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**NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PORTFOLIO
PLANNING
Long Island City High School
4/17/12**

1 [START 290276 PROCESSED AUDIO 290 276.MP3]
2 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Evening, ladies and
3 gentlemen. My name is Ariel Guerrero and I will
4 be acting as the moderator and facilitator for
5 the joint public hearing. This is a joint
6 public hearing of the Department of Education,
7 Community Education Council, and the School
8 Leadership Team to discuss the proposed closure
9 and replacement of Long Island City High School.
10 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and
11 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing we ask
12 that anyone who wishes to speak during the
13 public comment portion of the evening sign up at
14 the table in the back outside. Sign up will end
15 15 minutes after we have started this meeting so
16 we're looking at around 6:20. Time permitting,
17 if you have a question that you want to be
18 addressed during the Q & A portion of the
19 agenda, please write that question on comment
20 cards that are provided at the back at that same
21 table. You can submit these to a DOE staff by
22 the table or any DOE staff walking around
23 collecting them. If we do not get to your
24 question, it will be answered in the Analysis of
25 Public Comment section of the proposal. Only

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

1 question, each of you had to write your
2 question on a postcard or that public comment
3 card handed out at the table. While the public
4 comments are taking place staff members will
5 organize these questions and our Deputy
6 Chancellor will be able to answer them during
7 the Q & A period. Some questions will be
8 answered directly while others will be batched.
9 Even though all individual questions will not be
10 addressed in the forum tonight, the answers will
11 be on the website prior to the panel meeting.
12 If at the end of the hearing you still have
13 questions, we encourage you to direct them to us
14 by calling the number or e-mailing a designated
15 e-mail at the bottom of the fax sheet. This
16 number, and I will give this to you now, the
17 proposal number to submit comments via number
18 are (212) 374-7621. Again that number is (212)
19 374-7621. You can submit comment via e-mail as
20 well to d30proposals@schools.nyc.gov. Again
21 that is d30proposals@schools.nyc.gov. So our
22 Color Guard, I believe the Color Guard is going
23 to take this time to present.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: We are now going to

1 have a presentation by the Color Guard of the
2 American Flag. If we could all remain standing
3 for the presentation, please, thank you. Color
4 Guard, you can--

5 COLOR GUARD TEACHER: Good evening everyone
6 and welcome to Long Island City High School.
7 Please remove your hats and stand as we are the
8 Color Guard from the JROTC presents the colors
9 of our nation.

10 [Presentation & Pledge of Allegiance]

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: The Long Island City
13 High School Chorus will now present the National
14 Anthem.

15 [Singing of National Anthem]

16 [Applause]

17 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much.
18 You guys can be seated. We are going to take
19 this opportunity for the members of the dais,
20 the SLT members and the CEC members to introduce
21 themselves.

22 MR. KEN AKARON: Thank you very much. Good
23 evening everybody. They were great. For those
24 who don't know me, Ken Akaron, UFT Chapter
25 Leader Presentation Chairman for the School

1 Leadership Committee.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. TRACY BROWN: Good evening. I'm Tracy
4 Brown, DC 37 Shop Steward, SLT member.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. NICHOLAS LONGEJENSKI [phonetic]:
7 Nicholas Longejenski, UFT Teacher on the School
8 Leadership Team.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: Hi. My name is Sivika
11 Saraj and I'm a Student Council member on
12 District 30, as well as a LIC student.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: She has a fan club.
15 Isaac Carmignani, Co-President of CEC 30 and
16 Colleague of Divikas [phonetic].

17 [Applause]

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: Shael
19 Suransky, Deputy Chancellor.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. ERNIE BROOKS: Ernie Brooks and I'm on
22 the CEC for District 30 and I support Long
23 Island City High School.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. BRIAN RACADO: My name is Brian Racado

1 and I'm a member of the Student Leadership
2 Team.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. AMIR SHARIR: Amir Sharir, Senior Class
5 Vice President and a member of the SLT Team.

6 [Applause]

7 MS. ANIDA O'BRIEN: I'm Anida O'Brien, the
8 PA President and core member of the SLT.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. NICOLE LUCEN [phonetic]: Nicole Lucen,
11 proud parent, SLT member and Bulldog.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. We are
14 pleased to have the following elected officials
15 with us this evening as well. Dmytro
16 Fedkowskyj, our Queens Panel Representative;
17 Councilman Peter Vallone; Costa Constantinides,
18 the District Leader. We have Matthew Lerch
19 here, our Representative for the State Senator,
20 Michael Gianaris; Ted Kasapis, Representative
21 for Assemblywoman Simotas; and Katie Jarduines
22 [phonetic], Representative Assemblywoman Cathy
23 Nolan; and we have Leo Casey here of the UFT.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: I will now turn the

1 program over to Deputy Chancellor Suransky who
2 will present the proposal.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: Good
4 evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm really happy
5 to see so many people come out tonight. I'm
6 looking forward to having dialogue and hearing
7 what you have to say. I want to be very clear.
8 Excuse me, it needs to be quiet so everyone can
9 hear. I'm looking forward to hearing what
10 people have to say. I want to be very clear
11 that this is part of a very important process
12 and everything that is said tonight will be
13 written down and will become part of the process
14 for making a decision and no decision has been
15 made at this point. In order for this to work,
16 though, we have to listen to each other and be
17 respectful. So I would ask that we all take
18 that into account and I think that this is a
19 proud community. People have strong feelings
20 and I think part of representing those feelings
21 is doing it in a respectful way.

22 [Applause]

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: This
24 joint public hearing was convened to discuss the
25 proposed closure and replacement of Long Island

1 City High School. It currently serves grades 9
2 through 12 and on March 5th the New York City
3 Department of Education published a proposal to
4 close Long Island City and open a new school
5 32365. Before I go into the details of the
6 proposal I want to clear up a few
7 misconceptions. What we are proposing at Long
8 Island City High School can be confusing and
9 there's a lot of misinformation out there. So
10 let me first talk about how it affects students.
11 All current Long Island City students in each
12 grade that are not graduating this year, so 9th,
13 10th and 11th and any 12th graders that are not
14 graduating, will have an automatic admission to
15 the new school if this proposal is approved.
16 And additionally, we don't anticipate that the
17 closure and replacement detailed in this
18 proposal will impact the status of the District
19 75 inclusion program currently co-located here
20 in this building. In terms of the teachers I
21 also want to be very clear. There is no quota
22 of staff that must be removed as a result of
23 this process. This proposal does not require a
24 set percentage of staff to change. Pursuant to
25 the teachers' contract, if this proposal is

1 approved pedagogical staff who apply to the
2 new school will be reviewed by a five-person
3 committee made up of the Principal, two
4 designees of the Chancellor, and two designees
5 of the UFT President. The proposed new school
6 leader will develop qualifications for the
7 positions in the new school and the Personnel
8 Committee will consider each candidate who
9 applies. All teachers from the current school
10 are eligible to apply to work at the new school
11 and if a sufficient number of staff from the
12 closing school apply at least 50% of the new
13 school's pedagogical positions must be selected.
14 So at minimum it must 50. It could be much
15 more. Listen to what I'm saying. A minimum of
16 at least 50% are guaranteed and it can be added
17 above that, depending on the quality of the
18 candidates who apply. There is no set
19 percentage and I want to be clear that teachers
20 who choose not to apply, or who are not
21 selected, will either be hired by another school
22 or they will be guaranteed a job within the
23 system somewhere which may involve acting as a
24 substitute teacher within the ATR pool.

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ladies and gentlemen,

1 ladies and gentlemen, I want to remind
2 everybody that this opportunity is for the
3 Deputy Chancellor to present the proposal. The
4 time later on to make comments will be during
5 the public speaking part. So please, if we
6 could be respectful and let the Deputy
7 Chancellor present the proposal. Thank you.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: We
9 believe there is a lot of talent in this
10 building and we need to draw on that talent in
11 order to build a new school if this proposal is
12 approved. The new school is intended to build
13 on the strongest elements of the current Long
14 Island City High School and where things are not
15 succeeding, to change those and to innovate and
16 strengthen what's happening here. The goal of
17 this is to improve the opportunities that are
18 available to young people in this building, and
19 we believe that this proposal has the potential
20 to do that. Additionally, in conjunction with
21 this proposal, as a way to support additional
22 school improvement, the DOE has submitted a
23 school improvement grant application to the
24 State Education Department to implement the
25 turnaround model at the new school. If it's

1 approved this would make the new school
2 eligible for an additional \$1,550,000.00 in
3 supplemental federal funding. Despite the
4 number of challenges the school has faced, there
5 are certain things that are working well and I
6 want to mention some of the successes. For
7 example, we have seen improvements in the
8 graduation rate between 2007 and 2010. It went
9 from 57% to 66%.

10 [Applause]

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: We saw a
12 similar improvement in the six-year graduation
13 rate during the same period from 58% to 68%.
14 However, the overall performance data led the
15 school to be put on the state's list of
16 persistently lower achieving schools. The
17 school has earned an overall grade of a C over
18 the past two years on the progress report, and
19 the attendance rate remains well below that of
20 most other high schools at 80.8% which puts it
21 in the bottom 18% of all city high schools.
22 Safety issues have also been a concern at the
23 school in recent years. Sixty-six percent of
24 students reported feeling safe in the hallways,
25 bathrooms and locker rooms, which is in the

1 bottom 7% of all high schools citywide. In
2 addition 65% of teachers reported that
3 discipline and order were maintained effectively
4 at the school. In the school's quality review
5 there were some recommendations around
6 strengthening professional development, the
7 ability to differentiate instruction for kids at
8 different levels, and to improve the quality of
9 the feedback for teachers on their instructional
10 practice. I want to acknowledge that tonight
11 we're going to hear from many teachers, students
12 and families who have been well served by this
13 school and some of the success stories that are
14 part of what's going on in this building, and we
15 honor those success stories and I'm very
16 interested to hear about those. I also want to
17 hear from folks about what you think needs to be
18 improved because we know that four years ago
19 there were many 9th grade students who entered
20 the school that are no longer here as seniors.
21 So there are many kids who are not represented
22 in this room as well who have not made it, and
23 our job is to look closely at what can we do to
24 strengthen what's happening in this building and
25 that's the reason why we're putting this

1 proposal forward. So thank you. I look
2 forward to hearing your comments and questions
3 and I'll pass it back to our moderator.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: I do want to take this
6 opportunity to recognize Joe Kenton,
7 Representative of Jimmy Van Bremer, our City
8 Council member. So we're going to take this
9 opportunity now for elected officials to make
10 comment. First up we have Dmytro Fedkowskyj,
11 our Queens Panel Representative, who would like
12 to make some comments.

13 MR. DYMTRIO FEDKOWSKYJ: Thank you, thank you
14 panel members for taking the time out of your
15 day to be here to listen to our students, ones
16 who will be leading this city in the near
17 future. Thank you very much. For those of you
18 who don't know, I am Dymtro Fedkowskyj and I am
19 a Bulldog today.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. DYMTRIO FEDKOWSKYJ: But I am also the
22 Borough President Appointee and the Queens rep
23 on the Panel for Educational Policy. She
24 appointed me four years ago to safeguard the
25 interests of our students and I'm here to do

1 that today. The Borough President not only
2 supports this school community but opposes the
3 turnaround model.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: And I am one of the
6 13 members that will be voting on this proposal
7 next week and I, too, oppose the turnaround
8 model.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: But I want to be
11 clear why and this isn't something of a
12 political agenda for me. I firmly believe that
13 this proposal treats this like a business
14 venture as if we were dealing with the Widget
15 Factory, but this institution is charged with
16 improving the lives of our young students and
17 the turnaround strategy does not achieve that
18 goal.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: It just seems that
21 for ten years we've had policy in place that was
22 supposed to fix our schools and apparently
23 they're not working and we have to say is enough
24 to the DOE band aid approach to fixing our
25 schools.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: We need a model in
3 place that's going to sustain long-term gains.
4 That's what is going to make a difference, not
5 something that's going to turn around in one
6 year. We need something that's going to make a
7 difference for the long-term, and the turnaround
8 model doesn't do that. The model that you had
9 in September did that and they abandoned that
10 and that is not fair to this school.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: So I'm going to keep
13 this short because there's a lot of you that
14 have to speak but next week, on April 26th, I
15 want all of you to come out. If this school
16 does not come off the list, I want all of you to
17 come out to the panel meeting and take the time
18 to speak your mind about why you think Long
19 Island City should not be closed. Please do
20 that.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. DYMTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: Now in closing, I've
23 sponsored a resolution that's going to be voted
24 on next week that basically abandons the
25 turnaround model. Check it out. It's on the

1 DOE site. I look forward to seeing you next
2 week and thank you all very much for your time.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Mr.
5 Fedkowskyj. And next we'd like to recognize
6 Councilman Vallone who will come up and make
7 some comments.

8 COUNCILMAN PETER VALLONE: Good evening
9 everyone. Hey first of all, congratulations
10 Bulldogs, right?

11 [Applause]

12 COUNCILMAN PETER VALLONE: Hell of a
13 gymnastics team. I've had the football team
14 down to City Hall to give you guys awards. Kids
15 at LIC, freaking awesome, awesome these kids at
16 LIC, I'm telling you.

17 [Applause]

18 COUNCILMAN PETER VALLONE: Usually I have a
19 great time coming here. I get great food from
20 the chefs, I speak to the kids at the different
21 classes, it's great. I didn't have such a great
22 time in September or October trying to figure
23 out that inexcusable decision to take classes
24 away from you guys in the middle of a school
25 year which I thought was outrageous. I came

1 down here with a few others. We made sure
2 that the teachers you got stayed in your
3 classes, didn't get switched again, and we made
4 sure that some of you who had classes ripped
5 away for good had an opportunity to make that
6 up. And so that wasn't fun and this isn't fun
7 either, to come down here and then see what's
8 going on. I do want to reiterate what you heard
9 originally because sometimes you don't believe
10 people in suits up on the stage. I get a lot of
11 calls from people who say, "LIC is closing."
12 It's not. You know that now. It's not closing.
13 This building will be here. Every student will
14 be here. At least half the teachers will be
15 here. Now whether that's a good idea, I think
16 the people on that stage need to listen to you
17 about that. They need to listen to you kids.

18 [Applause]

19 COUNCILMAN PETER VALLONE: So that's why I'm
20 here. I want to be brief. I want to hear from
21 you. I don't want to stand here and yell and
22 scream or give speeches. I want the people on
23 the stage to listen to the kids and their
24 parents because you know best, and I hope you
25 will take into consideration everything they say

1 and I think it's great that you all came out
2 tonight. Keep up the good work everybody.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Councilman.
5 I'd like to recognize District Leader Costa
6 Constantinides. It's possible I said your name
7 wrong, my apologies.

8 DISTRICT LEADER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES: Good
9 evening everyone. My name is Costa
10 Constantinides. I'm a local Democratic District
11 Leader here in Astoria. I've actually been in
12 Astoria my whole life and today I'm a graduate
13 of Bryant High School but I think that all of
14 Astoria are the Bulldogs today.

15 [Applause]

16 DISTRICT LEADER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES:
17 Because it's really about the lessons that we're
18 teaching all of you. It's really about all of
19 you in this auditorium today and all of the
20 students that will be coming through these halls
21 in the years to come. We can read off the
22 success stories. We can say, you know, Senator
23 Gianaris was a graduate of LIC. We can talk
24 about all of the great graduates from LIC; but
25 it's really all about you and the education and

1 the lessons that we're giving you, and we
2 thought we had a bargain last year and the first
3 thing that this is teaching us is that a bargain
4 isn't a bargain when it comes to this
5 administration. That when you say a school is
6 saved, it's not saved and that we're going to
7 put these students, who really is what this
8 whole system is all about, through two
9 tumultuous years of strife. You know this is an
10 Astoria institution. LIC takes every student
11 and provides them with a quality education and
12 this is the school that's trending in the right
13 direction. And to say that we're not closing
14 the school, it is correct; but we shouldn't be
15 wiping away the history that is LIC.

16 [Applause]

17 DISTRICT LEADER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES:

18 There's a way to do this responsibly and
19 thoughtfully without taking away the name LIC,
20 without taking away the history and what it
21 means to be an LIC graduate. There's a way to
22 do this with investing in our students and start
23 listening to the students and to the community.
24 There really needs to be a change in policy
25 here, and I know you can't teach an old dog new

1 tricks but let's try, shall we? I mean
2 really, we have had ten years of these failed
3 models and what we're asking is please, we need
4 to start to building from the ground up and
5 listening to communities and not coming up here
6 and having us all come through and at the end of
7 the day doing what you wanted to do anyway.

8 [Applause]

9 DISTRICT LEADER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES: So
10 this school is tending in the right direction,
11 everyone in the Astoria community is here for
12 all of you, we're going to be there on the 26th
13 and we're really urging the DOE to reconsider
14 this mistake and to make sure that the Bulldogs
15 stay the Bulldogs for a very long time.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, District
18 Leader. I would now like to recognize Matthew
19 Lerch, Representative for State Senator
20 Gianaris. You can go ahead and make--

21 MR. MATTHEW LERCH: Hello, I'm here from
22 State Senator Gianaris' office and I'm going to
23 read a statement from the Senator. I would like
24 to express my opposition to the New York City
25 Department of Education's proposal to designate

1 Long Island City High School as a turnaround
2 school as part of the DOE's plan to close and
3 reopen 33 under performing New York City
4 schools. The disruption of completely replacing
5 school personnel, including replacing at least
6 half of their staffs, would do more harm than
7 good and would undoubtedly jeopardize students'
8 ability to learn. It is true that under
9 performing schools need improvement but not at
10 the expense of the students. The DOE's proposal
11 does not factor in how such an extreme overhaul
12 of these public schools would affect attending
13 students and how they learn. I went to public
14 schools in Western Queens, including Long Island
15 City High School--

16 [Applause]

17 MR. MATTHEW LERCH: --and the education I
18 received gave me the tools I needed to succeed,
19 a testament to the fact that these schools can
20 work. Some of the very same teachers and
21 administrators who made sure I received the
22 quality education are still here demanding the
23 same level of care for their students. If
24 implemented, this plan would be extremely
25 invasive to the faculty and functioning of the

1 school and would erase all familiarity
2 students have with their current learning
3 environment. Our children deserve a good
4 education provided by caring teachers which can
5 be achieved without such overbearing and far
6 reaching changes. I urge you to reconsider
7 implementing this plan for Long Island City High
8 School as I believe a better solution can be
9 found that would not have such a negative impact
10 on our students. Michael Gianaris, State
11 Senator.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much. I
14 would like to recognize Ted Kasapis for
15 Representative for Assemblywoman Simotas.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. TED KASAPIS: I also have a prepared
18 statement to read at this time from
19 Assemblywoman Simotas. Matt has to put his
20 glasses on. I have to take mine off to read. I
21 don't know what's going on anymore. Thank you
22 for the opportunity to testify at this important
23 hearing. The community is gathered here today
24 to support our students and to support this
25 school which has meant so much to so many of us.

1 As I see so many members of the Long Island
2 City High School and Western Queens communities
3 gathered here, I'm confident that we can work
4 together to find a solution that doesn't
5 unnecessarily disrupt the lives of students,
6 fire our teachers, and increase costs. Our
7 students come first and we should always look to
8 make improvements that ensure that they get the
9 best education possible.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. TED KASAPIS: But these drastic changes
12 will only increase uncertainty and stunt any
13 progress that the students, teachers, and
14 administrators have been able to make. Second
15 to parents, teachers are the most important
16 influences in a young person's life.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. TED KASAPIS: All of us can remember at
19 least one teacher that truly made an impact on
20 our lives. Firing half the teachers, the people
21 these students have become accustomed to leaning
22 on in what otherwise would be unstable times,
23 seems a foolish solution to academic troubles.
24 Comprehensive high schools like Long Island City
25 and William Bryant High Schools, which we

1 rallied in support of last week, are what come
2 to mind when one thinks of high school.
3 Students of different interests and abilities,
4 mingling and learning from one another, is the
5 hallmark of a public education. So many
6 children don't know at 14 or 15 what they want
7 to be when they grow up. The broad education
8 these students receive at Long Island City High
9 School, and their friendships with people with
10 so many diverse interests, open students' minds
11 and prepare them for college. Just two weeks
12 ago the Department of Education announced a
13 reprieve for seven schools on the closure list.
14 I commend the Department of Education for this
15 decision but note that none of these schools
16 were in Queens County. The support on display
17 this evening shows that Long Island City should
18 be removed from that list as well. The
19 Department of Education's decision--

20 [Applause]

21 MR. TED KASAPIS: --The Department of
22 Education's decision to remove those seven
23 schools shows that they know as well as we do,
24 that with the proper resources no school needs
25 the drastic changes proposed in the turnaround

1 model. Devote those same resources here in
2 Long Island City High School and this community
3 will show you what our teachers, our families,
4 and mostly importantly our students are capable
5 of. It is so wonderful to see so many students,
6 parents, and faculty here, as well as members of
7 the community to show that Long Island City High
8 School has the support of its community. No one
9 knows better than the community what our
10 students need. Our students need a consistent
11 investment in their education, not a turnaround.

12 [Applause]

13 [Audience]

14 MR. TED KASAPIS: Furthermore, you can tell
15 the Chancellor that I have a nine-week baby girl
16 at home. Aravella Simotas is expecting a baby
17 girl in July and we both expect them to attend
18 Long Island City High School.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much.
21 Before I move on to the next person, I just
22 wanted to take a second. Security School Safety
23 has asked us that the individuals that are
24 standing in the back, if you could please fill
25 in the seats. There are empty seats. That is a

1 safety hazard. We want to make sure that we
2 clear the exit ways. So any individuals that
3 are sitting next to empty seats, you want to
4 throw a hand up just to identify the empty seats
5 so that these individuals can please sit down, I
6 would appreciate it. Thank you very much.
7 Thank you very much. I want to take this
8 opportunity to recognize Katie Jarduines from
9 Representative for Assemblywoman Nolan's office
10 to come up and make a comment. I'm sorry if I
11 pronounced your name wrong.

12 MS. KATIE JARDUINES: Good evening. My name
13 is Katie and I'm here tonight representing
14 Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan. For those of you
15 who don't know, Cathy Nolan represents parts of
16 Long Island City and Astoria and she is strongly
17 opposed to the closing of Long Island City High
18 School.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. KATIE JARDUINES: I'm also going to read
21 a statement from Ms. Nolan. As a legislator who
22 is also a graduate of a city public high school,
23 I am deeply concerned about the effect the
24 sudden change in course will have on the
25 students of Long Island City High School. This

1 sudden closure will have a negative effect on
2 not only current students but on outgoing
3 seniors and incoming freshmen as well. Even
4 just the announcement of the possible closing of
5 Long Island City High School has probably done
6 serious damage to the school's future prospects.
7 Whatever benefits the DOE believes it will gain
8 by closing the school will certainly be negated
9 by the problems that will be caused. As a
10 parent of a public school student, I can attest
11 that parents will be very hesitant to send their
12 children to this school, no matter what future
13 form the DOE chooses for it. Long Island City
14 High School is a very important school to the
15 community I represent. Many of my constituents,
16 including parents, alumni, and members of the
17 local business community, have contacted my
18 office to describe what a crucial role Long
19 Island City High School plays in their lives.
20 The school has many impressive programs,
21 including an excellent ROTC program and a much
22 lauded culinary arts program.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. KATIE JARDUINES: The change that the
25 DOE is proposing will put these programs and

1 others like them in harm's way. The
2 transformation model of the school was
3 originally put in as intending to be a long-term
4 plan with the school receiving funds and taking
5 part in the model over three years. To decide
6 after less than five months to abruptly pursue a
7 different and much more drastic route is simply
8 bad public policy. Not only will five months'
9 worth of work, focus and resources be
10 essentially wasted, but the school itself will
11 struggle to recover from such a tremendous
12 change, no matter what form the DOE chooses when
13 it reopens. The closing and reopening of 26
14 schools is a tremendous undertaking, one that
15 will greatly strain both DOE personnel and
16 resources. It is very unlikely that serious
17 issues will not arise from this plan, issues
18 that may damage the school irrevocably. While I
19 acknowledge that Long Island City High School
20 faces challenges and that there is work to be
21 done, I urge that the school be allowed to
22 continue in its original transformation path of
23 reform and not be subject to turnaround. Thank
24 you.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much.
2 We have just been joined by Councilman Van
3 Bremer and I want to invite you to make comments
4 if you like.

5 [Applause]

6 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: Good evening
7 everybody. My name is Council Member Jimmy Van
8 Bremer and while Long Island City High School is
9 just a couple of blocks out of my district, I
10 join everybody here today because I represent
11 many of the families who care deeply about Long
12 Island City High School that it is the wrong
13 thing to do to close this great high school.

14 [Applause]

15 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: I hope it's
16 not too much of a problem to say in this crowd
17 that I'm a graduate of Bryant High School.

18 [Applause]

19 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: Thank you for
20 not booing for those folks but Bryant High
21 School is also being proposed to be closed and I
22 do not understand how closing this school is in
23 the best interest of these remarkable young
24 people who are the future of the City of New
25 York.

1 [Applause]

2 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: This is a
3 great new building. The city has invested
4 relatively recently in this school but the truth
5 is that by firing at least half of the folks who
6 work in this school, the great teachers who
7 teach every day, by letting all of those people
8 go, by taking away this school and closing it
9 and reopening it the next day in some reborn
10 version, I fail to see how that is in the best
11 interest of these young people, how that will
12 improve their educational outcomes.

13 [Applause]

14 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: I know that my
15 life was changed by the teachers at Bryant High
16 School, folks who work very, very hard day in
17 and day out under very difficult and trying
18 circumstances; and I'm sure that the young
19 people here agree that the teachers of Long
20 Island City High School are part of the success
21 story that is Long Island City High School.

22 [Applause]

23 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: So I appeal to
24 the Deputy Chancellor and to the Chancellor and
25 to the Mayor that we all want what is in the

1 best interest of these young people; and by
2 threatening to close down their school, by
3 threatening the future of their teachers, by
4 taking away all of the things that they hold
5 cherished, their sports teams and so many of the
6 other things that they have come to believe are
7 essential to their lives and a part of the
8 things that they expect every day, by
9 threatening to take all of those things away,
10 that is not helping these young people achieve.
11 It is only causing stress and threatening
12 instability at a time when they need stability.

13 [Applause]

14 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: So many things
15 change in a teenager's life. So many things are
16 going to change; but one thing that we can all,
17 and should be able to all rest assured, is that
18 this school will always be here. It will always
19 be here for the people of this community for
20 young people.

21 [Applause]

22 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: But a school
23 is not just a building. It is not just bricks
24 and mortar. It is not just chairs and an
25 auditorium. A school is about people. It is

1 about the students, the teachers, the
2 administrators. It is about the parents. It is
3 about community involvement. All of those
4 things are here and there is great passion and
5 love for this school in this auditorium right
6 here, right now.

7 [Applause]

8 COUNCILMAN JIMMY VAN BREMER: So you could
9 close it down and rename it but you could never
10 replicate what's here and I urge you, Deputy
11 Chancellor, and everybody keep Long Island City
12 High School open forever.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. I want to
15 thank all elected officials for making comments
16 tonight. I want to, before we move onto the
17 dais presentation, I want to recognize Leo Casey
18 from the UFT and invite him up to make comments.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. LEO CASEY: Good evening. My name is
21 Leo Casey and I am the Vice President of the
22 United Federation of Teachers, which represents
23 this school.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. LEO CASEY: And I want to say to you

1 today that when the Department of Education
2 put your school in transformation, it promised
3 that it was going to help you get better; but it
4 has given you nothing but trial and tribulation.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. LEO CASEY: It promised you more money.
7 It cut your budget but still Long Island City
8 rose.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. LEO CASEY: It changed your Principal
11 three times and brought chaos to this school,
12 but still Long Island City rose.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. LEO CASEY: It sat by and did nothing
15 while this school was reprogrammed again and
16 again and again this fall, and you lost half of
17 your fall term and still Long Island City rose.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. LEO CASEY: And the truth is that this
20 school does not meet the standards of the City
21 or the State for closure. The truth is if they
22 honestly followed their own standards, we
23 wouldn't be here today.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. LEO CASEY: Not only has this school

1 raised its graduation rate so it is no longer
2 below the 60% threshold of the State, but this
3 school now has a graduation rate which is
4 better, which is better than the New York City
5 average.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. LEO CASEY: Just think of what that
8 says; that of the 400 odd high schools in New
9 York City there are 200 which have a lower
10 graduation rate than you.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. LEO CASEY: And yet, and yet we are here
13 today and they say they're going to close you
14 and I say still Long Island City is going to
15 rise.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Mr. Casey.
18 We're going to go ahead now and move over to the
19 presentations from the SLT members and the CEC.
20 I want to first recognize your SLT Co-Chairman,
21 Ken Akaron, to go ahead and make a presentation.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. KEN AKARON: Thank you, there we go.
24 It's good to see so many people. This is the
25 biggest crowd. I've been to two of the others

1 in Western Queens and there was no doubt this
2 crowd says, as it was asked, that you be the
3 ones that tell everybody we want Long Island
4 City High School to remain as it is and it is
5 your voices that are making that statement and
6 your presence that is making that statement; and
7 I thank our UFT Vice President and I thank all
8 of the elected officials for their concern and
9 their statements but the numbers that Vice
10 President Casey spoke of in particular are so
11 important. Two hundred schools below us and
12 they're closing us?

13 [Applause]

14 MR. KEN AKARON: I will describe later a
15 little bit more in depth about all of the
16 missing monies; but all I could say is 1430
17 Broadway, are we on the boulevard of broken
18 promises because that's what we seem to get from
19 the city. So good evening everyone and it's
20 time to start, and tonight I have been asked by
21 our School Leadership Team to make the case why
22 Long Island City should remain open as is and
23 not closed through the 30th, only to be reopened
24 the next day, July 1, with a number and a new
25 name and a new Principal heading a new staff.

1 You know before we go through this, it took me
2 a lot of time to put it together. I have to
3 believe it can have an impact or I couldn't have
4 done it. So on behalf of not only myself but
5 all of the teachers here, Deputy Chancellor, we
6 all have a question. Is what you heard earlier
7 about it being a fait accompli, a fair accompli,
8 in other words is there any purpose to these
9 public hearings? Is there anything that we can
10 actually say, actually show, that will actually
11 take us off the list or are we, no matter what
12 we do, doomed to be on that list and this is
13 just a show trial?

14 [Applause]

15 MR. KEN AKARON: If he doesn't choose to
16 answer, I'll go on.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: Yes, so
18 as I said in my statement at the beginning, the
19 decision has not been made yet, that everything
20 that people are saying tonight is--

21 [Audience]

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ladies and gentlemen, I
23 want to please remind you again, we want to be
24 remindful of being respectful.

25 MR. KEN AKARON: Please, it is very

1 important to me to hear the Deputy Chancellor
2 say that what we do and say tonight has the
3 ability to remove us from the list because when
4 we are done with our presentations and your
5 public comments, I do not believe that the
6 Deputy Chancellor will have any other avenue but
7 to go back to Chancellor Walcott and say you
8 need to reconsider. So please, let us let him
9 speak.

10 [Applause]

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: Thank you
12 and I will reiterate that I hope that people
13 understand that in the past there have been
14 decisions that have been changed as a result of
15 public hearings and so that is a possibility and
16 I'm here to listen. I look forward to the
17 discussion.

18 MR. KEN AKARON: Thank you very much.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. KEN AKARON: We believe a turnaround
21 isn't necessary. We believe that in view of
22 many statements made in the last couple of
23 weeks, not only by officials tonight about where
24 we stand relative to everybody else, that we
25 have so much working for us that those things

1 that need to be repaired can be repaired by
2 us. We've been called the hardest best working
3 staff the next Principal knows. If that's the
4 case, why are we going to do anything that
5 lowers that staff? If this is the best by
6 definition, replacing them means you have lesser
7 people in the room. This is a stellar school in
8 Queens, and we expect to keep it that way, and
9 we expect support from the Department of Ed in
10 order to maintain that. Now let me go into some
11 of those problems. School is not an address.
12 People have been saying well the school will be
13 open next term. The school will be here. There
14 will be a seat for you. When I began my career
15 way back when I think the President was Lincoln,
16 Long Island City High School was at 2801 41st
17 Avenue; and in 1995 we moved but we were still
18 Long Island City High School.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. KEN AKARON: And a school is more than
21 an address. A school is more than a number. A
22 school is a community based on the teachers, the
23 programs, and the students that we have. We
24 focus on every student in this school. We
25 believe that we can reach every student and we

1 try our hardest. We go for the top kids and
2 we have great advanced placement, and we go for
3 the kids who are weak and struggling and we have
4 a lot of support for them. We have an
5 Instructional Support Services Department that
6 makes it a practice of treating every student
7 individually, every single student, not only the
8 IUP that's by law, but in this building there
9 are no labels. You would be hard pressed in
10 some cases to know who was in the class as
11 special ed and who wasn't unless you looked in
12 ARIS or you looked at numbers on the homeroom
13 numbers. I had a captain on my team for a
14 couple of years and I didn't know he was special
15 ed except the day I would check attendance, not
16 attendance, records for eligibility. Of course
17 that was the only place I could find his
18 homeroom was a special ed homeroom. Other than
19 that, there were no labels. That's the way this
20 school operates. Every single kid is given
21 every chance.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. KEN AKARON: What we do try to tell
24 people, we are a large urban high school and we
25 believe in a large school. There's no way

1 you're going to have certain advanced
2 placement classes in a school of 250 students.
3 You can't draw enough kids to like that area to
4 have studied it hard enough to make it an
5 advanced placement class. You can where there's
6 3,000 but what we add to that is we have a small
7 school feel. This is a large urban high school
8 with a small school feel. Almost every teacher
9 knows hundreds and hundreds of kids that are not
10 their students.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. KEN AKARON: You go through the building
13 and you see people working with kids that are
14 not just their own class kids. Now graduation
15 rate, we were told again boulevard of broken
16 promises. We were told we were going into
17 transformation, they'll give you extra money,
18 and you need to get your rate up for the next
19 three years and at that point, they'll take you
20 out of the PLA status. We did the first year,
21 we did the second year; oh, they took us out so
22 we couldn't reach the third year. Right? No
23 more transformation, boulevard of broken
24 promises. So what are we to believe? We come
25 here, not only us but the students, we know we

1 had to move forward and we moved forward. And
2 as soon as we got close to the finish line, you
3 guys took away the finish line. Worse than that
4 is the disingenuousness of the Department of Ed.
5 Forget about finish line, how about the month
6 before you get removed you get a letter from the
7 State Commission of Education congratulating you
8 on being on Newsweek's list of top 1,600 high
9 schools in the country because of your advanced
10 placement program? And congratulate your staff
11 on what it's doing. I included the letter
12 because Principal Bassell shared that letter
13 with me in July of 2010 where State Commissioner
14 Steiner congratulates he and the school,
15 Principal Bassell and the entire staff, on
16 making this recognition. A month later they
17 boot him out and they put us in transformation.
18 Hey, we're either good or we not but you can't
19 have it both ways and the Department of Ed would
20 like to have it both ways, not exactly fair. So
21 to move on because you keep seeing me flip
22 pages; believe me there's a lot more there but I
23 think we want to make the points and keep it
24 going. We talk about the Mayor and the
25 Chancellor's commitment to change. I get nuts

1 every time they say it and I have to do this
2 because I can't get rid of someone in less than
3 two years. That's not true. If they were
4 really educational leaders they would. They
5 would know how to do it.

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: We can't hear you.

7 MR. KEN AKARON: Excuse me, if the
8 Chancellor and the Mayor were real educational
9 leaders, they would know how to take care of the
10 problems that they have without punishing
11 everybody for what they perceive.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. KEN AKARON: We lost that grant money
14 because of the Mayor. We had that money here
15 but because the Mayor decided to change the
16 game, the State took the money back. That's not
17 exactly fair and it's not fair to everybody out
18 there. And who is out there? Who are we?

19 [Applause]

20 MR. KEN AKARON: Look out into the audience
21 tonight, Deputy Chancellor. First of all it's
22 the most filled auditorium you've seen.
23 Secondly, you're going to see a blizzard of
24 white shirts. They all say I am LIC because
25 people are LIC. We are LIC.

1 [Applause]

2 [Audience]

3 MR. KEN AKARON: Okay now, that's our staff
4 and our staff is a group of people that come
5 here every day to educate the children of the
6 neighborhood and take it very seriously. And
7 why do I know that? Why do I say that? I coach
8 and I when I coach I'm here till 7:00. Now I'm
9 being paid by the City to be here. I make no
10 bones about it. That's the way the system works
11 but most of these people that I run into in the
12 mailroom are 7:00 are just other teachers
13 tutoring, helping, taking care of a student that
14 couldn't figure it out during the day. They're
15 not being paid and they're putting in that time.
16 You're going to tell me you can find the staff
17 that puts together that kind of extra time?
18 You're not finding that kind of staff anywhere.
19 This year in particular there's been no money.
20 One of our UFT Presidents used to say, "There's
21 always no money. It's just some years there's
22 more no money than other years." And this is
23 one of those years. Yet these people are still
24 here till all hours and still keep talking about
25 how are we getting these kids through the

1 Regions? Take another look out there. You
2 see a sea of blue, or mostly blue. Some people
3 had games today and they had to have a different
4 colored shirt on and those blue shirts, those
5 are our varsities. Those are the kids that stay
6 all hours of the day to become excellent. Those
7 are the kids that are passing their subjects.
8 Those are the kids that remain eligible and
9 graduate and now they're concerned, will I have
10 my program next year? How can I know?

11 [Applause]

12 MR. KEN AKARON: This is Long Island City
13 High School. We don't coach Olympians. We
14 create adults. That's what we do here. These
15 kids come to school and we create adults out of
16 them and we work with them and it's not about
17 the big scholarship. It's about the children on
18 the teams and being fair to all of them and
19 making sure that they are passing, making sure
20 that they're going to class, making sure they're
21 attending school on a daily basis. That's what
22 we do and they do that for us so that we can
23 have a team and that we can a championship maybe
24 if we're lucky. One of the coaches I used to
25 work with, who's out there now, used to say,

1 "Every coach should win once."

2 [Applause]

3 MR. KEN AKARON: Thank you. You will see
4 many alumni out there because they don't want to
5 be a graduate of a memory. They don't want to
6 be a graduate of a memory. They graduated a
7 real school. They expected to remain here and
8 they expect the help it might need to continue.
9 We're a large high school with a small school
10 feel. The alumni came back to support us. Look
11 out there a little further you're going to see
12 some people with strollers and some of those,
13 the only reason they're still in school, is
14 because we have a life center.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. KEN AKARON: And that funding is
17 constantly under attack, too. So now what are
18 you going to do? Tell these kids well, you
19 know, we changed over the school and it will
20 take us a year till we get the life center into
21 the budget again because somebody forgot to do
22 it downtown. So now you girls will just have to
23 wait. Waiting means no school. Waiting means
24 they don't graduate. Waiting means they're
25 done. Waiting means it ruins the rest of their

1 life and we can't be sure, you can't give us
2 guarantees that a new school will have that life
3 center because it's been so often that the Board
4 says well and the Department says well, you
5 know, you're a new school. You need to wait.
6 We have schools on the waiting list that have
7 been there before you. We're talking about 20
8 kids, maybe 30 kids, who are in the middle of it
9 and maybe they won't have a school because they
10 have no place else to bring those strollers.
11 All together we are LIC, all together. It's not
12 just one and we need your help. We need
13 accountability at the top and the sad truth is
14 since entering PLA status, we have never really
15 had true support from the DOE. The truth is
16 we've had lots of words, lots of cracking down
17 to you; but in a world where money equals
18 support not only have we not seen the money, but
19 it seems the DOE right from the get go has got
20 us supporting them. When transformation grants
21 were first announced, it was listed at \$2
22 million and very quickly that became \$1.8
23 million per school. In other industries that's
24 called the 200,000, it's called the vig.
25 Thirty-three schools, \$200,000.00, that's six

1 and a half million dollars. That's a lot of
2 administration. You know, I heard an
3 assemblywoman say there was a cottage industry
4 closing schools downtown instead of supporting
5 them. There's more people working on the
6 closures than coming out and supporting the
7 schools.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. KEN AKARON: Times three years, that's
10 \$20 million of classroom aid being spent
11 downtown. That's just too much. So now we're
12 going to close everything down. We don't need
13 to spend that, but we're not getting rid any of
14 these people down there. We're just moving out
15 the teachers. We submitted transformation plans
16 to our Principal ourselves back then. Nothing
17 was looked at because all we ever heard was,
18 "Ah, but this is what Tweed needs. This is what
19 Tweed wants from us." So in an effort to
20 appease Tweed, this fall we ended up with 28
21 vacancies. Actually there's about 32. They
22 promised they would fix 12 after Labor Day but
23 they fixed about 4. So we had 28 vacancies day
24 after day for eight weeks. We wonder why we had
25 some issues in the hall? We wonder why we're

1 going to have problems with students passing
2 Regions? Twenty-eight vacancies every day you
3 go to science, every day there's a sub, or every
4 day there's what, somebody they call an ATR, or
5 every day there's some other science teacher
6 covering for the day, puts an attendance sheet
7 on the table and says sign in, I know we're not
8 doing but you've got to sign in. Or every day
9 when it was bad weather and we had our other
10 absentees and vacancies, what do we get? We get
11 nobody there. You know, our students aren't
12 stupid. After a while they stop showing up in
13 those empty rooms because there was no education
14 being given them because we were not being given
15 teachers to teach them. The budget did not cover
16 it. We were doing too much of trying to appease
17 Tweed. And do you know what the most difficult
18 frustrating thing is? Everybody above us knew.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. KEN AKARON: And everybody had a reason
21 why it wasn't their obligation to either help
22 the Principal fix it or order the Principal,
23 who's a rookie, to fix it. I'm not blaming the
24 Principal. I'm saying where is the support?
25 The kids are not getting their classes and no

1 one is helping to ensure that that stops. I
2 have friends in other states in teaching. They
3 laughed at me. Eight weeks? Eight weeks you've
4 28 vacancies? You know 28 vacancies is more
5 teachers than some of these little high schools?
6 Now they're complaining about 200 kids in each
7 of the grades that we're not reaching. Guess
8 what? I'm complaining about 950 kids not being
9 given the subjects. Do the math. Twenty-eight
10 vacancies.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. KEN AKARON: Twenty-eight vacancies;
13 these people all teach five classes. They all
14 have 34 kids ostensibly on register. When you
15 get done with the multiplication it's about 950
16 students. That's a little bigger. We trump
17 their numbers. They didn't help us a bit.
18 Council Member Vallone and Assemblywoman Simotas
19 and Assemblywoman Nolan and Bar President
20 Marshall came in after the program was done to
21 help us get some redress for kids who lost some
22 of their subjects but where was the DOE? The
23 DOE gave the minimal it possibly could till they
24 were pushed, till they were pushed. And now
25 they want to remove the Principal and part of it

1 is they point to this, they point to issues in
2 the hall. We're not going to pick our boss. We
3 know that. But I want to know how many
4 Superintendents they're going to remove for not
5 dealing with this. How many leaders down at
6 Tweed? That means Deputy Chancellors and
7 Chancellors, right up to the Mayor's Office.
8 How many people went because kids didn't have
9 teachers for eight weeks? I haven't heard a
10 number yet. It's because I think the number
11 stops at the Principal.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. KEN AKARON: It's just unfair that all
14 is put on the shoulders of the school. No
15 support is given from above while we have these
16 major problems and they say, "Ah, but you're not
17 doing it. We'll close you." So they're going
18 to close us. They're going to reopen us.
19 They're going to put in a new Principal they've
20 already announced, and somebody explain to me
21 how that doesn't obviate this system; why we
22 should think, when they've already picked their
23 people, that this has any bearing on anything.
24 Prove it to us. Take us off the list. Now
25 again, we're not here to pick Supervisors. Ms.

1 Selanikas [phonetic] said very clearly to us
2 we are a great staff. Well if that's the case,
3 then I invite everybody to join hand in hand
4 with us and let's rebuild this place rather than
5 try turnaround where you just end up where you
6 started. Try it, go around in a circle. When
7 you turn around, you end up where you started.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. KEN AKARON: Let's take a quick look at
10 how this is going to affect kids. Juniors,
11 let's take the juniors. They're going to come
12 in September. The people that were in the
13 programs they had, they're gone. So what does
14 that mean? To me it's like you move to Missouri
15 after three years because you're in a school
16 with a whole bunch of new staff. You moved.
17 The only this is you didn't have to move. You
18 stayed put and they took your people away.
19 That's what is happening. Fifty percent, that's
20 a floor maybe, maybe not; but we know that if
21 you're a junior and you walk in and they're
22 going to be all these changes then the play, the
23 team, everything else, it will take these people
24 six months to find the bathroom.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. KEN AKARON: Okay, we have all sorts
2 of programs that help all sorts of kids. We
3 have an ISS staff, there again the IEP is not
4 the answer. We have a very strong ELL program.
5 They work with the SIFE kids and those are the
6 kids without other formal education. They are
7 helped daily. Their teachers tutor beyond the
8 amount they should. You can't possibly know
9 without coming to the building and I've invited
10 the Chancellor to come to the building. He's
11 never responded. How does a manager change
12 staff on the basis of numbers without coming to
13 see the whole story? It's not fair. Our
14 academics are--they are not topped by anybody.
15 We have top programs for the top kids. We have
16 programs for kids who need them. We are doing
17 our best at both ends. And now we are on to a
18 stronger question. Why would the Chancellor
19 take away ten of the scholarship a year from
20 kids? Why would the Chancellor take away
21 scholarships? Well, that is likely to happen if
22 Long Island City's name is gone. We have a
23 scholarship here, The Seracino, awarded by a man
24 who passed away, whose will said this money will
25 go to Long Island City High School. It didn't

1 say go to new school. So we think--

2 [Applause]

3 MR. KEN AKARON: We think that this stuff
4 for the kids now who are in their second and
5 third year, they're in deep trouble. For the
6 kids who are now seniors, they may never see it
7 and that's another part of the boulevard of
8 broken promises. Our safety, let's look at we
9 don't feel safe here. There were issues. There
10 definitely were issues but you know what? The
11 Chancellor should know better. You can't have a
12 school that is running smoothly and safely when
13 you encourage kids to be in the hall by not
14 giving them teachers. The Chancellor should
15 know better. You can't have a school that is
16 safe when you take the agents out of the
17 building because the day we hit our lowest we
18 had six agents for 11 periods, 6 lunch periods,
19 6 empty periods, 6 agent periods; and the PD
20 tried to tell us that we had 12. It's just some
21 of them were elsewhere in the Borough. The
22 Chancellor should know better. When we are
23 trying to move problem students and they come
24 back and tell us you don't have 14 bibles
25 written on this kid, return to sending school no

1 matter what we said, the Chancellor should
2 know better. And because of that we have
3 issues. I want to ask as a conclusion that you
4 go back--we're going to give you a written copy
5 with everything in it. We're going to ask the
6 following. Ms. Selinakas, you believe that this
7 is such a great hard working staff and that
8 nothing would make you happier than to see us
9 continue. Stand with me and ask the Deputy
10 Chancellor to go back and re-examine the
11 question and to take Long Island City High
12 School off the list. Deputy Chancellor, we
13 implore you, take Long Island City High School
14 off the list of schools to be closed.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Mr. Akaron.
17 So our next presenter on the dais will be the
18 CEC Co-President, Mr. Isaac Carmignani.

19 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: Thank you, thank you.
20 I would just like to say that like Dymtro I,
21 too, am a Bulldog tonight.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: I think, Ken, you put
24 most of the details of what I wanted to say in
25 your presentation. It was wonderful what you

1 stated. You're greatly motivated to VICA, and
2 our Council also is greatly motivated you're
3 defending your home turf. As the Council of
4 District 30 we're also defending District 30.
5 We do not believe that closure is required even
6 for the turnaround, which is the most
7 comprehensive federal school change model.
8 You're taking a trip, a vacation trip, and you
9 find that you're going the wrong way. What do
10 you do? Well, you take your car, you find the
11 right road, whatever it is. You turn your car
12 around and you go in the new direction. You
13 don't take your car, go to the dealership, get
14 another car loan, buy another car, put it on the
15 road the wrong way, and then turn it around and
16 go the right way. That doesn't make sense.
17 Okay?

18 [Applause]

19 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: If a person came to a
20 school and they went to the Principal's Office,
21 and they met the Principal, the Principal takes
22 them around, they show them the building, the
23 school yard, the school field, the gymnasium,
24 the cafeteria, meet some of the teachers, the
25 students, and what if that person when they

1 walked out of the building thought to
2 themselves, well where is the school? See a
3 school is a composite. It is you, it is the
4 teachers, it is the building, it is the field.
5 How do you close a school? Furthermore, with
6 60% graduating I wonder how many do we need to
7 graduate to keep the school open? According to
8 Vice President Casey, 200 schools are beneath us
9 in LIC and they're not closing. We don't want
10 them to close but what we're saying is we oppose
11 this way. To close the school is far different
12 from just making some educational changes; and I
13 think if the Department of Education made
14 informed educational changes, instructional
15 changes, they could pretty much do whatever they
16 want within the guidelines of common sense and
17 research but to close the school, to take the
18 name down, that's something else and that is not
19 respectful of a community. Therefore, without
20 going further, I would just like to point out
21 that our Council at our next meeting is going to
22 be considering, and will possibly pass, most
23 likely will, this Resolution No. 81 and I'm not
24 going to read the whole, but I would like to
25 just clip out some excerpts to give you the gist

1 of where we're going. It reads: "Whereas,
2 the eight large high schools in Queens,
3 including Long Island City High School and
4 William Cullen Bryan High School, offer diverse
5 successful programs meeting the needs of all the
6 students regardless of need, disability, or
7 language proficiency and whereas, the thread of
8 subjecting these eight schools to "turnaround"
9 is a further act of discrimination against some
10 of our neediest students--

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: --Whereas, the DOE
13 has failed in its obligations to service all of
14 our students by creating statistically needier
15 populations but not funding their additional
16 needs, therefore, be it resolved that the
17 Community District Education Council 30 supports
18 the UFT and opposes the Mayor's attempt to place
19 the eight PLA Queens high schools into
20 "turnaround" and calls upon the Department of
21 Education to provide the additional support and
22 funding necessary to reduce class sizes, keep
23 experienced teachers, and secure resources so
24 that these schools can succeed and that our
25 students can receive the quality education that

1 they deserve." Thank you.

2 [Applause]

3 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Mr.
4 Carmignani. Our third presenter is Sivika
5 Saraj, the CEC Student Representative.

6 [Applause]

7 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: I'm going to stand up
8 because I'm representing LIC tonight.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: Good evening, teachers,
11 parents, students, and DOE representatives. My
12 name is Sivika Saraj. I'm, in addition to being
13 Student Council Representative of District 30, I
14 am also currently the Vice President of our
15 National Honors Society and Senior Class
16 President.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: I would just like to
19 share my opinions and thoughts based on my four
20 years of experiences in Long Island City High
21 School. Long Island City High School is a
22 school of my family. My older brother graduated
23 here, I'm graduating here, my brother is a
24 freshmen here, and my nine-year-old brother will
25 be coming to Long Island City High School, not

1 new school.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: Four years at Long Island
4 City has turned the majority of us seniors into
5 productive and successful individuals ready for
6 college. LIC has admitted a lot of us into
7 various numbers of colleges. I will be
8 attending Brown University in the fall with a
9 full scholarship.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: Thank you. And my fellow
12 classmates have been admitted to NYU, Sophie
13 Davis, Union, Fordham, - -, Pace, - -, and other
14 colleges. And the Mayor says that we're
15 succeeding? This is an insult to what I've
16 accomplished in my time spent at LIC and your
17 accomplishments in LIC during your four years
18 here.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: Without the help of our
21 teachers re-reading and editing countless
22 college essays, writing recommendations, helping
23 us with SAT test prep, or even being a support
24 system along the way for our college
25 proceedings, all this would not be possible. My

1 teachers throughout my four years have
2 challenged me to my fullest potential and have
3 ultimately let me to realize what career path I
4 want to follow in my near future, business,
5 which is a priceless entity the Mayor's
6 statistics can't justify. Our school seems--

7 [Applause]

8 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: --Our school seems to
9 only be in the spotlight for all the negative
10 things. What about all the positives? Is the
11 Mayor aware that our school has an Antarctica
12 science research program, or our immaculate
13 culinary and music department, or the spirit of
14 pride that we have in LIC with our victorious
15 sports teams and clubs?

16 [Applause]

17 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: The Mayor believes that
18 reshuffle of bad teachers and renaming our
19 schools will make our school and other schools
20 successful. A teacher labeled bad in one school
21 isn't going to be successful in another school.
22 The same teaching habits they have in this
23 school they'll bring to another school. It's
24 not going to make it any better or any worse.
25 These methods don't sound effective on paper and

1 it isn't going to be effective in reality.
2 The Mayor isn't in our school every day to
3 experience what goes on, or sees the strong
4 willed students that attend LIC, or the
5 motivated and determined teachers that come
6 every day to work. Our graduation rates are
7 improving and as a school that opens its doors,
8 the ELL and ESL students who take longer than
9 the four years to graduate, we cannot be
10 compared to a school like Stuyvesant. They are
11 no better or no worse than LIC.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. SIVIKA SARAJ: They are no better or no
14 worse than LIC but LIC represents a diversity of
15 our community and the tight bond of this school
16 has formed with its community throughout the
17 years. A community that has supported and
18 always will support the school for what it
19 represents. Ten years from now I want to come
20 back to LIC and take my kids around the school
21 to show them Long Island City High School and
22 show them familiar faces and teachers that I
23 have had that have impacted me from not only my
24 time here but what I will do in the future in my
25 career as a person that I'm growing as and

1 developing. LIC is what we've been called for
2 89 years and that's what we are going to remain
3 as. Not new school, not other names that the
4 Mayor wants us be called, it's going remain as
5 LIC. Thank you and enjoy your evening.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much.
8 Our next presenter is Ms. Tracy Brown, the SLT
9 Member.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. TRACY BROWN: Good evening, everyone. I
12 am so glad to see all these students here to
13 represent LIC.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. TRACY BROWN: When I started working
16 here in LIC, none of you all wasn't even born.
17 Okay? That's just the students. Now I
18 piggyback on what the UFT Chapter Chairman, Mr.
19 Akaron, said; and I agree whole heartedly. We
20 were told at the SLT meeting that LIC High
21 School has the best teaching staff in New York
22 City. We want to know if that is so true, why
23 did you all even think about closing this
24 school. The reason why our graduation rate is
25 coming up now is because when some of those

1 students got here in the 9th grade they
2 weren't where they were supposed to be. So the
3 best teaching staff here in LIC High School had
4 to reach down and pull these students up. These
5 are the students here. Okay?

6 [Applause]

7 MS. TRACY BROWN: If we were below the rate
8 when they got here, of course they wouldn't have
9 made the rate in four years. They had to start
10 somewhere and this teaching staff here at LIC,
11 awesome, awesome. We all have our faults, staff
12 and students, we all have our faults because
13 nobody is perfect. We correct them, we build
14 them, and they become productive citizens. Now
15 I have three questions that I will leave with
16 you because I got these from some of the
17 students and some of the staff. The first one
18 was the teaching staff on why you're closing it.
19 The second one was hypothetically, if the crime
20 rate dropped in the 114th precinct, will you
21 fire half of the police officers and replace
22 them with rookies?

23 [Applause]

24 MS. TRACY BROWN: And they also want to know
25 why wasn't the turnaround continued for the full

1 three years it was supposed to so we can
2 actually--transformation, I'm sorry--so we can
3 prove to you that this is the best teaching
4 staff here at Long Island City High School?

5 [Applause]

6 MS. TRACY BROWN: I will leave these cards
7 with you. You can ponder on them. Hopefully
8 you'll give us an answer but mostly like, like
9 the Board of Ed does, they never answer anything
10 positive that we have to say.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. TRACY BROWN: So I'm just going to say
13 to you and your staff, you all have a blessed
14 year and leave LIC alone because we are the
15 best. We're going places. Our students are
16 going places.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. TRACY BROWN: Full scholarships, more
19 scholarships, trophies because they win. We are
20 the best and we'd appreciate it if you'd just
21 leave us alone.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Brown.
24 Our next presenter is Brian Racado, the SLT
25 Student Representative.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. BRIAN RACADO: Thank you. Good evening,
3 everybody. I'd like to first start off by re-
4 introducing myself. My name is Brian Racado. I
5 am a senior at LIC, a member of the Leadership
6 Team, and a much honored member of the 2012
7 boys' gymnastics team.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. BRIAN RACADO: It brings great pride to
10 our school to see so many people come to this
11 meeting and help our school in our time of need.
12 As you all should know, our beloved Mayor
13 Bloomberg has labeled our school a turnaround
14 school. With that being said, the building you
15 are now sitting in may not be called Long Island
16 City anymore. The school you have developed
17 friendships in, achieved excellence in,
18 accomplished goals that seemed unattainable in,
19 will be nothing but a mere memory. I speak on
20 behalf of the student body when I say what
21 Bloomberg is doing is unfair, unjust, and wrong.
22 He knows absolutely nothing about what our
23 school has done and what we are capable of
24 achieving. He doesn't know about the diverse
25 community that travels through these halls.

1 It's a shame that he can't be here today to
2 witness our school fighting for something we
3 believe in, in a place that we can all call
4 home. I was enrolled into Long Island City High
5 School back in 2009. I was nothing but another
6 kid walking the hallway minding my own business,
7 just trying to get on with the day. As time
8 passed by, I began to blend in with the LIC
9 community and by that I mean make friends with
10 some, I'm sorry. And by that I mean make
11 friends that have been there with me since day
12 one. I've built strong relationships with some
13 of the schools' faculty members which include
14 teachers, deans, AP's, and lastly the one and
15 only Ms. Mamo, our Principal.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. BRIAN RACADO: On November 1st, 2010, I
18 decided to join the boys' gymnastics team and
19 from there on in--

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: [Interposing] Speak
21 into the mike

22 MR. BRIAN RACADO: --and from there on in, I
23 knew this was going to be one of the best
24 decisions I made throughout my high school
25 years. I have never, and I mean never, been so

1 dedicated to something in my life. I spent
2 three hours every single weekday working out in
3 the fourth floor gym above us; working on new
4 moves, perfecting the flaws in my - -, and
5 completing any task asked of me from my coach,
6 Coach Akaron.

7 [Applause]

8 MR. BRIAN RACADO: Ken Akaron is a well-
9 respected man whose name will live on for
10 centuries to come. Many of you also know him as
11 LIC's UFT Chapter Leader, but only a handful of
12 the students and alumni have the blessing to say
13 he's our coach. I can confidently say with my
14 head held up high that he has influenced many of
15 my actions in this school.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. BRIAN RACADO: He has paved the brighter
18 path for every one of the members of the boy's
19 gymnastics team. LIC requires all of its
20 athletes to maintain at least a passing average
21 in four classes and their physical ed class.
22 Akaron requires two, good health and good
23 grades. He'd always say, "Without good health
24 you won't do anything and without good grades,
25 you won't be anything." My coach's words of

1 encouragement pushed my fellow teammates and I
2 past what we thought was our 100%. We ended our
3 season with a 6-1 record and on March 7th we
4 restored the title to LIC. We brought the
5 Bulldog pride to new heights and won the City
6 championship like one unit, one social
7 structure, and one family.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. BRIAN RACADO: This program has made
10 such a huge impact on my life and to my younger
11 peers who have recently joined the team.
12 Closing the school could mean that the program
13 we have worked so hard for, the program that has
14 helped us through high school, the program that
15 has changed us as individuals, will be lost in
16 the turnaround process. Programs like the
17 gymnastics team, the concert choir, the theater
18 program, and other sports teams are successful
19 because of the heart and spirit of teachers like
20 Coach Akaron. Turnaround threatens to destroy
21 that heart and spirit. The next group of
22 students who are looking forward to joining this
23 team will not have the same opportunity that LIC
24 was able to offer to me. I have not only gained
25 an education from this school but a lifetime of

1 memories. LIC is a diverse community with
2 diverse activities and programs. This school
3 offers so much to the student body. You just
4 need to have the willingness to surpass
5 greatness. LIC is a fork in the road with
6 multiple paths to choose from. In my personal
7 opinion LIC is my second home. I love being
8 here. I am welcomed. I am urged to work harder
9 because of the teachers that are committed to
10 work here. If it wasn't for their consistency
11 to see my true capability, I wouldn't even
12 bother. LIC isn't what you see in the
13 newspapers and the media. It's what you make of
14 it. I am LIC.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you very much.
17 Our next presentation will be by Amir Sharir.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. AMIR SHARIR: Good evening, fellow
20 classmates, DOE members, Council members,
21 parents, teachers, and our wonderful Principal,
22 Ms. Mamo Vacacela.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. AMIR SHARIR: My name is Amir Sharir and
25 I was our school Senior Class Vice President and

1 a member of the school's Leadership Team. I'm
2 going to be the first to say that this meeting
3 is highly uncalled for. The judgments being
4 made about our school is based fully upon the
5 numbers. This is our backbone. This is our
6 life. We are LIC. We're all here because we
7 chose to be here every day, not because of the
8 numbers, but because we chose to be here and we
9 love it. Some of us don't have families at home
10 and the people here have become our support
11 system. LIC is our neighborhood school and I
12 know when I first decided to come here, I made
13 the right choice. I was both nervous and
14 excited but as I stepped through those doors and
15 met all the teachers sitting out there today,
16 everything fell into place. I joined clubs and
17 after school programs and met a lifetime of
18 friends that will stay with me forever. LIC has
19 given me the opportunity to join a leadership
20 class and meet my favorite teacher of all time,
21 Mr. Vutas [phonetic].

22 [Applause]

23 MS. AMIR SHARIR: His class has changed my
24 complete outlook on life. It has taught me to
25 be determined and fight for what I believe in

1 which is what we're doing right now. What LIC
2 did for me, it's something I'll always remember.
3 Since 2010 our graduation rate has gone up 9%
4 and we've done this on our own. LIC is based on
5 diversity. It's a melting pot of different
6 races. New students come here from all over the
7 world to enroll in our school and they're
8 offered the same opportunities as everyone else
9 here, regardless of where they come from or
10 their physical and mental capabilities. Our
11 parents, teachers, and Principal have provided
12 much support to bring our school to the top; and
13 we most certainly do not need Mayor Bloomberg's
14 money to help us change a school that we call
15 our home without our permission. The majority
16 of our time is spent here rather than in our
17 actual homes. I'm pretty sure there's nothing
18 in the turnaround model that gives us any
19 assurance that our school will improve and it
20 will be a school that we can still call home.
21 No one in the community or in the 33 schools, or
22 should I say 26 left now, supports this
23 turnaround model but the Department is doing it
24 anyway. The Mayor isn't here tonight and
25 neither is the Chancellor. How would they know

1 that our school is ineffective or not if they
2 never even stepped through our doors to see it
3 themselves?

4 [Applause]

5 MS. AMIR SHARIR: One thing they have not
6 seen is how much support we have. How can
7 someone on the outside be able to say our school
8 is not up to measures? Sadly the students have
9 had a new Principal each September for three
10 years now, and now they may have a new one. How
11 is this going to bring stability to the
12 students? But we're still going to fight for
13 our home. LIC has so much to offer. There are
14 32 sports teams, stand up guys.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. AMIR SHARIR: And more than 50 clubs
17 here. There's something for everyone, and this
18 turnaround model is going to change it all.
19 Where does this leave all the kids that have
20 built a relationship with their coaches and
21 teachers? They're going to have to start all
22 over again as if they started a new school. LIC
23 will never be the same starting from the name,
24 Principal, and teachers. As a graduating
25 student I'll never be able to reference back to

1 my school again because it won't exist. It
2 will be as if it never existed in the first
3 place. If you DOE officials want to take away
4 our backbone, so be it but we're not going down
5 without a fight. That's a promise. I am LIC.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before I
8 move over to the next two presentations from the
9 SLT, I just wanted to ask people that are
10 standing in the rows. This second row here in
11 the front is open so you guys can--you're more
12 than welcome to take a seat. We just need to
13 keep the aisles clear. School Safety has asked
14 us to just make sure we keep the aisles clear
15 for safety purposes, so if you guys could just
16 please have a seat. Thank you very much. Our
17 next presenter is from the SLT, the PA
18 President, Anida O'Brien.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. ANIDA O'BRIEN: Good evening. My name
21 is Anida O'Brien. I am the Parents Association
22 President and a proud graduate of Long Island
23 City High School.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. ANIDA O'BRIEN: I want to publicly

1 oppose the plan to close Long Island City High
2 School and make it a turnaround school. It is
3 unfair to categorize this school as a failing
4 school. The data that has been used to come to
5 that conclusion has been manipulated and has
6 overshadowed all of the positive data that this
7 school has produced. Long Island City High
8 School is one of the best large comprehensive
9 high schools in the City. Besides the excellent
10 culinary and music programs, this school offers
11 more for the average student than any other
12 school. The electives, AP courses, clubs, and
13 sports teams draw many students, especially its
14 own students who live right here on Long Island
15 City and Astoria. But in addition to those
16 wonderful programs the classes that are offered
17 for English, math, social studies, and science
18 are challenging and comprehensive and prepare
19 our students to be college and career ready.
20 Our wonderful Physical Education Department
21 offers students an array--

22 [Applause]

23 MS. ANIDA O'BRIEN: --it offers students an
24 array of classes to complete their mandated
25 credits, making it possible for more students to

1 graduate on time. The Department of Education
2 thinks that by changing the name and re-staffing
3 the school they will make things better. We
4 could have used their help years ago when they
5 saw our population exceeding the ideal amount of
6 students in each class. They should have put
7 more programs in place.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. ANIDA O'BRIEN: They should have put
10 more programs in place for truant students and
11 students who come mid-year and travel back and
12 forth all year long. Don't punish our school
13 and try to erase the long standing history that
14 Long Island City High School has in this
15 community. Until there is a level playing field
16 for all high schools, don't judge us by our
17 weaknesses. Judge us by our strengths, the
18 great students and staff who make up Long Island
19 City High School. I am Long Island City High
20 School.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. O'Brien.
23 Our next presenter is Nicole Lucen from the SLT.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. NICOLE LUCEN: Good evening students,

1 faculty staff and Deputy Chancellor. I'd like
2 to keep this brief because I want to give our
3 students a voice and let them speak because they
4 are the heart and soul of this school. As
5 school is not a building. It's not just brick
6 and mortar. It's home, it's home for so many
7 reasons; for kids who don't have anywhere else
8 to go. For parents who aren't involved, these
9 teachers are their family.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. NICOLE LUCEN: While I am not an LIC
12 alumni, my husband and his entire family are
13 alumni of LIC.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. NICOLE LUCEN: We moved from another
16 district and another Borough so I can place my
17 child here at LIC because I believe in what LIC
18 stands for, what the school stands for, what the
19 staff stands for here. I implore you, Deputy
20 Chancellor, don't just sit idly by and listen.
21 Truly, truly hear what our students and our
22 staff and we are saying. Please tell Walcott we
23 are not what the media portrays. We are not a
24 school with children who don't care. We are a
25 community who cares and we are students who are

1 going to lead the future.

2 [Applause]

3 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Lucen.
4 We have now concluded the formal presentations.
5 I will ask individuals to come up by name and
6 number and to make public comment. If someone
7 wants to submit their comments, you're more than
8 welcomed to submit them with our staff up front
9 here after you make them. As a reminder, public
10 comment is limited to two minutes. Please, time
11 will be kept and we will signal you when you
12 have 30 seconds remaining and when your time is
13 up. I do want to apologize in advance if I
14 mispronounce anyone's name. Please do not
15 hesitate to correct me when you come up to the
16 mike. Again, I do apologize. I will call your
17 name up but if I do mispronounce it, do correct
18 me. So if I can get numbers 1 through 5 in this
19 aisle over here, please. Kimberline Rayes
20 [phonetic], Yolanda Coleman [phonetic], Fodini
21 Dimopoulos [phonetic], Christian Ruiz
22 [phonetic], and May Hein [phonetic]. Ms. Rayes?
23 Okay. Go ahead.

24 MS. KIMBERLINE RAYES: Hi. I'd like to
25 reintroduce myself. My name is Kimberline

1 Rayes. I am a junior in Long Island City High
2 School. I'm here six times a week, not five,
3 six times a week in this school. Saturdays I
4 come for theater in Spanish, my native language.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. KIMBERLINE RAYES: In June we are going
7 to have the opportunity to go to a theater in
8 Manhattan to perform one of Spanish teachers,
9 Ms. - -, wrote.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. KIMBERLINE RAYES: If this school is
12 changed, can you tell me, do I have a guarantee
13 next year that I will have the same opportunity
14 that LIC gave me to do that same thing again?
15 Am I? No, I have no guarantee. Bloomberg wants
16 to close the school down. I say that is not the
17 way. It is not right. He should invest money
18 in our school so he can help us. Closing it and
19 changing its name is not going to do anything in
20 my point of view.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. KIMBERLINE RAYES: When somebody needs
23 help, you don't turn your back on them. You
24 don't send them home and you don't turn them
25 around. You help them. You actually help them.

1 Bloomberg is not here to see how successful
2 our school has been lately. He needs to come so
3 he can understand that we are a family. He
4 needs to understand that we are a true family
5 full of diversity, and I think he is so wrong
6 for closing this school down or changing it,
7 excuse me. So all we need is a little support
8 and help and that's all we need.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speak
11 number 2, Yolanda Coleman.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. YOLANDA COLEMAN: Yes, hi. Good
14 evening, Bulldogs. My name is Yolanda Coleman.
15 I am a senior at LIC. I've been here my whole
16 four years, yes, my full four years, and I'm
17 representing one of LIC's clubs, Legacy, you
18 know. Now I've been at LIC my full four years
19 and I have to say I don't have any siblings and
20 this is my family. I look at Legacy as my
21 family. I look at my teachers as people who
22 really help me. This whole four years these
23 teachers, they really care about their students.
24 If Bloomberg cared so much he wouldn't put so
25 many kids in one school. We have more students

1 than we have lockers. That makes no sense to
2 me. How are the teachers supposed to give us
3 individual help if we have overcrowded
4 classrooms to do so? That makes no sense to me.
5 I'm saying Bulldogs - -.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Coleman.
8 Speaker number 3, Fodini Dimopoulos. Did I say
9 that right? Did I say that right? Did I say
10 that, no?

11 MS. FODINI DIMOPOULOS: No, but it's okay,
12 it's okay.

13 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Sorry.

14 MS. FODINI DIMOPOULOS: It's one of those
15 Greek names, it's okay. Alright guys, so my
16 name is Fodini and I'm a junior here. I've been
17 here for three years and through these three
18 years I have to say I've been through many
19 clubs, sports, AP classes, and LIC offers so
20 many things. If you guys close it down or make
21 it a turnaround school, it's not guaranteed that
22 we're going to have all these things back. And
23 since I'm a junior, next year is going to be
24 horrible. I need to start looking at colleges
25 and get recommendation letters; and if I'm not

1 going to have the same teachers that we have,
2 what's going to happen?

3 [Applause]

4 MS. FODINI DIMOPOULOS: We also have to
5 realize that LIC is also a big name in this
6 community. I'm in leadership class and we've
7 done Penny Harvest, blood drives. We've done so
8 much to help this community and if LIC becomes a
9 turnaround school, what's the name going to mean
10 anymore? It's going to be LIC anymore. I've
11 come to this school and its name was LIC, and I
12 plan on leaving this school named LIC.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. FODINI DIMOPOULOS: LIC has been in my
15 family for two generations. My mom has
16 graduated from it and so has my sister and I
17 plan on graduating it the same way.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. FODINI DIMOPOULOS: So if the school is
20 not broken, don't bother fixing it.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
23 number 4, Christian Ruiz.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. CHRISTIAN RUIZ: Hey guys, good evening.

1 My name is Christian Ruiz and I've been
2 through a lot in this school, you know. I've
3 met so many people. I know half of you over
4 here.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. CHRISTIAN RUIZ: I met so many people
7 here. I came here without knowing anything. I
8 didn't even want to join any clubs until I met
9 all of my teachers. I joined a team this year
10 finally after the three years that I've been
11 here, and I've got to say it's a great staff.
12 I've been through so much. My Coach Akaron
13 helped me. My Coach - - helped me and - -, most
14 of all he helped me develop myself. I want to
15 thank him.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. CHRISTIAN RUIZ: The school in general,
18 this is like my family now. Well it is my
19 family. It's my second home, too. So I love
20 you guys. Don't close our school down. We have
21 to keep it open. Alright? Let's go Bulldogs.
22 LIC, how do you feel? LIC, how do you feel?
23 Yeah.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, speaker

1 number 5, May Hein.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. MAY HEIN: Hi, I'm May. I'm a junior at
4 Long Island City High School. I want to tell
5 you how much LIC means to me. I was an ESS
6 student. I came from another country five years
7 ago and I was really nervous when I first came
8 to high school because I didn't know what to
9 expect. I didn't speak English well but now LIC
10 changed me into the person that I am today. I'm
11 an honor student. I have four AP classes.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. MAY HEIN: I'm the Vice President of the
14 Spiro Club. I'm a school spirited cheerleader
15 also. Also I draw for the school newspaper, and
16 I want to thank all the teachers for believing
17 in me, especially Mr. Yurich [phonetic]. He's
18 not a teacher but he's Assistant Principal.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. MAY HEIN: He was always there to help
21 me and he always wears his smile around. It's
22 beautiful. Also my swimming coach, Mr. B, I
23 love you. I don't know where you are.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. MAY HEIN: He trained me to become a

1 certified Red Cross lifeguard. I'm a little
2 girl but I can save a person now. I didn't even
3 know how to swim before. I have respect for you
4 for coming here and being brave enough to
5 represent and to listen to us. Like Bloomberg,
6 I don't even where he is. I respect you and
7 please do not close down the school and
8 reconsider your decision, please. Thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Can I get
11 speakers 6 through 10? Speakers 6 through 10,
12 if you could please line up on the side here.
13 So speaker number 6, Jaqueline Antoine.

14 MS. JAQUELINE ANTOINE: Hi, my name is
15 Jaqueline Antoine. I'm a parent of an alumnus.

16 [Applause]

17 MS. JAQUELINE ANTOINE: I'm speaking
18 enthusiastically this evening to support LIC
19 students and the staff and to oppose the
20 turnaround based on three reasons: stability,
21 commitment and longevity. Stability for
22 students whose siblings and parents attend this
23 school, there is a history of this institution
24 dating back many years. How do you change a
25 legacy and call it a new school; how empty, how

1 trite. This is a staff commitment to allowing
2 students here to succeed. Bringing in a new
3 school is an unnecessary disruption to this
4 process. Somehow DOE believes new and different
5 is better yet the results of support of its many
6 reorganizations are less than impressive. My
7 son graduated three years ago and he returns
8 every break so he can see his teachers and to
9 volunteer. He gives rave reviews about Ms.
10 Kapodistrias.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. JAQUELINE ANTOINE: --and Coach Akaron.
13 He talks about how much he loves them and misses
14 them and they're the best things that happened
15 in LIC. Allow LIC to continue to improve. Give
16 them the resources they need to succeed and let
17 them do the job they are committed to do. They
18 have the stability. They have the commitment.
19 They have the longevity that they need to bring
20 LIC into the 21st century and they should be
21 supported to do it. Thank you.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Antoine.
24 Speaker number 7, Gary Eiferman.

25 MR. GARY EIFERMAN: Good evening. What I

1 have on this paper pales to what the students
2 just said. So thank you. You were wonderful
3 and I just have some words I'd like to say. I
4 was the Department of Ed for 34 years. I spent
5 seven amazing wonderful years in this building,
6 my last seven years, and you are my family and
7 I'm never going to forget you guys.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. GARY EIFERMAN: Last year my son
10 graduated from this school. Yes, Corey. And
11 with the help of this wonderful staff he made
12 the Dean's List so thank you guys.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. GARY EIFERMAN: When I came to this
15 school nine years ago, I was knocked out by the
16 abilities, the talent, the dedication of the
17 staff, and got to know many of the teachers
18 throughout all the curriculum. They're just
19 wonderful people to work with and if you see the
20 results that you would see day in and day out,
21 not only in the classrooms. I sat in this
22 auditorium many years, for four years or five
23 years, watching the concert choir which would go
24 on to win State competitions; the percussion
25 ensemble which brought in students from all

1 abilities and won two years in a row in New
2 York State competitions; AP classes which I
3 taught, the students challenged me every day to
4 be a better teacher, to give them their best and
5 it was a two-way thing always. There's a lot of
6 rhetoric which I could back and talk about,
7 number crunching and accountants who run the DOE
8 and have no idea what goes on in the classrooms.
9 It's been said many times already tonight. A
10 successful school begins with collaboration,
11 with teachers, students, and administrators, not
12 one governmental bureaucracy. If you have a
13 community and you have a school that works as a
14 community, all the students succeed and
15 achievement gaps are closed. Thank you very
16 much and good luck.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
19 number 8, Nicole Lucen. You name, sir.

20 MR. GREG LINDAU: My name is Greg Lindau.
21 I'm the Union Representative of the United
22 Federation of Teachers, representative at
23 Washington Irving High School.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. GREG LINDAU: Another school that the

1 Department of Education has decided that they
2 would close down. Our students, our kids, don't
3 choose to come into this life. We owe them a
4 chance to survive, but Mr. Bloomberg has another
5 idea. And that idea is that all of the schools
6 are going to compete, that students are going to
7 compete like some twisted version of Hunger
8 Games.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. GREG LINDAU: Mr. Bloomberg has set up a
11 system where almost everybody eventually loses.
12 Our kids are not losers, Mr. Bloomberg. We know
13 how to improve schools. We can reduce class
14 sizes. We could keep experienced teachers. We
15 can help communities like yours survive.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. GREG LINDAU: Mr. Bloomberg came to my
18 school today. He spoke at a press conference in
19 my library and what did he do? He raved about
20 the new schools going into our building. The
21 problem is, is that at the end he didn't realize
22 that he was standing in a library that hadn't
23 been opened since last June because of budget
24 cuts. Mr. Bloomberg has a lot of great ideas
25 but unfortunately he doesn't want to pay for

1 them. It is like Bloomberg, Inc., the get
2 rich while ripping people off strategy of
3 business.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. GARY LINDAU: Mr. Bloomberg, have you no
6 shame? Shame on you, Mr. Bloomberg, it is time
7 to shut the Mayor in need of improvement down.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before I
10 call up the next speaker, if I can get speakers
11 11 through 15, 11 through 15 to line up on the
12 side, please. Speaker number 9, Fausto Puano.

13 MR. FAUSTO PUANO: Good evening to all here
14 tonight. My name is Fausto Puano. I am a Long
15 Island City High School graduate who currently
16 attends Columbia University.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. FAUSTO PUANO: I came out here today to
19 defend the school that endowed me with a great
20 deal of good things. I came here in the hope
21 that I could return the favor to the teachers,
22 faculty, and staff who selflessly opened doors
23 for me. I came to defend the teachers that were
24 with me for every single step of the way, to
25 defend teachers that taught me things which were

1 necessary for competing with top tier students
2 from other high schools. These teachers never
3 said to me, "Fausto, you should set your goal
4 lower." No, not once did they ever deter me.
5 In fact they pushed me. They made sure that I
6 exceeded even my own expectations. Long Island
7 City High School gave me a vast amount of
8 opportunities, countless experiences, and to see
9 it ripped apart and changed literally hurts. It
10 hurts to know that if the school is indeed
11 remodeled, future children might miss out on the
12 same opportunities that I was fortunate to have,
13 that future children might have to face the
14 locked doors that I never faced, that these
15 future children might be ill prepared. They
16 might be unequipped because they won't have the
17 same mentors that I did.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. FAUSTO PUANO: Long Island City provided
20 an environment for me that made me excel at the
21 university I am at today and I attribute that
22 solely to the teachers that pushed me along
23 every single step of the way.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. FAUSTO PUANO: I do not support ignoring

1 the opinions and the voices of everyone that
2 is here today. I do not support the remodeling
3 of the school. I do not support drastic changes
4 based on statistics, statistics which don't
5 account for the details that can't be written
6 down or quantified. Sir, I think that there is
7 a great deal more to a good school, to good
8 teachers, than a graduation rate or the average
9 on a standardized test. And I think that there
10 are better solutions, less drastic and more
11 effective, that you guys should think about.
12 My name is Fausto Puano. I'm both a Long
13 Island City High School graduate and a student
14 at Columbia University. Both feats were results
15 of excellent teachers. I ask you to please
16 reconsider the remodeling of this school.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
19 number 10, Carol Ann Cely.

20 MS. CAROLANN CELY: Hello, my name is
21 Carolann Cely and I am the alumni of Long Island
22 City High School Class of 2011. In my four
23 years of attending this school I have
24 experienced so many opportunities such as
25 concert choir, Arista, ROTC, and many other

1 sports. Those experiences have made me the
2 person that I am today. Long Island City High
3 School has offered so many options, to not only
4 me but my classmates, all four years, options
5 that as a freshmen were essential, choices that
6 are needed for every single student here. LIC
7 offers so many sports teams, clubs and art
8 programs to our community's youth. I understand
9 that physically the building will always stand
10 here but the decision to close LIC down will
11 destroy the internal institution of this school
12 that can offer so much as a whole. The decision
13 to close down LIC has been made by people that
14 have never talked to any of the students here,
15 have never taught any classes that our teachers
16 have instructed, and who have made the clear
17 decision that teaching at LIC is the only career
18 that they want and only thing that they will
19 always do. Instead these decisions are made
20 based on numbers on paper, not decisions based
21 on the actual activities of the students doing
22 this, only on numbers. As someone who studied
23 here for four years I can say Long Island City
24 High School deserves better. The kids of this
25 community deserve better and our future deserves

1 better.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. CAROLANN CELY: We cannot stand aside
4 and let this community's schools be snatched
5 from our hands. Yes, there are areas that our
6 school can improve on as many of the schools can
7 also say, but may I ask among the students and
8 alumni here, has any upstate official elsewhere
9 come here to help us? Is Mayor Bloomberg here
10 to actually hear our questions? No. Is he?
11 No, he's not. Has anyone given us insight on
12 how or what to improve? Has there been any
13 direction given or guidance offered to our
14 schools or to our teachers who have given
15 everything from my four years to us? They have
16 countlessly have been there me. That includes
17 Ms. Kapodistrias, Ms. --, Mr. --, Mr. --. All
18 these teachers are teachers that you cannot
19 replace. These are teachers that have been
20 there for you for the past four years and will
21 always be there for you. If these so called
22 crucial numbers matter so much, then, hold on I
23 screwed this up. If these so called crucial
24 numbers matter so much, measures should be taken
25 to help our community's youth where it is needed

1 rather than toss them aside and a confusing
2 whirlwind of a change in school and revocation
3 on everything they have come to know and love
4 from LIC and can't be replaced anywhere. This
5 school is a good school, a great school, and has
6 so much to offer that closing it down you are
7 taking every kid's chance to grow into a strong
8 independent adult. Don't take the easy way out
9 by just closing the school. Take time to invest
10 in our students and our teachers. Thank you.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
13 number 11, Samantha Fallen Smith.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. SAMANTHA FALLEN SMITH: Dear my fellow
16 students of all ages, my name is Samantha Smith
17 and I'm a 16-year-old junior at Long Island City
18 High School. I love my high school mainly
19 because my two older sisters graduated from here
20 with Region diplomas. Sure LIC isn't perfect,
21 but honestly, what school is? Every school has
22 glitches, including all those fancy colleges and
23 universities. But if schools didn't have
24 glitches, then we wouldn't be able to find other
25 ways to improve or make it better. In my

1 opinion all the school needs is a little TLC,
2 if even that. However when I heard that the
3 school was closing down and reforming, my heart
4 dropped. I began hearing all sorts of things.
5 The thing that bothered me the most was the fact
6 that all of the teachers at LIC were going to
7 get fired and only 50% of them would be allowed
8 to hire back for next year. This made me burn
9 up inside because why the teachers? All they
10 ever did was try to help their students succeed
11 and pass all of their classes and exams.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. SAMANTHA FALLEN SMITH: I would say that
14 the teachers worked themselves to death so we,
15 the students, could have a better education and
16 future. They do whatever they can to set a good
17 example for us and we sometimes don't even
18 appreciate what they do. All of LIC's teachers
19 love helping and teaching their students and it
20 doesn't get any better than that. The teachers
21 at Long Island City High School have taught me
22 many things but the one thing that stuck out was
23 never to give up on your dreams and beliefs. I
24 know that I'm not big or tough but I am a
25 fighter and I'm not going to give up anything

1 without a fight. My teachers made that all
2 possible for me and if it wasn't for them, I
3 wouldn't be standing here right now. I'm not
4 afraid to stand up for what is right because my
5 teachers were there for me and I want them to be
6 there for other students as well. Next year
7 when the new teachers come in, we may not have
8 the same teachers like before. There's always
9 that chance that most of the good and well
10 experienced teachers won't be here anymore.
11 Next year when I'm a senior I'll be sitting down
12 in my classes in my new improved school and with
13 my new teachers, wondering if my old teachers
14 are still in the school, wondering if they still
15 jobs, wondering if they know how well I'm doing
16 in all my classes, wondering if they know how
17 much I miss them, and wondering if I'll ever see
18 them again. It would be all unknown to me and
19 that's something I'm not looking forward to.
20 And call me a fool if you wish but that's the
21 true, the truth that came from the heart, my
22 heart. Thank you so much for your time. Go
23 Bulldogs.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ms. Smith. Speaker

1 number 12, Theodora Kapodistrias.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. THEODORA KAPODISTRIAS: It is quite
4 heartbreaking to stand here and try and explain
5 to you in two minutes or less why you shouldn't
6 close down this building and reopen it as
7 something that is new. This school has been
8 part of this community, even if it isn't this
9 building, for 89 years and this will be the 90th
10 graduating class.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. THEODORA KAPODISTRIAS: I am LIC alumni.
13 I graduated from this very same building in
14 1997.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. THEODORA KAPODISTRIAS: I chose to come
17 back here and teach because what was instilled
18 in me in this building is something that cannot
19 be duplicated or quantified, and it's very hard
20 to try and explain to you so then you can take
21 to Chancellor Walcott and the Mayor and explain
22 what this building does and what it builds and
23 instills in its students. I don't have to also,
24 and so many people have articulated without this
25 evening, I have amazing colleagues that work day

1 in and day out and we raise these kids. We
2 consider a lot of them to be our own.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. THEODORA KAPODISTRIAS: And while we
5 enjoy the applause and everything, we do it
6 because we believe that that is our
7 responsibility. It's more than a job. It is a
8 profession and it is something that we have
9 fought hard for every single day. Whatever has
10 been asked of us from this Mayor, we've met it
11 and we continue to meet it. He asked us to
12 improve our graduation rate. We did it. He
13 asked us that we have three years for that
14 transformation model, we're in year two; and now
15 all of a sudden it was decided that we are a
16 failure which is particularly insulting for an
17 entire staff and a group of students who put
18 their heart and soul into all of this to be
19 called failures time and time and time again.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. THEODORA KAPODISTRIAS: And you also
22 spoke of in the beginning, when talking about
23 the proposal, that this new school will actually
24 build up on the weaknesses, then you need to
25 tell the Chancellor and the Mayor, then they

1 need to attack poverty and systemic
2 weaknesses because that's one of the major
3 problems that we face. We face it head on and
4 we do the best that we can with what we are
5 given and we haven't been given a lot by this
6 Mayor even though he's promised us a lot. So we
7 are LIC. We are not a number. We are not a
8 letter on a report card. We are people. So
9 please take that message back to him. We stand
10 here and we do the hard work every single day
11 without promise of accolades or anything else
12 but we do it because we believe in it and we
13 want to fight for this building. I graduated in
14 1997. My sister is a graduate from this school.
15 I live in this community. This is our
16 community. This school is our community. You
17 take it away, you undercut our community and I
18 leave you with this. We teach them a lot of
19 lessons every single day. So time and time
20 again, everyone in here has told you do not
21 close this school. So what lesson are you and
22 Chancellor Walcott and the Mayor going to teach
23 them if you decide to close down this school and
24 tell them their voice doesn't count?

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
2 number 13, Chantell Chimbo.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. CHANTELL CHIMBO: Good evening,
5 Bulldogs. My name is Chantell Chimbo and I am
6 this year's Student Organization President, as
7 well as the girls' varsity lacrosse captain, and
8 the girls' varsity soccer captain. This is
9 currently my fourth year attending LIC and must
10 I say, it has been one of the most amazing
11 experiences. This school is more than just a
12 building. It is a home to all our students. I
13 spend more time in school than at home, being
14 involved in all the opportunities that our
15 school has to offer. In a couple of months I
16 will be graduating high school and I owe a lot
17 of my success to my teachers. More than
18 teachers, they have been my mentors along my
19 high school years. Thanks to teachers to Mr. -
20 -, who has always believed in me and supported
21 me, or Coach Sherlock [phonetic] and Coach
22 Scrubsky [phonetic] who have never failed to
23 teach me--

24 [Applause]

25 MS. CHANTELL CHIMBO: to teach me new

1 skills, that it is not always about the game
2 but about the lessons learned while playing.
3 Mayor Bloomberg wants to open a new school and
4 replace most of our teachers. What he doesn't
5 know is that these teachers are here for us
6 every day, pushing us and motivating us to do
7 better. You won't find teachers who are as
8 dedicated to their students as teachers here in
9 LIC. Teachers like Mr. Tai [phonetic] who has
10 made math fun to learn and easy to understand,
11 or Ms. Ramone [phonetic] who has made global
12 worth learning my freshmen year of high school.
13 Tonight we are all Bulldogs and as you look
14 around at all our students, teachers, parents,
15 and community members, we are here to fight for
16 our school. This is our home and tonight our
17 voices will be heard. We are LIC.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before the
20 next speaker, I'm just going to call out
21 speakers number 16 through 20. If you could
22 please come up, speakers 16 through 20. Speaker
23 number 14, Brenda Vergaray? Vergaray, sorry.

24 MS. BRENDA VERGARAY: Good evening,
25 everyone. Today is a very important night in

1 which we've all--

2 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Excuse me, ladies and
3 gentlemen. If we can give the speaker the
4 respect, please, thank you.

5 MS. BRENDA VERGARAY: Good evening,
6 everyone. Today is a very important night in
7 which we've all united for the cause, to support
8 and save our school. My name is Brenda Vergaray
9 and I am this year's Student Organization
10 Treasurer. Long Island City is not just some
11 other school in this community. It's a home to
12 me as I believe it is for many others. Long
13 Island City High School has brought to me many
14 new experiences that I wouldn't trade for
15 anything in the world. As a senior with the
16 support of my teachers, I have grown as a
17 student as well as a person. This school to me
18 is not just a place of learning but it is a
19 place of opportunities. In the four years here
20 I've achieved several great accomplishments;
21 being part of a student government, English
22 Honor Society, the Spanish Honor Society, and
23 Arista, the National Honor Society. Our school
24 consists of programs, teachers and students
25 working together. One of the many programs

1 provided to us is the sports programs. This
2 school, unlike any other, has 32 sports teams.
3 Among these are soccer and lacrosse. For the
4 last three years I've been part of these
5 amazingly successful teams. The soccer team
6 with Coach Mark Scrubsky--

7 [Applause]

8 MS. BRENDA VERGARAY: --and the lacrosse
9 team with Coach Sherlock.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. BRENDA VERGARAY: The skills taught to
12 us are not just skills that can be applied on
13 the field but also off of it. We have shared
14 tears, smiles, laughter and many other memories.
15 Now the moment I fear is getting closer and
16 closer. It is very hard already knowing that
17 graduation is right around the corner and in
18 just a few months I will no longer be able to
19 play with my teams. But it's even harder to
20 know that due to this turnaround program there
21 is a slight chance that there won't even be a
22 team to come and support next year. These teams
23 have helped me through thick and thin and have
24 motivated me to keep going and succeeding in my
25 life. All of my teammates and amazing coaches

1 have impacted me like nothing else has in
2 life. It is because of this that I am here
3 tonight in the hope to stop this turnaround
4 policy in order to continue offering other
5 experiences I've had. I love this school and
6 what it's offered. I would hate to see it go
7 down like this. I, along with others, will not
8 sit and watch this happen to our home. It
9 affects us and our teachers whom we appreciate
10 and thank for their hard work. We will do the
11 impossible. We'll speak out and we will be
12 heard. We are and will always be Long Island
13 City Bulldogs.

14 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
15 number 15, Avani Davis, Avani Davis. I'm sorry,
16 say that again?

17 MS. AYANI DAVIS: Ayani.

18 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ayani, I'm sorry, Ayani
19 Davis.

20 MS. AYANI DAVIS: Good evening, Ms.--

21 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: [Interposing] Can you
22 speak into the mike a little closer? Thank you.

23 MS. AYANI DAVIS: Good evening. Our
24 wonderful Principal, Mrs. Mamo Vacacela, Mr.
25 Yurich [phonetic], our Assistant Principal, to

1 all other faculty, staff, students and
2 parents, my name is Ayani Davis and I am your
3 Vice President of Student Organization. When
4 they told I had to write a speech for today, I
5 went into shock. I had nothing to say or no
6 idea of what I was going to say. Then I started
7 thinking, thinking about the last four years of
8 my life, the last four years of being a student
9 at Long Island City High School; also how I am a
10 proud example of a student who was at her worst
11 and didn't care about school to the young lady
12 who stands before you today. When I first
13 entered this school as a freshmen, I traveled
14 from Far Rockaway Queens, New York to get here
15 at 8:45 every morning and I still do that today
16 to get here at 7:00 every morning.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. AYANI DAVIS: I had a very low GPA of
19 70.3 and did the bare minimum just to pass. As
20 time progressed I slowly became more interested
21 in school because of my teachers, friends and
22 everybody else here. I learned that I can talk
23 to people instead of holding everything in. I
24 learned to socialize and I gained confidence
25 from being that little insecure girl. Someone

1 asked me why do you even care, you're
2 graduating this year. My response was I care
3 because this is my school. This is my duty. I
4 care because I want to. I used to be a teenager
5 who hated reading and barely passed. I hated
6 English because I never got over a 70 in the
7 class. Then when I came here, that all changed.
8 I went from being a 70 student in English to
9 being a member of the English Honor Society.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. AYANI DAVIS: I went from not
12 understanding math to having an 80 and above
13 average in calculus, from hiding my report card
14 from my mother because she only took 85 GPA's to
15 taking pictures of it show I could show the
16 world. If LIC is really that bad of a school,
17 then why are our seniors this year getting
18 accepted to schools like Johnson and Wells
19 because of our excellent culinary arts teachers,
20 students going to Brown University because of
21 our excellent teachers, Fordham, Pace, NYU,
22 Sullivan, St. John's and St. Joseph, Queens
23 College and even LaGuardia. If LIC is so bad,
24 why is it that students consider this to be
25 their home, their life, their everything? Long

1 Island City High School is not just a school.
2 It's our community and if you close that, what
3 does that say about you? Thank you.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
6 number 16, Martin Fiasconaro.

7 MR. MARTIN FIASCONARO: Good evening. I'm
8 representing the Council of Supervisors and
9 Administrators. The New York Department of
10 Education's latest attempt to close these 26
11 schools, which were already in the process of a
12 three-year reform program, is clearly a
13 political maneuver that is not rooted in sound
14 educational practice. Rather it began as a ploy
15 designed to avoid negotiation with CSA and the
16 UFT over new Principal and teacher evaluation
17 systems. The motivation behind the ploy was to
18 follow a turnaround model, a model that does not
19 require Principal and teacher evaluations and
20 allows the City to close and immediately reopen
21 schools under new names. What else would be new
22 about them? Fifty percent of the teachers would
23 be new while fifty percent of the former
24 teachers would be put into excess. There is
25 nothing educationally sound about this plan. It

1 is being introduced for cynical reasons,
2 political reasons, not to help children. It
3 will not contribute to the development of sound
4 Principal and teacher evaluation systems.
5 Furthermore, removing half of the staff of these
6 schools and recruiting replacements from other
7 schools, the New York City DOE will destabilize
8 schools throughout the system, one after
9 another. While the human costs, and we've heard
10 an awful lot about the human costs from a bunch
11 of great kids, there are fiscal costs, too.
12 Removing 1,800 teachers and tossing them into
13 the ATR pool, where they will work as
14 substitutes at full salary, will cost the City
15 approximately \$180 million a year. Finally in
16 closing, I wanted to commend and thank Principal
17 Mamo Vacacela for stepping into the breach to
18 protect Long Island City High School from the
19 administrative blunders of a misguided Mayor and
20 Chancellor.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
23 number 17, Azzizi Hu [phonetic]. Correct me if
24 I'm wrong, sorry.

25 MS. AZZIZI HU: Good evening to all. My

1 name is Azzizi Hu and I'm the President of
2 Arista and National Honor Society and I'm proud
3 to be this year's Valedictorian.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. AZZIZI HU: Sometimes we do not know how
6 lucky we are until we see what others do not
7 have. I just came back from the - - weekend at
8 Union College. With me were students from
9 various top high schools, including private
10 schools and special ed high schools from New
11 York City and Boston. We bonded quickly and we
12 talked all night about our lives and our
13 schools. I have to say I was one of the few
14 students who loved the school I attend. They
15 dislike their school either because it's
16 dominated by a particular race or there is too
17 much competition and pressure. I was so proud
18 when I was telling these things do not exist in
19 my school.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. AZZIZI HU: The diversity in our school
22 is amazing. We have students from all around
23 the world and my friends and I often joke that
24 we are the United Nations. We see students of
25 every color and we hear many different languages

1 spoken every day in our hallways. Students
2 are never pressured by their peers. Instead we
3 encourage each other. We help out each other
4 because we want the best, not just for
5 ourselves, but for everyone else. Our grades
6 may not be as impressive as the special high
7 schools, but we have something that they do not
8 have. We are a family.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. AZZIZI HU: Our teachers act as our
11 parents while we're in school and they care for
12 us in many different ways. They pay attention
13 to our problems and give us the best
14 suggestions. They are always concerned with the
15 actions we take and the choices we make.
16 They're just like our parents. I cannot speak
17 for all but my teachers have showed their
18 endless love and care for me just like my
19 parents. If I want to go talk to them, all I
20 have to do is go up to them. Sometimes I feel
21 that they're like my therapists who are never
22 tired of listening to me. Several weeks ago I
23 had an accident. I had to stay home, sorry,
24 just give me 30 more seconds. I had to stay
25 home because of my injury. All my teachers sent

1 me best wishes along with get well cards and
2 my favorite Hello Kitty stuffed animals.
3 Although I was scared this accident made me
4 realize that I'm so lucky to have teachers like
5 I have in LIC. So I want to thank all my
6 teachers here because I love you all. Sorry I
7 cannot list all the names because she'll get mad
8 at me. Students, especially seniors, it's our
9 turn to give back. We will submit our voices
10 and be heard by the community. It's time for us
11 to grow up and be strong. We will protect our
12 school and its teachers like the army protecting
13 our country. We love our school and we love our
14 teachers. No one can hurt them without
15 bypassing us first, no one. Go Bulldogs.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
18 number 18, Cardina Richardo.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. CARDINA RICHARDO: Good evening. I just
21 want to say my best friend is on--

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: [Interposing] Just pick
23 up the mike just a little bit, yeah. They you
24 are.

25 MS. CARDINA RICHARDO: My best friend is on

1 stage and she said the things that I wanted
2 to say and I think 300 other seniors wanted to
3 say, who put in hard work. Seriously, I've
4 worked so hard for two years. I've never worked
5 like that in my whole life. Just save this
6 school so I could have a better future and I
7 thank the staff for pushing me and my friends
8 for pushing me. Although I'm leaving and I'm a
9 senior, I am member the Arista, the National
10 Honor Society for this school, and we
11 collaborate with the other clubs that were
12 mentioned today like Leadership, Spira, Student
13 Government, and the fact that we're driven to
14 fight for what we believe in, and to fight for
15 LIC proves how well LIC has influenced us. I
16 know all students they focus on academics but
17 this school helps us with extracurricular
18 activities and makes it a home for us. So I
19 want to thank everybody for being here and for
20 the support.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
23 number 19, Luisa Cruz.

24 MS. LUISA CRUZ: My name is Luisa Cruz and I
25 have been teaching music in New York City public

1 schools for 14 years. I started my career
2 here at LIC and though I have the last 11 at a
3 different school, it was always my dream to
4 return to this school. Long Island City High
5 School is one of the most incredible places I've
6 ever seen. It offers over 20 AP classes, more
7 than 30 sports teams, 5 foreign languages, a
8 world class culinary program, 4 years of band,
9 choir, orchestra, guitar classes, an incredible
10 art program, and some of the most dedicated
11 faculty I've ever seen. As a comprehensive high
12 school LIC gives everyone who attends this
13 school the chance to partake of these incredible
14 opportunities. This is my dream school for so
15 many reasons, not the least of which is that I
16 have the world in my classroom. The
17 opportunities LIC offers literally pave the way
18 for the American Dream, especially for the many
19 immigrants this school educates. Instead of
20 giving us the resources to work with these
21 beautiful students, some of whom have only been
22 in the country a few months while others face
23 enormous personal obstacles the teachers cannot
24 control, the Mayor is saying that teachers are
25 doing a lousy job and should be replaced. This

1 despite increasing the graduation rate two
2 years in a row, having three Principals in two
3 years, and being put through two different
4 models of transportation. Instead of closing
5 schools, give our schools the resources they
6 need to ensure that all students graduate
7 without fear of becoming a statistic, a number
8 that is only as good as the money they bring in.
9 Our students deserve more than this. Mayor
10 Bloomberg and Chancellor Walcott, education is
11 not a business. See Long Island City for what
12 it is, the stepping stone to the American Dream.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Cruz.
15 Speaker number 20, Kelvin Fernandez. Is Kelvin
16 Fernandez here? I want to take the opportunity
17 to bring up Mr. Donato to speak.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. VENICIO DONATO: Good evening. My name
20 is Venicio Donato. I'm the Chair of Community
21 Board 1 and that's why this school is standing
22 here because Community Board 1 fought for over
23 25 years to make sure there was funding. The
24 original plans for this school had every
25 athletic field you could think of but the

1 politicians, even at that time, wanted to
2 build housing and we said no because I'm a
3 graduate of Long Island City High School.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. VENICIO DONATO: Probably the oldest
6 person in this room. I graduated in 1952, 60
7 years ago.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. VENICIO DONATO: The solution is not to
10 close but to give additional support to a school
11 if you believe there's trouble in the school.
12 The easiest thing is to close it and the
13 Chancellor and the Mayor, of course God himself,
14 has the solution for everything. He believed
15 that there should be term limits, two terms. Lo
16 and behold, he decided that God should have a
17 fourth term and that's what he did. You know,
18 when you have billions of dollars you can almost
19 do anything you want to. See, he wants to cut
20 me off but I remember LIC when you couldn't play
21 basketball in the gym because of the dampness
22 the gym floor raised up. And I had some very
23 good colleagues and very good Principals years
24 ago. I have been a teacher, I retired, for 37
25 years so I know a little bit about resources and

1 putting stuff in the school that makes it
2 better. It's easy to say why don't we close a
3 police station because two or three policemen
4 have problems? Close it, start all over, move
5 them all over the City. That's no solution.
6 The solution is, and the Deputy should bring
7 back the message, is to bring resources into a
8 school, not remove. Thank you. Good luck.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Mr. Donato.
11 We are going to take a five minute restroom
12 break. If we can start grabbing our seats,
13 we're going to go ahead and get started. If we
14 can start grabbing our seats, please. Okay
15 ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, if
16 we can grab our seats, please. I'm going to go
17 ahead and get started and call up the next group
18 of individuals on the public comment list.
19 Again, if you know anyone outside that is on the
20 list, if you can tell them to come in, I'd
21 appreciate it. So speakers we have coming up,
22 we have speakers 21 through 25, speakers 21
23 through 25. Priscilla Folk, Eleni Douglas
24 [phonetic], Mary Leah Bartoleme [phonetic],
25 James Vasquez [phonetic], and Diego Narrrajo

1 [phonetic]. Again, speakers 21 through 25.
2 Speaker 21? Go ahead. Did I say your name
3 right? Just say your name one time. Hold on
4 one second.

5 MS. PRISCILLA FOLK: Hello. My name is
6 Priscilla Folk. I graduated in 2011 at Long
7 Island City High School. When one of us is in
8 trouble, all of us are in trouble. This was the
9 case for Long Island City High School, a school
10 filled with many great opportunities and hopes
11 for current and former students. It's on a list
12 of closing down, with a friendly environment and
13 efficient staff that helps educating our
14 children every day. Every single teachers uses
15 their time, energy, money and passion to get
16 their degree and do what they love which is to
17 teach. How can all of the hard work of the
18 staff and students be wiped off and turn around
19 the school because of the graduation rates? It
20 is simply unfair to students, parents, staff,
21 alumni, and the school community. From the
22 outside Long Island City High School may not
23 appear to be a great school but until you lay
24 your footsteps into the school you won't be able
25 to see the teachers, staff, and students' hard

1 work as specialties. When you first step
2 inside the building you will feel very happy
3 because you will see a hard working staff and
4 students talking and laughing as they go to
5 class. The building is considered a home for
6 most of these students and staff. Over the
7 years I have fallen many times and was able to
8 get back up because of the help of the school
9 staff. They have helped me to achieve the
10 American Dream which is to get to college and be
11 the best I can and now it is our responsibility
12 to pass it on because we are the future. Long
13 Island City High School has the potential in
14 helping students achieving their goals and being
15 successful. Thank you.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
18 number 22, Eleni Douglas. How do you say your
19 last name?

20 MS. ELENI DOUGLAS: Hi. I'm Eleni Douglas.
21 I graduated in 2011 and I'm here just like
22 everybody else because it's time for us to speak
23 up and it's time for us to prove that you can't
24 just base such a major decision on just the bad
25 observations for your information. It's about

1 you guys haven't the AP classes the school
2 provides, the amazing culinary program, all the
3 sports teams, the fact that we managed to
4 increase our graduation rate in the past couple
5 of years. It's easy to look the past and focus
6 just on the bad but that's why we're here. And
7 just as my lovely teacher, Ms. Kapodistrias,
8 told us a year ago, we are the future because we
9 determine it. She specifically told us that we
10 can make a difference and that's why we are
11 here, for all the teachers that had faith in us
12 throughout the past years even when we seemed to
13 have lost it. LIC isn't just a high school.
14 It's our home. So many of us have spent more
15 time in this school than in our own homes.
16 These other students, teachers, staff members,
17 are our family, the people we have grown to love
18 throughout the years. Because of leadership
19 with Mr. - -, I have learned to stand up and
20 voice my opinion. Because of Ms. - - and Ms.
21 Capo [phonetic] I learned that history class
22 isn't all that bad, and because of AP Stats with
23 the wonderful Mr. Tai, I'm able to say that I
24 have a new friend. I just want to say that once
25 a Bulldog always a Bulldog. Thank you.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
3 number 23, Mary Leah Bartoleme, there you go.
4 Go ahead.

5 MS. MARY LEAH BARTOLEME: We welcome you to
6 Long Island City High School. We welcome you to
7 a fight. We welcome you to a war against
8 politics for our school. My name is Mary Leah
9 Bartoleme. I am a member of the Student
10 Leadership Team and a captain of the varsity
11 girls' lacrosse team. I have one thing to tell
12 you. LIC is not just a facility. It is a
13 vessel that furthers our development for the
14 future generation. These walls represent
15 struggle. These teachers they represent
16 guidance. Our student congregation gathers here
17 tonight with confident hearts and humble minds
18 to ask you to reconsider the turnaround policy.
19 Pride is what we fight for. A community is what
20 we wish to maintain and we wish to secure LIC's
21 future. I am the blue and white. I am a
22 Bulldog and, Chancellor, I invite you tonight to
23 be LIC.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker

1 number 24, James Vasquez.

2 MR. JAMES VASQUEZ: My name is James
3 Vasquez. I'm the District Representative for
4 Queens High Schools for the United Federation of
5 Teachers. You know, I'm here to talk about the
6 ten years of failure of the Mayor's education
7 policies, obviously ten years where he can't
8 seem to get his act straight. He has no policy
9 except to close schools. People misunderstand.
10 They think that this is not closing a school.
11 Well, Deputy Chancellor and Mayor, then why are
12 you going through the process of closing the
13 school if you don't want to call it closing the
14 school? This is not about teacher evaluation.
15 This isn't about the CIG grant because you said
16 if you got either one of them it's still going
17 forward with this closure. This isn't even
18 about improving the grades and improving
19 graduation rates because LIC has already done
20 that and you're still going to go forward with
21 closing this. And with all due respect you say
22 that you are going to listen to us, Deputy
23 Chancellor, but forgive us if we have no faith
24 in you or in this Mayor in hearing the peoples'
25 voice. The Panel for Education Policy has never

1 rejected a single thing that this Mayor has
2 proposed and, therefore, why should we believe
3 you when you say that you're going to listen to
4 us? This actual panel that is sitting here
5 tonight is chaired by the CEC and the Parent
6 Leadership of this District and the SLT of this
7 school. So then who is it that called the break
8 here just before? I want to know who it was
9 that called it. Was it them who are chairing
10 this meeting or is it you, Deputy Chancellor?
11 We have absolutely no faith in you whatsoever or
12 in this Mayor because obviously you don't
13 respect the process. They chaired this meeting,
14 they call the shots, they decide this meeting is
15 going to end, and they decide when the breaks
16 are going to be called, not you.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. JAMES VASQUEZ: I remember where your
19 former Chancellor, the beloved Joel Klein that
20 we remember so dearly as he began to destroy the
21 schools of the first eight years of the Mayor's
22 reign, he sat there at the Panel for Education
23 Policy until 2:00 in the morning before he had
24 to go to the bathroom. Deputy Chancellor
25 Suransky, I'm going to tell you right now, you

1 are just as bad as the Mayor and the
2 Chancellor. We have no faith in you and we are
3 going to still be here way after you are gone.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Before I bring up the
6 next speakers, I would like to call up speakers
7 26 through 30. Again, speakers 26 through 30.
8 I would like to bring up speakers 26 through 30,
9 if you could please come up to the side in the
10 aisle, please. Speaker number 25, Diego
11 Narrajo. Your name is?

12 MS. EVI GONZOPOLOUS: My name is Evi
13 Gonzopolous [phonetic]. I'm Evi Gonzopolous.
14 I'm a resident of Astoria. I have three kids in
15 public schools. I'm here tonight, I'm also a
16 member of Community Board 1, where we just
17 passed a resolution to ask that the Department
18 of Education delay the decision to close LIC for
19 at least another year to allow some of the
20 reforms that have been taking place to actually
21 take root and be given a chance. I guess I'm
22 here because I've not met one parent, I've not
23 met one student who says that they want this
24 school to be closed. And, Deputy Chancellor,
25 you are a respected educator. You've been in

1 the system. You've been a Principal and I do
2 believe that you care about the education of
3 these students. I think it's very, very
4 important to listen to the community. There are
5 still students here. It's 9:00 at night. I
6 know it was packed earlier. I came later after
7 the hearing started. If everyone is saying keep
8 our school open, let's find another way. It's
9 important that their voices be respected and
10 heard; and I know that this is a technicality in
11 a way, but I guess I do have faith. I have some
12 faith that hopefully you and the Department of
13 Education will re-evaluate this proposal because
14 I don't think LIC is like many of the schools
15 who have been shut down in the past. In my
16 professional career I've worked in many schools
17 throughout the City. I don't think LIC is like
18 South Shore High School. I can't put them in
19 the same category. I can't see how you would
20 use the same criteria to shut down LIC that you
21 would for some of these other schools which were
22 very troubled. And there's definitely work here
23 that needs to be done. I think people are
24 ready. Students want to get engaged. Parents
25 want to get engaged. Teachers want to get

1 engaged. I know the DOE wants to get
2 engaged. We should be looking at how we can
3 work together to do this, as opposed to really
4 disrupting the lives of the students whose lives
5 have already been disrupted so much. So that's
6 what I wanted to say. I hope that this is more
7 than just a legality and it's actually an
8 opportunity to think about it and maybe postpone
9 this decision for at least another year. Thank
10 you.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
13 number 26, Hugo Wele.

14 MR. HUGO WELE: Hello? I wanted to address
15 the Deputy Chancellor directly. I'm a freshmen
16 here at Long Island City High School.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. HUGO WELE: Yeah. During the beginning
19 the year, during the fall, we had a lot of
20 program changes. I didn't have two teachers for
21 two of my major subjects, global and biology,
22 and I had a free period. So I ended up having a
23 3 to 11. I come at 8:45, getting out at 4:15,
24 alright, that's absurd. This medal that I'm
25 wearing is from the gymnastics team that I

1 worked to get it along with my peers, and I
2 want to win more of these. I don't want you to
3 take this away from us and deprive us of what we
4 are hoping to get.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. HUGO WELE: I've had the pleasure of
7 having many teachers, well not many teachers,
8 but several teachers including Ms. Cruz and a
9 few teachers that came up here to speak. Mr.
10 Akaron, he is my coach and he is just awesome.
11 I know Brian Racado. He's been awesome. He's
12 my big brother in the leadership program. He's
13 been awesome. I know a lot of seniors in
14 school. I have made a lot of friends and this
15 school, you can't turn it around. You can't
16 take LIC away from LIC. This is our school and
17 we are Bulldogs and you can't take that away
18 from us.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
21 number 27, Despina Exzoras [phonetic].

22 MS. DESPINA EXZORAS: Hi. I'm not used to
23 talking into one of these. My name is Despina
24 Exzoras and I'm a former substitute teacher and
25 tutor. I'm also a member of the Tamiment

1 [phonetic] Democratic Club and about a month
2 ago I was at a meeting where our State Senator
3 Gianaris and our assemblywoman informed us about
4 the closing of Bryant High School and Long
5 Island City. We brought home petitions and we
6 proceeded to get signatures to stop the closing
7 of these two schools. Since I have a disability
8 I could not go stand underneath the train and
9 appeal to strangers for signatures. I'm telling
10 you this because it's going to lead up to
11 something else. So I set up three days for the
12 petitions and beforehand called all my friends,
13 former childhood friends who are graduates of
14 Long Island City High School and Bryant High
15 School. They were all shocked. Nobody knew
16 that these schools were being closed. I'm sorry
17 for turning my back on you. They were shocked.
18 They came out and signed my petitions. I
19 informed them of what was going on, even
20 childhood friends across the street, and I only
21 live a few blocks away from Long Island City,
22 were getting on the computer as we were talking
23 and accessing the information. Nobody knew.
24 Apparently our Mayor is down playing the closing
25 of 33 schools and up playing the child molesters

1 and teachers ratings being accessible. He
2 has the power of the media and we don't. This
3 brought back memories of when I was a teenager a
4 long time ago, okay. I went to Art Design High
5 School even though everybody I knew went to Long
6 Island City and Bryant. It was the height of
7 the Vietnam War. I'm going to teach you a
8 little history. Everybody was demonstrating
9 against the draft and Vietnam. Our teachers
10 encouraged us to speak out, to be aware of what
11 was going on in our country and we did. In 1970
12 something terrible happened as college students
13 were demonstrating across the country. The
14 National Guard came in, ordered by our
15 President, and opened fire in Kent State, Ohio.

16 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ms. Exzoras, if you
17 could please wrap it up.

18 MS. DESPINA EXZORAS: Just let me finish
19 because it leads to something.

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you.

21 MS. DESPINA EXZORAS: Please, just give me
22 these extra--I waited all night. So the bottom
23 line is Art Design High School joined forces
24 with Pace University for a big moratorium,
25 demonstration, sit-in, and condemnation of what

1 our President had done. We were 5,000 and we
2 marched 20 blocks up to the funeral home where
3 one of the two students who died was from New
4 York and had quiet, quiet moratorium, and then
5 we proceeded to walk 60 blocks down to Union
6 Square for our final sit-in. The bottom line is
7 as we walked people were asking us, "What are
8 you doing? What is this about?" And we told
9 them and they congratulated us and others who
10 had not even heard about the event, that we
11 informed them, and they supported us. The
12 bottom line just like my friends who didn't know
13 that these schools were closing, I want you guys
14 to consider doing something and uniting with
15 more than one school, Bryant with Long Island
16 City, with Flushing, and work out, get together,
17 administrators, teachers, bright students,
18 brainstorm, come up with an idea, an event, a
19 location, inform the media and do it. You need
20 to be strong in numbers and then you can fight
21 Bloomberg, a power opponent.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Exzoras.
24 Ma'am, your bag. Thank you. Speaker number 28,
25 Mary McGukin.

1 MS. MARY MCGUKIN: Hi. My name is Mary
2 McGukin and I'm a parent of two former students
3 here.

4 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Can you speak a little
5 closer to the mike?

6 MS. MARY MCGUKIN: My one son came to this
7 school by accident. He was at Millennium High
8 School the first year it opened but because he
9 was special ed and tested too low, he was
10 politely asked to leave. We came to the
11 District Office in Queens and they sent us here
12 to Long Island City. It was the best thing that
13 ever happened to him. It transformed him. The
14 support staff here, the teaching staff, the
15 guidance counselors, it was amazing what the
16 Special Ed Department did for him. He's now
17 graduating May 20th from St. Joseph's College
18 with a job and he is a former Bulldog. He
19 played baseball and football. He is a Bulldog.
20 My second son took a little bit longer to get
21 out of school. He was in regular ed but he did
22 it; he graduated last year, two success stories
23 of many of thousands which you've heard. This
24 is an amazing school. It does not need to be
25 transformed. It doesn't need to be turned

1 around. What it needs is to continue on, the
2 consistency. They need to come in and see the
3 same teachers that they've seen. And the
4 succession has started. I was a SLT parent. I
5 sat on the Board and the transformation started.
6 I was here and involved. It is moving. It is
7 moving forward, it's moving up. Mr. Bloomberg
8 is not an educator. He's a businessman. An
9 education is not a business. LIC is an
10 education. It's a family. I would like to ask
11 the Deputy Chancellor, when you came in here,
12 did you happen to notice the plaques by our main
13 office. There were veterans that came from this
14 school that gave the ultimate sacrifice. They
15 didn't go to a failing school. This is not a
16 failing school. This is a successful school and
17 you dishonor their memory by considering LIC as
18 a turnaround. That's not the solution. Thank
19 you.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before I
22 call the next speaker, I want to call speakers
23 31 through 35, speakers 31 through 35, if you
24 could please come up. Again, speakers 31
25 through 35, if you could please come up.

1 Speaker number 29, Alin, Szabo.

2 MR. ALIN SZABO: Good evening, everybody.
3 My name is Alin Szabo and I graduated here about
4 ten years ago. Today I go by the name of
5 Professor Szabo. Thank you. I'm here to just
6 simply--I'm not aware of everything that's going
7 on with the school. I was simply asked to come
8 down and share my feelings with the people that
9 have served me when I was here and that's the
10 family that we all come to call Long Island City
11 today. When I graduated high school from here
12 because of financial reasons, I was ready to go
13 to work and not go to college. Now obviously
14 the students sitting down here will know that
15 you can't be a professor if you don't go to
16 school. Correct? It was a faculty member that
17 literally set up an appointment and dragged me
18 to the interview and made sure that I went to
19 school. Thank you, and that's how I feel about
20 Long Island City High School and that's how it's
21 affected my life; and to hear that it's possibly
22 closing down, that's an insult to the faculty,
23 the students, and everybody in the community.
24 Thank you very much.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, sir.

2 Speaker number 30, Bilaual Raja.

3 MR. BILAUAL RAJA: Good evening. My name is
4 Bilaual Raja and I'm a proud junior at Long
5 Island City High School. Firstly, I'd like to
6 state that the schools under the educational
7 system are in fact clustered in individual
8 communities having their own faults and fervors,
9 environments and advantages, appreciations, and
10 needs for improvement. And that being said,
11 there should be stable school environments that
12 are in New York City should not be tampered
13 with. If LIC was to be closed down, then the
14 greatest magnitude of impact by such a decision
15 would be felt by the students of the school.
16 The reselection of teachers and the staff of the
17 school, along with institution of a new and
18 initially unstable system under which the school
19 would be run, will not only devastate the
20 chances of having further successful school
21 years but will also greatly depreciate the
22 students and the staff of LIC who have become
23 attached to the school. I speak not only for
24 myself but also on behalf of the entity that is
25 Long Island City High School, as everyone would

1 agree that this school deserves more than it
2 is granted. We have the potential. The school
3 has many bright students and has teachers who
4 are adept in their subject areas. The
5 environment created by these teachers is skewed
6 towards higher education and prosperity for
7 students in terms of gaining knowledge. With
8 the inclusion of multiple vigorous college level
9 AP courses and college now classes, LIC contains
10 students who have a zeal for knowledge of the
11 sciences, maths, arts, as well as history and
12 literature. Although LIC is not a utopian
13 institute, it has its capabilities and honor.
14 It is a functional school where days are greeted
15 with intrigued minds. The school does not
16 deserve to be put in a tenuous balance so to
17 effuse discouragement. It is by the decision of
18 closing the school that the self-esteem of a
19 congenial body would be undermined. I and the
20 rest of my peers at LIC would like to request
21 for the continuation of the school stability for
22 the following years. Under the premise that the
23 job of NYC high schools is solely to educate,
24 the impact of such a decision on students'
25 education must be greatly considered since they

1 are the base of the education system,
2 especially for the students and teachers of LIC
3 whose dedication in receiving and distributing
4 knowledge is profound. Unlike many other
5 schools, we hold community for our world to come
6 and I'd like to add one of the great gains I got
7 from LIC personally. I'd like to point out that
8 out of all the Queens high schools LIC was
9 chosen by the Palazzo Strozzi Foundation for a
10 fee paid trip to Italy to learn the Renaissance
11 and I'm proud to be selected to go this summer
12 and I'm looking forward to it.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. BILAUAL RAJA: Now I would like to thank
15 the teachers, students and parents for the
16 support for this school this evening and I would
17 like to thank everyone else for their presence
18 and time. Thank you.

19 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
20 number 31, Audrey Dimola.

21 MS. AUDREY DIMOLA: Deputy Chancellor,
22 paying attention? I'm standing here. I'm a
23 writer, an editor, I'm a project manager. I
24 graduated from Long Island City High School--

25 [Applause]

1 MS. AUDREY DIMOLA: --Class of 2004 and I
2 would not come back to stand here today for a
3 school that I didn't care about, for a school
4 that didn't give me something, and teach me
5 something. My teachers are even sitting here in
6 the audience right now, Ms. Franklin who I was
7 able to perform in a citywide Shakespeare
8 competition; Mr. McCool [phonetic] taught me
9 calculus. We had opera class with the Principal
10 every morning. I got a 100 on the English
11 Regions. I had a 4 and a 5 on events placement
12 tests and I went here, I went here. I didn't go
13 to Stuyvesant. I didn't go to any of the
14 specialized high schools. This is where I came
15 because I wanted to, because I'm from Long
16 Island City. And it kills me, especially being
17 someone in the media that the media is not
18 covering the good things that are happening in
19 this school. All you see, especially me, being
20 years later year, all you see is that someone
21 got stabbed in this school and the school is
22 closing, and this and that. What about all
23 these people who are here? I can't believe it.
24 It feels me with joy and it's amazing to stand
25 here and see. People who don't care about the

1 school will not take the time to come and
2 stand up, write essays that people have written,
3 get in front of people and if they're scared or
4 whatever. They stand up. They care about this
5 school and it needs to be here. It needs to
6 have a chance. The other thing is I'm not a fan
7 of Bloomberg. Bloomberg doesn't remember how it
8 is to be in a school. Bloomberg doesn't know
9 what it is to be a city kid and know how hard it
10 is, and LIC gives us--

11 [Applause]

12 MS. AUDREY DIMOLA: LIC gives us
13 opportunities that we would never be able to
14 have anywhere else. Like I said, go the
15 Metropolitan Opera, be in a Shakespeare
16 competition, learn art history, things that have
17 enriched me as a person and the writer and the
18 creative and the professional person that I am
19 today that I would not be without LIC. It's not
20 the media betrayal, it's not kids and hoodlums
21 and people who don't care. It's all the people
22 that you see in front of you right now and that
23 is not a school that deserves to be wiped off
24 the face of the planet. So stand in solidarity
25 guys.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
3 number 32, Jimmy Padilla.

4 MR. JIMMY PADILLA: Deputy Chancellor, I
5 want you to know something. I am a freshmen at
6 LIC right now. I went to gifted and talented
7 program in middle school and right now, I'm
8 doing better than I ever have in my academic
9 life before. Not just that, I want you to know,
10 did you go to school in this city? Did you?
11 Because if you did, then you shouldn't be
12 shutting this school down. We need this school.
13 This is a zoned school for many kids that
14 otherwise would not be able to have a good
15 quality education. This is not an ineffective
16 school. What we have an ineffective educational
17 system.

18 [Applause]

19 MR. JIMMY PADILLA: Thank you, LIC.

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
21 number 33, Nick Widzowski, Nick Widzoeski, 34
22 Ana De Leon. No? I'm going to call up speakers
23 35 through 40, 35 through 40. Speakers 35
24 through 40. Speaker number 35, Olivia Doyle.
25 Speaker number 35, Olivia Doyle. She's here?

1 Go ahead.

2 MS. OLIVIA DOYLE: Good evening Bulldogs.
3 Hi. My name is Olivia Doyle and I am currently
4 a junior here in Long Island City High School.
5 My times spent here at Long Island City High
6 School have been amazing, filled with great
7 memories, whether it was in the classroom
8 getting educated by our amazing teachers or
9 taking advantage of the many programs LIC
10 offers. I am pleased to see that I am part of
11 the girls' varsity lacrosse team with a great
12 coach, Ms. Sherlock, and the girls' varsity swim
13 team with my great coach, Ms. Beedes [phonetic].
14 Also along with Aspira [phonetic], Gear Up, the
15 drama club, the cheer team with my coach, Ms.
16 Lanza [phonetic] and our orchestra which is
17 conducted by Dr. Bartalozzi [phonetic], not
18 including the great AP honor classes I am also
19 enrolled in. Me along with many others, call
20 this our second home. We are family here.
21 Closing LIC and firing 50% of the staff will be
22 a poor decision. Disadvantaging students from
23 these great opportunities, from the sports, the
24 clubs, the advanced classes, and not getting a
25 chance to get educated by these great teachers

1 are irreplaceable. Bloomberg does not know
2 what an amazing job these teachers for us and
3 what an awesome school we are. So please do not
4 close Long Island City High School.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
7 number 36, Khalif Havens. Did I say that right?

8 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: Havens, Khalif Havens.

9 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Okay, sorry about that.

10 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: How are you guys doing?
11 I graduated the Class of 2010. I'm not your
12 perfect student. I never was. I was always the
13 under achiever but I achieved a lot of great
14 things in this school. I'm the first male from
15 my family to graduate high school.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: I come back every year
18 to watch the Homecoming games for the football
19 team. I graduated with the top tackles in New
20 York City with 113 tackles. I graduated with
21 the lacrosse team that my year started the
22 inaugural season, I graduated winning the
23 championship, my first ever championship, thank
24 to Coach Wharton [phonetic].

25 [Applause]

1 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: It's just a lot of
2 memories in this school and for you to take that
3 away would mean a lot to me. I used to come
4 into school early in the morning and walk past
5 the hall of famers hoping that my name would be
6 one day with my picture so I could just show my
7 kids like hey, look what I did. So I don't have
8 too much to say. I do miss Vicarro's [phonetic]
9 Tom Cruise hairstyles. Ms. Alangie [phonetic]
10 working me in day in and day out trying to get
11 my body strong.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: That's my surrogate
14 mother. Every time I come here, she asks me
15 how's my dad doing. I've been taking care of
16 him since I moved to New York in 2007. She
17 always asks me how's my car doing and things
18 like that. I didn't come straight out of high
19 school and go to college. I did a year and a
20 half in community college. I have dreams of
21 becoming a New York City firefighter.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. KHALIF HAVENS: To me, it wasn't about
24 the big school names or having a lot of money.
25 It was about helping people and being around

1 people I love. That's why I'm here to save
2 this school. Thank you.

3 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
4 number 37, Nick Calder.

5 MR. NICK CALDER: Good evening. My name is
6 Nick Calder. I graduated from this school in
7 2004 and I met the greatest friend in my life in
8 this school, Audrey Damola, who also spoke
9 today. I chose to come to this school even
10 though it wasn't my zone school because of my
11 first major best friend in my life, who is also
12 sitting her right now. I came here out of my
13 own free will. I wasn't assigned to this
14 school. I come from a really low income family
15 in Queens as well, and I didn't have parents who
16 really supported me. The people at this school
17 supported me. I spent all three of my years
18 here. I graduated early because the counselor
19 believed in me and pushed me forward to do it
20 and I graduated in three years.

21 [Applause]

22 MR. NICK CALDER: The only reason I
23 graduated was because I was told by the teachers
24 at this school, like Ms. Albores [phonetic] who
25 taught me Spanish and Ms. Downer [phonetic] who

1 taught me art and Ms. Munch [phonetic] who
2 stayed with me in my senior year every day of
3 the week until 8:00 p.m. so that she could help
4 me finish my paintings, because of these people,
5 Ms. Kapodistrias who came here to speak earlier.
6 I had many issues with my life, with my family,
7 and I couldn't go anywhere but here and they
8 showed me who I was. They showed me my
9 identity. To change the name of this school, it
10 seems like such a simple switch because the
11 school is still here. Yes, the student body
12 will still be here, but it's not that simple
13 because you're really taking a piece of my
14 identity away from me. A school that's almost
15 going to be 100 years old in just 11 years; I
16 mean you take that name away and that school
17 doesn't exist anymore because we can't find five
18 minutes to think clearly, instead of spending a
19 whole day arguing about what the future of a
20 school is, it's the wrong way to do it. I
21 really hope that you do take everything that
22 everyone has said here, and take everyone's
23 spirit all the way back up to Bloomberg and you
24 tell him that he can't possibly do this in good
25 conscience. Thank you.

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
2 number 38, Sebastian Zarate.

3 MR. SEBASTIAN ZURATE: Hello. My name is
4 Sebastian Zarate. I am currently a student in
5 LIC, a junior, and as a student I believe I
6 represent everyone here. I am representing the
7 symbol of the Bulldog. This school's legacy
8 started years ago and I am determined to do
9 everything in my power to keep this school open.
10 My father graduated from this school and I will
11 graduate from this school also. Its legacy will
12 continue and we will all be a part of it. As
13 Mr. Akaron said, a school is more than a number
14 and I say he is right. LIC is our home. LIC
15 has changed me in many ways and for the better.
16 I've made many friends and hopefully if the
17 school stays the same, I'll make many more.
18 That is what LIC does. It brings people
19 together. I love this place with all my heart
20 and it is a home for many people and I look
21 forward to keeping it the same. I am LIC. We
22 are LIC. Once a Bulldog, always a Bulldog. So
23 stand up and show Bloomberg what it means to be
24 a Bulldog.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
2 number 39, William MacKoul.

3 MR. WILLIAM MACKOUL: Mackoul.

4 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: MacKoul? Thank you.

5 MR. WILLIAM MACKOUL: While most people
6 mourn the imminent death of their schools with
7 premature eulogies, I mourn the death of public
8 education in this country. The purity and the
9 beauty of public education is public schools try
10 to educate all applicants no matter what
11 background, no matter what ability. We do not
12 turn away someone if they speak little English
13 and might graduate in five years instead of
14 four. We do not look at a person's ability in
15 terms of how it might affect our school's report
16 card. We try and educate everyone. Mr.
17 Bloomberg and others seeks to destroy public
18 education. What are their motives? First, a
19 lot of public federal money is at stake.
20 Secondly, some politicians like the Mayor are so
21 narcissistic that they want credit for saving
22 education in this country. They are determined
23 to turn education into a data driven business
24 instead of the human endeavor that it is. The
25 recipe for killing public education is to start

1 with individual schools like Long Island
2 City, place them on a list, label them as PLA,
3 persistently low achieving, make the list
4 public, constantly remind students in the press
5 that their school is low functioning, and lastly
6 give the students an option to transfer. And
7 who would want to send their school to a school
8 labeled as low achieving? The method is very
9 devious and subversive. How do you overcome
10 such a specter of such a label? Like Wall
11 Street without limitations, the entire system
12 that Mr. Bloomberg has created is a breeding
13 ground of corruption from the school report card
14 to the increased graduation rates that are
15 quoted in the press. Schools lose points if
16 they report safety incidents. So what do they
17 do? Schools throughout the City do not report
18 incidents for fear of a lower report card. The
19 result, schools get safer on paper but not in
20 reality. Throughout the City, Principals
21 pressure teachers to pass students who do not
22 deserve to pass. The result? The graduation
23 rates go up but children are not adequately
24 prepared for college. So what does all this
25 mean? Mr. Bloomberg has created a system that

1 has no checks and balances. If you are a
2 student in U.S. history and government, you know
3 that even the President of the United States has
4 checks and balances.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. WILLIAM MACKOWL: Against the objections
7 of the people, Mr. Bloomberg got his way in
8 securing a third term as Mayor. Are we going to
9 allow him to destroy public education the way
10 that Wall Street almost destroyed this country?
11 Are we going to allow greedy and self-serving
12 politicians to destroy public education in order
13 to further their own personal agendas? Then we
14 need to take back our schools. We need to be
15 part of the process and not scapegoats for a
16 failed administration like Mr. Bloomberg.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before I
19 call the next speaker, Joshua?

20 MR. JOSHUA ALMONTE: Yes.

21 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Give me one second.
22 Can I get speakers 41 through 45, speakers 41
23 through 45. You could please come up to the
24 aisle, please, speakers 41 through 45. Speaker
25 number 40, Joshua Almonte.

1 MR. JOSHUA ALMONTE: How are you guys
2 doing? My name is Joshua Almonte and I'm a
3 captain on the varsity baseball team. Today I
4 wasn't planning on giving a speech but fellow
5 classmates inspired me and pushed me to actually
6 come up here and actually say something and
7 stand up for my school. This school has taught
8 me how to be a great leader. This school has
9 taught me how to be a great leader. Every day
10 when I step on the field, oh God--

11 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Take your time. Take
12 your time.

13 MR. JOSHUA ALMONTE: You know, this school
14 has taught me a lot. One of my dreams in life
15 is actually to go pro in baseball and actually
16 come back and support this high school and give
17 back to the people who have helped me,
18 especially my coach, Thomas Leeman [phonetic].
19 I just want to say please don't close down the
20 school because it means a lot and I'm sorry but
21 thank you very much and have a good evening and
22 thanks for the support.

23 [Applause]

24 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
25 number 41, Tiana Locke. What's your name?

1 MR. JOSHUA TIMOTHY GARCIA: My name is
2 Joshua Timothy Garcia. I used to go to LIC I
3 think five years ago and I left my sophomore
4 year. See I've only been in New York for five
5 years and I've had the misfortune of being
6 homeless for four of those years, and I never
7 lived anywhere in this community but I came to
8 LIC and it was like my escape. Sometimes we'd
9 go weeks without eating, me and my family. I've
10 got five brothers and sisters. I'd come here
11 and I'd be with my friends and they'd make me
12 forget all my problems. My teachers helped me a
13 lot. I actually work across the street now in
14 the deli and I meet so many of these kids that
15 were just like me when I walked into this
16 school. I hear them talking about tests,
17 stressing out. I'm just there to make them some
18 bacon, egg and cheeses so they can--

19 [Applause]

20 MR. JOSHUA TIMOTHY GARCIA: --so they could
21 start up their day. I see teachers coming in.
22 Sometimes it just gets to me like why would you
23 do that to this school? The question is not if
24 this is right or wrong. That's a rhetorical
25 question. This is obviously wrong. You know

1 it, I know it. In fact--

2 [Applause]

3 MR. JOSHUA TIMOTHY GARCIA: Sorry, I'm
4 nervous and I'm kind of mad. I really wish you
5 were allowed to speak as a person and not a
6 representative because I really want to hear
7 your thoughts on this. You shouldn't be
8 representing Bloomberg, right, you should be
9 speaking on your own mind, too. What in your
10 heart is right? Alright? Do you really think
11 it's okay to close this school down because I
12 know that it's not. It's a fact. It's not okay
13 to close this school down. This is LIC. This
14 has been a part of my whole life. It saved me.
15 I graduated from another school, a very small
16 school, a horrible school down in the lower East
17 Side. I'm sorry, just 20 seconds. I've been
18 around schools all over NYC because homeless,
19 moving around place to place. Every day I
20 walked into those schools, I prayed that I could
21 come back here because this was such a great
22 school. It's taught me so much. That's all
23 I've got to say. Thank you. Thank you very
24 much.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Tina
2 Locke? Your name? Oh, I'm sorry, Leo Smith.
3 Go ahead. Thank you.

4 MS. LEO SMITH: Good evening. My name is
5 Leo Smith. I'm a teacher here at LIC and I
6 don't think I would have been able to sleep
7 tonight if I didn't share my thoughts. I've
8 read and re-read the statement for the proposed
9 turnaround model, and the language assures us
10 that the proposed new school will build on the
11 strengths of LIC as it exists. But why then is
12 the DOE not simply supporting the school as it
13 exists without jeopardizing the sense of
14 community that you see evidenced here today,
15 without sabotaging success of students by
16 creating undue stress, tension and uncertainty?
17 This is a human enterprise. Public education is
18 an investment in the future strength of our
19 nature and it's an investment in the
20 infrastructure of communities and future
21 generations. It is unconscionable to undermine
22 repeatedly the success of our next generation in
23 this community, especially with policies that
24 treat students, teachers and parents, and the
25 community as inconsequential. Communities are

1 an art. They are not simply the
2 architecture. Communities need building. Why
3 dismantle a school that already has so many
4 wonderful programs, so many resources, and such
5 a dedicated staff of teachers, and such a
6 committed student body? I question why the DOE
7 chose to utilize a model that has not been
8 proven to be successful in New York City public
9 schools. I asked this at a previous meeting. I
10 asked for research on this model and its success
11 rate in public schools and that has not been
12 provided. The only school that I see in my own
13 research is Bronx International High School,
14 Morris Campus. That school did not remain a
15 comprehensive high school. It became a campus
16 with a number of small schools. I came from a
17 shared campus at the old Roosevelt Building in
18 the Bronx. If you combine the statistics of all
19 the schools that now populate that building,
20 there would be no appreciable change in the
21 overall success rates for those students. What
22 did change is that that student body was
23 demoralized, destabilized, and the shared
24 facilities function only at a fraction of their
25 capacity when utilized by six different schools.

1 I do know what we learned from history is
2 that it never works to save to village by
3 destroying that village. You do not save a
4 school by dismantling and disrupting the school.
5 If you do not want to disrupt the programs,
6 please don't. I oppose this proposal and I urge
7 you to hold yourselves accountable truly for
8 investing in the futures of students at LIC.
9 Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms. Smith.
12 Speaker number 43. Could you say your name,
13 guys?

14 MS. JOHAN MERA: Johan Mera. I graduated in
15 '06 and that right there was a back somersault
16 that I was taught in gymnastics. I was the
17 captain and I graduated the captain of the
18 gymnastics team. We did not win a championship,
19 but Mr. Akaron taught us to never give up and
20 always be the best that you can be. A back tuck
21 doesn't just represent a skill or showing off or
22 whatever. It also represents fear. You know a
23 lot of people are very scared to even attempt
24 going backwards like that. That teaches you to
25 get rid of fear and overcome your fears, and you

1 can apply that to some much in life that you
2 don't even know. And this school, if you take
3 away all the teachers, Mr. Chancellor, if you
4 take away all the teachers, that would have
5 never been possible. And I'm also here to speak
6 for my little brother who is on his way to
7 becoming a well-established doctor. He goes to
8 Brown University and he was salutatorian, the
9 second highest grade in the whole school, and I
10 told him every day how great this school was and
11 he went here and now look at him. He's going to
12 be a doctor. And, Mr. Chancellor, God forbid
13 anything happened to you. He would save your
14 life one day or anyone in your family. And if
15 you take away everyone that put into my little
16 brother's future, where are all the kids that
17 want to be doctors going to be at? Where are
18 all the people that will save everybody's lives
19 be at? Nowhere. Thank you.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speak
22 number 44, Anthony Pacheco.

23 MR. ANTHONY PACHECO: Hello, hello. Alright
24 this is on. Listen, man, I want you to really
25 look at me and listen to me because what I'm

1 saying comes from my heart and hopefully it
2 goes to yours because I know you have one.
3 Check it out. I remember high school being such
4 a simple time in my life with simple decisions,
5 such simplicity, but I didn't know that the
6 simplicity would later build the foundation for
7 what the rest of my life would become. Mr.
8 Akaron, my gymnastics coach, you know he was
9 like a second father for me at a time when I
10 didn't have a father for a little bit; and he
11 sacrificed so much for me and taught me to be
12 great in everything I do. He made sure I was
13 good in school. He talked to me when I had
14 personal problems. He made sure that I was
15 alright, as well as many other teachers here. I
16 met my best friends in this school, who will
17 probably be my best friends till I get married.
18 We started something here, something powerful.
19 We started a dance organization that is the
20 foundation of my life right now. This dance
21 organization has allowed me to travel the world;
22 UK, Europe, Italy, Portugal, you name it. My
23 crew has been there. And if it wasn't for LIC
24 teaching me how to push past fear and push past
25 failure, then I wouldn't be able to do this.

1 And I don't want you to sit there listening
2 to me because you have to, or because I'm
3 another success story, because I've had failure
4 and I'm pretty sure you have and I'm pretty sure
5 everyone else has had failure in their life.
6 But LIC taught me to overcome that failure and
7 it taught me to overcome anything. This is the
8 melting pot in the whole City of schools of
9 every culture. I get to meet people from every
10 culture here, learning so much about their
11 lives. Why are you going to take that away from
12 kids who want to experience that? You just
13 can't do it. Think about it, man, really think
14 about it. You know what a smart decision is.
15 We all do. LIC taught me how to make a right
16 decision and a wrong decision. I love LIC. I
17 love my crew. I love my life. I love Akaron.
18 I am a Bulldog and LIC is me and I am LIC.

19 [Applause]

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Before I
21 call up the next speaker, speakers 46 through
22 50, speakers 46 through 50, if you could please
23 come up to the side aisle, speakers 46 through
24 50. Speaker 45, Jason Corley. Go ahead, sir.

25 MR. JASON CORLEY: Hi. My name is Jason

1 Corley from Jamaica Queens. Mr. Deputy
2 Chancellor, I trust you will take the word back
3 to Bloomberg and Mr. Walcott that the great
4 majority, if not everyone here and in this
5 community, demand that hands be taken off LIC
6 and that this school remain as is and let the
7 people decide, that is the teachers and
8 students, what changes should be implemented.
9 Thank you. I would also add that as a previous
10 speaker indicated, an injury to one is an injury
11 to all. Inasmuch as that's the case, I demand
12 that not only LIC or Bryant not be turned
13 around, transformed, closed, et cetera, but I
14 also demand that the Mayor take his hands off
15 August Martin High School in South Jamaica, as
16 well as reopen Jamaica High School. The people
17 at both of these schools have spoken demanding
18 that effective improvements be made, not by
19 closure. Again, an injury to one is an injury
20 to all. The second thing that I would say is
21 that I personally commend the teachers and the
22 students that are here right now who have been
23 speaking out, both here as well as at Bryant a
24 couple of weeks ago, because the best education
25 I think that we can ever get in life usually

1 doesn't come from the classroom unless we
2 have teachers that motivate us to apply what we
3 have learned in struggles like this. That is
4 what creates the freedoms that we celebrate, the
5 education of struggle. It is through struggle
6 that we find our self-worth, as Malcolm X would
7 put it incidentally, it is through education,
8 this type of education, a struggle that we
9 realize we have the ability to transform society
10 and in the process ourselves. Keep up the fight
11 LIC and whether or not this ends in defeat,
12 struggling now will teach us how to fight more
13 effective for the future. Thank you. Stay
14 strong.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, sir. Number
17 46, Mary Ann Franklin.

18 MS. SABRINA ELANO: Hi. I switched times
19 with Mary Ann Franklin. My name is Sabrina
20 Elano. I am an English teacher here at Long
21 Island City High School. Of course, being an
22 English teacher I have to read a poem. This is
23 actually courtesy of my colleague, Maria
24 Karaiskos. It is entitled *For I am Public*
25 *Education: Give me your tired, your poor, your*

1 students with disabilities yearning to
2 breathe free, the wretched refuse not allowed
3 through charter school doors, send these the
4 homeless tempest toss to me, for I am public
5 education, I lift my lamp beside the golden
6 door, a free and equal education for all. And
7 this is from Long Island City High School, an
8 89-year-old school, a barrier free school, a
9 school whose immigrant student population speaks
10 over 30 languages, the zone school to Queens
11 Bridge, the largest public housing project in
12 the United States. And right now,
13 unfortunately, a school slated for closure by
14 Mayor Bloomberg. As Maria's poem suggests, this
15 is a school that has an incredible diversity
16 which in some ways provides some of the
17 challenges that we see in our statistics; but on
18 the other hand, is one of our greatest, greatest
19 strengths. I've seen students come into the
20 school, really broaden their minds and their
21 horizons, and I've seen them rise up to our
22 expectations. So I want you, Deputy Chancellor,
23 to think about what happens when we set our
24 expectations low, when we call our school
25 persistently low achieving, and say that our

1 school is a failure, and that our staff that
2 has been a really beloved community for our
3 students is not worth saving. Thank you.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker
6 number 47, Audrey Damola, you're going to speak
7 on behalf of Barsha Khandkes. Okay, go ahead.

8 MS. AUDREY DAMOLA: Back again. The Class
9 of '04 loved LIC so much one of my friends also
10 passed on a statement. She lives out of state
11 and she wants to add her voice to this. So this
12 is from Barsha. I'm a former student of Long
13 Island City High School, like generations before
14 me, and ones prior to my graduation. This
15 school has sculpted me as a person. It has
16 carved ethics and values into the very fiber of
17 my being. It molded me from teenage fluff into
18 a vehicle for community betterment. LIC is the
19 reason why apathy no longer exists in my
20 vocabulary. As school's success story is not
21 entirely written in its test scores. It's
22 written on the faces and history of those who
23 are lucky enough to roam its facilities, absorb
24 from it and be changed by it. LIC has been more
25 than a building with chalk boards and rooms. It

1 has been a community center. It has been a
2 sanctuary for kids who would otherwise fall
3 through the cracks. If you have failing
4 children, turn the numbers around. What kind of
5 message will you will be sending if you choose
6 to turn your backs on these students? There are
7 many success stories out of LIC, many we've seen
8 tonight. Many of its students have gone on to
9 higher education, earned degrees, and are fully
10 functioning successful members of society. You
11 do not achieve that without the nurturing and
12 efforts of your high school teachers. Under
13 normal circumstances kids from barely middle
14 class and under can only dream of finding
15 themselves in the position we did. We were
16 offered the best of the City, a high tech
17 environment with sports, culinary arts, science,
18 and creative arts within our reach. Our
19 teachers actually cared about us and did their
20 best to make sure we reached our potential and
21 for that we are eternally grateful. No one
22 would care about a failing school. No one would
23 stand for it and no one would succeed from it
24 but all that is being challenged. Hey, Deputy
25 Chancellor, are you listening? Thank you.

1 Being challenged in front of you today. I
2 challenge you to do your part. Stand up instead
3 of turning your backs. We are Long Island City
4 High School and we have not failed, Deputy
5 Chancellor.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Ms. Damola? Ms.
8 Damola, can I ask you to submit that for our
9 public comment? If you could just give that to
10 staff. Thank you, I appreciate it. Speaker
11 number 48, Niko Liandrakis.

12 [Applause]

13 MR. NIKO LIANDRAKIS: I'll do something, if
14 at all, but I just wanted to say my whole family
15 has been to LIC--

16 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: [Interposing] Just
17 speak into the mike

18 MR. NIKO LIANDRAKIS: My whole family has
19 been to LIC. My mom graduated from the old one.
20 My oldest brother, he went to this LIC. He has
21 his own business now. My other brother, he went
22 to this LIC and now he's in the Air Force, been
23 to Afghanistan. My sister, she graduated in the
24 Class of 2010, salutatorian. She's now at NYU,
25 full scholarship, pre-med.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. NIKO LIANDRAKIS: Hopefully when I
3 graduate, I can get into John Jay and pursue my
4 criminal justice. I want to be a cop, NYPD, and
5 I don't now but this school has so many
6 opportunities. You've just go to make it work.
7 You can't blame the school or the staff or
8 whatever for the students who don't take
9 advantage of what the school has.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. NIKO LIANDRAKIS: I'm lost right now but
12 I don't want to graduate from any school that's
13 not called LIC. Lastly, I want to give thanks
14 to all my teachers, and three people who I
15 haven't had as teachers but mentored me in this
16 school. One Mr. McTexas [phonetic], two Mr. - -
17 , and three Mr. - - who is not here with us
18 right now because he's in a different school.
19 But yes, I just wanted to say thank you to
20 everyone, all the staff, and everyone in the
21 school. Thank you.

22 [Applause]

23 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. If I could
24 also get speakers 50 through 55, 50 through 55,
25 if you could please come up to the side aisle,

1 50 through 55. Speaker number 49, Anthony
2 Josey. Speaker 49, Anthony Josey. Is Anthony
3 Josey here? No? 50 is not here, 51? Okay, so
4 speaker 50 is not here. Speaker 51, Ann Balasa.

5 MR. KEN AKARON: Very quickly, I just want
6 to say to the Deputy Chancellor that I hope he's
7 been able to hear many, many of our students how
8 this school really does affect them and that as
9 he contemplates the decision, he takes all of
10 their statements into account. As he said at
11 the beginning, what is said heard can certainly
12 affect the change and that's what we need.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, sir.

15 Speaker 51, Ann, can you say your name?

16 MS. HEAVENLY MARTINEZ: Heavenly. Well, I'm
17 a sophomore here and I transferred here from
18 John Jay Campus. That school has three
19 secondary schools, three junior high schools,
20 and this year they added a charter school. I
21 wanted to leave that because I wanted a home. I
22 wanted a stable place and LIC brought me that
23 and I'm proud to say I'm a Bulldog and I don't
24 want that to change. I don't want an unstable
25 home. I don't want people to change the people

1 that are like family to me; my basically
2 mothers that are like teachers and everybody
3 that instills everything that I need to be the
4 amazing person that I will be one day. You all
5 are unique. You all are amazing and I thank you
6 for everything and if they change our school, we
7 will still be amazing. I don't want us to
8 change but if it happens we will still be
9 strong. Go Bulldogs.

10 [Applause]

11 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you. Speaker 55,
12 Jamie Rosario.

13 MR. JAMIE ROSARIO: How are you doing? I'd
14 just like to say that my past four years, this
15 is my last year attending Long Island City High
16 School, my past four years has been a rough one;
17 and I'm not here to say I'm a really good
18 student. In fact, I'm not the greatest student
19 but I'd like to say that I was a former pothead
20 in the school who would always smoke, who would
21 always cut school just for all my selfish
22 benefits. My bottom line to why I'm here today
23 is that the teachers had showed me humility,
24 humility to come to work every day to teach us,
25 to go out of their way to talk to us out of

1 their own free time to tell us we're not here
2 to give up on you. We're here to teach you.
3 We're here to pursue our career. They worked
4 hard to pursue their career. They worked hard
5 those five, six, seven, probably ten years to
6 get their master's. I want to be a teacher. I
7 don't want to teach anywhere else. I was born
8 and raised in Long Island City and Astoria and I
9 want to teach here. If you take that pride away
10 from me, that's the only thing honestly I have.
11 I'm not going to say I don't have anything else
12 but the pride I have for going to this school,
13 for having teachers who have not given up on me,
14 who just done so much stuff for me, have given
15 me Saturday school to catch up; I got to school
16 from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Why? Because of my
17 teachers persuading me to go in school. I read
18 one thing in the bible that said pride go before
19 destruction and I believe if you're expecting a
20 raise if you could shut down LIC, you're
21 destroying our school and I don't want our
22 school to be destroyed. At our school we are a
23 team. Our teachers, our sports teams, we're all
24 a team. I'm here to represent LIC and the
25 people who are in here today, they're selfish.

1 Don't be like them, don't. It's not cool to
2 be selfish. It doesn't take you anywhere else
3 in your life. You worked hard to become a
4 Deputy Chancellor to make a difference, not to
5 make money. You have it as a career, humble
6 yourself. If you want to take a side note down,
7 write humble. Write the word humility because
8 you can make a difference in our lives. Don't
9 take our pride away. These elderly teachers
10 that work over here, who break their backs, who
11 come a period, two periods earlier at 7:00 in
12 the morning and leave at 5:30, they don't have
13 to do it. They do it because they love their
14 job. They love their career. I'm sure you love
15 your career but right now all these people are
16 hating on you. I'm sure you're feeling some
17 type of way and honestly, my teachers over here,
18 my elderly teachers over here, have taught me
19 humility. If you try to take their jobs away,
20 that's just stupid because they work hard to
21 become a teacher and for all we know, they want
22 to die being a teacher. They don't want to die
23 knowing I couldn't die being a teacher. They
24 don't want to die just saying I can't do
25 anything else in my life. Just take a note down

1 and just write down humility because pride
2 does go before destruction. Have a good night.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, sir.

5 Speakers 56 through 58, speakers 56 through 58,
6 if you could please come up. Speaker number 57-
7 -is speaker number 56 not here? Speaker number
8 56, I just want to make sure that they're not
9 here. Speaker number 56? No? Speaker number
10 57, Nicholas--I'm sorry, can you say your last
11 name?

12 MR. NICHOLAS LUNG-BUGENSKI: Lung-Bugenski.

13 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Lung-Bugenski. Go
14 ahead.

15 MR. NICHOLAS LUNG-BUGENSKI: To everybody
16 here, this meeting has been going for four and a
17 half hours. We are over time. That's a
18 commitment that everybody has in the depth of
19 your heart. Deputy Chancellor Shael, I
20 voluntarily transferred to come to Long Island
21 City three years ago and personally I have a
22 dream. I was born in 1978, the same year that
23 Mr. Akaron started teaching at this school. My
24 dream is that 30 years from now I'll be at Long
25 Island City High School.

1 [Applause]

2 MR. NICHOLAS LUNG-BUGENSKI: And we've
3 talked and you know some of the history. I've
4 bounced around the system before I came here.
5 On April 26th, it doesn't end tonight in two
6 more speakers, on April 26th that dream of mine,
7 I was recruited to come to this City, a mid-
8 Western kid, to help education. That dream will
9 be killed if you kill Long Island City High
10 School. Shael, quickly, I just want to talk
11 about some of the things that we've discussed
12 here. We've heard it over and over and over
13 again that it's been said essentially that every
14 student LIC will be fine if LIC is destroyed.
15 Honestly, we know that's not true; and the logic
16 and the truth is that you say, well they all be
17 guaranteed a seat. But let's be honest. Queens
18 is the most overcrowded Borough in New York
19 City. That's a fact. You have no place else to
20 put them besides warehousing them. I want to
21 talk about so these are our students, the ones
22 that are still here tonight and their parents,
23 they're the 65% that we're getting to graduate
24 and that grade is going up. Some of you have
25 heard from homeless students to the students

1 that are struggling with problems that make
2 them at risk, we're pulling them into that 65%.
3 But Deputy Chancellor, Shael, with 28 vacancies
4 how are you supporting us in doing that? If you
5 give us the tools, you've talked about the
6 talent in your statement, if you give us the
7 tools we will do better and we will continue to
8 do better as Long Island City High School.

9 [Applause]

10 MR. NICHOLAS LUNG-BUGENSKI: Thank you. To
11 the crowd, ladies and gentlemen, you've stayed
12 this late, four and a half hours. Do not end it
13 here. We heard a lot of people come that Albany
14 is in session. Write thank you notes to the
15 elected officials that have supported us. Write
16 letters to all the papers. This doesn't end.
17 April 26th is when vote will be taken. This
18 community if it wakes up, they will not able to
19 stop us. To Senator Gianaris, ask him because
20 he said it when he was at Bryant. He couldn't
21 be here today. He wanted to be. He was outside
22 in front of the school yesterday. Ask him to
23 put a bill in Albany to recall Mayoral control.
24 Ask him that and thank him for stating that.
25 Thank Cathy Nolan, our assemblywoman. And to

1 the students that are still here, remember
2 win or lose, whatever they do on April 26th,
3 whatever they do, you are witnessing history.
4 I'm a social studies teacher and you are on the
5 right side of history.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. NICHOLAS LUNG-BUGENSKI: Whatever
8 happens here tonight, remember your roots, like
9 Senator Gianaris remembered where he came from,
10 remember that. Don't do like former Chancellor
11 Klein, who didn't show up when his alma mater,
12 Bryant High School, was being closed down and
13 they had this meeting. Where was he? Don't do
14 that, remember your community. Everyone here
15 needs to carry what you saw tonight, what you
16 were committed to, and you need to do more. You
17 need to do it tomorrow, you need to do it the
18 next day, you need to do it from now until the
19 April 26th, and you need to keep doing it. This
20 Mayor has promised he's going to close more
21 schools next year. This fight will continue and
22 so goes Long Island City High School, so goes
23 education in New York City, so goes education in
24 the United States of America. Thank you.

25 [Applause]

1 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, sir.

2 Speaker number 58, Maria Karaiskos.

3 MS. MARY ANN FRANKLIN: Mary Ann Franklin, I
4 switched numbers.

5 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: No, that's fine, thank
6 you. Go ahead.

7 MS. MARY ANN FRANKLIN: Can you hear me?
8 Good. Tonight I feel compelled to speak on
9 behalf of a job that I love, a career that I
10 have been blessed with, and colleagues that I
11 admire. It deeply saddens me that for the first
12 time in my 22 years as public school teacher
13 that public opinion of teachers has declined,
14 yet my service and my dedication has not
15 declined. I still love the career that I chose.
16 Someone once told me that you have to love what
17 you do. You have to be passionate about it.
18 I've lived with the satisfaction that I still
19 feel that way about teaching. Yet this year has
20 been especially challenging. We have shifted
21 our focus away from learning and celebrating in
22 that joy to excessive guidelines for everything;
23 data driven instruction, entering data on
24 computers, handing data to our supervisors. We
25 are turning the art of teaching into a numbers

1 game and we are losing what's most valuable,
2 the joy of learning. Our school suffered a blow
3 this year that came in November when our entire
4 school was re-programmed. Students received
5 programs as if it were the first day of school,
6 but how do you start over in November. How do
7 you get back time? How do you get students to
8 refocus when they've lost their continuity at a
9 time when students are just beginning to settle
10 down? We were not helped in this transition or
11 instructed on how to help our students deal with
12 it. We are not even given an adequate reason
13 for its occurrence. So the teachers and
14 students were on their own to pick up the pieces
15 and make the best of it. I think it unfair to
16 expect so much from students but teachers try to
17 adjust and we try to help our students adjust.
18 Some did, others did not. I've lost students
19 this year who never cut last year. I can only
20 think of how they must have lost faith in us.
21 We have disappointed them, jeopardized their
22 education, and they know it. If it did not
23 matter to us, then why should it matter to them?
24 Tonight you are voting whether or not to close
25 our school. Why would you close a school filled

1 with hardworking, dedicated teachers who have
2 kept this school together? Why would you
3 pretend that you are offering a better
4 opportunity for students? If you release staff,
5 the very ones who were with them this year, who
6 helped them get through an impossible situation,
7 it is a lie you offer. There is nothing in your
8 actions that show that you care about students,
9 the art of teaching, or the love therein,
10 nothing. I am LIC.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Ms.
13 Franklin. The speaker list has not been
14 exhausted. We will move over to the Q&A period.
15 Any question that is not answered here tonight
16 will be answered on the website. If you have
17 additional questions at the conclusion, at the
18 end of tonight's proceedings, we ask that you
19 direct them to us via the phone number or e-mail
20 address on the fax sheet. I will give you that
21 number and e-mail address as well. The number
22 is (212) 374-7621. Again, that number is (212)
23 374-7621. And the e-mail you can submit comment
24 to is d30proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and that's
25 d30proposals@schools.nyc.gov. I will now turn

1 the program to the Deputy Chancellor for a
2 Q&A.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: So first
4 let me thank those of you that have chosen to
5 stay for the whole hearing. I think that that
6 demonstrates your commitment and your passion
7 for supporting your school. Let me start by
8 sharing some of the things that I heard tonight
9 that I found very compelling and powerful. We
10 heard from students, teachers, alumni, parents,
11 folks who are members of the community and have
12 connections to the school; and what we heard was
13 that for many folks this has been a powerful
14 community where there's tremendous love and
15 respect and pride. We heard about the ways in
16 which kids have been supported and nurtured, the
17 ways in which kids have been taught values,
18 taught persistent and resilience, and given some
19 of the critical skills that they need to succeed
20 whether that is being exposed to sports teams,
21 being exposed to strong academics, being exposed
22 to career programs like the culinary program.
23 We also heard about a sense of family and a sense
24 that in this school there's a lot of supports
25 that are put in place in informal ways where

1 teachers and others stay long hours before
2 and after school, and the kinds of relationships
3 that form through that are hard to measure in
4 the data that we look at to look at school
5 performance. We also heard about exciting
6 programs that people have found very valuable
7 like the choir practice, the leadership class,
8 the college preparation programs that exist, the
9 sports teams. We also heard a lot about the
10 sense of identity, the sense that many of the
11 speakers said I am LIC. That sense of history
12 and identity clearly came through this evening.
13 So all of that I've definitely heard and will
14 share as I take this back to Dennis, the
15 Chancellor, and he goes through the process with
16 his team of making this decision. I do also
17 want to answer some of the specific questions
18 that came up. I was honestly quite disturbed to
19 hear some pretty deep misconceptions that I
20 think have spread through rumors, and I want to
21 clarify and I hope that you'll share this back
22 with the folks that have already left. We've
23 been clear in each case where we've made a
24 proposal like this that sports teams after
25 school, extracurricular activities, and other

1 programs like that will continue as part of
2 the new school proposal that we've put forward.
3 So anyone who's telling you that there might not
4 be those programs available is not telling you
5 the truth. We've also been clear that programs
6 like the life center that are independent of the
7 school but serve students in the school, would
8 not be impacted by the proposal. I think that
9 there is a common theme that came up a lot
10 tonight that suggests another misconception,
11 that either all of the teachers are going to be
12 fired or half of the teachers are going to be
13 fired; and I want to restate what I said at the
14 beginning that the proposal for a new school
15 involves an opportunity for every single teacher
16 to apply and there is not a limit on the number
17 of teachers that can be hired to come back. And
18 so I think that there is automatically in that
19 statement a sense of uncertainty and that's hard
20 both for teachers and for students and that came
21 through. But I also want to be clear that the
22 purpose of this process, if it is approved, is
23 to create a team that is going to provide each
24 of the students in the school what they need;
25 and where teachers have tremendous strengths,

1 and we heard a lot about some of the
2 strongest teachers in the school this evening, I
3 would imagine that those teachers, if they
4 choose to, will continue to be part of this
5 community. I also want to touch on the comments
6 around this being an attempt to sort of save
7 money in some way or not give money. I just
8 want to clarify why the transformation grant is
9 in jeopardy. We had an agreement that required
10 the United Federation of Teachers and the
11 Department of Education to reach a formal
12 agreement on teacher evaluation by January 1st.
13 When we did not reach that agreement, the State
14 Education Department suspended the funds for the
15 transformation grant and at this time the New
16 York City Department of Education is continuing
17 to support some of those programs from the
18 City's funds to the extent that we can and so
19 the funds have not been entirely discontinued
20 because we've replaced some of them. If this
21 proposal is approved we do hope that the school
22 will be eligible for funds again, although that
23 is not a guarantee. The name of the school came
24 up a lot as well this evening and I understand
25 that there is a deep sense of connection to the

1 name. The process is when there is a new
2 school created that there is a new name. That
3 is not decided outside of the school community.
4 It's part of the school community's role in the
5 process to define the name. I also want to
6 point out that when we go through a process like
7 this, a lot of the things that people spoke
8 about really feeling supported by in this
9 school, are typically the kinds of things that
10 we would want to integrate into the proposal for
11 the new school. There were two specific
12 questions that came up on the cards and these
13 were most of what I just responded to came up in
14 the discussion. One was around the quality of
15 the teachers and why, if they are strong
16 teachers, we're making this proposal. I started
17 my career in New York City 17 years ago as a
18 teacher. I've been a teacher of math and social
19 studies. I've been an Assistant Principal.
20 I've been a Principal. I know the intensity and
21 the passion that teachers bring to this work and
22 have deep respect for that having been there in
23 their shoes myself. And I want to just be very
24 clear that in every school there are those
25 amazing teachers and there are also teachers

1 that are not doing so well, and I think that
2 it's not honest to suggest that everyone is
3 perfect. It's not true of teachers. It's not
4 true of Principals. It's not true of students
5 or anyone at any level of the system. And so
6 part of this conversation is about if this
7 proposal is approved, is there going to be an
8 opportunity for the leadership of the school in
9 collaboration with the committee I described to
10 evaluate which teachers are going to continue
11 and become part of the school moving forward;
12 because I can promise you that where teachers
13 are excelling, if they choose to they're going
14 to be able to continue, but I also can tell you
15 that I think if you look honestly at what's
16 going on in the school, we have kids that are
17 not succeeding, whose voices would not have been
18 here tonight, because they've dropped out or
19 moved on. If you look at the number of kids
20 that enrolled in this school four years ago, it
21 was approximately 1,100. That 65% graduation
22 rate means that 650 made it through, maybe a
23 little bit more, maybe it's 670; but the
24 hundreds of kids that didn't make it through, we
25 have an obligation to them as well. I think

1 that when you balance the obligation to
2 hundreds of kids each year not making it, and
3 then ask the question, well the kind of changes
4 that we're talking about, where we would try and
5 bring in the strongest possible teachers into
6 the school and build on the strongest possible
7 programs so that we can do better for those
8 kids, that's what this is about, and we can
9 honestly disagree. And I think it's fair to
10 disagree on the question of whether this is the
11 best way to improve the school, but I do think
12 there is a reason here that is designed to
13 support all of the kids coming into this
14 community. I don't accept the argument that
15 those students that haven't made it, it's on
16 them. I think that what we've seen in our most
17 successful schools, and I heard it here tonight
18 for some of the students that have made it, is
19 that we can get more kids to succeed and that is
20 the challenge that we're all here to discuss.
21 And that is the debate that's happening across
22 the City, and this is not about destroying a
23 school. This is about figuring out how do we
24 actually create a school in this building that
25 doesn't just work for two out of three kids but

1 works for every single kid. That is the
2 goal. That is what we're talking about. As I
3 said before, there are going to be a lot of
4 conversations about what is the right thing to
5 do in each of these instances and so by sharing
6 that, I don't want to signal to you that I've
7 made a decision, or that the Chancellor has made
8 a decision, but I do want to explain to you the
9 thinking that is driving that decision. So I'm
10 going to close on that. I'll stay around a
11 little bit afterwards if people want to talk and
12 if there are other points that come up in the
13 coming weeks, you should feel free to reach out
14 to me or folks on our team, and we'll continue
15 this process up until the final decisions are
16 made at the end of April. Thank you. The
17 process is that the questions are submitted in
18 advance. We're not going to go back and forth
19 at his point. We will get responses, too.

20 MR. ARIEL GUERRERO: Thank you, Deputy
21 Chancellor. So as stated before, if there are
22 comments, we do have the comment cards, and we'd
23 be more than happy to take them tonight to
24 ensure that they're taken and put into the
25 record. Again, we have heard a number of

1 significant comments this evening. We
2 appreciate all your feedback and contributions.
3 This information will be shared with the Panel
4 on Education Policy which will have its hearing
5 on Thursday, April 26th, to vote on this
6 proposal. Again, if you want to submit comment
7 via phone or e-mail, it can be submitted via
8 phone at (212) 374-7621. It can be submitted
9 via e-mail, d30proposals@schools.nyc.gov, if you
10 have any other questions or concerns. Thank you
11 all for coming tonight. This joint public
12 hearing is officially adjourned.

13 [END 290276 PROCESSED AUDIO 290 276.MP3]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hebbie L. Manning". The signature is written in black ink on a white background and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Date: April 20, 2012