm also very proud of.

4 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

5 MALE SPEAKER: - - I'm also from proud - -
6 and diverse city.

7 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

8 MALE SPEAKER: It's one of the why I go to
9 school.

10 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

11 MALE SPEAKER: I don't want the school to
12 close because it's the best thing I've had.

13 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

14 MALE SPEAKER: I'm not going to fix
15 [phonetic] that way.

16 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

17 MALE SPEAKER: There are other students that
18 also think the same way as I do and you don't
19 find them targeted occasionally one student, the
20 other comes to school [phonetic].

21 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

22 MALE SPEAKER: There's no one - - is about -
23 - as possible.

24 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

25 MALE SPEAKER: It's not fair at all.

1 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

2 MALE SPEAKER: I've been going to - - and
3 Thomas [phonetic] here for me, we're - - here
4 and I do and--any word about students who are
5 performing to the - - target and it's hard. - -
6 take time for graduates - - .

7 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

8 MALE SPEAKER: The problem is affecting all
9 students.

10 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

11 MALE SPEAKER: The administration, students
12 and teachers.

13 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

14 MALE SPEAKER: - - important education at
15 least is not focused.

16 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

17 MALE SPEAKER: For me and for all the
18 students and teachers that are sitting down.

19 MR. CORTIES: [Foreign Language].

20 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

21 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

22 MR. STEVE REGIFO: Hello, - - . My name is
23 Steven Regifo [phonetic], I am in science and
24 social [phonetic] - - classes, 2011. And
25 honestly, I'm being - - about anything.

1 MR. STEVEN REGIFO: I think everything
2 that's to be said has been said and I just want
3 to tell my club. Well, first of all, I'm
4 representing the club that I'm in right now.
5 I'm in the Blind--Flushing the Blinds. Flushing
6 - - Grassroots Lions [phonetic], which the
7 current goal, our first year of - - club are the
8 Leos. That's part of the - - in this high
9 school have been going on for, I believe, eight
10 years.

11 And we really focus on community service and
12 fund raising and leadership development. And I
13 remember all of these reporting our skills when
14 I was in this high school and when I was a
15 junior. When I met a very inspirational man
16 named Elvis Hanith [phonetic]. So it's--I'm
17 very that the school is getting because when I
18 was a junior, I found this sad. I said, how can
19 you close such a school, like, so much is going
20 on with these clubs and so much after school
21 activities and sports and everything. I mean,
22 and it's going to close and it's not--yes.

23 Yeah, that's all I have to say. Much love
24 from you guys, from everybody. And so my own
25 math class - - Carl [phonetic] sitting here with

1 me, too. In our--I'm happy for the
2 experience I had with before I turned into a
3 graduate, things they taught me. I'm not sure
4 if he's here but Terrence Kitts [phonetic] who
5 is the Social Studies, awesome teacher. Began
6 to - - which is - - Ms. Lacage [phonetic], what
7 an awesome teacher.

8 Ms. Nanso [phonetic], great. What else?
9 Last but not least, Ms. Helen [phonetic] - - , I
10 mean, inspirational, all right. And okay, thank
11 you. - - Flushing.

12 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

13 MR. STEVEN SIMMONS: Hello there everyone,
14 all right to see - - . Now, how much--and got
15 your - - let me tell you what I mean. My name
16 is Steve Simmons and I'm a proud graduate of
17 Flushing High School. I want to say something,
18 they can't close this school. Sir, you can't
19 close this place, you can benchmark the stats
20 all you want. But the fact of the matter is, I
21 was here, I know what happened, I know what's
22 going on.

23 These people on the front seats, these - -
24 right here, they helped me. Ms. Sanders
25 [phonetic] helped, Ms. Boyle [phonetic], Ms. - -

1 kept me in class when I shouldn't have been
2 in class anymore in a - - . Ms. Tanger
3 [phonetic] with basketball in gym class, Mr.
4 Hudson helped me in math, after school program.
5 - - Club helped me to be the person that I am
6 trying to be in the future. And you keep
7 bringing up these statistics about this, this
8 and that to everyone.

9 Let me bring up some--they had to say that
10 the new acquired coordinate of the New York
11 Giants is tainted, right? They weren't talking
12 about the first league quarters on, he had to
13 play someone, he's on this, he's on that.
14 Right, let me tell you something. When crunch
15 time happens, they don't go crunch time anymore.
16 Where do they go?

17 FEMALE SPEAKER: Tebow time.

18 MR. SIMMONS: Why do they go to Tebow time?
19 Because he's a gamer, he's a baller, he's a
20 playmaker and he's a stop - - , that's who we
21 are here. If you close this place down, nobody
22 else is going to be able to tell you stories.
23 I'm fortunate enough to be able to tell the
24 story because I already graduated.

25 What about the other people behind me? All

1 the people that are graduating next year,
2 year before that, 2012, 2012, 2014. What about
3 those? You have to understand that--time is up
4 so I got to go. So anybody that wants to close
5 this place down, tell me next. They can go kick
6 rocks.

7 MALE SPEAKER: Hello, thanks. Hey, I'm
8 class of '76. My - - senior year here is - -
9 and I never thought I'd - - far because of my--
10 which was the centennial of this very school.
11 But the - - school and I'm very privileged to
12 attend this - - and actually that's dedication
13 and our generation is - - what our attendee year
14 and the - - year just devoted to their education
15 and serving the school and the community. And
16 with it--and have to - - to be a - - . My
17 intention to - - they--I thought I heard from
18 you while we were rocking and that's pretty
19 good. Flushing High rocks.

20 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon, - - . My
22 name is - - Rodriguez [phonetic]. I'm here--I'm
23 proud first of all, I'm proud to say I'm a
24 student that graduated last year. And I'm happy
25 that I was a student in Flushing high school,

1 I'm here representing Spanish people, the
2 team [phonetic]. My stop--my international
3 club. I've been--I'm with this - - people and
4 I'm doing it but I just don't want to say that
5 I'm irate [phonetic] that--with Mayor Bloomberg,
6 he's closing Flushing High School, I'm against
7 that.

8 Why? Because I think first of all
9 [phonetic] - - anyone who makes a difference
10 become a teacher. And now all these teachers
11 that we - - in taking those opportunities from
12 them and it's not fair. Because I can tell you
13 what they - - go through. A lot of good stuff
14 when I was here in high school. Now, I'm in
15 college and I need those kind of teachers that
16 support but I don't have them in college.

17 And now every time I'm something [phonetic],
18 I can test them, I can say, I need a transcript,
19 I need a reference letter and they're still here
20 for me. And closing Flushing High School. Being
21 part of Flushing High School has changed my
22 life. I have personal compliments. I could say
23 I have some - - problems and teachers from this
24 school called me - - . I was a freshman and
25 nobody give a damn about me but some teachers

1 did.

2 Mr. Hudson taught me all my math class, Ms.
3 Curie [phonetic] told me she was not fully a - -
4 . She was not only the assistant principal in
5 this school, she was also my coach, who I - - .
6 Ms. Nanso has had me on a large - - . Ms.
7 Boyle, acting like old teachers here because I
8 know that they know me very well.

9 But who's Bloomberg? He doesn't know me, he
10 doesn't know this got [phonetic] through. He
11 doesn't know the problems I had to--went
12 through. But who's Bloomberg, - - and
13 [background noise]. He can't come here and tell
14 us, you know what? Flushing High School has to
15 be closed because I've paid - - , who is he? Is
16 he doing stud? I don't think so.

17 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

18 MR. RICHARD DINELLI: My name is Richard
19 Dinelli [phonetic], I was here at Flushing 1780
20 [phonetic], really from the longest side of
21 Flushing I ever thought of, I - - from main
22 parks [phonetic], where I grew up. Went to
23 Newtown [phonetic] High School, which is one of
24 the other eight queen's high schools that is
25 slated for turnaround. Turnaround my butt.

1 Destroying us, turn us inside out, turn
2 us upside down. Or is that the - - high schools
3 dealing in for, well, that's why. And like
4 Flushing tonight, the place was packed with - -
5 . It's the winner [phonetic] that - - , it's
6 good that you arrived on time. Not a - - not
7 late as you take less time and they cut off a
8 thousand people waiting next time.

9 The board would like you to all believe that
10 this is all about a 50-year or \$60 million
11 federal fund or state grant reaching [phonetic]
12 federal money. But that's nonsense, that's just
13 the excuse, that's not the reason. When dealing
14 with a \$17 billion budget of the port of a
15 [phonetic] \$58 million or - - something like
16 three one thousands of one percent.

17 So it's not about \$58 billion, which the
18 city in all likelihood is going to receive
19 anyway. Because our main line in our
20 involvement into promo [phonetic] like this. If
21 we really - - the panel on education policy,
22 which is going to vote on this proposal in eight
23 days, it's like a read [phonetic] on political
24 patronage.

25 Yes. Eight of them are appointed by Mayor

1 Mike and five like one of our former
2 speaker's supreme rep, are appointed by the
3 borough presidents. We stand a chance with the
4 borough reps in this--the campaign that we have
5 to deal with in eight days, which they all
6 noticed now. We can--we have to get loud, we
7 are loud, there's a lot of positive energy in
8 this room tonight, you have to get louder. You
9 got to wake up your neighbors, wake up the rest
10 of the city in the next eight days and send
11 emails to the panel on educational policy.

12 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Next speaker.

13 MS. MICHELLE FOYER: Hey, everybody. My
14 name is Michelle Foyer [phonetic], I'm a science
15 teacher at Flushing High School [background
16 noise]. I also worked in the - - they were
17 trying last year. I guess you go to work
18 tomorrow saying, another day in the office, I am
19 ready. Completed another meeting, another year,
20 it seems to be a four-month conclusion where
21 we're headed, but I don't really think it has to
22 be. But the gentleman before said we really do
23 have to get loud, we have to address the stake
24 on this issue. We must address the stake, we
25 have to get active on the - - .

1 We've done everything that we were
2 supposed to do, everything. We hit our goals.
3 I don't understand what else can do or could've
4 done except fulfill our requirements and meet
5 those goals. This, I am afraid, will be known
6 as the dark ages of education. I am here
7 defending my job, my school, my position that
8 has shown so much improvement with so much
9 promise, while DoE's record remains littered
10 with failure. I don't get it.

11 And I'm supposed to have faith and trust in
12 the people that you are now appointing to take
13 over when we've shown so much promise? Where
14 were you all? Where were you when we really
15 needed? Where was the DoE then? Where were
16 you, guys? I'm not sure I understand, where
17 will you be tomorrow. You'll be in New York
18 saying, we just had another year review
19 [phonetic]. Just remember they will come for
20 you one day, they will. Thank you.

21 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

22 MALE SPEAKER: Over here.

23 FEMALE VOICE: Okay. I would just like to
24 say the - - Flushing High school dates back to
25 the late 1800s. Probably around 1875 and still

1 standing - - in history. One of New York's
2 oldest schools, considered a - - holding the
3 grand title of being a national resistance - -
4 historic basis in 1992. Many attempts to - - -
5 - constructive in the public experience
6 surrounded by - - . More importantly in this
7 school the teacher - - and individual one - - .

8 Changing the name and its location won't
9 create a better learning environment. - - will
10 create chaos, it won't just be making - -
11 evaluations and examinations where they do
12 nothing. Our teachers have been there for a
13 goal, mentally, physically and socially, a
14 habitat has been established - - everyone.
15 Levels of intelligence overflowing why - - that
16 down?

17 [applause]

18 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

19 JESSICA: Hi, my name is Jessica - - and I'm
20 a sophomore in Flushing High School. Okay, my
21 first point is that I know a lot teachers and
22 there is none of them that I would describe as
23 incompetent or someone who does not know how to
24 - - . My teachers have taught well, very well.

25 And my second point is where else would you

1 find this kind of diversity. There are
2 people from all over the world. Sorry. My
3 third point is there is no point in blaming
4 teachers if students are failing. Students are
5 responsible for their own wellbeing and if a
6 student is not doing well, it's not the
7 teacher's fault because I'm in a classroom of
8 students and I mean they are people who really
9 into education.

10 They understand the value of education, and
11 they've been brought up with how important
12 education is. And there are other people who do
13 not really have a guidance. We're not taught
14 the importance of education and we are entrusted
15 with these people and they make noises and they
16 make budgets and they - - so the teachers are
17 not really to blame. If they can't teach a
18 student then in my opinion it's the student's
19 fault.

20 MS. HARRIS: Next speaker.

21 MS ESTHER CHEN: Good evening thank you for
22 your patience. You know I wait for three hours
23 too. My name is Esther Chen, I'm the President
24 of American Chinese Women Association. I've
25 come here to talk about--to beg you don't close

1 this school. It is not a right or good
2 solution to close our community school. I have
3 - - so 30 years. I work at Rockwell, Webster, -
4 - I deal with many students and teachers. And
5 this school impressed me very much because I
6 know how hard for the teachers to teach the
7 students, and many students coming from very
8 diverse backgrounds.

9 This school has a very diverse population
10 and for the teachers who work to teach them.
11 And for the students they come from some of
12 their - - they are not from the - - schools and
13 they are not - - they can select certain - - to
14 be there. And this school has open door policy
15 they cannot take it. You are not good, this one
16 cannot speak English, I will take that one, - -
17 they want to close my school standard [phonetic]
18 for statistics.

19 What I want to say statistics sometimes miss
20 right people. A good education is you always
21 keep in mind not just the statistic, and that's
22 not right. And education is not just to have
23 the student - - in school because school is not
24 educate people just to be good at - - and there
25 are some human skills.

1 I'm very impressed about - - and we
2 shouldn't punish them by closing the school,
3 make them feel they are failures - - and I
4 really sincerely come here, I have waited for
5 three hours, I'm not feeling well but still I
6 said I like to say something. Please save this
7 school--

8 [applause]

9 MS. CHEN: Thank you.

10 FEMALE VOICE: Hello. Good evening. I also
11 have been here three hours. I am - - I came
12 down in 1968 and - - at that time it was just -
13 - came out in 1967 and there were many
14 distinguished people that I went to school with
15 there and came out and - - things. And one of
16 the things that I'm seeing tonight are the
17 students of today. They say do not teach
18 enough, they're behind, their numbers are not
19 correct, but we know numbers can be manipulated.

20 But the way these students are talking
21 they're talking about love, something that I
22 share with them. The love of Flushing High
23 School. My teachers--I'm remembering memories.
24 Things that I did maybe I shouldn't have done.
25 How it got me through. How I was well prepared

1 crunch time - - we want to get out. So you
2 know, those things are still the same. I cannot
3 understand how the DOE wants to just erase a lot
4 of memories for people.

5 I met a couple here - - who graduated--I
6 mean graduated 50 years ago. Met each other in
7 the halls of Flushing High as we were going from
8 class to class and they got married. And they -
9 - here and what are the chances of that? If you
10 close the school, who's going to have memories
11 like that?

12 And I really can't see how you close a
13 historical landmark school on a historical trip.
14 It's supposed to have protection. The name is
15 supposed to stay the same. Stop blaming the
16 teachers that the kids are not learning,
17 especially--and every September the Mayor ask
18 for 1%. Back in - - schools got to give back
19 1%. We already have budget cuts now they're got
20 to give back more. How do you pay for the tools
21 that they need?

22 They have excellent clubs here and they have
23 excellent afterschool program that also starts
24 during school. Tutoring these kids and getting
25 - - and the school is improving. So what

1 message are you giving to our kids? I'll
2 tell you what you're giving to the kids, you're
3 saying it don't matter how good you do. You're
4 not good enough, you're not going nowhere and we
5 really don't care. Thank you.

6 [applause]

7 FEMALE VOICE: I'm here as representative
8 for - - who's a candidate for Congress - - .
9 I'm also here as a parent of a student who was
10 here maybe four years ago. And I remember
11 sitting right at this auditorium watching him
12 perform Chinese New Year - - .

13 When I came here first we talked about
14 educator who came. He was really like competent
15 - - turnover computer could make the transcript.
16 I was wondering was that Kathy [phonetic] - - no
17 experience except for business experience. This
18 seems like business, what the whole thing is
19 about.

20 That schools have become a business and
21 that's what the mayor's position on education
22 is, is that somehow instead of giving money to
23 schools there is a way to take money from
24 schools. Perhaps they put in four new schools
25 and they start as charters and maybe they end up

1 as private schools and there's nothing left
2 to come out of them. I think it also made
3 unionists - - long time - - replaced them with
4 new people, and the new people - - less amount
5 by that time this happens so - - I really don't
6 know what it is.

7 The other thing is a lot of people--the kids
8 who are struggling. It's not really teachers'
9 fault, it's not really students fault, it's the
10 fault of the society. I mean if your parents
11 are losing their jobs. If you're suddenly
12 hearing - - of people that you know New York
13 City we are antisocial [phonetic]. So now do
14 you get up in the morning and - - these kids are
15 amazing that they've done this without - -
16 society and the economy that we have in New York
17 City.

18 The last thing is, is they send them to big
19 schools - - to the smaller schools because big
20 schools staff, if that's how it is then we
21 should close down - - .

22 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. We have now
23 concluded the public comment, we will begin the
24 - - period. Remember, there will be some
25 individual questions and others that have been

1 bucketed into categories where we will have
2 representative questions asked.

3 Any question that is not answered here this
4 evening will be available on our website. If
5 you have additional questions at the conclusion
6 of tonight's proceedings we ask that you direct
7 them to us via the following telephone number.

8 The telephone number is 212-374-7621. Again
9 the number 212-374-7621 or you can email us at
10 d25proposals@schools.nyc.gov. Again, that's
11 d25proposals with an S, all one word.

12 MALE VOICE: Thank you. We're going to - -
13 before we get out just wanted to thank all of
14 our speakers especially all of the students who
15 came up here and speak. It's very brave to come
16 speak in front of your peers and your community.
17 That's very - - thing and we really appreciate
18 it. It's very - - passionate for the school--

19 [applause]

20 MALE VOICE: --there are just three
21 questions here tonight.

22 First one is DOE proposing to close Flushing
23 to replace it with several small schools? Well,
24 that's not the case. That is not the way that
25 this proposal's working. Now the proposal's to

1 close Flushing and to replace it with one
2 large comprehensive high school within this
3 building that will be able to continue on the
4 positive elements of Flushing High School.

5 Second question is what will happen to the
6 students as a result of this proposal? All
7 current students who have not yet graduated
8 Flushing so between nine, ten and 11 and 12th
9 graders will graduate by the end of the year are
10 guaranteed a seat in the new school. All
11 incoming 8th graders now that apply to Flushing
12 that are coming here for 9th grade - - . So
13 students will be guaranteed a seat at the new
14 school.

15 What will happen to the teachers? So by
16 closing Flushing High School and opening a new
17 school we going to go through what's called the
18 AT&D [phonetic] process to hire the best
19 possible staff which includes both current and
20 the new teachers. All the current teachers will
21 be able to apply for the new school - - staff
22 coming to the new school and we're - - for the
23 teachers that are committed to great teaching
24 and student achievement.

25 [background noise]

1 MALE VOICE: Today we're not making any
2 decisions, several speakers spoken this is but a
3 feedback section, the point of which is to hear
4 all the comments from the community and the
5 families about Flushing and the proposal that's
6 been put forth. The feedback is obviously very
7 important to the decision that will come in May-
8 -

9 [background noise]

10 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. We thank you for
11 your feedback contributions this evening. The
12 information that you've shared with us tonight
13 will be shared with the Panel on Education
14 Policy which will have its hearing next
15 Thursday, April 26th at Prospects Heights Campus
16 in Brooklyn. To vote on this proposal we ask
17 that you please use the telephone number and
18 email address that I've provided if you have any
19 additional questions or concerns. Thank you all
20 for coming - - .

21 [background noise]

22 AUDIENCE: Save our school.

23 [END 290_283]

24

25

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 

Date April 23, 2012

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