

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

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

1 [START 290_284.MP3]

2 MR. ARIEL GUERERRO: My name's Ariel
3 Guerrero, and I will be acting as the
4 moderator/facilitator for this joint public
5 hearing. This is a joint public hearing of the
6 Department of Education, Community Education
7 Council, and the School Leadership Team to
8 discuss the proposed closure and replacement of
9 Bushwick Community High School. Tonight's
10 proceedings will be recorded and transcribed.
11 Before we begin the hearing, we ask that anyone
12 who wishes to speak, again I just want to remind
13 people, during the public comment portion of the
14 evening, sign up at the table that's outside.
15 Sign-up will end in approximately 15 minutes.
16 Time permitting, if you have a question that you
17 want to be addressed during the Q and A portion
18 of the agenda, please write that question on
19 comment cards that we have at that same table
20 outside. You can submit these to any of the DOE
21 staff by the table, or any of the DOE staff
22 walking around to collect them. If we do not
23 get to your question, it will be answered in the
24 analysis of public comment section of the
25 proposal. Only people who sign up to speak for

1 public comment will be able to participate in
2 the public comment section. All panel
3 participants are asked to be here no later than
4 5:30 p.m. Now that we have started, if a panel
5 participant arrives late, he or she will be
6 given the time to speak at the first opportune
7 moment. We want to be respectful of everyone's
8 time. There may be elected officials who arrive
9 at different times throughout the evening. If
10 they wish to speak, we will do our best to
11 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
12 Those who are here at the start of public
13 comments segment will be asked to speak first.
14 We do have agendas posted up outside. The
15 format will include a presentation of the
16 proposal, and presentations by our hearing
17 participants at the dais, followed by public
18 comment. Speakers should have already signed up
19 at the sign-in table in the lobby. We ask that
20 public comments made during the public comment
21 section be no longer than two minutes each.
22 Speakers will be informed when their designated
23 time has ended by a staff up front by the
24 speaker's microphone. There will be a question
25 and answer period. If you have a question,

1 again, please write these comments, or
2 questions, on a comment card that will be
3 supplied at that front table. Even though all
4 individual questions may not be addressed in the
5 forum tonight, the answers will be posted on the
6 website prior to the panel meeting. If at the
7 end of the hearing, you still have questions, we
8 encourage you direct them to us by calling the
9 designated number, or email that I will give you
10 now. If you want to make comment via phone, you
11 can call (212) 374-0208. Again, the number is
12 (212) 374-0208. You can also email comments to
13 d32proposals at schools, with an S, dot N-Y-C
14 dot gov. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm just going
15 to ask that if everyone can please keep their
16 voices down. We want to make sure that all the
17 information tonight is delivered, and that
18 everyone gets an opportunity to hear it. Thank
19 you very much. The email again, I want to just
20 make sure people get the email and the number to
21 post comment if you like. That number again is
22 (212) 374-0208. That number again is (212) 374-
23 0208. You can email comment as well to
24 d32proposals@schools.nyc.gov. That is
25 d32proposals@schools.nyc.gov. I want to now

1 take this opportunity to introduce our panel,
2 which has been assembled for tonight's joint
3 public hearing. So I want to start at the end
4 and work our way in. So first we have Victorina
5 Lugo, who's the president of the CEC, CEC 32.
6 We have Barbara Hendrickson, of the Bushwick
7 High School SLT--

8 FEMALE VOICE 1: [Interposing] Community
9 High School.

10 MR. GUERERRO: Community High School, my
11 apologies. We have Marisol Bermudez, of the
12 Bushwick Community High School SLT as well. We
13 have our principal of the Bushwick Community
14 High School, Tira Randall. And we have our
15 Deputy Chancellor Shael Suransky. I would like
16 to now take this also opportunity to recognize
17 some of the elected officials, and their
18 representatives have joined us for the evening.
19 We have Miss Alexandra Pena, who is a
20 representative of State Senator Dilan. We have
21 Miss Anklan Perez, who is a representative for
22 Assemblyman Vito Lopez. And we have Mr. Antonio
23 Reinoso, who a representative of Councilwoman
24 Reyna's office. I want to now take this
25 opportunity to turn the program over to the

1 Deputy Chancellor Suransky, who will present
2 the proposal.

3 MR. SHAEL SURANSKY: Good evening, everyone.
4 My name is Shael Suransky, and for those of you
5 who I don't know, I started my career in the
6 Department of Education about 17 years ago as a
7 teacher. I taught middle school, and then I
8 taught high school history and math. And then I
9 was principal of a school up in the Bronx called
10 Bronx International. And I am now Deputy
11 Chancellor. What I'm here to do this evening is
12 explain the proposal that we're going to be
13 discussing tonight and try and answer some of
14 the questions that we've heard leading up to
15 this. And then we're going to go on and have
16 the other members of the dais up here make some
17 statements and then we're going to open it up to
18 the floor. And I want to thank everyone first
19 of all for coming here. I know that it's taking
20 time out of your schedule, and it's a show of
21 real commitment for your community. And that's
22 really important. I also want to be very clear
23 that the point of this hearing tonight is to
24 have an honest dialogue, and a respectful one.
25 And what I'm going to be doing, and what the

1 folks on my staff are going to be doing, is
2 writing down and listening very closely to what
3 the members of this community are saying. And
4 we will be bringing that back to Chancellor
5 Walcott. And before the panel meeting at the
6 end of the month, he will be making a decision
7 on this proposal. And then the panel will vote
8 on that proposal, on April 26th. So the voices
9 that are heard tonight are really important, and
10 I am going to be listening very closely to what
11 folks have to say. So this hearing is convened
12 specifically to talk about a proposal that was
13 published on March 5th, and that proposal
14 suggests that the Bushwick Community High School
15 will close and be replaced by a new school next
16 year. And I think that there are a number of
17 things that are confusing about this for many
18 people, so I just want to first address what
19 does this mean for students, and what does it
20 mean for teachers, if indeed this proposal is
21 approved? So for students, I want to make sure
22 everyone understands that students will
23 automatically have a right to be part of any new
24 school that replaces this school. And anyone
25 who graduates, obviously, won't need that. But

1 anyone who does not graduate this year would
2 have an automatic right to come back. And all
3 incoming ninth graders or other grade levels
4 that have already been accepted, would be
5 automatically accepted to the new school. This
6 also should not in any way impact the other
7 school in this building, Roland Hayes Junior
8 High School. And in terms of teaching staff,
9 there's been a lot of stuff in the press about
10 this, and I think people have gotten the idea
11 that there's a specific quota of teachers that
12 would be allowed to come back. And I want to be
13 really clear on this that there is not a
14 specific quota. There's no set percentage. The
15 way it works is when a new school is created,
16 there's a committee made up of the principal,
17 two members who are nominated by the chancellor,
18 two members who are nominated by the teachers
19 union, and that committee is involved in hiring
20 staff. And any teacher from the school can
21 apply. And also, teachers from other schools
22 can apply. And if a teacher chooses not to
23 apply, that's their right, and if they choose to
24 apply and they don't get picked as part of that
25 process, they are guaranteed a job somewhere in

1 the Department of Education. We believe that
2 there's a lot of talent in this school. And
3 there's a lot of things that are going well.
4 And I expect to hear some of those things
5 tonight. And I also want people to be honest
6 about the things that are not working, because
7 the reason we're here tonight is that the school
8 was named on the state's list for schools that
9 are struggling, and so we are taking a very
10 close look at how can we improve this school.
11 And we've looked at both what is strong, and we
12 also have looked at where the struggles are. So
13 first of all, let me talk about the strengths
14 that we see. On Regents Exams outcomes, we've
15 seen some really strong results in English and
16 math. We've also seen attendance that's
17 improving in this school. It's increased by 15%
18 since 2009, which is a tribute, I think, to the
19 hard work that both students and educators have
20 been doing. And we've also seen, on the
21 negative side, that the graduation rates for the
22 school have been under 32% over the last four
23 years. And last year, the six-year grad rate
24 was 28%. And we judge transfer schools
25 differently to the way we judge other schools

1 because many students take longer to graduate.
2 Many students come to this school who have been
3 in other schools, and have gotten a second
4 chance by coming to the transfer school, and so
5 it's important that we look at it differently.
6 And I want to note that there's been some
7 discussion this year with the state education
8 department about this exact issue, because
9 members of this community as well as members of
10 other transfer schools have said the state
11 should also take a look at how it makes its
12 judgment with the transfer schools. It's
13 something that they've agreed to look at. I
14 spoke today, actually, while I was preparing for
15 this hearing, with the chancellor of the State
16 Board of Regents, and she told me that they've
17 put in a proposal to the federal government to
18 allow them to judge transfer schools differently
19 than other schools because of the special
20 population that they serve. Now that proposal
21 has not yet been approved, but it is expected to
22 be reviewed in the next weeks and months. And
23 so as part of the decision-making process, we're
24 looking at all of these issues. I also want to
25 say that for the folks who came out tonight, as

1 you share what you've come to share, I'd
2 really like to hear about where you see
3 strengths in the school community, and what you
4 think, either way, whatever decision is made,
5 there's going to be kids in this school, there's
6 going to be many teachers who are part of this
7 community now who continue in this school. And
8 I want to know what you think needs to be done
9 to improve, because whether it's part of this
10 new school proposal, or whether Bushwick
11 Community stays open, we have a collective
12 responsibility to make this school successful
13 for every single student who comes here. So I'm
14 going to stop there; I don't want to talk a long
15 time. I'm going to now pass it back to our
16 moderator, who's going to allow the folks up
17 here to make a few comments, and then we'll get
18 into the discussion. Thank you.

19 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Deputy Chancellor.
20 So now we're going to take this opportunity for
21 the dais to make presentations. So first, we
22 have Miss Lugo of the CEC. So I want to just
23 make two quick announcements that I've been
24 asked to make. I want to remind people, if you
25 know anyone in the audience that needs

1 translation, I'm going to have the translator
2 come up and make another announcement. Also, if
3 you have cell phones, I ask you to put them on
4 silent, or to turn them off, just to be
5 respectful of all the comments that are going to
6 be made tonight. Thank you.

7 FEMALE VOICE 2: [Foreign audio] 0:13:26.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Could you say it one more
9 time? I'm sorry, yeah.

10 MR. SURANSKY: Say it louder.

11 FEMALE VOICE 2: [Foreign audio] 0:13:41.

12 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Miss Lugo? She
13 is going to make her...

14 MISS VICORINA LUGO: Good evening. As a
15 Community Education Council, we recognize and
16 understand that according to the data, we need
17 to make changes in order to better support the
18 needs of our children, and improve their
19 performances so that they experience success.
20 We are requesting that in proposing the closure
21 and replacement of the Bushwick Community High
22 School, the only existing transfer school in
23 District 32, the Department of Education paid
24 close attention to the unique needs of our
25 community, and worked closely with our families

1 and parent leaders to ensure that our children
2 are provided with the best possible
3 opportunities and options to succeed. And be
4 well-prepared for their future success. If the
5 proposal to close Bushwick Community High School
6 is pass, we want to make sure that the programs,
7 services, support, and resources that are
8 currently working well for our children continue
9 to be available and strengthening to meet their
10 needs. For example, we want the Department of
11 Education to continue offering our most
12 struggling youngsters who are falling behind
13 quality programs and a learning environment that
14 will motivate and fully prepare them to graduate
15 with a high school diploma and seek career,
16 vocational, and college opportunities so that
17 they succeed in life. Also, the CBO partners
18 are an important component of the school that
19 needs to be continued and strengthened. The
20 many resources provided by the CBOs offer our
21 childrens and families many opportunities and
22 many services that help support their needs. As
23 parents, leaders, we want our voices to be
24 heard, and our feedback's to be taken into
25 consideration as planning for the future of this

1 school community, and considered. We want to
2 ensure that the unique needs of our children are
3 taken into an account, and that they are
4 provided with the necessary resource to improve
5 their performances, and build on their
6 strengths, so that they are successful, and
7 contribute in improving our society, and
8 community at large. Thank you.

9 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Lugo. Our
10 next presenter will be Miss Hendrickson, of the
11 SLT.

12 MISS BARBARA HENDRICKSON: My name is
13 Barbara Hendrickson, and I'm the new PTA
14 president. I have eight children, seven
15 gainfully employed in good jobs. And one son
16 and his wife are Department of Education high
17 school teachers here in Brooklyn. A wonderful
18 thing happened to my seven oldest children and
19 myself. We were all educated under the old
20 Board of Education, and we received an excellent
21 public education. One of my children, the
22 youngest, wasn't so fortunate. He was educated
23 for the past ten years under Mayor Bloomberg's
24 administration. And for some strange reason,
25 this child has a warped vision of his

1 educational future. He was losing his way,
2 and faltering through the school system. So I
3 brought him here, to Bushwick Community High
4 School in September 2011, to save him. And the
5 school was succeeding. He began going to school
6 regularly, and passing his classes. And he was
7 also maturing in many other ways. Then lo and
8 behold, word got out that Bushwick Community was
9 about to close. And everything started to go
10 down. And like the old Board of Education, my
11 son felt his educational world was blowing up
12 along with it, and has since he's been suffering
13 from what I believe is discouragement. For ten
14 years, we've endured this outrageous process of
15 school closures, which are disruptive,
16 destructive, discouraging, and disrespectful, to
17 staff, parents, and children. It reminds me of
18 *The Hunger Games*. Each year, children, parents,
19 and staff are forced to come together to endure
20 a slaughter, which to some is joyful, to others
21 a horror, where the odds are against them. I
22 hope that what we can do is find an appropriate
23 tool to measure this good school, and save it
24 from an unfair judgment. And then quickly find
25 a way to keep Bushwick Community High School

1 open. Thank you.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Hendrickson.
3 Our next presenter will be Miss Bermudez of the
4 SLT.

5 MISS MARISOL BERMUDEZ: Good evening, panel
6 fellow members, Chancellor, staff members, and
7 students of Brooklyn Community High School. I
8 come before you, not only as a mother. I come
9 wearing different hats. First of all, I come as
10 a former student, from the Bushwick Outreach
11 Center. I come to you as mother of not one, but
12 two students, of Bushwick Community High School.
13 I come to you as a community member. I come to
14 you as the PTA secretary and School Leadership
15 Team member. I'm here, 'cause this school
16 means, it's not just a school. This is a
17 family. This is the village that takes to raise
18 one child. This school goes back years in my
19 family. My younger sister graduated out of the
20 last outreach class in 2004. I have cousins
21 that graduated from here. My little sister went
22 on to college, and she's a lead teacher Fed's
23 Kids in Federal Plaza. I have cousins that have
24 went on to college and their master's and their
25 degrees and have moved forward. My oldest

1 child, who's sitting there, she's just turned
2 19. Julissa [phonetic], can you please stand?
3 This child is a student at the school now. But
4 the first time she walked into Bushwick
5 Community High School, or not even, Bushwick
6 Outreach Center, she was nine months old. So
7 this is a family history that goes on back in
8 years to this school. I was here in '93-'94.
9 Now for you to sit here and tell us that this
10 school's not working, I'm a product of that
11 school that does work. My family is a product
12 of this school that does work. Now for you to
13 say that this school is the only transfer school
14 in District 32, why would you even think of
15 closing this school? Myself came from John
16 Dewey. It's amazing how John Dewey, Brooklyn
17 Tech who my son came from, and is in this
18 school, Boys and Girls High School, William H.
19 Maxwell, these schools are saved but yet and
20 still these are the saved schools whose students
21 are sitting in this audience now. And I told
22 the superintendent, without disrespecting her I
23 told her to her face, "Go back and tell your
24 bosses when they set a foot into this school and
25 they walk through our hallways and see our

1 students in their classroom, and see what
2 these teachers are doing, then you come back and
3 tell me this still doesn't work." 'Cause like I
4 told her, you could close the school, change the
5 principal, change the staff members. Time and
6 time and time again, it won't make a difference
7 if you're still judging us under the same rules
8 and regulations and under the same statistic
9 numbers you're judging other schools. We're not
10 like other school; we are the only ones that
11 stand tall. We are the only ones that graduate
12 students that other people give up on. So for
13 you to sit here and tell us that we don't work,
14 I suggest you go back and recheck those numbers,
15 and try checking our numbers under our rules and
16 regulations, and our work, not on the other
17 people's work. Thank you.

18 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Bermudez. We
19 have now conclude the formal presentations by
20 the members of the dais. I will call, before we
21 start the public comment list, I'm going to call
22 them up, by numbers one through five and your
23 name. I do want to apologize if I mispronounce
24 anyone's name in advance. We are going to line
25 up over here, in this row. And then our staff

1 will proceed to kind of go ahead and guide you
2 to the mike when I call your number. Before I
3 move to public comment, I want to take this
4 opportunity to recognize some members of elected
5 officials' office that we have just joined us.
6 Mr. Ledesma, from Council member Dilan's office.
7 And Miss Medina, from Assembly member Espinal's
8 office. I want to take this opportunity to give
9 elected officials' offices the opportunity to
10 speak now. Miss Alexandra Pena, from State
11 Senator Dilan's office. You can, the mike there
12 is, yeah.

13 MISS ALEXANDRA PENA: Good evening,
14 everyone. My name is Alexandra Pena. I'm the
15 office manager for State Senator Dilan. And
16 unfortunately, he is in session; he couldn't
17 make it. But I'm going to reading his testimony
18 this evening. "Thank you to the panel assembled
19 today to hear the community's concern and
20 sentiments with the proposed Bushwick Community
21 High School closure. Civic input is the
22 foundation of a democratic society, and this
23 evening's meeting exemplifies our collective
24 commitment in this community. Unfortunately,
25 due the legislative session in Albany, I could

1 not attend tonight's meeting. But I wanted to
2 add my comments for the record. The proposed
3 closure of Bushwick Community High School is
4 troubling. I have read the Department of
5 Education's assessment of the school, and the
6 unflattering statistics put forth as a
7 justification for the closing of the school.
8 However, I cannot agree with this short-sighted
9 path, and would urge this panel to reassess the
10 closure of the school. Bushwick Community High
11 School's performance rating should be based upon
12 a system that is fair and representative of its
13 status as a transfer school. Many people have
14 expressed that this is not that case, and I
15 would hope that this panel recognizes that the
16 data's not always the end-all in assessing
17 something's value. Bushwick Community High
18 School is a beacon of hope to many students who
19 are looking for a second chance. These students
20 want to learn, long for opportunity, and closing
21 this school inhibits their ability to do so.
22 Each success story of a student who turned their
23 life around resonates throughout this community.
24 It fosters hope in others that may feel lost, or
25 overly burdened by life's obstacles. This plan

1 will undercut a legacy of hope and
2 opportunity. Not only would it be disservice to
3 those who our system may have failed before; it
4 will reinforce the stigma that many of these
5 students have faced their whole lives. Their
6 school, their hope, and they themselves are
7 failures. I have spent my whole life within
8 this community, and I know all too well the
9 challenges young people face. I have heard the
10 negative connotations affiliated with Bushwick,
11 and I do not accept them. These students do not
12 accept them. The faculty of Bushwick Community
13 High School does not accept them. In closing, I
14 ask that you provide this school and those who
15 walk in its halls with fair assessment, not with
16 erroneously based on graduation rates.
17 Furthermore, I strongly you not to label these
18 young people, who are working toward a second
19 chance, as failures. Thank you for allowing me
20 this opportunity to comment, and many thanks to
21 those who came in support of Bushwick Community
22 High School. Thank you."

23 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Pena. I
24 would like to now call out Miss Perez, who will
25 be representing Assemblyman Lopez's office.

1 MISS ANKLAN PEREZ: Good evening. My name
2 is Anklan Perez; I work for Assemblyman Vito
3 Lopez, who unfortunately was not able to be here
4 today. He's in Albany in session. And he asked
5 me to deliver his testimony. Assemblyman Lopez
6 strongly urges the New York City Board of
7 Education to continue operation of Bushwick
8 Community High School. The Assemblyman has met
9 with both parents and students, and made a firm
10 commitment to the protection and maintenance of
11 the school. He also understands a two-year
12 continuance might have certain accountability
13 measures attached to continuance of the school
14 operation. The Assemblyman strongly believes in
15 the quality educational standards, and will
16 support changes to the way the school operates.
17 But believes that based on his evaluation, this
18 school deserves a two-year extension. He
19 strongly urges meeting between the Board of
20 Education, the school, and himself before
21 December, in order to come up with a
22 comprehensive plan of action that parents,
23 students, and Board of Education can support and
24 agree, and we can agree to move forward. Thank
25 you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

1 And hopefully, you will understand the
2 concerns of our community. Thank you.

3 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Perez. I'd
4 like to now ask Mr. Reinoso to come up for
5 representing Councilwoman Reyna's office.

6 MR. ANTONIO REINOSO: Thank you very much.
7 My name is Antonio Reinoso, and I am Chief of
8 Staff to Council member Diana Reyna, here, of
9 course, to advocate on behalf of Bushwick
10 Community High School. For us, it's extremely
11 clear and very simple. We have to be very
12 careful with the message that we're currently
13 sending all the students that are here and the
14 students that have graduated. And the message
15 is very clear for the Department of Education.
16 And I apologize. Go, you can clap. Go ahead.

17 [Background noise]

18 MR. REINOSO: The message we're sending them
19 is that they do not have a second chance. And
20 this school in itself is a sham. That this
21 building and the programs that you have set
22 forth for years, long before today, are a waste
23 of time and are a sham. What we have to tell
24 them is that they do have a second chance, and
25 that we're paying attention to the details.

1 That we're not cutting them with one fell
2 swoop of the sword. That we're letting them
3 know that they matter, and that they're not just
4 numbers. That they are people, and that the
5 standards that we set forth as a transfer
6 school, we're going to continue that. And right
7 now, that is not the message we're sending. The
8 Department of Education has currently, and well,
9 this year specifically, has acted rashly with
10 the work that they are doing with all of our
11 schools. Williamsburg, Bushwick, Ridgewood,
12 wherever you are, they've just acted rashly.
13 And I think that we have to currently, at this
14 moment, take a stand, at the Department of
15 Education, and say, "We messed up. We made a
16 mistake." This school doesn't deserve a second
17 chance; it is a second chance. And this school
18 needs to get the opportunity to show what it
19 really is about, not with the standards of a
20 traditional school, but with the standards of a
21 transfer school. If it was a traditional
22 school, you would have named it that. But you
23 didn't. You named it a transfer school. So
24 treat it like a transfer school and make sure
25 you give it those standards. So on behalf of

1 Council member Diana Reyna, this school is not
2 physically located in our district, but many of
3 our students do go this school. So on behalf of
4 Council member Diana Reyna, I want to say that
5 we are going to stand with the community, stand
6 with the students and stand with the teachers,
7 and we will not accept the closure of Bushwick
8 Community High School. Thank you.

9 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Reinoso. I
10 want to now invite Miss Medina, the
11 representative of Assembly member Espinal's
12 office, to make statements.

13 MISS MEDINA: Good afternoon, greetings.
14 Foreign audio [0:31:17]. I really want to tell
15 you that I represent the Assembly member Rafael
16 Espinal of 54th Assembly District. I'm his
17 regional district manager, and I must say, not
18 only as a representative, but also as a child
19 advocate and a community member, that I've been
20 here all my life. I think that it's not fair
21 what they're doing. This is alternative; this
22 is the second chance. The Assembly member says,
23 "Look around you; this is the future." This is
24 the time that we need to give the opportunity to
25 these kids and show them that, yes, they can do,

1 and make a difference. And with in closing
2 the system is not fair. I think bringing a
3 comprehensive plan, echoing what the Assembly
4 member Vito Lopez did say as well, Dilan's
5 office, and the senators, I have to say that it
6 is not fair what they're doing to our kids
7 today, in the system. The educational system is
8 failing on Latino and African American children.
9 And I have to tell you, I have a daughter, and I
10 too fight in her school at Ericsson 126. And
11 I'm a PTA member, and have to say, it is
12 disgusting what they're doing to our system and
13 our kids. It is not fair, and the Assembly
14 member is not accepting this either. So he
15 would fight. He would fight with the parents
16 and our students. Thank you.

17 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Medina. We
18 are now going to move into the public comment
19 portion of the evening. As a reminder, public
20 comment is limited to two minutes. Time will be
21 kept, and we will signal you when you have 30
22 seconds remaining and when your time is up.
23 Again, I want to apologize to anyone in advance
24 if I mispronounce your name. Feel free when you
25 come up to the mike to say it out loud and

1 correct me. So I'm going to call up the first
2 five. The first five individuals, numbers one
3 through five, can come up. One through five:
4 Aaron Boyle, Eleanor Andrew, Karl Plummer,
5 Louise Bogue, and Jeannette Wright. Again, if
6 you can line up in this row right here, the
7 second to last row. And if you just give the
8 staff member your number when you get up.

9 [Background noise]

10 MR. GUERERRO: Speaker number one, Mr.
11 Boyle.

12 MR. AARON BOYLE: I love you guys. I'm on a
13 clock. I'm on a clock. Hello, everybody. I'm
14 Aaron Boyle; I'm a teacher and data specialist
15 at Bushwick Community High School. I've been
16 here for nine years. And being the data
17 specialist, usually when I talk about this, I
18 talk about a lot of numbers, a lot of math, a
19 lot of data, a lot of stats, a lot of formulas,
20 with the upshot being that Bushwick Community
21 High School's listing on the PLA list and this
22 process is more a mathematical inevitability of
23 the way that the formulas are set up. And less
24 about being a valid, comprehensive assessment of
25 who we are as a school. But I'm not going to

1 talk about that today. Because that
2 conversation is done. We've had it with
3 numerous educational officials of the state, of
4 the city level. It's been understood, changes
5 have been made to the structure, that logic has
6 prevailed, that is done. Expect for here. This
7 is the only place that for some reason, has not
8 prevailed, where that logic is not causing the
9 change that we believe should be made. That's
10 what I want to talk about: what is going on.
11 And the fact that our school, as you've heard
12 from some speakers and as you are going to hear
13 from many speakers, much more passionately than
14 I'm going to express, is that we don't fit with
15 the system that is at play right now. We don't
16 go into a neat little package that can be
17 measured nicely and put into a picture, which
18 the mayor really, really wants to put out there
19 of his successful educational legacy. We don't
20 fit into that picture, so we need to be molded
21 oppositely and put somewhere else. That is a
22 problem, because we're never going to fit in the
23 system. We are a school who is serving students
24 for whom the traditional system didn't work. So
25 I hope it's not a surprise that we cannot be

1 like the traditional system if we hope to
2 serve our students. Because that doesn't
3 exactly fit, it's something that we're going to
4 have to figure out. It's not something that we
5 need to sweep under a rug; it's not something we
6 need shift with an educational impact statement
7 that I disagree with in many ways, and we can
8 talk about that later after the two minutes is
9 up. But it comes down to this: there are
10 thousands, thousands, of students who are older,
11 and out there, and who are looking for a school.
12 We are looking at them and saying, "Welcome.
13 You have an opportunity here." What is the
14 deal, are we going to say to them?

15 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker
16 number two, Miss Eleanor Andrew.

17 MISS ELEANOR ANDREW: Good evening. My name
18 is Eleanor Andrew, and I'm here representing
19 Ernie Logan, President of the Council of School
20 Supervisors and Administrators. It's a very
21 interesting event this evening because I'm
22 delivering a message on behalf of Ernie, but I
23 also have a personal comment I'll give at the
24 end. The Bloomberg's New York City Department
25 of Ed's latest attempt to close 26 schools,

1 which are already in the process of a three-
2 year reform program, is a political maneuver
3 that is not rooted in sound educational
4 practice. Rather, it began as a ploy designed
5 to avoid negotiations with CSA and UFTO over new
6 principal and teacher evaluation systems. The
7 motivation behind this ploy was to follow the
8 turnaround model, a model that does not require
9 principal and teacher evaluations, and that
10 allows the city to close and immediately reopen
11 schools under new names. Will there be anything
12 else new about them? Yes. 50% of the teachers
13 would be new, while 50% of the former teachers
14 would be put into excess. There is nothing
15 educationally sound about this intervention
16 program. It is being introduced for cynical
17 reasons, not to help children. It will not
18 contribute to the development of sound principal
19 and teacher evaluation systems. Furthermore, in
20 removing half the staff from these schools, and
21 recruiting replacements from other schools,
22 Bloomberg's DOE will destabilize schools
23 throughout the system, one after the other, like
24 dominoes. While these human costs are the most
25 important ones, there are fiscal costs also.

1 Removing 1,000 teachers and tossing them into
2 the ATR pool, where they will work as
3 substitutes at a full salary and cost the school
4 approximately \$144 million annually. In
5 conclusion, I want to quote from William of Tyre
6 who wrote, in his chronicles, *A History of Deeds*
7 *beyond the Seas*, about 1175. He said, "It is
8 rare indeed that an enterprise, bad in exception
9 and perverse in purpose, has a good ending." On
10 a personal note, I think that a school that is a
11 transfer school is what we need for students
12 because I have a son who would have thrived,
13 being in a different type of environment, even
14 though he successfully went on. But a school
15 like this is what every child should have an
16 opportunity to attain. Thank you.

17 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Andrew.
18 Speaker number three, Mr. Plummer.

19 MR. KARL PLUMMER: I just want to say
20 welcome. My name is Karl Plummer; I represent
21 Brownsville Academy High School, which is also
22 another transfer school. So I want to say I
23 know what you guys are looking for and I know
24 what transfer schools can do and have done. And
25 also, as a person that's taught in one, and I

1 remember on the very first graduation we had,
2 the former chancellor, Joe Klein, showed up, and
3 he said, and I'm quoting you, and which is
4 strange for me, to quote someone such as Klein
5 that I don't always agree with. But he said,
6 when he started, "The New York City Board of
7 Education was a size seven shoe that was trying
8 to be given to everyone." He created a transfer
9 school, so that way, the kids that had bigger
10 feet and needed more time, had a shoe that fit.
11 You are now that same mindset, sorry. I got to
12 learn my timing, sorry. You are now using that
13 same size seven rule mindset to close this
14 school. Simply put, if you created it to answer
15 a problem that you weren't able to answer with a
16 traditional school, why are you then using the
17 same measuring tape for that traditional school,
18 to measure this shoe? You need to figure a way
19 to get a shoe that fits and a measuring tape
20 that fits what this school does. 'Cause not
21 everything is a numbers. And I'm going to take
22 a little bit deeper, because I don't like
23 numbers because one of my favorite baseball
24 players, Derek Jeter, when they measure his
25 numbers, he's an average, if not even below

1 average, shortstop. But how many rings does
2 everybody else have? How many other success
3 stories does Bushwick Community High School
4 have, compared to other schools, that you're not
5 looking at?

6 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Plummer.
7 Speaker number four, Ms. Bogue. Ms. Bogue,
8 before you speak, I'm going to call up the next
9 couple of speakers. I just want to call up the
10 next couple of speakers for the list. No, no,
11 you can stand up. You can stay there.

12 MS. LOUISE BOGUE: Oh, fair enough.

13 MR. GUERRERO: Can I get speakers number six
14 through 15? Six through 15? Speakers six
15 through 15, if you could please come down?
16 Thank you very much.

17 MS. BOGUE: Oh, I can go?

18 MR. GUERERRO: Ladies and gentlemen, Ms.
19 Bogue. You may go ahead.

20 MS. BOGUE: Hi, my name is Louise Bogue. I
21 am a former teacher of Bushwick Outreach, many
22 years ago. This is not the first time this
23 school has come under attack. From 15 years
24 ago, no one understood went on in these walls,
25 in these classrooms. It was misunderstood then,

1 and it continues to be misunderstood now.
2 Just as a note, your educational impact plan has
3 a typo. It says, "You want to improve the
4 education in K, not 291." That is not Bushwick.
5 We go by a different number. Based on quality
6 reviews, school survey report, progress report,
7 this school does fine. It's the DOE's
8 insistence on looking at that six-year
9 graduation rate that brings all that data down.
10 It is not accurate. Education, to me, is one of
11 our most privileged public trusts. And I feel
12 the DOE needs to trust the community to
13 determine what is best for them and who lives
14 here, who is educated here, who works here. And
15 the DOE has refused to do that in choosing to
16 close this school. When I taught here, we did
17 what was known as "Hero's Quest of Mythology."
18 We would start with Gilgamesh, work our way
19 through the Aztecs, the Egyptians, the Mayans.
20 This is where the student's hero's quest starts.
21 This is where they meet their challenges, they
22 look for help, they find their supports. And
23 when they leave here, they go on to do great
24 things. That cannot be taken away from them,
25 and the spirit of this school cannot be measured

1 in data.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Ms. Bogue.

3 Speaker number five, Miss Wright.

4 MISS JEANNETTE WRIGHT: Hello, my name is
5 Miss Wright, and I am the family worker here at
6 IS 291. You cannot imagine having most of the
7 students that are in this room graduating from
8 291, and having leadership. You have to look at
9 the success of a school. And majority of the
10 time, the success of the school is due to your
11 leadership. So I understand what you're talking
12 about as far as to the data, but you're not in
13 this community, some of you. You don't live.
14 And as a family worker, you don't know when I go
15 out to houses 10:00 at night, 9:00 at night, and
16 I see students who are preoccupied and don't
17 have time to get their classwork because they
18 got too many other responsibilities. And for
19 whatever reason, maybe they went in a
20 traditional school and they started being
21 attacked, and being ran home and going through
22 ridicule, and not shown compassion. 291 here,
23 they leave us with compassion. That lady right
24 there has a great commodity with this principal,
25 and every principal that has been in this

1 building. So you may want to bring somebody
2 new; you may want to have new staff. But they
3 will not compare to the staff that these
4 students are dealing with now. The Department
5 of Ed is so quick to say "no child left behind,"
6 and they're so quick to say that we need to look
7 at the child as a whole from the inside out.
8 You're talking about a school who looks at a
9 child from the inside out. And they deal with
10 issues the Department of Ed don't.

11 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Wright.
12 Speaker number six, Yvette Santiago. She's
13 nervous.

14 MS. YVETTE SANTIAGO: I'm the parent of
15 Alyssa Fay Santiago [phonetic]--

16 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Can you--

17 MS. SANTIAGO: --currently. I'm the parent
18 of Alyssa Fay Santiago currently in this school.
19 I'm short. She came in at 20, expected to
20 graduate January of next year. I, no other
21 transfer schools are going to accept these kids
22 at this age. 20? They come in with a certain
23 amount of credits. They're not going to be able
24 to make it. If you close this school, I know
25 for sure she's going to drop out. She won't

1 have a faith in the system. If you close this
2 school, you're shutting down all these students
3 that came in and put their faith in this school.
4 The structure of the school is what means
5 something to them. She came from a school in
6 which they changed the structure. It all went
7 downhill. She has two kids. Both kids were
8 high-risk pregnancies, so she basically missed
9 three years of high school. Home-schooled at
10 home during these pregnancies. They didn't work
11 for her; they did nothing for her. I never saw
12 my daughter be on honor roll. I never expected
13 this in all the years she's been in school.
14 She's been in 291, PS 75, in the system in this
15 neighborhood. Nothing has worked for her, not
16 'cause she was a problem child, but because of
17 the system: the teachers and the way things
18 were. The few teachers we had, which were good,
19 it took more than that to make something out of
20 her. This school has made something out of her
21 and all these students because I have seen. And
22 if you check the Facebook of all these comments
23 that these kids are making, they put their faith
24 in this school, to bring them ahead. They're
25 thriving. If you change, what are they going to

1 go to? They just want to drop out. Half of
2 them are already doing it. How are you going to
3 set them up for failure, after you gave them
4 that chance to succeed?

5 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Ms. Santiago.
6 Speaker number seven, Mr. Leo Casey.

7 MR. LEO CASEY: Yeah. Good evening. My
8 name is Leo Casey, and I am a vice president of
9 the United Federation of Teachers. And I
10 represent this school. And I want to say
11 tonight that Bushwick Community High School is a
12 place of redemption. It takes the wounded, and
13 it heals them. It takes the fallen, and it
14 lifts them up. And if you kill this school, you
15 are going to kill not only the school, but the
16 part of your own soul that made you into an
17 educator, and said there is something in the
18 power of the intellect of every young person
19 that we can reach, and we can build on. Earlier
20 today, President Mulgrew and myself were on the
21 phone to Regents Chancellor Tisch. And she said
22 to us that she has gotten the waiver from the
23 U.S. Department of Education, which will allow
24 this school, and all other transfer schools, to
25 be taken out of the PLA category. If the

1 Department of Education chooses not to
2 exercise this waiver, and it is a choice, it is
3 a choice. If the Department of Education
4 chooses not to exercise this waiver, it has
5 killed, it has killed a school that is a place
6 of redemption.

7 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Casey.

8 [Background noise]

9 MR. GUERERRO: Speaker number eight, is it
10 Mr. Lemon or Mr. Luan [phonetic]? Is it Lemon
11 or Luan?

12 MR. WALTER LEMON: Lemon.

13 MR. GUERERRO: Lemon, Mr. Lemon? Go ahead.

14 MR. LEMON: All right. All right, hello
15 everyone. My name is Walter Lemon. I am
16 scheduled to graduate this June. I am 21 years
17 of age, and I have been given a second chance.
18 I was failing; I came to this school with only
19 seven credits at 18 years of age. And from the
20 moment from orientation, this was like a home.
21 This is not just a school; it is a home. This
22 is family. We see each other as like, this is a
23 place where no one ever wants to leave. This is
24 a place where children rather stay than go home.
25 They give us, we celebrate holidays. What

1 school you know celebrate holidays? None. I
2 want to say that the staff here, they are
3 fathers and mothers to us. Some second-time,
4 some first-time, 'cause we have lost them. And
5 like you all closing this school, it will not be
6 good. I'm just telling you all from the bottom
7 of my heart. Because I came here, and it really
8 changed me as a person. They don't just educate
9 us, but they help us understand who we are, and
10 who we can be. And on that note, before I close
11 up, I just want to say that if things do go into
12 effect, and you all do send in new staff, how
13 are they going to reach us if they can't relate
14 to us?

15 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Lemon. Mr.
16 Gould, just give me one second. I want to take
17 this opportunity to recognize Miss Evelyn Cruz,
18 the representative for Representative Nydia
19 Velazquez's office. She's not going to speak
20 now, but Mr. Gould, you can go ahead. I just
21 wanted to take this opportunity to recognize
22 her, but Mr. Gould, go ahead.

23 MR. ALEX GOULD: Yeah, my name is Alex
24 Gould. I'm a student at Borough of Manhattan
25 Community College, and a supporter of the

1 Internationalist Group. And I'm here to
2 defend public education against this wrecking
3 operation. I'm here to defend Bushwick
4 Community High School, the teachers, students,
5 and parents and community here against this
6 union-busting, racist, segregationist, wrecking
7 operation coming from the Obama White House,
8 from Cuomo in Albany, and from Mayor Bloomberg.
9 And I'm not here to bed the Department of
10 Education and to tell them all the facts that we
11 all already know, because they're not here to
12 listen to us. They've already made up their
13 minds. They're so smug they think they can walk
14 all over us. But they're dead wrong. Because
15 when you go after--I only have two minutes.
16 When you after 130,000 teachers and staff, when
17 you go after over a million students and their
18 families, what we say here doesn't make a
19 difference. They've already made up their
20 minds. But they're touching the working class
21 of this city that makes city run and can make
22 this city stuck. And it has the power to do
23 that. You're touching the sons and daughters of
24 the people who drive the trains and make the
25 electricity turn on, who clean all the offices,

1 and can stop this wrecking operation that's
2 coming straight from Wall Street and the White
3 House. And we need to use that power, the power
4 of the working class. I think that parents,
5 students, teachers who want to stop this union-
6 busting, racist, segregationist wrecking
7 operation, need to occupy the closing schools.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Mr. Golden, would you please--
9 -

10 MR. GOULD: [Interposing] Shut--

11 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] bring it to a
12 close?

13 MR. GOULD: --down the Department of
14 Education with the power of the workers'
15 mobilization.

16 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Mr. David
17 Donsky?

18 [Background noise]

19 MR. DAVID DONSKY: Hello. My name is Dave,
20 and I'm one of the teachers here. And I really
21 just want to directly address Mr. Shulansky
22 [phonetic] of the DOE, because I think we all
23 know this like Aaron said, and other people
24 said. We know the accountability metrics are
25 wrong for this school. We know how they're

1 measured is wrong; it makes no sense. The
2 state, the city, everybody's on the same page,
3 and I know you know it too. And we know it's
4 about politics, and we know you know it too.
5 But, but, I want to realize the consequences of
6 the data-driven approach. 'Cause what happens
7 right now is most transfer schools won't take
8 most of our students. 'Cause 17, 18-year olds
9 with no credits can never graduate on time,
10 ever. Who's going to take them? 'Cause what
11 happens if you take them, you get closed. Most
12 transfer schools in the city right now will not
13 take a 17-year old with zero credits in zero
14 regions. No transfer school in this city right
15 now would take a 20-year old with no credits,
16 except this one. And you're about to close it.
17 And the EIS outlines will take 16-year olds.
18 And that is so cynical. Because all you're
19 doing is juking the stats. You're taking
20 younger kids, so it's more likely though they'll
21 graduate on time, but you're not improving
22 academic outcomes. You're just playing a stat
23 game. And I'm telling you, the next thing
24 that's going to happen is the new school will
25 change the admission policy. The admission

1 policy for this school is: zero credits, zero
2 regions, 17 or older. But who's going to take
3 those students at the new school, if every one
4 of those schools, every one of those students
5 count as a failure? Walter, who just spoke,
6 didn't graduate on time. But he's not a
7 failure. The DOE is failing him.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. - -. I'd
9 like to bring up Miss Cruz, for Assemblywoman
10 Velazquez's office.

11 MISS EVELYN CRUZ: Hi. Good evening,
12 everyone. My name is Evelyn Cruz; I'm here
13 representing Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez.
14 Thank you to the members of the CEC for your
15 consistent engagement in education issues in our
16 community, okay? And Deputy Chancellor, we've
17 written to you regarding our opposition to the
18 proposed transformation or closure of Bushwick
19 Community High School. As a representative of
20 the 12th Congressional District, which
21 encompasses Bushwick, the Congresswoman is
22 greatly disappointed and distressed with any
23 plans by New York City DOE to close or transform
24 this institution when it is accomplishing the
25 goals of a transfer school. It is unfair to

1 measure this school on the basis of cohorts
2 designed for cohorts of traditional high
3 schools. Bushwick Community High School was
4 created to meet the needs of students 17 to 21
5 years of age who did not meet the academic
6 standards of traditional high schools. Bushwick
7 Community High School is unique in that it is a
8 transfer high school that admits students who
9 encounter difficulty in traditional high school
10 environment. Sadly, these students have often
11 dropped off the traditional school radar.
12 However, they have voluntarily registered at
13 this school, which is able to admit an age
14 group, even if they have accrued only five
15 school credits. They have been admitted into
16 Bushwick Community High School, and they have
17 succeeded. This school serves more than 300,
18 more than 300 low-income, predominantly minority
19 students. These students come from difficult
20 circumstances. Some are homeless. Some are
21 young parents who are pursuing a school degree
22 and raising a child while working. Bushwick
23 Community High School provides these students a
24 rigorous and full academic curriculum, enabling
25 them to graduate and go on to higher learning.

1 The state education department of New York has
2 recently moved to differentiate its
3 consideration of transfer schools in the
4 persistently lowest achieving school process.
5 We urge DOE to listen and to do the same. If
6 one compares this school with other transfer
7 schools, it is evident that the school has
8 scored 90 out of 100 on the New York Progress
9 Report for ELA Regents Performance. And, and,
10 and, 100 out of the 100 of math Regents
11 Performance. Those are the facts.
12 Additionally, the school has met the No Child
13 Left Behind adequate yearly progress targets for
14 both math and English. The school demonstrates
15 a 90% passing level in English Regents Exams,
16 and 100% in math exams. So the message from
17 Nydia is, we need to keep a successful,
18 different, unique model happening here in
19 Bushwick. You look in front of you, these are
20 the faces of the young people that DOE and we,
21 as public servants, have to support. If we want
22 a civil society, if we want the best weapon
23 against guns and violence in our community, then
24 education is the way. And that is clear-cut. I
25 also want to close by saying that we were here

1 last week. We've been here before, and we've
2 met with many students. And it is the
3 compelling students, Deputy Chancellor, not the
4 data, that will tell you what is happening at
5 Bushwick Community High School. And I say this,
6 and I say this with conviction, because we live
7 it, we walk these streets, we meet with these
8 young people. What we encounter our students,
9 one, two, three students that we talked to, one
10 of them was shot 17 times while he was out of
11 school. He didn't know where to go. Guess
12 what? He was counseled and sent to this school.
13 He survived 17 gunshot wounds. He graduated
14 from this school, and he's now a student at SUNY
15 Purchase. That is a success story. We met
16 another young man, and he may talk tonight.
17 Another homeless young man, dropped out of
18 school, I think came here with eight credits.
19 He is now, he graduated, he attended a technical
20 school for car, mechanical special school. He's
21 now working for a major auto business, I think
22 it's Toyota, as an engineer, mechanic/engineer.
23 This kid would have been another statistic, had
24 it not been for the Bushwick Community High
25 School. So these are the stories. The data

1 looks great, but these are the real,
2 compelling stories. The Congresswoman invites
3 you, the Mayor, and DOE, Chancellor; let's take
4 a walk on these streets. Let's walk at night,
5 let's walk in the morning, and let's walk these
6 streets when these kids are in school. It may
7 look chaotic, but it's like organized chaos, you
8 know, like government sometimes? So what we're
9 urging is, your support, we're urging that this
10 school be removed from the list. Let's sit
11 down, let's have a dialogue. Let's meet the
12 alumnis, and let's look forward to really,
13 really putting a stop to crime and violence in
14 Bushwick, supporting these kids. Thank you.
15 Thank you very much.

16 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Cruz.
17 Speaker number 11, Mr. Sanchez.

18 MR. MATTHEW SANCHEZ: Hi. I just want to
19 say, I graduated from this school. I'm sorry;
20 I'm a nervous speaker, but all right. I just
21 want to say, I graduated from this school, and I
22 was really bad at math. And I'm not sure if
23 anybody knew Charles, but Charles was my math
24 teacher. And every time I couldn't get
25 something in the classroom, no matter what, if

1 everyone else got it and I didn't, Charles
2 would stop the whole classroom until I got it.
3 And I just want to say, I had a 90 average in
4 math. I never had a 90 average in math in my
5 whole life. And I know the school is way better
6 than a lot of schools because the first school
7 I've been to is Art and Design in Manhattan.
8 And I walked out of my math classes countless
9 times, and the teachers had never gotten back in
10 the classroom. And here, they keep me in the
11 classroom. And I just want to say, if you close
12 this school, this is going to be a crisis
13 situation because you're destroying potential
14 futures and you're killing the enrichment of
15 this neighborhood. This neighborhood is poor,
16 and you're making it more poor by steering away
17 from opportunities they may never get again in
18 their lives. And you know, this school's been
19 given birth to innovators and generations of
20 people. I could give you, like, countless names
21 of people in my family, like more than eight
22 people from my family have graduated from this
23 school before me, you know. And they taught me
24 about this school, you know. And if you close
25 this school, like you're going to kill the

1 community as well as the school, so thank.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Before I
3 call the next speaker, I'm just going to ask
4 that speakers 16 through 25 please come down.
5 16 through 25. Speakers number 16 through 25,
6 you can please come down. Mr. Soler? You can
7 go ahead.

8 MR. HECTOR SOLER: How are you doing, ladies
9 and gentlemen? My name is Hector Soler, if you
10 don't me. I'm an alumni of this school; I
11 graduated here last June. I know it's sort of
12 cliché to say that this school saved people's
13 lives, but it actually does. For example, it
14 saved my life; it saved my cousin's life who's
15 here right now. Yo Dee [phonetic], can you
16 stand up? Where are you at? It's my cousin - -
17 . I have two other cousins, one who couldn't
18 make it because he's taking a teacher
19 certification exam right now. And one who's not
20 here with us today 'cause she passed away two
21 years ago, but she was a fire inspector for the
22 FDNY. Myself, I came into school 17 and a half
23 years old, with only two credits. Before the
24 school, I attended two other schools: Murry
25 Bergtraum High School for Business Careers, and

1 Grover Cleveland High School, which is not too
2 far from here. I came here; the staff here
3 accepted me with open arms. I was a little
4 rough around the edges, you know, one of those
5 little kids that ran the streets, was into
6 gangs. You know, fast money, illegal stuff. In
7 2009, I had gotten arrested for robbery and
8 assault. Dave, if you can, so you show
9 yourself, Dave, Tabari [phonetic], Ali
10 [phonetic], Drew [phonetic], and Neil
11 [phonetic], who is not here with us today, wrote
12 me recommendation letters for the district
13 attorney, let them know how I am in school and
14 who I really am as a person. With those
15 letters, I was able to get my case dropped with
16 no probation. And that enabled me to get
17 counters jobs, like I worked for UPS, I worked
18 for the Sports Authority. But I now attend
19 BMCC, Borough of Manhattan Community College. I
20 got accepted to seven or eight different
21 colleges, but I chose BMCC as the most
22 affordable. And right now, I've attained 30
23 credits. I'm halfway towards my associate's for
24 criminal justice, that's all I'm going to say.

25 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker

1 number 13, can you say your last name, sir? I
2 can't.

3 MR. TONY SCLAFANI: Tony Sclafani, UFT
4 District Rep for Bushwick Community High School.

5 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you.

6 MR. SCLAFANI: If you take a look at the
7 Webster Dictionary and take a look at the word
8 "oxymoron," it's pointless foolishness. Well,
9 welcome to oxymoron. When you have a school
10 that is successful, with the population of
11 students that you have here at Bushwick
12 Community, when you have a school that is
13 successful, with the kids that no other school
14 wants to educate, when you have a school that
15 successful, with the kids who have shared
16 stories with you, and you're going to hear even
17 more tonight, and how this school has helped
18 them. When you want to close that school,
19 because it's been a success, that's pointless
20 foolishness. It's an oxymoron. And it's
21 ironic. It's ironic that the waiver that could
22 save this school was for all intents and
23 purposes, authored by two teachers from this
24 school. It's ironic that the chancellor of the
25 state education department came here, spoke to

1 these people, and helped them with the words,
2 to make sure that this waiver would pass the
3 Board of Regents. And it's ironic that the fact
4 that this waiver has now been approved, that
5 this school is about a day too late. But it's
6 not. You see, Shael, I have a phone here. And
7 I have Merryl Tisch's phone number in it. You
8 can call her right now, and you say that this
9 city wants to apply that waiver to Bushwick
10 Community High School.

11 [Background noise]

12 MR. SCLAFANI: And if you want my phone,
13 Shael, I'll be more than happy to let you use
14 it. The UFT will pay the damn phone bill. I
15 want you to look at these people, Shael. I want
16 you to look at these young men and these women,
17 and I want you to listen to their stories. And
18 then I want you to be able to go home tonight
19 and justify closing this school. Oxymoron:
20 Mayor Bloomberg. Oxymoron.

21 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

22 MR. SCLAFANI: You close the school that's
23 successful with a population you're dealing
24 with, and you do it for political reasons,
25 because you couldn't get your damn appeal

1 process passed.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Let me
3 remind you to be respectful of everybody's time.

4 MR. SCLAFANI: With that in mind, okay, I
5 just want to close by repeating something I said
6 in Brooklyn Borough Hall a couple of weeks ago.
7 We're not dealing with an educational issue;
8 we're dealing with a mayor who's arrogant,
9 narcissistic, vindictive, vicious, and a
10 bloodsucker.

11 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
12 14, Mr. Martir.

13 MR. ANDREW MARTIR: Good evening, everyone.
14 My name is Andrew Martir. I'm standing here
15 with my family. But I first want to say thank
16 you to all the representatives and the elected
17 officials that are here, thank you to make the -
18 - and Jesus. And again, for everyone in the
19 community that is here with us, I wanted to say
20 thank you. But I do want to start with, you
21 know, first of all, I'm one of the guidance
22 counselors in this building; I'm one of the
23 college advisors in this building. And I am a
24 graduate of Bushwick Outreach Center. I met my
25 beautiful wife, who is the lead guidance

1 counselor, here at orientation. I came in
2 with nine credits, and she came in with--

3 MS. MILLIE LOPEZ-MARTIR: [Interposing]
4 Eight.

5 MR. MARTIR: Eight. And this school
6 absolutely changed my life. It is the very
7 reason that I went to college. It is the very
8 reason that my wife to college. And I attained
9 my bachelor's, my master's, and my advanced
10 master's degree. It is the very reason that I
11 can help my children with their homework, and
12 they're going to pursue an education, because my
13 parents had a third grade education. And it was
14 not a part of the conversation at the dinner
15 table. But I want to share with you a little
16 data since you guys love data. I mean, we just
17 say a couple of names. Millie Lopez-Martir,
18 William Martir, Nita Martir [phonetic], Eduard
19 Monchano [phonetic], Tatiana Pagan [phonetic],
20 Angel Pagan [phonetic], Helen Lopez [phonetic],
21 Jerrell Rodriguez [phonetic], Chris Rodriguez
22 [phonetic], Kayla Rodriguez [phonetic], Angel
23 Orsay [phonetic], Alex Morales [phonetic],
24 Raymond Rivera [phonetic], Oriel Torrez
25 [phonetic], Felicia Gomez [phonetic] are 15

1 members of my family that have graduated from
2 this - - school.

3 [Background noise]

4 MR. MARTIR: And I give you the list of
5 those names 'cause anyone can say, "Yeah, it
6 saved a bunch of lives in my family." This
7 building, this school, the teachers in this
8 building, that now have to reapply for their
9 jobs, have single-handedly affected and impacted
10 the lives of my family and my entire family and
11 have totally, totally changed the lives of my
12 children. So I wanted to say, to you guys, I
13 hope you hear us loud and clear. And I wanted
14 to say to my students, all power to the people.

15 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Martir.
16 Speaker number 15, Millie Martir.

17 MS. LOPEZ-MARTIR: Yes.

18 MR. GUERERRO: Go ahead.

19 MS. LOPEZ-MARTIR: Hi. So my name is Millie
20 Lopez-Martir. I'm the lead guidance counselor
21 here in Bushwick Community High School. I've
22 been here nine years. And just like my husband
23 Andrew said, I'm a product of this environment,
24 this community, and this school. Since I want
25 to put a face to the data, because it's very

1 easy when you're talking about statistics and
2 you're looking at reports, that you forget that
3 you're dealing with the lives of people in this
4 community. So in this audience, if when you
5 applied to Bushwick Community High School,
6 Bushwick Outreach, this school, and you were
7 between the ages of 17 to 19, and you had less
8 than 15 credits, no Regents, and you're in this
9 building, you either got your high school
10 diploma or you're still in this building, I want
11 you to stand. And that's including Andrew and
12 myself that we're already standing. I just want
13 to put a face to this decision. This decision
14 is not about data; it's not about statistics.
15 This about the lives of the people in this
16 community. I have kids commuting from Staten
17 Island. I have kids from Bronxville. I got
18 kids from the Bronx who don't want to do the
19 schools in that community; they want to go to
20 Bushwick Community High School. As someone that
21 has sat in many meetings with Aaron talking
22 about data, I was in the meeting with Chancellor
23 Tisch, one of the conversations that we had was
24 not about data. It was about the lives of the
25 students. When I have students who've graduated

1 from this school, who've expire their six-year
2 cohort, you forget that that kid, we don't get
3 positive ratings, but we transform that child's
4 life. That child is still a success, and a
5 functioning member of this community because
6 they graduated from this school. So although
7 you don't acknowledge it as a success on behalf
8 of the school based on the statistics, the
9 reality that kids are success stories, because
10 they came to this school and they committed to
11 transforming their lives.

12 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
13 16, Jesus Gonzales.

14 MR. JESUS GONZALES: Good evening. My name
15 is Jesus Gonzales; I'm an alumni from '05, the
16 first graduating class of Bushwick Community
17 High School. I attended Bushwick Outreach
18 Center beforehand. And I'm here, I wanted to
19 first of all, thank you all for being here and
20 hearing our concerns. I want to thank the
21 elected officials who is represented here today.
22 And for really standing on the right side of
23 this issue and working hard for us. I want to
24 thank all the students. I want to thank Ariel
25 for being patient, because I know that being

1 patient with me, and being patient with this
2 process, because I know it's tough, when we in
3 this boxing match, you want to go for the
4 knockout. And I know it's tough; we're fighting
5 together. Hopefully, we strongly urge the
6 Department of Education to do the right thing.
7 It's very blatant and obvious that the wrong
8 thing is to have us on this list, and to take
9 the proposal off the table before the 26th. Time
10 is ticking; we still have time. I'm extremely
11 optimistic and very happy that you all are all
12 here today. Another thing is, I want to say on
13 behalf of all the, you know, I must have gotten
14 like, at least 100 messages from alumni
15 throughout this process. You know, we're not
16 failures. And the statistics will say that
17 we're failures, but we're not. And I came in
18 here at 17 with three credits. And according to
19 your turnover plan, it'd deny students like
20 myself, it'd deny students like Drew, like Bakti
21 [phonetic], like Cynthia [phonetic], like other
22 folks. How many of you are going to be the
23 first in your family to graduate high school?

24 FEMALE VOICE 3: Right here.

25 MR. GONZALES: We have students who are the

1 youngest sibling. More than five siblings who
2 will be the first to graduate high school. How
3 many of you are will be the first to go to
4 college? First person in their family? This is
5 a devastating blow to the entire city, if you do
6 this turnover model for the school. Please take
7 it into consideration on behalf of metro New
8 York, on behalf of the community, and standing
9 here with the elected officials who are present
10 in this building. We strongly urge you to do
11 the right thing. You still have time, and we
12 have confidence in you. Please don't let us
13 lose confidence in this system. Thank you.

14 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Gonzales.
15 Speaker number 17, Sydney Rodriguez.

16 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Hi, my name is Sydney
17 Rodriguez. I am a current student of Bushwick
18 Community High School. And it's known as China.
19 Well, I'm here to speak today because you keep
20 telling me that I have a seat in this school.
21 And I do have to come back in 2013 and I will
22 not sit in a classroom with teachers I do not
23 know, teachers who do not understand me as a
24 person. And today, I sit in a classroom with a
25 person with Tabari [phonetic]. I don't even

1 call him teacher; I call him dad. Why?
2 'Cause he takes the time and he respects me
3 enough to tell me when I'm wrong, when I'm
4 right. He treats me like I'm his daughter, and
5 he teaches me like I'm his daughter. Allie
6 [phonetic], she takes the time. Me and her bump
7 heads all the time, but you know what? She
8 takes the time to try to understand me. I have
9 teachers every day who try to look for me. And
10 if I'm absent, they make sure I'm at school the
11 next day. If I'm sick, they make sure they call
12 me and see I'm okay. And I could tell you half
13 of these students will tell you the same thing,
14 that all these teachers do the same exact thing
15 for them. And you know what? For you to tell
16 me that I'm going to be here next year, that
17 everything is going to be okay, that you're
18 going to bring your staff that is going to be
19 exactly the same, you can't bring back teachers
20 like these teachers. You can't find copies like
21 these teachers. And as much as you want to tell
22 me yeah, I'm still going to get my high school
23 diploma, I'm going to get my high school
24 diploma. You're not going to take away my
25 education. But you know what? You're going to

1 take away a family that I gained. You're
2 going to take away a family that you know what
3 is going to break my heart to be here in June
4 and tell me that my principal is going to leave
5 me. Because that's not a principal; that is a
6 family member. And you see the students, the
7 students who stand behind me, even though I hate
8 facing my back towards them at this moment.
9 These are students who I promise you, ten years
10 from now, when I come back for this reunion,
11 they're going to be lawyers, doctors, and they
12 are the most, they're family to me. I might not
13 get along with all of them, but they are so
14 smart in every class. I could tell you that
15 today I spoke to every single one of them. My
16 students, they're standing up today because they
17 believe they have a future. And I'm not let
18 Mayor Bloomberg or any of you take that away
19 from us.

20 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
21 18, Ricardo Rodriguez.

22 MR. RICARDO RODRIGUEZ: How's everybody
23 doing? My name is Ricardo Rodriguez. I'm the
24 CUNY college mentor at Bushwick Community High
25 School and I'm class of 2011. See, I can sit

1 here and spend two minutes about how before I
2 came here, I was addicted to drugs, how I was
3 living in the streets, how I barely came in here
4 with barely any credits and barely any Regents.
5 But right now, I want to talk about how
6 everybody behind me is the reason why I love
7 coming to work every Tuesday and every Thursday.
8 If it wasn't for these people, if it wasn't for
9 the staff or the students or anybody here, I
10 wouldn't be who I am today. I wouldn't be who
11 I'm going to be in the future. This school has
12 changed my life. If it wasn't for Ellie Weiss,
13 she's the reason why I've done homework for the
14 first time in five years. You understand? If
15 it wasn't for my best friend Drew Martir, I
16 would not be in college right now. Right now,
17 my job consists of getting each and every one of
18 these students into college. You understand?
19 If it wasn't for this building, if it wasn't for
20 this culture, then I would not be, and Dee would
21 not be who they are, as well as who they had
22 potential to be. They have potential, as my
23 sister before said, they have potential to be
24 doctors and lawyers and anything they want to
25 be. But if you take away the very root that

1 gives them that potential, then what do they
2 have? If you take away the platform that has
3 created the fact that I learned a Puerto Rican
4 consisted of a Taino, of an African and European
5 descent, then I would not know my history the
6 way this school has taught me. If you take away
7 this school, if you take away this school from
8 my community, then what do my people have left
9 to accomplish? You understand? There's other
10 schools out there, but there's no school like
11 this school. Back then, this school used to mean
12 a lot to me. Now this school means everything
13 to me. This school is my first home. This
14 school is my serenity. This school is the
15 reason why I'm going to become a guidance
16 counselor and help the brothers and sisters
17 who've went through the same struggle that I
18 have, to help the same brothers and sisters who
19 is in the same position as me, and everybody
20 behind me. This school is the reason why I want
21 to change the world. And if it wasn't for this
22 school, I would not be the super man that I feel
23 like right now. And I love everybody in this
24 school. Power to the people, you all.

25 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number

1 19, Miss Weiss. You take your time. Take
2 your time.

3 MISS ELLIE WEISS: Okay.

4 MR. GUERERRO: Whenever you're ready, 'cause
5 the--

6 MISS WEISS: [Interposing] No clock? No
7 clock here, right?

8 MR. GUERERRO: I'm not going to cut you off.
9 Your time has not started; don't worry about it.
10 Take your time.

11 MISS WEISS: All right. I've been a teacher
12 since 1986 in Bushwick Outreach Center, and
13 Bushwick Community High School. 26 years. You
14 want data? I've got data. But nobody's asked
15 me for our data. Nobody has talked to us. And
16 I can put a spin on some of your data. Our
17 graduation rate is lower than you would want it
18 because the kids who graduated after their six-
19 year cohort are not counted as graduates in our
20 school. That's number one. Number two: the way
21 I view our graduation rate is those are
22 hundreds, literally hundreds of students who
23 never would have graduated in New York City,
24 period, end of sentence. That is our legacy.
25 There are hundreds of students that would never

1 have graduated from their own high schools and
2 no other, and there's another fact for you. No
3 other transfer school in the city would have
4 taken our students. You want data. We hold two
5 orientations a year. Every year, every student
6 fills out experiences of their old high schools,
7 experiences of their educational system. We
8 have data this thick as to why those schools did
9 not work, and we have data about how unfair and
10 unjust the educational system is in New York.
11 You want data? We have data. And I only have
12 30 seconds. I got two things to say, and one, I
13 do this with all due respect. Even my 12-year-
14 old daughter understands that you are measuring
15 us incorrectly. Everybody in this room knows
16 you are measuring us incorrectly. My only
17 question to you, and I say this not as a teacher
18 to Board of Ed members. I say it person to
19 person. How can you not, how can you not take
20 us off this list and change the way we're
21 measured? Everybody knows it's ridiculous, it's
22 unfair, it's disgusting, and you as a human
23 being need to look at yourself and ask yourself
24 how can you do that? And, I love you. I love
25 you.

1 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Weiss.

2 Speaker number 20, Miss Osato. How do you say
3 your first name? How do you say your first
4 name?

5 MISS UNA OSATO: Una.

6 MR. GUERERRO: Una? Una Osato? Okay.

7 MISS OSATO: Yeah.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Go ahead.

9 MISS OSATO: Hi. That's the teaching staff
10 that you have at BCHS. Power and beauty and
11 inspiration to everyone. And to take that way
12 from a community is tragic. I'm a teaching
13 artist; I've been a teaching artist for the past
14 ten years. I've worked in dozens of schools
15 around New York City. And what I've seen at
16 BCHS is like no other school. The humanity that
17 the staff and the administrators treat the
18 students with, is like no other I've seen at any
19 other school. And that culture is seen through
20 the students in how they treat each other. And
21 I just hope that tonight, you'll learn the
22 lesson from them about treating other people and
23 schools with humanity. And that you'll do the
24 same by taking them off the list. Thank you.

25 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number

1 21, Cynthia, I can't read your last name, it's
2 just--

3 MS. CYNTHIA TAPIA: Tapia, Tapia.

4 MR. GUERERRO: Tapia?

5 MS. TAPIA: Yeah.

6 MR. GUERERRO: Go ahead.

7 MS. TAPIA: I came to Bushwick Outreach when
8 it was still called Bushwick Outreach Center--

9 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Can you just,
10 again, a little louder on the mike--

11 MS. TAPIA: [Interposing] I came to Bushwick
12 High School when it was still called Bushwick
13 Outreach Center, and like many others here,
14 we've had family members that have graduated,
15 many success stories--

16 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Cynthia? Just
17 a little louder so everyone can hear you.

18 MS. TAPIA: A lot of success stories come
19 from my part of the family, and my future
20 husband. Now this school means a lot more than
21 just a regular high school. It's a voice for
22 our community. You can't, you can't put these
23 kids in all these other schools and all these
24 little ideas that you guys have come up to try
25 to the issues that you're having at the moment.

1 It's not the right way to do it because the
2 high schools have bombarded us with pity and
3 limits that we can't measure up to. This school
4 is the only one that has provided us with a
5 voice. It's prepared us for the future; it's
6 given us a mission. You know it doesn't stop at
7 high school; nothing ever stops at high school.
8 You need to prepare us for the future, and
9 because of this school, I am right now two
10 clinicals away from graduating from a LaGuardia
11 High School, and I'm on my way to Sloan-
12 Kettering. I don't have my parents to thank for
13 that. I'm not going to thank my mom at my
14 graduation. I won't be thanking my father.
15 I'll be thanking this school. They're the ones
16 that impacted me; they're the ones that have
17 made the difference. Mr. Shulansky, you can't
18 take this school away from us. It's the only
19 thing in this community that give the kids
20 ambition and gives us our hope for the future.
21 It makes them think about college. It gives
22 them a reason to stay here and not go outside
23 and do these bad things that you see you us on
24 the news for. You have to let us stay, you
25 know. We don't need another door, because we've

1 been that before and I've been in this
2 situation before where we've been having to
3 fight for this school to stay open. We've
4 always been shown the door. We're choosing to
5 stay; you have to let us stay.

6 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
7 22, Iran Rosario.

8 MR. ROSARIO: I once was told that the truth
9 is in your struggle. I'm going to tell you my
10 struggle. I've lived in Bushwick my entire
11 life. I attended Bushwick High School. I was
12 one of the students that did not succeed in
13 Bushwick High School. I transferred into this
14 school when no other school would accept me.
15 Right? We're going to talk about numbers. I
16 got shot eight times, less than ten blocks from
17 here. I got left for dead. There are people in
18 this room that were in my hospital room, that
19 convinced me to change my life around and that I
20 could change my life around. We're going to
21 continue to talk. Every exam that I took, I
22 passed. Every college that I applied for, I got
23 accepted to. Not community schools, but private
24 universities. Right? I have a degree from a
25 school. I work now for the Department of

1 Education. Where do I choose to work in is
2 District 32. Where do I spend my days, is in
3 Bushwick Outreach Center as I would call it.
4 You all call it BCHS. If you close this school
5 and another kid from this area comes into a
6 school that's placed here and does not have the
7 same people backing him and is put in the same
8 position that I was put, the response will not
9 be the same. That is all.

10 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker
11 number 23, Ora Wise.

12 MS. WISE: Hi, Tyrin [phonetic]. The school
13 system is the problem. BCHS is part of the
14 solution. I came here today straight from the
15 children's learning program that I run in Park
16 Slope, a place where let's just say they have a
17 lot more resources and support for their
18 educational programs. And I have never been in
19 a school that has been this inspiring, this
20 positive, this full of love and respect. You
21 know that there is so much dysfunction, and
22 there's so much disempowerment going on in
23 schools throughout New York City. And I, along
24 with Una, am one of the artists and educators
25 that the teachers and the administration and the

1 students welcomed into their hallways many,
2 many times throughout the past few years. And I
3 have been all over the country in public
4 schools, and I have never seen so much love and
5 respect in a public school. And so much
6 attention paid to each other. Have you ever
7 heard, I hope that there are people who love
8 enough in their school settings as much as what
9 happens here, and you've heard about here.
10 Teachers that love and respect and care for
11 their students, and administrators that
12 communicate honestly with and support their
13 staff. And students that love their teachers,
14 as much as we're witnessing here, and that I
15 witnessed when I was here. And so shutting
16 down, replacing the staff and the leadership of
17 this school, would be a vote against having love
18 and respect being what schools are about. And
19 if you make the wrong decision here, Bushwick
20 Community High School, I want you to call on me
21 to do whatever it takes. I want you to call on
22 me. And I will be here to help keep this going,
23 because it is what I value about New York City.
24 Thank you.

25 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Ms. Wise. Before

1 I call the next speaker, just give me one
2 second. Before I call the next speaker, I want
3 to get speakers 26 through 35, speakers 26
4 through 35. You can come down, please, and line
5 up over here in this aisle. Speakers 26 through
6 35.

7 MR. KEVIN EHLY: Hello.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Speaker 24, Kevin, how do you
9 say your last name?

10 MR. EHLY: Ehly.

11 MR. GUERERRO: Ehly? All right.

12 MR. EHLY: My name is Kevin Ehly; I am a
13 math teacher here at BCHS. I've been here for
14 four years. Now, one of the most troubling
15 things in the EIS is this new policy to begin
16 admitting 16-year olds. Seemingly harmless. To
17 begin admitting 16-year olds who have options,
18 16-year olds who have time. And 16-year olds
19 who may take the place of our current students.
20 Every time we have this discussion, everybody
21 says, "Our current students will be guaranteed a
22 seat in the new school under the turnaround
23 model." However, I have to wonder. Would our
24 current students be admitted into this school,
25 or would they again just be pushed to the

1 wayside in favor of younger 16-year olds with
2 more credits and more Regents, in the effort to
3 just make this look like a better school on
4 paper, so that the DOE can show that is turned
5 around the school, but again, given our
6 students, no chance, no opportunity. Do not, do
7 not, do not do this. It is disastrous.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker
9 number 25, Tabari Bomani? Mr. Bomani? Mr.
10 Bomani?

11 MR. TABARI BOMANI: Bomani.

12 MR. GUERERRO: Go ahead.

13 MR. BOMANI: So I'm a latecomer, ladies and
14 gentlemen. So I'm going to keep this brief,
15 'cause everybody has said most of what I wanted
16 to say. What I do want to say is that this a
17 moment for courage. And I want to talk to you
18 about the importance of courage. 'Cause what
19 you're all going to do is destroy the courage of
20 teachers, who will sign up to teach in a school
21 like this, 'cause they love students and want to
22 help the students who need the most help. But
23 by closing this school, you're telling everybody
24 who wants to be a teacher, "Don't take a chance
25 on students like this." So I want to talk about

1 destroying the courage of administrators. I
2 just told the people from New Visions, 'cause I
3 was a New Visions student in their SAM program,
4 that I just passed the state exam to be an
5 administrator. But what I told my ten-year-old
6 daughter, who says that Bushwick Community High
7 School is her home, I said, "Daddy probably will
8 be the only person who would want to be an
9 administrator of a school like Bushwick
10 Community High School, because if you have the
11 courage to do that, you're going to lose your
12 job, because the matrix is wrong, and the DOE
13 has no courage." Because this is not going to
14 take politics. This is not going to take 1,000
15 conversations. This is not going to take a
16 waiver, 'cause you got all of that. This is
17 going to take courage. The kind of courage that
18 my sons and daughters have. That after being
19 abused by an educational system, they have the
20 courage to believe us one more time. It take
21 the kind of courage that the staff has to come
22 to a school even when they find out we're on the
23 PLA list, we got eight new teachers this year.
24 Why? 'Cause they got courage. It's going to
25 take the kind of courage that New Visions has,

1 that sat down and said, "Look. You should not
2 be on this list. But you know what? Let's
3 improve the school." So out of good faith, we
4 started the process to improve the school out of
5 courage. And guess what you did? You talked
6 about closing us down. So we have good faith.
7 We have courage. The DOE doesn't. The elected
8 officials who are here, who I love, have
9 courage. Jesus Gonzales, who's my brother, and
10 my son, has courage. - - has courage. El
11 Puente [phonetic] has courage. My students have
12 courage. The staff has courage. New Visions
13 has courage. Rosadio [phonetic] has courage.

14 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker
15 number 26, Audrey, Audrey Rochelle?

16 MS. ROCHELLE: Hello. My name is Audrey
17 Rochelle. I'm 21 years old, and I have an 18-
18 month-old son. Bushwick Community High School
19 is the only high school that would accept me. I
20 entered this school 17, less than ten credits,
21 no Regents. My first passing Regents was in
22 this school, and I got a 75. You can't tell me
23 that this school was a failure, 'cause behind me
24 everybody has succeeded. How can you say that?
25 If you judge us from the time that we walked

1 into the door, we'd be number one, as the best
2 high school. In here, this is my home. This is
3 all our homes. I don't leave here until 5:00,
4 like this is my job. I work my butt off to
5 finish. I'm going to college, and I never
6 thought I would. I'll be the first in my entire
7 family. I'm going to be a paramedic, and one
8 day, you're going to need me to save your life.
9 So don't close my school.

10 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
11 27. Speaker number 27, Travis Brehon.

12 MR. TRAVIS BREHON: Hello, everybody. My
13 name is Travis Brehon. I entered this school in
14 2009. Before here, I was at two other high
15 schools. I went to George Westinghouse for four
16 years. I met a friend there named Will. He'll
17 tell you, my son Will. He'll tell you how many
18 times we were told, "Oh, you can do whatever you
19 want because at the end of the week I'll get my
20 check." Every teacher, every teacher, told me
21 that. You know how that made me feel? I get
22 here, 21 years old, and I felt like I didn't
23 belong because I was already, you know, overage,
24 and people like Tabari, Drew, Dave, Kev, they
25 believed in me so much, I succeeded all the way

1 through. It was hard, yeah, being 21. I was
2 thinking about aging out. I never thought I
3 would pass my math Regent. I had help from Kev;
4 he showed me the way. I read my first book when
5 I got to the school with Dave, 'cause he
6 encouraged me to start reading, and people like
7 Tabari who's always been like a backbone when I
8 needed a shoulder to cry on, he's been there for
9 me. I gained bonds with teachers that I would
10 expect, like, I walk in this building, every
11 teacher knows my name, even teachers I never had
12 before. That made me want to be here all the
13 time. I graduated; all summer I was here
14 helping out because there I wanted to be. This
15 is what helped me get out of the streets, 'cause
16 the road that I was taking, like, it wasn't
17 leading me down the right path. I think if it
18 wasn't for BCHS, I don't know what would have
19 happened to me. And now, I'm a father. Being
20 here taught me how to be a man; being here
21 taught me how to be a good father. And it
22 taught me, you know, education is the way. And
23 it starts here.

24 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
25 28, Mr. Brian Pickett.

1 MR. PICKETT: Yeah, my name's Brian
2 Pickett. I teach at Queensborough Community
3 College, and one of the highlights of my
4 semester was to look down at my class roster and
5 see a name that I recognized, name of the
6 student who I first met while working here at
7 BCHS as a teaching artist. The student is on
8 the dean's list at Queensborough, and the
9 captain of the track team. Second to that as a
10 highlight was another former student from BCHS
11 who came as a guest in my class, just to join us
12 for a discussion. And while he was there, he
13 brought such critical insight to our discussion
14 that it really sort of took us to the next level
15 in terms of the class discussion that we've been
16 having this semester. I've worked as a teaching
17 artist in numerous public schools as well. And
18 I have to say hands-down, BCHS is one of the
19 healthiest, most innovative learning
20 environments that I have ever had the privilege
21 of being a part of. It is a model of community-
22 based education that should be replicated and
23 learned from, not turned over. Thank you.

24 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Pickett.
25 Speaker number 29, Brittany Howell?

1 MS. BRITTANY HOWELL: Yeah, that's me. So
2 I'm currently a student here, and when I first
3 came to this school, I was like--

4 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Can you bring
5 in the mike a little bit and speak into it?

6 MS. HOWELL: Oh, sorry.

7 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. No, that's okay.

8 MS. HOWELL: Well, to my old peers and my
9 staff right there, like, when I first came to
10 this school, I thought this school was going to
11 be like my last school. And from my last
12 school, if I was still in that school, I'd be
13 dead. Like, really dead. I'd be dead, for
14 real. Well, when I first heard about this
15 school, I did my research. And this school is
16 just like Providence now. When I first had to
17 find myself, and you know what the crazy thing
18 is? This teacher, this one teacher, Brian,
19 right here, for real, Brian right here, when I
20 went into his class, he talked about Sam Coppola
21 and everything, that's what's happening right
22 now, seriously. And you know what the crazy
23 thing is? I feel that, you know, like, I'm
24 going through so much right now; this school
25 helped me so much. Tira, she's like my

1 grandmother right now. I don't even care.
2 Oh, sorry. Oh, so sorry. Oh, so sorry. And
3 these students behind me, these are like my
4 brothers and sisters. They always got my back.
5 Always. Like, I came to this school, moody,
6 mad, happy; these people have me going glad.
7 And I'll be like, what's wrong with you? They
8 would ask me what's wrong with me. I'm like,
9 life. That's what's wrong with me. But every
10 time that I come to this school, this brings me
11 more life and gets me from out of the streets.
12 And I'm telling more of the people that I live
13 with, telling them, "Yo, come to this school,
14 'cause they will change your frickin' life.
15 They will change you." A have a couple of
16 credits right now. And I'm waiting to go to
17 college. 'Cause when I go to college, I want to
18 be mayor. No, mess with that. I want to be
19 counselor for education. Because right now,
20 this education, you're all doing, you're
21 shutting us down. You're breaking my heart.
22 You're all really breaking my heart. My heart's
23 already broken, and you're shutting us down. I
24 won't go here. I will go - -. I will go to the
25 Board of Education and I'll be like, yo, don't

1 shut this down because this school did us
2 right. This school brought old school dudes to
3 this school, telling us about the school,
4 writing poetry about the school. Let me tell
5 you right now, I love this school. This school
6 is the best school I've ever been to in my
7 frickin' life.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
9 30, Pedro Sierra?

10 MR. PEDRO SIERRA: Good evening. My name is
11 Pedro Sierra. I'm proud to say that I graduated
12 in 1992, from Bushwick Outreach. When I came
13 in, it was the only school at the time that
14 would take me with open arms. I had six and
15 half credits. I came from William E. Grady.
16 The type of teachers that we have here are the
17 ones that have your back regardless of what you
18 do. So you guys want numbers? I'm going to
19 give you some numbers. I'm happy to say that I
20 have two beautiful daughters, and I've been with
21 one wife, one woman for the last 13 years, we've
22 been happily married. Those are some numbers.
23 Back in 1994, that's two years after I graduated
24 from here, because they knew so well, they sent
25 me to Hofstra University. My dad, Tabari, along

1 with my mom, Ellie, they sent me to Hofstra.
2 I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, and the
3 first time that I got up from one of the
4 surgeries, I turned around, I'm laying in the
5 bed. I turned to my right; Tabari was the one
6 that was there sitting in the seat. The second
7 time, it was the principal, Jill, at the time.
8 And countless other friends and family members
9 from the Outreach came. Let me give you another
10 number. My file number is 738393. I've been a
11 teacher since 1997, in District 32. I was at
12 the old Bushwick High School, and then I'm
13 coming. I'm happy to say I'm at Academy of
14 Urban Planning. I have former students that are
15 in here, from the old Bushwick High School and
16 from the old AUP. They're in the audience, and
17 I have old friends here that I was with, 20, 25
18 years ago when I was destroying the community.
19 What did they teach me? To build the community,
20 okay? I don't have the mathematics or the know-
21 how to sit down and build bricks and build
22 buildings and like that, but what they taught me
23 was, just like Tabari said, was courage. And I
24 do it one brain, one student at a time. That's
25 how I do it. Listen, closing this school down

1 is like getting read of the nearest - -. It's
2 like getting rid of Wyckoff. It's like getting
3 rid of Woodhall [phonetic]. What are we going
4 to do? This is our academic rehab center that
5 we really desperately need. Thank you.

6 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Sierra.
7 Speaker number 31, Desiree Flowers.

8 MS. FLOWERS: My daughter transferred here
9 from Minnesota, from one of the best high
10 schools in Minnesota, that there was a waiting
11 list to get on. She did not grasp what they
12 were teaching her there. We relocated here. We
13 came to Bushwick Community High School. My
14 daughter has done nothing but flourished. You
15 have to ask yourself, if you stood in these
16 students' shoes, would you stand by and let it
17 go, or would you fight? I ask you to fight for
18 them. Ask to change the minds. You have to
19 take something back to them, today, from what
20 you've heard here, from everyone. This is not
21 just a school. Tabari, Millie, Drew, Ellie,
22 Brian, my daughter speaks of them so much, Tara,
23 it's like they live at my home. Tira, I'm
24 sorry. It's like they live at my home. She was
25 in a school where they didn't even know her

1 name. I go to conferences. "Whose mother are
2 you?" "What class are you in?" "What period do
3 you have with me?" They did not even know her.
4 And this was supposed to be one of the best high
5 schools in the state of Minnesota. We came back
6 to New York, and she has done nothing but
7 flourish. Please allow these other children to
8 flourish. I thank you.

9 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Ms. Flowers.
10 Speaker number 32, Brian Favors.

11 MR. BRIAN FAVORS: Yes. Good evening. My
12 name is Brian Favors, and I'm a teacher here at
13 Bushwick Community High School. And let me just
14 start off; I'm originally from the West Coast.
15 And I remember; I came with Tira. I came here
16 about nine years ago. And I will never forget.
17 First of all, I didn't think I was going to be
18 able to teach in the public schools. I had
19 already worked in the non-profit world, and I
20 was worried that I wouldn't be able to love my
21 children. And I knew a lot of people who were
22 teachers, and they talked about the constraints.
23 And I was worried, and I remember coming into
24 this school, and I'll never forget the first
25 orientation I went to. And the teachers spoke.

1 And first of all, as they spoke about before,
2 we do orientations throughout the year. We
3 might do four or five a year, so we're always
4 getting new kids who have been kicked out of all
5 these schools, right? So anybody who's come to
6 this orientation, and you all can attest to
7 this, everyone got the tough face on. You got
8 every gang in the city, in this school, in this
9 building. And I remember, hold on hold on hold
10 up, 'cause I got to be quick. And I remember
11 thinking, wow, what have I gotten myself into?
12 And that man right there, Tabari Bomani, that
13 was a brother we have orientation, we had a
14 small group, and there was a young brother where
15 they were talking about what they did for the
16 summer. And there was a young brother named
17 George, and he was talking about selling crack
18 out of Marcy Projects, and bragging about it,
19 getting people to laugh. And I watched Tabari
20 Bomani give this speech and address it and talk
21 to this brother about the fact that he had lost
22 his soul. And told him that his job was going
23 to be give him his soul back. And he gave a
24 speech that I will never forget. When the
25 orientation ended, the brother George walked up

1 to me and I did not know him. And he
2 apologized to me for his behavior. And what I
3 want to say is, these kids here have never seen
4 a fight in their school. They have never seen a
5 fight, which is unheard of in the best schools
6 that you will ever see. And I travel the
7 country, working with a lot of average
8 populations. I have seen one fight in nine
9 years. It is unheard of. As a matter of fact,
10 we were recognized by the Annenberg Institute in
11 2008 as being a model school for safety. I
12 bring teachers from Columbia Teachers College to
13 observe our class and observe the environment
14 because this is a place that needs to be
15 replicated. We do not have metal detectors.
16 And guess what? And guess what? And guess
17 what? Guess what? Guess what? That does not
18 come easy. That comes with a lot of work. That
19 comes with staff development. That comes with
20 creating a culture that is sure that our
21 teachers are culturally competent, which is
22 something that's not happening in the DOE. So,
23 in closing, I just want to say, you would have
24 to be spiritless. You would have to be
25 spiritless to not recognize the spirit that is

1 in this room. Our kids go to school for ten,
2 12 years and never learn anything about their
3 heritage and culture. And one of the reasons we
4 have no fights is because our young people, when
5 they get it for the first time in their lives,
6 they learn about people and their history. They
7 learn about their culture and their heritage,
8 things that they've never learned, and they
9 realize that they are standing on the shoulders
10 of those died and struggled so that they could
11 be here. And it changes them. And it changes
12 them. Lastly, and I'm going to close, brother
13 Alan [phonetic], where you at? Is Alan here?
14 Brother Alan, one of our students, we had an
15 assembly. This year has been the most difficult
16 year of my teaching career because I am watching
17 the spirit become, I'm watching it go. With
18 everything that we've been going through this
19 year, one thing I want to say to you all,
20 regardless what happens, you guys are some of
21 the only young people, black and brown people,
22 in this country that can say that they went to a
23 school with your population with people who
24 looked just like you, and never saw a fight.
25 And you guys know that is possible. You know

1 it's possible. You know - - .

2 MR. GUERERRO: Sir?

3 MR. FAVORS: You know that's very possible
4 for people to create the environment that we
5 wish to live in, so regardless - - here, let us
6 not forget the spirit, let us - - the spirit,
7 and let us make it with - - .

8 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
9 33, Will Matos.

10 MR. WILL MATOS: Hi, how you doing? Yes, my
11 name is William David Matos, and I'm currently a
12 student in BCHS. And what I would like to say
13 is that my views, my opinions, my thoughts have
14 never really mattered until I entered this
15 building. I've been to several schools before,
16 high schools in the New York state, and none of
17 them, none of them, have ever put so much time
18 and effort into getting to know their students,
19 and making sure they're successful in not only
20 their academic careers, but what they do with
21 themselves outside. They make themselves
22 available for us. Not a lot of teachers do
23 that. They go out of their way. You know what
24 I mean? Tira is like a mother figure to me.
25 Tabari is like a father figure to me. There's

1 things I've learned from him that I've never
2 learned in my whole life. I've never had a
3 father, and I've never had a real family until
4 I've entered this building. Everybody behind me
5 right now are my brothers and sisters, and I
6 pray to God that you don't tell my brothers and
7 sisters that they can't have an education, that
8 they can't do something with themselves. If you
9 guys make it 16 to 21, you would've erased me.
10 You would have erased half of the people, almost
11 everybody behind me. But my whole thing is
12 this: if you take away my school, you're taking
13 away my community. These are my community.
14 This is my community; this is my family. Every
15 single one of these people are my brothers and
16 sisters. Everybody, from Tira to the
17 custodians, man.

18 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
19 34, Justin Soto.

20 MR. JUSTIN SOTO: How you doing? My name is
21 Justin Soto. And I just want to say that--

22 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Could you speak
23 into the mike?

24 MR. SOTO: --I just want to say that I'm
25 21 years old, and before I entered this school,

1 I didn't have a father. I have two now:
2 Tabari and Andrew. They make me want to learn.
3 They love me; I love them. I love everyone
4 here. Everyone, everyone, everyone. And the
5 tears that are rolling down my eyes, as I speak,
6 is from heartbreak from the words you are
7 telling me. You're telling me you're going to
8 kill my family. You're going to kill what I
9 love, what I come to school for every day.
10 You're going to hurt me, and you're going to
11 hurt the future of us. You're going to hurt the
12 future. You're going to my kids. You're going
13 to hurt their kids, just because this school is
14 not going to open and not the way it is. I love
15 this school, and I love everyone here.

16 MR. GUERERRO: Justin--

17 MR. SOTO: [Interposing] Do you see this
18 face?

19 MR. GUERERRO: I just need you to talk into
20 the mike, so that we can, I want to make sure
21 that we have--

22 MR. SOTO: [Interposing] And I want you to
23 look at this face, 'cause this is the face of
24 Bushwick. This is the face of Brownsville.
25 This is the face of East New York. This is face

1 of - -. This is the face of Canarsie. We all
2 look the same, and you don't like us because of
3 that.

4 MR. GUERERRO: Miss Lopez?

5 MISS MIRNA LOPEZ: Good evening--

6 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] Just give me
7 one second. Just give me one second; I'm going
8 to call up the next group of people. Can I get
9 speakers numbers 36 through 45? 36 through 45,
10 if you can please come up. Speakers 36 through
11 45. Again, speakers 36 through 45, you could
12 please come up. Okay. Ladies and gentleman, if
13 we can give the speaker the attention, please.
14 Speaker number 35, Mirna Lopez.

15 MISS LOPEZ: Good evening to everybody. I'm
16 not here to disrespect anybody, but I'm here to
17 stand up for what I feel is right. And I'm not
18 here to sugarcoat any of you guys. You guys are
19 here, and I know if you don't have a heart to
20 all these stories you've been hearing, all these
21 testimonies, then I don't know if that's check
22 that you get that you gets you all feeling like
23 this. This is more than a school; this is a
24 family. And I guess you guys, you need to
25 understand what the term "family" is. These

1 people, you can cry to, you can laugh with.
2 If you need a dollar, if you didn't eat, they'll
3 give it to you. Just have heart, and understand
4 that what you guys are doing is not right.
5 You're taking away an opportunity. This is
6 school is for people that need a second chance.
7 Think about it: if you never a needed chance,
8 you'd be begging for it. You'd be begging for
9 it. All right. It's so disrespectful, how you
10 guys see us as statistics. But you guys are
11 going to be gone soon. This is the new
12 generation. These are the new presidents, the
13 leaders, everybody that's here, I'm sorry I'm
14 giving you all my back. But everybody that's
15 here, you're not statistics. You all got
16 another opportunity; you all going to be
17 somebody in life. Don't let none of this bring
18 you all down or stop you from getting a dream
19 that BSHS has helped you all get you. Good
20 evening.

21 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
22 36, I have Nicole Chevide [phonetic]? Is Nicole
23 Chevide here? Speaker number 36, Nicole
24 Chevide. Is she here?

25 [Background noise]

1 MR. GUERERRO: Where is she?

2 FEMALE VOICE 4: Right here.

3 MR. GUERERRO: You want to talk? Okay,
4 okay. Number 37, Vincent Ruiz.

5 MR. VINCENT RUIZ: Well, my name is Vincent
6 Ruiz, and I came from Grand Street. That's one
7 of the worst school that I believe is, 'cause I
8 watched one of my own bros died in that school.
9 I watched one of my friends get stabbed up in
10 the locker room. In here, I don't got to worry
11 about nothing. In here, I don't have to worry
12 about having a gang stabbed in the back. I can
13 walk, at least, with my head high, and know that
14 nobody's going to hurt me. Nobody's going to
15 beat on me, and everybody's going to help me.
16 People help me in this school, realizing that
17 the streets is messed up. The streets ain't
18 going to help me. The streets ain't going to
19 going to get me nowhere. It's about time I
20 really do something with my life. And it's
21 here, it's Tabari, it's Ellie, it's everybody in
22 this school that's a staff member. Kevin made
23 me realize that I'm actually good at math. Sean
24 made me realize that I could speak really. I'm
25 here right now speaking. And truthfully, I want

1 to say that closing this school ain't worth
2 it. It's no point of doing that, 'cause it's
3 real people in this school. Real people came
4 from this school, and real people is coming out
5 of this school. So you close this, I rather be
6 dead or incarcerated than having this school
7 closed down. 'Cause this school means
8 everything to me.

9 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Ruiz. Speaker
10 number 38, Sheldon Downs.

11 MR. SHELDON DOWNS: Hi, my name is Sheldon
12 Downs, and I'm a student at BCHS. I started
13 going to this school in September, and ever
14 since, my attendance, my behavior, and my grades
15 have improved. I'm not saying I walked in here
16 and they magically changed, but the staff had
17 patience with me. They love me; they show me
18 more love than anybody else have showed me in my
19 life. And to close this school would be a
20 shame. It's a waste of time, like look at
21 Bushwick. You all look at Brooklyn, and you all
22 see kids who are violent, kids who didn't do
23 anything with they life, because they didn't
24 have a school like this to go to. Ain't no
25 other school like this. They told my teacher

1 Tabari and Ellie, the rest of the teachers had
2 a dean's meeting with me, and they let me know
3 that this might be my last chance to get out of
4 here. And if I don't, I won't have no future.
5 And it opened my eyes. Not a lot of schools
6 accept students like this. Don't close my
7 school.

8 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
9 39, Lynette Franklin.

10 MS. LYNETTE FRANKLIN: Hey, what's up, baby?
11 Hi, my name is Lynette Franklin. I'm a school
12 aide here at 291. My daughter is an alumni of
13 Bushwick Community High School. My daughter
14 graduated with an 85.6--

15 FEMALE VOICE 5: [Interposing] 96.

16 MS. FRANKLIN: --96 average, when she was
17 only a 32 average in her regular high school.
18 You are trying to kill love. This school is
19 about love and integrity; you understand what
20 I'm saying? You're taking away everything, but
21 you see all these kids out here? You see all
22 these faces out here? This is our future.
23 These are the next presidents, these are
24 everybody. They mean everything to us. The
25 teachers, you ain't going to find teachers like

1 this anymore. You understand what I'm saying?

2 You must keep this school open. Okay?

3 FEMALE VOICE 6: With the same staff.

4 MS. FRANKLIN: Okay, with the same staff.

5 And to Tira, God bless you. God bless you,
6 Tira. You made my baby to what she is today
7 because you accepted her with open arms, when
8 she was a failing in Progress High School. Not
9 one fight that my child had ever had, in this
10 school, when she suspended nine times for
11 fighting. You understand? My baby passed on
12 her Regents with a 75, when she was failing, one
13 of the highest at her time in 2007. You
14 understand? To you, mister, I've been watching
15 you all night. I hope it's not going out of one
16 ear, into one ear and out of the other. If you
17 kill this school, you kill yourself. And that's
18 the end of that.

19 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Miss Franklin.

20 Speaker number 40, is it Edgar Graston?

21 FEMALE VOICE 7: No.

22 MR. GUERERRO: I can't say that. Speaker
23 number 40, I have, sorry if I say his name
24 wrong, trying to read it. Graston? Here? Just
25 say your name for the--

1 MR. GRASTON OVANDO: Graston, yeah.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Graston, what's your last
3 name?

4 MR. OVANDO: Ovando. All right. I want to
5 say to you is that this school is a family. How
6 do you feel if they go into your house, take
7 away your mother, your father, your brother and
8 your sister, and they replace them with somebody
9 else? 'Cause that's exactly what you're going
10 to do here. You have Tabari as a father; you
11 have Ellie as a mother to everybody. Like
12 they've been there for me, in and out, no matter
13 what. Drew has always hit me up. Even when I
14 wasn't coming to school and I didn't care, Drew
15 always hit me up on Facebook, would've texted
16 me, and would tell me to come every single day
17 and encourage me. I got my brother right there.
18 I said to him right there, coming over here,
19 along by my side, to study over here 'cause he
20 saw a difference. I got this tattoo right here
21 that says "revolution and love," because that's
22 exactly what this school taught me. That's
23 exactly what this school is going to teach
24 everybody, from now on 'til the end of days
25 'cause I know this school isn't going to stay

1 closed. That's all I got to say.

2 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Zeneida
3 Ortiz, speaker number 41?

4 MS. ZENEIDA ORTIZ: Good evening. I'm a
5 former student of BCHS, class of '94. I don't
6 understand. It's very moving. I'm a parent. I
7 mean, I'm a older student and I had to wait
8 many, many, many years for sons to come here,
9 because it saved me. And it saved my brother,
10 my older son, and he graduated here last year,
11 and is now attending college. And is now going
12 to complete his first year in college. It saved
13 him. He commutes every day for two hours, never
14 been late, never been absent, because of the
15 determination that Bushwick Community have given
16 him. I now have his brother here, which I
17 fought for him to be here, to save him 'cause
18 the other schools were neglecting him, and
19 trying to put him as a statistic, which he's
20 not, because he's going to be someone, just like
21 we all are. And, I'm sorry, I had to write
22 things down because it's just so many things,
23 and--

24 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] All right, take
25 your time.

1 MS. ORTIZ: --I just want to say this is
2 just not a school; it's a family built with lots
3 of love and inspirations. It's rare to find
4 teachers who still care for their students. You
5 mentioned you're making a different school
6 earlier. But would this be another transfer
7 school? If not, what will happen to the
8 students that do want an education, and want
9 that future? What will happen to them? What
10 will happen to the teachers that do care for
11 these students? That's it.

12 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
13 42, Frederick Aldeco.

14 MR. FREDERICK ALDECO: Yes, Frederick
15 Aldeco. Yes. I graduated from this school,
16 BCHS, last year in June. And because of this
17 school, basically, everything that I've been
18 through in my life before, I've been to this
19 school with my health problems, me doing
20 craziness, and, 'cause I'm from Brooklyn. So
21 it's just, it's been, you know, it's hard to
22 grow out here in Brooklyn, if you, I don't know
23 if you guys know, but, you know. Right now, I'm
24 currently Revolutionary MC, and I'm part of a
25 group called 9/11 Thesaurus, that tries to get

1 the same impact that 9/11 had gave us to our
2 community, back to the music industry, but
3 that's a whole different sideline story. But I
4 would never basically spit anything in my music
5 that's disrespectful to my community. And I
6 have learned that because of this school. I
7 have toured with my brother Riddick [phonetic],
8 because of this school. We dropped two albums,
9 two successful albums, actually, because of this
10 school. Exactly, we were about to go to Belgium
11 because of this school, because of the knowledge
12 that this school taught me. Because of Tabari,
13 sitting in Tabari's Latin American history
14 class. Sitting in Brian's slavery class.
15 Sitting in Ellie's race class and poverty class
16 gave me the knowledge to give the knowledge back
17 to my community, because I get hit ups every day
18 from kids that, from the youth, because I used
19 to work at Beacon, at 291. And these kids hit
20 me up every day and they asked me, "How are you
21 doing this? How is your music so successful?
22 How are you able to give back this positive
23 energy?" And what they don't understand is that
24 you got to over-stand. And I over-stand that.
25 I over-stand the time. I over-stand you looking

1 at your watch. I'm sorry, I had to, you
2 know. But I know, I know, I know, I know. But
3 before I go, I just wanted to let you know, if
4 you close this school down, what am I supposed
5 to tell the youth that asks me, "Where do I go?"
6 When they ask me who did I learn from, who is my
7 mentors? And I won't be able to tell them, "You
8 have to come with me to BCHS," because it
9 wouldn't be here. Yeah.

10 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Speaker
11 number 43, Luis Reyes [phonetic]. Is Luis Reyes
12 here? No. Speaker number 44, Derek Distier?

13 MR. DEREK DISTIER: Yep. Like you said, my
14 name is Derek Distier. My mother graduated from
15 here, Bushwick Outreach. Went to LIU Brooklyn,
16 graduated from there. I graduated from here in
17 2000, Bushwick Outreach. Went to LIU Brooklyn,
18 and graduated from there with a 3.4 average, if
19 you want numbers. If you close this school,
20 that would be the wrong thing you'd do. Because
21 maybe your child might come here, and get
22 knowledge from here. You never know. The world
23 turns; remember that. You might lose your job
24 and want a second chance, and you're not going
25 to get it. But in this school, you get a second

1 chance. That's what you got to see. Open up
2 your hearts a little bit, just a little bit.
3 And leave my school open.

4 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, sir. Before I
5 call the next speaker, I just want to get the
6 next set of speakers up. Speakers 46 through
7 49. Speakers 46 through 49. Speakers 46
8 through 49, if can come up, please. Speaker
9 number 45, Cleopatra LaMoyne [phonetic].

10 MS. CLEOPATRA LAMOTHE: Hi, my name is
11 Cleopatra LaMothe--

12 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] LaMothe.

13 MS. LAMOTHE: I was a college advisor, one
14 of the college advisors here for three years.
15 I'm no longer working. I don't want to really
16 echo, I want to echo a lot of what people said,
17 and I definitely support everything that the
18 young people, the faculty, the staff, the UFTC
19 members, and the politicians have said. But I
20 also want to say, on a very personal note, you
21 know, I have been back to BCHS since I left,
22 twice, right? One was two weeks ago, when we
23 had a beautiful Cathy Malik [phonetic] talking
24 about the closure of the school, and the second
25 time is now. Particularly because I'm no longer

1 at Bushwick Community High School, but I'm
2 still working full-time and I'm still gaining my
3 master's degree full-time, right? And I'm
4 taking time out my class to be here today
5 because I feel very passionately that one, say
6 personally, I think is this pretty absurd and
7 it's crazy. And then number two, I think it's
8 really important to put it into context. You
9 know, we're in a crisis of education right now.
10 The hot topic across the nation is education
11 reform. The second hot topic is the fact that
12 we have a crisis with youth. We have young
13 people who are angry; we have young people who
14 are being neglected. We have young people who
15 are in fact, because they're the product of an
16 education system are actually being left behind.
17 And then number two, Bushwick is an isolated
18 community. And what that means in a very
19 serious sense is, literally, we have a state,
20 and we have a borough system that's ignoring a
21 city, right? We have people who don't even have
22 the right to have their trash picked up off the
23 floor when you kind of get on the train, go a
24 few stops, and you have an immaculate street,
25 depending on what your zip code is or how much

1 money you make, right? You have a community
2 that doesn't have adequate health care, right?
3 You have a community where I can't even walk
4 down the street and find fresh vegetables if I
5 actually want it. I can actually feed myself,
6 right? But then you have a school that is
7 actually going far and beyond the purpose of
8 what an educational space in a school should be.
9 This is more than a school; this is a community
10 institution, right? I was working here just as
11 a college advisor, and the connections that I
12 made with young people were a testimony to how
13 they find us as resources far beyond teachers
14 and faculty. If I'm waking up in the morning at
15 6:00 in the morning to get ready to go to work,
16 and I have a student call me at 7:15 in the
17 morning and say, "Cleo, I just got in a domestic
18 violence assault situation with my partner. I
19 don't know where you are right now, but I need
20 you to be here right now," right? That says to
21 me, that they see this school as far more than a
22 space to learn how to read, and write, and do
23 math. Which also means to me that you should
24 learn how to measure student growth and school
25 progress far beyond the results of writing,

1 reading, and math. And I ask you guys, while
2 you have your assessment measures and you ask us
3 to hold ourselves accountable, I want you to ask
4 yourself, what are you holding yourself
5 accountable to? What is your responsibility?
6 What is your responsibility in allowing these
7 young people to actually have a safe space in
8 the community? We all know what's going in this
9 world. These young people are a reflection of
10 what's happening in this world. Young people,
11 every single day, are dying. Everybody knows
12 the name Trayvon Martin now. Every young person
13 in here is a replica of that. We have Trayvon
14 Martins; we have young people here who are not
15 safe walking down the street. But they're not
16 trying to leave this building unless we try to
17 kick them out at 7:00 at night. Ask yourself
18 what is your responsibility. I'm not here to
19 beg you. I'm actually here to challenge you to
20 really go home at night like everybody here has
21 asked you to do, and ask yourself: as an
22 educator, as a provider, as a street bureaucrat,
23 somebody who's working with the people, who's
24 supposed to be for the people, what is your
25 responsibility to keep these young people safe?

1 And how is closing this school actually going
2 to do that?

3 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
4 46, Aniah McAllister? Aniah?

5 MS. ANIAH MCALLISTER: Can you hear me?

6 MALE VOICE 1: I can hear you.

7 MS. MCALLISTER: You all can hear me? Yeah,
8 I do have swag. Seriously, my name is Aniah
9 McAllister. I came to BCHS when I was 18, with
10 about 15 credits. Now I'm 20 years old; I'll be
11 graduating in June. Yeah, thank you. First of
12 all, I just want to say that when I first came
13 into this school, I had no intentions of going
14 to college. I just wanted to really get out and
15 get an education. But Drew and Millie and
16 Maribel [phonetic], they really pushed me into
17 being here. I actually fought to get out of
18 college summit because I just knew I wasn't
19 going to go to college. And they kept me in
20 this class, and now I got accepted to BMCC, and
21 LaGuardia. So to you, to say that we're
22 failures, is problematic because a failure can't
23 take a person who's dropped out for two year and
24 put them on the dean's list. A failure take a
25 dropout and have her come here and pass every

1 class. A failure can't teach me to be a
2 woman. A failure can't grow me up. A failure
3 probably can't show me, and bring out the
4 leadership qualities in me, which I get every
5 day. So my grandmother once said, "If you
6 didn't like our rules, you should get out of our
7 house." And if you don't like the rules that
8 BCHS has for us, then you all should just get
9 out of our house.

10 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you.

11 FEMALE VOICE 8: You're in charge, right, of
12 the DOE? You're in charge of the DOE, right?
13 No, so who is?

14 MR. GUERERRO: Say that again?

15 FEMALE VOICE 8: Who's like, in charge of
16 DOE at the moment right now? Like, who's--

17 MR. GUERERRO: [Interposing] I'm the
18 facilitator.

19 FEMALE VOICE 8: You?

20 MR. GUERERRO: Yep.

21 [Background noise]

22 MR. GUERERRO: Speaker number 47, Luis
23 Reyes.

24 MR. GIOVANNI MATOS: Yeah, Luis couldn't
25 make it.

1 MR. GUERERRO: - - the bottom.

2 MR. MATOS: Yeah, Luis couldn't make it, so
3 I'm here talking on his behalf. My name is
4 Giovanni Matos, and I'm a youth organizer and
5 media arts educator at nearby - -, New York, and
6 I'm also a graduate of Bushwick Community High
7 School. I graduated in January 2009. And I'm
8 also a student at Borough of Manhattan Community
9 College. I have a very simple question: how
10 dare you? How dare you come into my house, and
11 tell me that my family is dysfunctional? How
12 dare you come and tell me that the people who
13 made me the man who I am today, have failed me?
14 How dare you call me a failure, when it took me
15 six and a half years to earn a diploma? I came
16 into this school with very low expectations of
17 myself. I became my own worst enemy because the
18 school that I went to, Grover Cleveland High
19 School, told me that school wasn't for me, that
20 I'd never get a diploma. That I should just
21 drop out, get a GED. That's what I was told, at
22 15, right? Sophomore year. I came into this
23 school, and the wording was very similar, but
24 the message was completely different: you will
25 never get a diploma if you don't earn it. And I

1 failed myself two different times in this
2 school, because I really thought I could do what
3 I want. I didn't have to come to school. I
4 could be late, and I could be tardy as much I
5 wanted. I was going to get whatever I wanted,
6 and that wasn't the case. I was discharged from
7 this school twice. It was my fault, because I
8 didn't take this seriously. But the school took
9 me back, two different times. And I finally
10 earned a diploma. And I earned it, I earned it,
11 like this is something that they told me I was
12 never going to get. And I honestly believed I
13 would never get a diploma. And then I received
14 it, and it was mind blowing. Like, I cried. I
15 had to cry, because I actually made it. Tabari
16 made me believe in myself, when I didn't believe
17 in anything in this world. And I had somebody
18 who had my back. And now you're telling me that
19 you're going to close down the school? You want
20 to turn around, you want to turn it whichever
21 direction you want, but there's no way you can
22 emulate the love, the love that this school has
23 been giving to this community for the last 20-
24 some odd years. How can you say that this
25 school doesn't work? You got people still here,

1 still here at this hour, telling me that they
2 love this place, and I love it too. And no,
3 there is nothing you can tell me that makes it
4 reasonable for you to shut down this school and
5 flip it to whatever you want 'cause this
6 environment is what makes people who they are,
7 and it makes me want to stand up here and talk
8 to you when it's not even my place to do so.

9 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
10 48, Idris Ocasio?

11 MR. IDRIS OCASIO: Idris Ocasio.

12 MR. GUERERRO: Idris Ocasio.

13 MR. OCASIO: So, I just wanted to say hi to
14 everyone here. I'm going to be representing my
15 brother, Celin Ocasio [phonetic]. He attended
16 this school; he had very little credits. And I
17 don't even attend this school, but I know I've
18 seen him down on his luck. And he told me that
19 this school is in trouble of getting closed
20 down, and I already knew what this had done for
21 him. And I have enough, like, care for this
22 school to come up here and stand for everyone
23 here, because I know this school does great
24 things. I'm going to read a letter that my
25 brother wrote to me, to read to you guys. He

1 says: "No other school has done more to
2 refine my character and intelligence than
3 Bushwick Community High School. Before I
4 attended BCHS, my intelligence was but a useless
5 ore. The dedicated, passionate, and competent
6 staff smelted it into an ingot to be further
7 processed in any career I so choose. BCHS has
8 imbued in me the attributes of a leader, and the
9 discipline of a scholar. Before BCHS, I was at
10 Midwood High School, one of the best schools in
11 Brooklyn. Now I'm at Spring Valley High School
12 in Columbia, South Carolina, one of the best
13 schools in the nation. I have learned and grown
14 more in one year at BCHS than those two schools
15 combined. BCHS is a beacon of light for the
16 underprivileged youth of Brooklyn. Without it,
17 we young men and women who are given the
18 opportunity to become productive members of
19 society and to be leaders of our community,
20 would otherwise be unemployed, impoverished, or
21 incarcerated. In other words, tax burdens
22 instead of taxpayers. What you see at BCHS are
23 men and women dedicated to learning, change, and
24 bettering their community. I was watching
25 President Obama speak about reforming the

1 education system, reforming the way we teach
2 our youth. President Obama is unaware that the
3 reform has been here for 30 years. He's unaware
4 that that innovation has been here for 30 years,
5 right here in this room, right here at BCHS.
6 You know, in just the past few years, this
7 school has changed the lives of hundreds of
8 young men and women that would have been
9 otherwise lost. So if you decide to close this
10 school, in the next few years, when you see
11 hundreds of young men and women unemployed,
12 impoverished, and incarcerated, if God forbid
13 your children or their children are unemployed,
14 impoverished, and incarcerated, I want you to
15 tell them this: I'm sorry. I once knew a place
16 where you could be transformed into a man or a
17 woman dedicated to learning change and bettering
18 their community, but I helped close that place.
19 I'm sorry. I closed Bushwick Community High
20 School." Thank you.

21 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you. Speaker number
22 49, Bernard Greene?

23 MR. BERNARD GREENE: Good evening. My name
24 is Bernard Greene. Now, I'm a 2007 Hofstra
25 University graduate. A 2002 Bushwick Outreach

1 graduate. Now let's talk about failures. In
2 2001, one of your schools told me that I wasn't
3 about to be shit. My own principal told me
4 that. I had this conversation with him face-to-
5 face. That hurt, that another man that looked
6 exactly like myself could put me down. So I
7 came here with no hope. None of my family has a
8 high school diploma. My great-grandmother was
9 97, third grade education. Both my parents,
10 drug addicts. And not just them, their brothers
11 and sisters. So I grew up with nothing. I grew
12 up impoverished. When I came here, that man
13 right there saved my life. 'Cause I should have
14 dead right now. I shouldn't be looking at you
15 right now. If I'm a failure, why am I here?
16 But not just here. I run a program up the block
17 in Bushwick High School called the Suit to
18 Success Center, where I advocate going to
19 college to not just this community, but every
20 youth that I encounter in my life. I don't
21 think a failure would do that. I got students
22 to know all types of schools right now on
23 scholarship. They're not failures, 'cause they
24 grew up looking at me. Two of my brothers
25 graduated from this school. Two of my cousins

1 graduated from this school. I see your time,
2 but I'm sorry about, I'm not going to strike
3 that, I'm sorry. I can't. This is something
4 that I love. This is my backbone right here.
5 Not only did I graduate from here, but I come
6 here frequently. I don't have to. I can sit at
7 my school and make money. But I choose to come
8 here every day. That young man that just read
9 that poem, his brother has one of the highest
10 SAT scores in the city. Graduated from here.
11 Is he a failure? I don't think so. I remember
12 the morning I went to Hofstra University. I had
13 no ride. That man right there got up, 7:00 in
14 the morning, to come all the way from Queens, to
15 take me all the way to Long Island. He didn't
16 have to do that. Now, that's just the love
17 aspect. Academically, I was put on my feet.
18 When I went to school, I could stand with every
19 other race in the school. I could stand with
20 the Caucasians; I could stand with anybody. You
21 couldn't tell me nothing; I graduated with a 3.5
22 GPA. Am I a failure now? I came here, from
23 here. Nowhere else. The school that you all
24 had me in, left me for dead. They forgot all
25 about me. And now they want me to come back to

1 speak to their students, and tell them how I
2 did. So if you're going to close this school,
3 think about the people who educate your kids,
4 and the problems that your kids may face. The
5 fact that this school has been here for so long,
6 no metal detectors, nobody got shot or stabbed.
7 That says a lot. When in your own high schools
8 across the city, people are getting shot and
9 stabbed every day. There's gang violence. You
10 don't see that here. And I came here with all
11 types of people: Bloods, Crips. And they sat
12 here, and broke bread with each other. So where
13 are we failing at? My GPA was 3.5. I'm going
14 to grad school next year. Where's the failure
15 at? I can't see it, except if I look up there.
16 And that, - -, but for the Board of Ed.

17 MR. GUERERRO: Thank you, Mr. Greene. We
18 have now concluded the public comment list. We
19 are now going to move over to the Q and A
20 period. Again, I want to remind people that the
21 comment cards, if any question that is not
22 answered here tonight, they will be answered on
23 the Department of Education website. If you
24 have any additional questions at the conclusion,
25 at the end of tonight's proceedings, we ask that

1 you direct them to the phone number or email
2 address on the fact sheet or the EIS. I'll give
3 you that number and email again. That number is
4 (212) 374-0208. And the email is
5 d32proposals@schools.nyc.gov. I'm now going to
6 hand over the Q and A portion over to Deputy
7 Chancellor.

8 MR. SURANSKY: So I want to thank you all
9 for speaking from your heart, with such passion
10 and pride about your school tonight. And I want
11 to take a couple of minutes first to answer two
12 questions that were written on cards, and then I
13 want to share some of what I heard with you, and
14 reflect on that briefly before we end. So
15 quickly, there were two specific questions I
16 want to get to. One is a question around will
17 the replacement school that was proposed as part
18 of this proposal be a transfer school, and the
19 answer to that is yes. The second question was
20 about the accountability, and a number of
21 speakers also raised this issue. The question
22 of the state's waiver, and the performance being
23 judged using metrics that are not appropriate to
24 a transfer school. And I want to reinforce what
25 I said at the beginning, that it's correct that

1 the state has applied to the federal
2 government for a waiver on behalf of transfer
3 schools, and they are optimistic that that will
4 be granted. And that is part of the
5 consideration that will go into the decision
6 about this proposal. So now let me shift to
7 share some of what I heard that I think was
8 powerful and important, shared by you this
9 evening. This is a school that looks at the
10 whole child. This is a school that gives
11 students second chances, that's a place of
12 redemption. It's a family. It's saved lives.
13 The students in this school call it home. It's
14 a school that has built a curriculum around
15 teaching students to think critically, to value
16 their history and their culture, to know their
17 identity. To respect each other's humanity.
18 It's a school that's safe. It's a school that
19 develops leadership, both amongst the faculty
20 and amongst the students. And it's a school
21 where teachers know kids well, and know kids
22 deeply, and are willing to go above and beyond
23 what you see in most schools in order to provide
24 the supports that kids need. We heard students
25 talk about coming to this school after being in

1 other schools where no one ever cared what
2 they thought, or what they felt. We heard
3 students talk about the fact that this is school
4 where they want to learn, as a result of the
5 commitment that they feel from their teachers.
6 And we heard many stories about individuals who
7 had come back from very difficult situations,
8 and learned how to be students, and how to go on
9 to be successes, as educators, as musicians, as
10 artists, when they left here. And those were
11 powerful stories. And they came through loud
12 and clear. And I want you to know that as I
13 take those stories back, I will share them with
14 our chancellor, Dennis Walcott, who is the
15 person who is going to make the decision about
16 this school will continue to the panel meeting
17 or not. But I was moved by what you said
18 tonight. I've been to a lot of public hearings,
19 and I think it's a tribute to the educators in
20 this community that the students speak with such
21 passion, with such eloquence, and so
22 thoughtfully about what works. And I do think
23 whatever gets decided as a result of this
24 process, there's something very powerful here,
25 and I thank you for sharing that tonight.

1 MR. GUERERRO: I just want to reiterate
2 the deputy chancellor; we've heard a number of
3 significant comments tonight. And we definitely
4 do appreciate your feedback, for the hearing,
5 obviously. It is one of those pieces that,
6 again, it's important. The information will be
7 shared with the Panel for Educational Policy,
8 which will have its hearing on Thursday, April
9 26th, to vote on this proposal. I do want to
10 reiterate that if there are additional comments
11 that you want to submit or individuals that were
12 not here who would like to submit, please call
13 the number and the email. The number is (212)
14 374-0208. Again, that number is (212) 374-0208.
15 And the email is d32proposals@schools.nyc.gov.
16 D32proposals@schools.nyc.gov. Thank you all for
17 coming tonight. This joint public hearing is
18 officially adjourned.

19 [END 290_284.MP3]
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

5
6 Signature



7 Date April 22, 2012

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25