

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

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

**Extension of the Co-Location of
Harlem Prep in M099**

April 3, 2014

5:30pm

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. ALEXANDRA ESTRELLA: Good evening. We
3 are about to begin. Could everyone please find
4 a seat? Before we begin today's hearing, I'm
5 going to take the opportunity to allow all the
6 members of the panel to introduce themselves.

7 MS. ELENOR FOXE: Good evening, my name is
8 Elender Foxe, and I'm a CEC member of the
9 district team.

10 DR. ROBERT KANE: Good evening, I'm Dr.
11 Robert Kane, the principal of the Academy of
12 Environmental Science Secondary High School,
13 AES.

14 MS. LILLIAN SARRO: Good evening. Thank you
15 all for coming. Lillian Sarro, Principal of
16 Manhattan East School here in the Junior High
17 School 99 complex.

18 MS. KIM DACRES: Good evening. Kim Dacres,
19 Campus director of Harlem Prep Middle, grade six
20 and seven.

21 STEVE: This is for all the Spanish
22 speakers. [Speaking foreign language]

23 MR. TERENCE JOSEPH: Good evening. I am the
24 principal of Innovation High School. I just
25 want to let you know that Steven Fyrif

1 [phonetic], the Executive Director of
2 Innovation High School will be here on the panel
3 also.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. ESTRELLA: Welcome. My name is
6 Alexandra Estrella. I'm the superintendent of
7 District 4. This is a joint public hearing of
8 the Department of Education community education
9 counsel 4 and the school leadership team of
10 Manhattan East, AES, Success Academy Charter
11 school, Harlem 3, Renaissance Charter High
12 School for Innovation and Harlem Prep to discuss
13 the proposed extension and expansion of Harlem
14 Prep's co-location in Building M099. Alongside
15 Manhattan East Success Academy charter school,
16 Harlem 3 and Renaissance Charter High school for
17 innovation through 2014/2015 school year.

18 Again, my name is Alexandra Estrella,
19 superintendent of district 4 schools, and I am
20 the chancellor designee for this hearing.

21 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and
22 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, we
23 ask that anyone who wishes to speak during the
24 public comment portion of the evening sign up at
25 the speaker sign in table toward the back of the

1 auditorium. Sign up will end in 15 minutes.

2 Only people who have signed up to speak will be
3 able to participate in the public comment.

4 All panel participants were asked to be here
5 no later than 5:50 p.m. Now that we have
6 started, if a panel participants arrives late,
7 he or she will be given the time to speak at the
8 most opportune moment. We want to be respectful
9 of everyone's time.

10 There may be elected officials who arrive at
11 different times throughout the evening. If they
12 wish to speak, we will do our best to
13 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
14 Those who are here at the start of the public
15 comment segment will be asked to speak first.
16 Tonight's - - will include a presentation of the
17 proposal and presentations by hearing
18 participants followed by public comment.
19 Speakers should have already signed up at the
20 sign in table in the lobby. If you have not yet
21 signed up, there are 15 minutes remaining.
22 Public comment can be no longer than two minutes
23 each.

24 The time will be strictly followed, and
25 speakers will be informed when their designated

1 time has ended. I would now like to introduce
2 the panel, which has been assembled for this
3 evening's joint public hearing. As they
4 presented themselves before, these are the panel
5 members that will be speaking today.

6 We are pleased to have the following--well,
7 today we don't have any elected officials, but
8 if they arrive, like I mentioned earlier, they
9 will be asked to speak. I'm going to provide a
10 summary of the proposal. On January 16, 2013,
11 the Panel of Education Policy approved a
12 proposal by the DOE--to the DOE to re-site the
13 middle school grades of Harlem Prep charter
14 school from this building M099 to building M121,
15 beginning in the next school year, the 2014/2015
16 school year. However, due to a construction
17 delay, the building to which Harlem Prep was to
18 be re-sited, M121 will not have sufficient space
19 available to accommodate Harlem Prep's middle
20 school students until the 2015/2016 school year.

21 Dream Charter school is currently in M121
22 and will not be able to move out in the
23 2014/2015 school year as planned due to a
24 construction delay.

25 In exploring options for temporary private

1 space, Dream worked with Harlem RPI, a
2 community-based organization affiliated with
3 Dream to try to identify alternative space and
4 also sought assistance from other East Harlem
5 community organizations and Manhattan commercial
6 realty corporation in order to find suitable
7 space. However, this search did not yield any
8 viable options for the 2014/2015 school year.
9 Civic Builders, Inc., which is constructing
10 Dream's permanent facility, has advised the
11 Department of Education that the facility will
12 be completed for student occupancy by August
13 2015. The school construction authority will
14 continue to visit the construction site
15 periodically to observe and confirm the
16 progression on the facility's construction. The
17 DOE is therefore proposing to extend and expand
18 the co-location of Harlem Prep's middle grades
19 in M099 until the conclusion of the 2014/2015
20 school year. The DOE is in the process of
21 reviewing the state's new legislation on charter
22 school. The DOE has also posted a related
23 proposal to move Harlem Prep from M099 to M121
24 beginning in the 2015/2016 school year. At this
25 time, I'm going to allow the panel members to

1 present, but before I do that, I want to advise
2 everyone in the audience that after the panel
3 members present, students will be allowed to
4 present first because we want to make sure that
5 we don't keep students here late, and they have
6 the opportunity to go home early if they wish
7 to. I'll start off with Ms. Elender Foxe, CEC4
8 member.

9 MS. FOXE: As a CEC4 member, I'm actually
10 here to represent the students of our community.
11 And what's important is to keep in mind that
12 overcrowding interrupts with instruction. So
13 you have to keep in mind when there's too many
14 students in a building, then who loses out? The
15 students do. So keeping in mind having more
16 than three or four schools, having five schools
17 in a building, I fear to even imagine who's
18 going to have the 10:00 lunch, okay? So
19 schedule of common areas is something that
20 becomes an increasing problem when you have
21 overcrowding in a building. That's something
22 that we really have to keep in mind that the
23 students of this building are really the most
24 important ones that are going to be affected by
25 what happens in this building. Thank you.

1 DR. KANE: Thank you. The Academy of
2 Environmental Science Secondary High School is
3 not impacted by the proposed changes for the
4 2014/2015 school year. The school is in its
5 final year, phase out, and will close at the end
6 of June 2014.

7 MS. SARRO: Lillian Sarro, Manhattan East.
8 Manhattan East tries, in the population of
9 students that we receive from four different
10 boroughs of New York City, and we teach our
11 students to set goals and meet benchmarks along
12 the way. And what Manhattan East is saying
13 tonight is that the DOE and the PEP should be
14 adhering to the vote that took place in January
15 2013 and previous to that, April 2012, giving
16 Harlem Prep two years here, and then giving them
17 a permanent home in the 121 building.

18 We understand that things happen, but it was
19 questioned at the meetings. It was questioned
20 at the community meeting, at the joint public
21 meeting, what would happen if Dream Charter
22 would not be able to move to their new facility,
23 a brand new, beautiful school building, what
24 would happen. And it was clearly stated that
25 Dream would be the ones responsible to find

1 their own temporary space. What we are arguing
2 is stick to what was said.

3 If it had been a natural disaster that had
4 occurred, we would welcome anybody into this
5 building, filling up every, single inch of this
6 space. That is not what has occurred. It is a
7 construction problem. The building's not ready.
8 Who in construction would not have foreseen that
9 the building would not have been ready on time?
10 I look at this audience, and I see people here,
11 and I'm sure that they have dealt with the
12 construction of something, and they know that
13 construction doesn't always happen. And I stand
14 by the fact that the DOE is in the construction
15 business, you know? And they should have known.
16 They should have foreseen it. Let's just skip
17 to what was done and voted for 13 months ago.
18 Thank you.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. DACRES: Kim Dacres, Harlem Prep Middle.
21 We have shared so much space here. We've shared
22 bathrooms with kindergarteners, and bathrooms
23 with 12th grades. Cafeterias, gymnasiums,
24 hallways, stairwells, the whole nine, and
25 throughout everything, we've been great

1 neighbors. We expected only to be here for
2 two years and ultimately to be here for our
3 students. Our students matter the most for us,
4 and we've been unfortunately caught in the
5 crossfire between a charter school and their own
6 space. I'm not going to speak to that. I'm
7 only going to speak about our kids and what
8 matters to me and my staff and the team and the
9 work that we do at Harlem Prep Middle. I know
10 that we've built great relationships here.
11 We've had Innovation seniors volunteer at our
12 Halloween party. Manhattan East and Harlem Prep
13 Middle - - scholars play basketball in the
14 mornings before morning arrival, and we're
15 starting a reading program with Harlem Success.
16 So we are great neighbors, and we're willing to
17 do what's best for our students in making sure
18 that we have this space to do so.

19 We are forced to shrink our program by not
20 having a fully grown middle school possibly next
21 year, and that impacts how many students we have
22 promised we would impact over the course of our
23 charter. So we want to make sure we do what's
24 best for our students and of course maintain the
25 relationships and friendships that we've

1 developed here with the building leadership
2 team. Thank you.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. STEVE FYRIF: Steve Fyrif, executive
5 director, Renaissance Chart High School for
6 Innovation. First of all, I just want to echo
7 what the other speakers at the table said.
8 We're good neighbors in this building. Perhaps
9 we've been the model building co-location in my
10 view. I have a great relationship with Kim,
11 great relationship with Lilly, great
12 relationship with the people at Harlem Success -
13 - there, and in fact, the building council here
14 embodies the best values of a building council.
15 You could take a video of what we do. We could
16 talk about that. We could replicate it. I know
17 that the Chancellor and the Mayor are very big
18 on replication. Come right here. We'd be very
19 happy to be role models for you.

20 So the issue is not with the building
21 council. The issue is that the building council
22 was not consulted before the BUP, that's the
23 building utilization plan, was enacted, and
24 before the educational impact statement was
25 written.

1 And that may be somewhat mysterious or you
2 might wonder how could that have possibly
3 happened. How can you write these documents if
4 you don't have the facts? How can you arrive at
5 a conclusion without the data? How can you
6 decide that something like this should occur
7 without discussing with the stakeholders. Well,
8 I don't want to speak for the other folks at the
9 table. I find it mysterious. Everybody else
10 I've talked to in this matter has found it to be
11 equally mysterious.

12 You know, I know that the people from the
13 DOE are good people, are smart people. They're
14 people who I believe act in good faith, and I
15 think this is a wonderful opportunity to have a
16 - - where the entire community comes together
17 and rethinks what's happened in light of
18 reasonable considerations. We really need to
19 get the information we didn't have before.

20 I'll give you a few pieces of information
21 that - - high school. We have 440 students this
22 year, and we're packed to the gills. The
23 educational impacts statement for this building
24 says we're 80% filled. That's simply not the
25 case. Ask any of the building leaders here. At

1 Innovation, we're counseling kids in what
2 would amount of closets, slightly larger than
3 closets, off of stairwells in rooms that don't
4 even have locks. They have to be padlocked when
5 they're not being occupied. They have holes in
6 them. They have water leaks. They have
7 environmental conditions that make their
8 occupancy untenable, but even if you were to
9 make them beautiful, they wouldn't be the space
10 we need to counsel our special needs population.
11 Nearly 40% of our kids have special needs, but
12 all of our kids have needs.

13 And the need for space is the most
14 fundamental need that we have. We don't have an
15 art program. We don't have a big enough
16 language program. I'm going to let the other
17 members of my leadership team fill in the facts,
18 because they can do so more eloquently than I
19 can, but really the long and short of it is that
20 I really believe that the information that was
21 required to make a rational and just decision
22 about what's best for these kids was simply not
23 obtained before the DOE reached its conclusion.

24 Now, the last thing I want to say--I know
25 I've been going on for some time. I apologize

1 about that. Our charter, Innovations Charter
2 provides that we build out to 500 students. We
3 have 440 now, and we're overcrowded. We held
4 off on full build out this year because we were
5 promised that we'd have additional space next
6 year. Now we're being told again that we're not
7 going to get it. In fact, they were planning to
8 cut our space down, and we're already
9 overcrowded. So that simply is not acceptable
10 to the folks at Innovation.

11 Now, some of you may be familiar with the
12 new budget legislation that just came out in
13 Albany, and if you are, you know that for co-
14 located charter schools that already have a
15 building utilization plan, that plan cannot be
16 changed without the consent of those schools.
17 So I mean, I really think that what's going to
18 happen is that we're going to work together, the
19 building leaders are going to come together, the
20 community is going to come together, and we're
21 going to make this work, but I have to say, I've
22 been asked to say by our board of trustees that
23 if that doesn't happen, then as a fiduciary of
24 the school and as a representative of the board,
25 it's going to be very difficult for us to

1 provide consent to the proposed co-location.

2 So let's work together, work together as a
3 community, arrive at a reasonable solution and a
4 just solution for all of our kids and for every
5 school in the building. Thank you.

6 [Applause]

7 MS. ESTRELLA: At this time, I'm going to
8 ask Andrew King, representative of Melissa Mark-
9 Viverito, to come up to speak on her behalf.

10 MR. ANDREW KING: Thank you, superintendent.
11 My name's Andrew King. I work for the Office of
12 Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. I just
13 want to reiterate what I communicated at our
14 last community meeting earlier this week, the
15 councilmember, council speaker now, is a strong
16 supporter of Renaissance School for Innovation.
17 She believes in the vision of a local community
18 based charter serving East Harlem's highest
19 needs students for a number of years, and so
20 she's very concerned and is opposed to the
21 proposed modification of this building
22 utilization plan here at 99 because ultimately
23 we all know the numbers. Renaissance there's a
24 very high needs student population, high
25 percentage of ELL students, special education

1 students, constituting 35% of the student
2 body. Significantly higher than any other high
3 school in the district, I believe, and much
4 higher than the city average, and ultimately we
5 all know that it's absolutely wrong and unfair
6 for this new proposed modification for
7 Renaissance to be losing classrooms, because
8 that will ultimately hamper their ability to
9 effectively serve special education high needs
10 population, also other things that Renaissance
11 we originally promised was more space for self-
12 contained classes, small group ELL class space,
13 and also had plans to expand different programs,
14 literacy programs, multiple pathways, more space
15 for music and art. So the Speaker is not in
16 support of the proposed modification. Thank
17 you.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. ESTRELLA: Thank you. At this time we're
20 going to have SLT members speak. We'll start
21 off with Success Academy and maybe you can
22 introduce your names so that I don't butcher
23 your names.

24 MS. NORA CONNEY: Good evening. My name is
25 Nora Cooney [phonetic]. I'm here on behalf of

1 Success Academy. The DOE's proposal would
2 cause all the schools co-located in this
3 building to lose space that they were counting
4 on for next year. Some would lose as many as
5 seven full sized rooms. The school's been
6 planning on the use of these rooms for some
7 time. For Success Academy, losing these rooms
8 would have a negative impact on our scholars.
9 We don't think that any of the schools in this
10 facility are able to absorb the loss of these
11 rooms. Therefore the DOE needs to explore and
12 determine a different solution, one that does
13 not harm any of the schools in this building.

14 We understand that this changed utilization
15 is the result of another school's private
16 facility not being ready. In a previous EIS,
17 the DOE said that if the private facility was
18 not ready, the school would explore options to
19 serve its students in temporary space. We're
20 asking for that to be followed. This proposal
21 is not good for the school community as a whole,
22 and therefore, the DOE needs to support the
23 efforts of all of the schools in this building
24 by finding an alternative space solution that
25 would benefit all schools rather than harm them.

1 Thank you.

2 MS. ESTRELLA: Thank you. At this time, can
3 I have Manhattan East SLT members? Boss
4 [phonetic] and Melissa - - ? Please introduce
5 your names.

6 MR. AMID BOSA: My name is Amid Bosa
7 [phonetic]. I'm a parent of a student at
8 Manhattan East and a member of the School
9 Leadership Team. On Monday when I came to the
10 community forum and spoke in front of the group
11 there, I said that this proposal was misguided,
12 and I gave the reasons why I thought it was
13 misguided, and many of those reasons have been
14 articulated here. But the interesting thing
15 about that community meeting is it gave all of
16 us the first opportunity to actually hear what
17 the impact would be on all of the schools. And
18 so after that meeting, I came away with the idea
19 that--not the idea. With the revelation that
20 every kid in this school is going to be impacted
21 if this proposal goes forward. So at this time,
22 I'm actually calling for the withdrawal of this
23 proposal because I think that the impact that it
24 has from the kids from innovation, the kids from
25 Manhattan East, Harlem Prep not being able to

1 get their permanent site, is way too large for
2 any group of students to have to adhere to.

3 Dream Charter, which is currently in 121,
4 knew on January of 2013--in fact, they knew
5 earlier in November of 2012 when the first
6 proposal came out that they would need to look
7 for new space in the event that their space was
8 not ready, and in fact, they haven't done that.
9 Dream Charter actually sent us a letter because
10 my wife requested from the Deputy Counselor
11 here--Deputy Chancellor, excuse me--what steps
12 has Dream taken to find new space.

13 They sent a two-page document to the DOE
14 apparently, in which they claim that they looked
15 for space, and they said they were only given
16 one year to look for it. That's simply not
17 true. They knew in November of 2012 that they
18 would need to find new space. So why would they
19 wait? It's like me saying you know, I live in a
20 great apartment. I don't pay any rent. You
21 want me to live there another year? Of course
22 I'm going to stay another year. So without
23 going through all of the reasons that have been
24 articulated here before that are on the record,
25 I think the DOE should really stick with the

1 proposal that they made in 2013, that they
2 sold us all on. The new charter should find its
3 own new space, Harlem Prep should be allowed to
4 go to its permanent space, and the schools that
5 are currently in M099 should be allowed to
6 expand in the manner that they were promised
7 that they would be able to do so. Thank you.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. MELISSA CANSONE: My name is Melissa
10 Cansone [phonetic]. I'm the assistant principal
11 over at Manhattan Middle School. Excuse my
12 voice. We've been very fortunate in this
13 building to have such a positive relationship
14 amongst all of the schools in the building, and
15 in some ways I feel that may be to our detriment
16 in this situation. The fact that we all do get
17 along, play well together and have worked very
18 hard to share our space along the way, that
19 support all the schools, may actually be to our
20 detriment here because they're counting on the
21 fact that we are going to work together, and we
22 are going to support each other, and then at the
23 end of the day, we're all going to walk away
24 from here still liking each other and doing what
25 we feel is best for all of the students in this

1 building, regardless of what anybody else
2 tells us.

3 But unfortunately because we play so well
4 together, there's not going to be this horrible
5 sentiment in this building toward each other
6 that would create stress and create strife and
7 all of the arguments and all of the drama that
8 tend to follow these types of situations.

9 So unfortunately the fact that we do work
10 well together is working against us. My other
11 concern is, and I was shared by my SLT, the
12 information that you were sent regarding what
13 Dream Charter had done, and initially Dream
14 Charter school was not going to be ready until
15 January of 2015, and I just heard someone say
16 it's not going to be ready until August of 2015.
17 That concerns me because already within a short
18 period of time, it seems that there's been
19 another delay.

20 So what's going to happen if something else
21 happens? What happens if we have another
22 horrible winter? What happens if we have, God
23 forbid, another Hurricane Sandy that slows or
24 delays these construction problems? Because
25 there's no way we can off put this another year.

1 There's no way we as a building, no matter how
2 well we play well together, would ever be able
3 to survive that, and then what happens? What
4 happens to the dream kids? What happens to our
5 kids here? That's my major concern. So for all
6 of this that's written on paper, for all of this
7 commitment - - here - - aids us, we know that
8 now, even though it's written down, it's not
9 necessarily going to be followed, and I really
10 would like to hear what's going to happen even
11 more so if something happens during the summer
12 and there are other changes that may have to
13 come up, and nobody's around to protest or to
14 speak about it.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. ESTRELLA: Renaissance Charter School
17 for Innovations SLT members.

18 MR. TERRENCE JOSEPH: Thank you. Good
19 evening again. My name is Terrence Joseph. I
20 am the principal of Renaissance Charter High
21 School for Innovation. What I want to talk to
22 you guys about this evening is impact, and
23 impact on the kids. I want to share some of the
24 sentiments that I shared on Monday during the
25 community meeting. I've been with Renaissance

1 for three years. I started off as the
2 director for teaching and learning, and my main
3 goal was working on academic program, and
4 understand how academic programing creates
5 success for our students. So I have a very rich
6 understanding of what space needs are needed for
7 actual course work in classes. My main focus
8 right now is to really talk about how the BUP
9 and this new proposal came about and looking at
10 the numbers. Just looking strictly at the
11 numbers. I spend every, single day looking at
12 the faces of children and thinking very
13 concretely, what is it they need. It's very
14 frustrating to get a phone call on Monday or
15 Tuesday alerting us to the fact that our spacing
16 needs were completely changing just off of
17 numbers and a formula.

18 We spent four years working on a formula in
19 our school that addresses the needs of our at-
20 risk population. That addresses the needs of
21 our students with special education needs that
22 provides counseling services, that provides
23 services for overage, under-credited seniors who
24 have an opportunity to graduate with a regent's
25 diploma in our school. Spend day and night

1 thinking very concretely about the faces and
2 the names of our children. This proposed plan
3 is going to squeeze and constrict our ability to
4 provide opportunities for our kids, provide
5 opportunities for the future of the families.
6 Many of our students are the first ones in their
7 families to actually graduate with a high school
8 diploma. And it really sickens me, it hurts my
9 heart, to understand that we will not be able to
10 provide the formula that we have come to
11 understand works for our kids.

12 We're really pushing that this BUP is not
13 adopted and that they can adhere to the original
14 BUP that was designed earlier on. Thank you.

15 MS. SYLVIA PAVON: Good evening. My name is
16 Sylvia Pavon [phonetic]. I am the director of
17 special education at the Renaissance Charter
18 High School for Innovation. Echoing my
19 principal and our sentiments that were expressed
20 on Monday, as the director of special education,
21 as a former special education teacher in our
22 school, I've seen the growth from the beginning
23 of the school. I've seen how the first year we
24 had a 41% special education population, how the
25 needs that our students have are impacted by not

1 having the space in order to service them
2 appropriately. This year, we currently have 155
3 special needs students in our school. That's
4 35% of our school population that has an IEP,
5 that has mandated services that include
6 counseling, speech services, occupational
7 therapy, small group instruction. Without the
8 appropriate space, our kids are not receiving
9 the services that we believe we are mandated to
10 give them.

11 It is the students' rights, it is the
12 parents' rights to have these services for our
13 students. I see here in the audience a lot of
14 my kids. For the last three, four years how we
15 have come together to create that formula that
16 Terrence just spoke about, that we know has
17 helped our kids. My seniors, when they were
18 freshmen, how they struggled, how they came in
19 so below grade level, how they came in so
20 defeated about their education, and are now
21 getting ready to graduate with regents diplomas.
22 You know, we have students here who were in
23 former self-contained classrooms who did not - -
24 middle school and who have at this point need a
25 couple of credits to graduate from high school

1 with the Regents diploma. I think back to
2 when I first started working here, and people
3 looked at me and said, how can you expect to get
4 these kids to graduate, and I have faith in my
5 students, and I have faith in my school program
6 that it has worked over the last four years.

7 Our seniors are a testament to the
8 programing needs that we have and why space is
9 so needed. Why throughout the years our small
10 group instruction classes have helped them to
11 reach their goals. How being flexible with our
12 programing has helped them reach the goals that
13 we've had in our charter.

14 75% of our students pass most of our Regents
15 exams that are in their senior class. These
16 programing needs are so important because we
17 need to think about our kids and what they need
18 to be successful, not about how many students
19 can fit in a classroom, not how many kids can we
20 divide up into ten classrooms.

21 My counselors have been suffering for this
22 whole school year counselling in stairwell
23 offices that my walk-in closet could sometimes
24 fit more people in it. I have three counselors
25 who see 102 mandated students in those two small

1 stairwell offices. There's tons of students
2 who deserve a right to have a counselor, to have
3 somebody to talk to.

4 A couple weeks ago we had tragedy in this
5 neighborhood that affected a lot of our
6 students. They did not have the space needed to
7 really effectively counsel the needs of the
8 school community in general. Almost everybody
9 in our school knew somebody who lived there who
10 was affected by that tragedy. Giving our
11 students that social-emotional support is a huge
12 part of our school program and why we've been
13 able to be successful with them academically.

14 Having the appropriate space is not just
15 about our needs. It's about our kids, what they
16 need to be successful, and why they keep
17 returning year to year and why parents have
18 faith in our programming to get their students to
19 graduate.

20 You know, we want to make sure that our
21 classes don't end up being 32 kids in a room.
22 It is known throughout America that that's not
23 the most effective way to teach students. I
24 want to make sure that this building utilization
25 plan takes into account our kids. It's not

1 about the schools. It's not about how many
2 schools can we fit in here. It's not about how
3 many people we can squeeze into these rooms.
4 It's about how can we get our kids to be
5 successful adults, graduate high school and
6 become productive citizens in our society.

7 Thank you.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. PABLO SUAREZ: Good evening. My name is
10 Pablo Suarez [phonetic]. I'm the director of
11 Student Life and Community Engagement and Family
12 member, Renaissance Charter High School for
13 Innovation. I don't want to overkill what's
14 already been said. I know a lot of people are
15 going to say more of what's going on. What I
16 want to talk to about is kind of the history of
17 how we got here. In 2010, we replaced East
18 Harlem, came in here, did our recruiting, had
19 100% enrollment from East Harlem students that
20 really reflected the East Harlem community.
21 That same year, while we were doing our
22 recruiting, the UFT filed a lawsuit that put a
23 temporary stop to the phase out of AES. We were
24 still allowed to come in, but we were left with
25 this last year, where this was the year when we

1 were supposed to be fully built out. We were
2 supposed to have 500 students. That wasn't
3 possible because this lawsuit had delayed their
4 phase out for another year. In 2012, Harlem
5 Success Academy and Harlem Prep were proposed to
6 come into this school. Harlem Success, this was
7 going to be their permanent home. For Harlem
8 Prep, it was a two-year incubating space while
9 they found other space, which ended up coming
10 where Dream charter is. Two days before--those--
11 --we embraced all these neighbors. So as
12 anyone's said, we worked with Harlem Success and
13 Harlem Prep, with AES and Manhattan East. With
14 good partnership and very good partnership, like
15 Steve, our executive director said. We haven't
16 tampered with our model when it comes to
17 building co-locations, which can be good.

18 Two days before this plan was released, we
19 got a phone call from the Department of
20 Education telling us that we no longer could
21 build out, but that shouldn't be a problem
22 because we didn't have any expansion plans,
23 which is just incorrect. I want everyone to
24 understand, we did have expansion plans. We're
25 at 440 students on purpose. We already have

1 classes with 30, 32 students, classes that
2 shouldn't be that big already. So we kept it
3 low on purpose. How did it affect our funding
4 and other things, you know, it was a longer
5 story to tell.

6 But we did that on purpose because we didn't
7 have this full space. Full expectation that
8 this year would be a year that we fully built
9 out to the second and third floor. And this
10 plan does not allow us to do that. So I just
11 want to clarify that piece because the
12 Department of Education is looking at this from
13 a blueprint perspective. They're saying you
14 have this many students, and you have enough
15 rooms, and it's just not a reality. To have the
16 walkthrough after a plan is already created I
17 think is very concerning as well.

18 So I hope the Department of Education hears
19 what we're all saying. We're all willing to
20 continue to play nice together. We're all
21 willing to cooperate and work, but at this point
22 every, single one of our schools is being hurt
23 because of something that was preventable that
24 should've been foreseeable. I don't know a
25 single project in the City of New York that was

1 completed on time.

2 I'm not blaming anybody, but this was known.
3 This is going to happen, and so we have to have
4 contingencies. For this contingency to hurt
5 everyone in this building is very frustrating.
6 So I hope the Department of Education does
7 listen to all these members who are coming here
8 to speak. Nice full house today, so I hope you
9 guys do express this. Your concerns, and I hope
10 the DOE is willing to listen. We're willing to
11 compromise. We're not saying it's all or
12 nothing, but this - - recall damages us. So
13 please, I hope you hear what we're saying.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. ESTRELLA: Before we have the last
16 member of the SLT present, we have another panel
17 member that arrived. We're going to have him
18 the opportunity now to speak.

19 MR. NOAH KAUFMAN: Good evening. My name is
20 Noah Kaufman. I'm a parent volunteer. I'm a
21 parent of several students in the city system,
22 and I'm a member of the citywide council on high
23 school. I'm the appointed member on the
24 citywide council on special education. Ms.
25 Aileen Hugley is the acting president of the

1 citywide council on high school, and Mr. John
2 Engler is the president of the city-wide council
3 on special education. These councils are
4 established by law and regulation to provide
5 comment to the chancellor on the policies,
6 programs and operations of the Department of
7 Education. I myself am a graduate of New York
8 City public schools, and my comments this
9 evening are my own, not those of either council.

10 I wanted to say that we are sitting here in
11 the Margaret Knox school, which is 04 M099.
12 There is no more Junior High school 99, and yet
13 we're talking about fighting over space by four
14 different school programs. I think the Office
15 of Portfolio Planning is not exactly an office
16 known for the planning of communities, making
17 something that plans portfolio.

18 Who was Ms. Knox? I'm not sure anybody
19 remembers, but I suspect she was a pioneering
20 woman principal at the turn of the century. How
21 do we know that? Wouldn't know. It's not
22 apparent, but it's certainly something worth
23 considering that we have sitting here this
24 evening in the Knox facility or the Knox
25 building, and we've not one Knox school here.

1 We do have a public school, and I'm
2 wondering if the public school is the school
3 carrying the freight on this building. I'm here
4 to say to the chancellor that it's very much
5 important that we consider the allocation of our
6 public school resources in a way that favors our
7 public schools. I know we have this matter in
8 the newspapers in recent weeks. It's additional
9 challenges, I'm sure, to the public school
10 system, but there seems to be two different
11 accounting systems, one which the state tuition
12 provided to charter schools passes straight
13 through, and one in which our public schools
14 have the cost taken for the facility management,
15 the custodial services, the nutrition services,
16 our security operations are all paid for out of
17 our public school, and I don't think that that
18 is a fair system. I think equity is important.
19 I did want to say one more comment, then we'll
20 go back to these questions before you tonight on
21 allocation of space. There are two questions
22 before us. One is the allocation of space based
23 on not on a blue book, but on something called
24 the fictitious footprint. It is something that
25 the Department of Education must consider, and

1 I'll speak directly to portfolio planning. If
2 you're going to use the footprint, you have to
3 give every school ten administrative rooms.

4 Now we come to the question of what is a
5 school? If you have a school building with a
6 number and you have four or five different
7 programs, it's not at all clear what the school
8 is or what they mean by school programing. On
9 the flip side, if you have a school with
10 multiple spaces or multiple locations, that's
11 not clear either. It's kind of a New York City
12 trick to call the same thing by two or three or
13 four different names. And I think we have to be
14 very careful and be aware of that, so I put that
15 forward as a concern as we go forward with new
16 administration. Let's avoid slights of hand.
17 Let's avoid a shell game that says a school is
18 not a school, a school is not a school. We can
19 play with the space that way because our
20 children need resources. Our children deserve
21 the best.

22 To that end, I have put this in writing, or
23 I will put it in writing following these
24 comments. I request from the Department of
25 Education that the Chancellor make available

1 clearly and transparently a list of all the
2 school facilities that are leased, either by the
3 Department of Education, the Board of Education,
4 Division of School Facilities and the New York
5 City School Construction Authority so that we
6 know what buildings or properties are not owned
7 by the public. You should know what the terms
8 of those leases are, and on the flip side of
9 that, we should know, and the chancellor should
10 make available to the public clearly a list of
11 public school buildings either owned by the
12 Board of Education, the Department of Education,
13 the New York School Facilities or the New York
14 City School Construction Authority which are in
15 turn leased to some other entity. That is
16 something that exists, but we have no clear
17 ability to find that information out. With
18 that, I thank you so much for your kind
19 attention. We should not, after ten years, be
20 fighting over school space for our children.
21 Thank you so much.

22 [Applause]

23 MS. ESTRELLA: At this time, I will return
24 back to the SLT team member. We have one more
25 team member that has not presented from

1 Renaissance Charter School for Innovation.

2 Steve Falla [phonetic]. Oh, I'm sorry, - - .

3 Now we're going to move to give the students
4 the opportunity to speak. I ask--I'm going to
5 be calling you five students at a time, and one
6 of you will come to the speaker. Jose Romero,
7 Walter Kennedy, Jocelyn Boreman, Aisha See,
8 Anita. So if you could line up here, and the
9 first person that I call can take the mike, and
10 you can stand in a line. Jose Romero will go
11 first.

12 MR. JOSE ROMERO: Hello, everyone. My name
13 is Jose Romero, and I am here on behalf of
14 Innovation Charter High school. - - the
15 particular reason or cause of the hearing, but I
16 do come from personal experience, and I have
17 seen the effects that the intricate details of
18 this proposal has done so that our school - -
19 from what I hear from the representatives, this
20 seems like a very positive group effort to try
21 to get all of our students their proper needs
22 and collaboration from the wonderful staff on
23 each side, and the space that is needed to
24 everybody here.

25 From my school on a personal note, I receive

1 counseling, and - - receive Jessica Antonio--
2 sorry, - - but we sometimes have to meet in the
3 hallways. We have staircase, as - - we have
4 staircase rooms where we attend our meetings,
5 and - - personal counseling that goes far beyond
6 education side of things. At-home problems,
7 stuff that we're coping with. I feel like we
8 should have the proper - - to elaborate on those
9 things - - stress. I wasn't aware also that
10 this was 40%--our school in particular is 40%
11 special education students. I do feel like that
12 is way more of a major role in our school
13 structure system, and I just really, really
14 think we need to work together, and I think we
15 can come to a solution, but I think that we need
16 the space to move forward.

17 [Applause]

18 MR. WALTER KENNEDY: Hello, my name is
19 Walter Kennedy. I'm a student at the
20 Renaissance Charter High School for Innovation.
21 As Sylvia has said before, we do have very
22 little space in our school. Counselors have to
23 meet in basically a closet, and this - - it's
24 very awkward to us. So sometimes they do have
25 to meet in the hallway. The hallway's always

1 very crowded when you're transitioning between
2 classrooms. Last year it was each class had
3 their own floor, and it was much less crowded.
4 It was easier going to your next class and
5 making sure you're on time with no problems and
6 pushing and shoving or - - .

7 [Applause]

8 MS. JOCELYN BOREMAN: Hello, I'm Jocelyn. I
9 would like to get a good education, and like
10 everybody said already, the hallways are
11 crowded. A lot of people pushing, shoving to
12 get into the classrooms. The classrooms are
13 very crowded also. Some people will have to
14 share classrooms also, and there's also a lot of
15 kids in the classrooms, so it's hard for the
16 teachers to teach everybody at once because
17 we'll be distracted and stuff. The counselors,
18 I see a counselor, and it's like sometimes I
19 will start crying while talking to her, so if
20 there's other people in there. I don't want a
21 lot of people to see me, how I get emotional and
22 stuff, and I don't want people to hear me
23 because they have to see other kids also. So
24 it's privacy wise also.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. AISHA SEE: Hi, my name's Aisha. I
2 want to say the hallways are very crowded, and
3 sometimes most - - the hallway - - a lot of
4 people pushing, shoving. And I just wanted to
5 say the counselor, some counselors don't have
6 privacy knowing that there's other students, and
7 there's a lot of rumors that start during
8 counseling saying, oh, she said this, she said
9 that. Just - - and it can be aggravating when I
10 don't get what I need to learn. A lot of
11 students get distracted. I get distracted a lot
12 easier. Knowing there's fights in the hallway,
13 people talking. It's just too crowded.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. ANITA TOM: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Anita Tom [phonetic], and I am a senior at the -
17 - High School. - - I want to - - College. I am
18 here to--

19 [Applause]

20 MS. ANITA TOM: I am here to express my
21 support in having Harlem Prep middle school have
22 an additional year in building 099 until they
23 are provided a living space where they can grow.
24 Democracy Prep has been my backbone, my
25 supporter and - - students like me are on their

1 way to college and to changing the world.
2 Even though I am not a student in this building,
3 I am confident that Democracy Prep Scholars do
4 not cause trouble and are just here to learn - -
5 . So please give them that chance in this
6 school building to learn and to become
7 successful scholars. Thank you very much.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. ESTRELLA: At this time, the following
10 students can come up. Rachel E., Marsella P.,
11 Nate Robinson. Rachel? What's your name? Can
12 you let Rachelle go first?

13 MS. RACHELLE E.: Good evening. My name is
14 Rachelle - - and I am a senior at the
15 Renaissance Charter High School. I am going to
16 Mount Holyoke College next year. I've been a
17 school of - - for seven years, and I have
18 experience - - , shared space in public school
19 buildings. I'm here today to support the
20 students of - - middle school in staying here
21 for another year due to construction delays that
22 have made moving to MS121 unfeasible. I can - -
23 and change the world. I am speaking on behalf
24 of Harlem Prep Middle School students because to
25 me, changing the world does not only mean

1 advocating for justice on my own behalf, but
2 also on behalf of others. Please support Harlem
3 middle school in staying in this school for one
4 more year. Thank you.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. MARSELLA P.: My name is Marsella, and
7 I'm here to support my brother, that he needs
8 more space for his science classes and to learn.
9 So that's why I'm here, to support him.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. ESTRELLA: Nate Robinson? Okay. That
12 concludes the students' presentations. At this
13 time, we have now concluded the formal
14 presentations. You are reminded that the public
15 comment must be limited to two minutes. Time
16 will be kept and we will signal you when you
17 have 30 seconds remaining. And when your time
18 is up.

19 I ask that the following people line up for
20 public comment. And again, I apologize if I
21 don't pronounce your name properly.

22 Jared--Georgette Martinez, Dan Clark, the
23 name is spelled O-U-L-E-Y-E, last name D-I-A-G-
24 N-E, Danielle Sabia, Frank Kritendon, Jr.,
25 Deanne Birch. In the order that I called you,

1 please stand in the aisle, and Georgette, you
2 can begin.

3 GEORGETTE MARTINEZ: Thank you, and thank
4 you everyone for being here. It just goes to
5 show how strong our community really is amongst
6 all the schools. We're still East Harlem.
7 We're still this community. I'm happy to see
8 everyone here. My name is Georgette Martinez.
9 I'm the secretary of the parent counsel at the
10 Success Academy Harlem 3, and I was here on
11 Monday night as well. We had an open
12 conversation. First I'd like to thank the Vice
13 Chancellor for responding back to the question I
14 proposed on Monday night. It's really
15 important.

16 I look at this process as one that a lot of
17 us face in our jobs, whatever it may be, whether
18 you work at McDonald's or you're working at
19 management, or in a store, something. You've
20 got a problem. There's a building that can't
21 get finished or whatever the issue is at your
22 job. You've got 17 other big, important things
23 that you have to deal with that were on your
24 plan, like the DOE has a lot of other things to
25 cover. So what do you do? You do the most

1 convenient thing first. It's very convenient
2 to ask the Harlem Prep students to stay squeezed
3 into the space that they are. I think they said
4 they're going to have to pull back on their
5 charter to continue to grow if they stay in this
6 building. It's very convenient because they
7 don't have to move and everybody can think,
8 okay, they'll stay.

9 - - job and the first thing I think of is
10 the most convenient thing. But then I build up
11 my plan and I do a lot of research, and I know
12 my stuff, and then I present it to my team, and
13 what do they say? Dude, you totally missed
14 this.

15 So I feel like this hearing is that process
16 of saying you totally missed this, and this is
17 our opportunity to say it's saddened me on
18 Monday night to hear what everyone had to say
19 about - - for Renaissance. I know from the
20 Harlem Success Family that our kids, we have
21 issue around science and special ed. Like I
22 mentioned the other night, our kids are reading
23 in the hallways. So I just use this as the
24 opportunity that it is to go back and do the
25 work that the principal of Renaissance or the -

1 - director of Renaissance. Talk to your
2 stakeholders and rethink this and think of a new
3 option. Thank you.

4 [Applause]

5 MR. DAN CLARK: Good evening, friends. My
6 name is Dan Clark, and my son was in the same
7 class as - - in the building from the sixth
8 grade, and he's the senior year now, so it's
9 been quite a journey, seven years. Seven years
10 of two hours a day homework, seven years of - -
11 . Seven years of - - high. Seven years of the
12 rigor. Seven years of him being in power, and
13 you know what that yields, my friends? You know
14 what you get? A full scholarship to Vanderbilt
15 - - those who - - . A great school is one of
16 the great schools - - . Now god knows we don't
17 want to be here in this position. We were
18 looking forward to moving to our new space, but
19 circumstances beyond our control happened, and I
20 can say we've been always everywhere we co-
21 locate, we've been good neighbors. We've been
22 good neighbors here. We'll continue to be. I
23 just know this. That our kids deserve to finish
24 the journey after working so hard and so - -
25 school - - get into a great school, maybe even

1 for free. Thank you.

2 MS. ESTRELLA: Next speaker?

3 MS. DANIELLE SA[BREAK IN AUDIO]: Hi, good
4 evening. My name is Danielle Sabia. I'm the
5 art teacher here at Success Academy. This
6 proposal would have a negative impact on our
7 scholars' programs here at Success. Art and
8 Science already share a room, as there is no
9 space for us to have our own art studio. We
10 believe scholar year has the right to a
11 successful art and science curriculum, for which
12 we depend on that space for next year. Without
13 that space, I already push into six different
14 classes, each with 30 kids, each causing the
15 curriculum to suffer. We already use all of our
16 space to the maximum efficiency, teaching in
17 both the hallway and in the shared space rooms.
18 This basement here is absolutely critical to the
19 success of our programs here. Thank you.

20 [Applause]

21 MR. RANDAL WASHINGTON: Good afternoon. My
22 name's Randal Washington, and I'm the father of
23 Theresa Washington. - - to go to such a great
24 school because they stay in contact with me,
25 always know how my daughter is doing. Something

1 I really appreciate as a parent. The - - is -
2 - dedicated - - . Although our daughter has
3 only been - - the Harlem Prep - - I already see
4 a change in her attitude. Before Harlem Prep,
5 we had to begin her to do her homework. Now she
6 immediately comes home from school and starts
7 doing her homework without being asked.

8 I really wish Harlem Prep - - . I think the
9 proposal - - to be great neighbors. I look
10 forward to my daughter being able to finish - -
11 in this building. Thank you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. DEANNE BIRCH: Good evening. I'm a
14 parent of success. I'm a parent of Success
15 Academy. I think it's a real shame that the
16 Board of Ed. is squeezing these children into
17 the building. They want them to perform well
18 and do well, but they aren't even trying to
19 provide the space that they need to perform and
20 do it. How can you expect children to grow up
21 to do well on task, have all this knowledge but
22 you're not giving them the space to get this
23 knowledge? How can you expect - - have
24 approximately 90 children squeezing into a space
25 that's already crowded by approximately--I'm

1 sorry, 180 children squeezed into
2 approximately the space that--excuse me--90
3 children are already sharing in their tightness,
4 but you want - - you want performance to be
5 better on the tests, but you're not giving them
6 the space. And I think the Board - - failed
7 these children for all the students in the
8 building by not having an alternate plan for
9 this. Because if it was an office building
10 where they were going to get some money from it,
11 they would've had it done. They would've had -
12 - overtime. They would've had it done, and they
13 would've been moving everybody fine, but now the
14 kids - - because they're already squeezed in a
15 tight squeeze. Thank you.

16 [Applause]

17 MS. ESTRELLA: I'm going to call up the next
18 speakers. Please make sure to bring up your
19 numbers when you come up to speak. Princess,
20 Christina de la Rosa, Betty Mundi, Katrina
21 Hernandez, Lucy Sosiano, Amit Bose.

22 PRINCESS: Good evening, everyone. I'm a
23 New Harlem Prep Middle parent. We actually came
24 from a private school, so when we started here,
25 I was very concerned being a co-location with

1 five schools in the building, trying to
2 understand how it was all arranged so that
3 everybody could have the space that they need.
4 But I found out quickly through asking many
5 questions and just observing is that the school
6 leaders actually do get together and make a plan
7 of who uses what place, what stairwell, what
8 bathroom, and it works. It's not a permanent
9 solution. Right now it's a solution that we
10 have that's working, and I'm sure if we get
11 together and continue to cooperate with each
12 other, we can come up with a plan that can
13 accommodate everybody's needs. Space is the
14 issue. All the schools in New York City. I
15 know it's not a perfect solution, but for us, -
16 - this is their home. They deserve to have
17 space. We're a - - , so if we can work together
18 and continue to cooperate with each other, I'm
19 sure we'll come up with a solution that will
20 give us all that we need in the end. Thank you.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. CHRISTINA DE LA ROSA: Good evening. My
23 name is Christina de la Rosa. I'm a proud
24 parent of a Success Academy Scholar. My
25 daughter Emma attends kindergarten and I

1 couldn't be happier with the results thanks to
2 her teachers and staff that put a lot of
3 2014/2015 hard work and effort each and every
4 day. But this could not be possible without
5 appropriate classrooms. I'm standing here
6 because I believe that without appropriate
7 space, my daughter and the rest of the scholars
8 will have - - learning. At this age, it's
9 important for them to move, explore and most
10 importantly learn. So it's important for our
11 school to have a science room, a special
12 education room and art room.

13 My daughter might be five years old right
14 now, but she knows what she wants to be when she
15 grows up, and she want to be a science teacher.
16 So don't - - . Let her and the rest of the
17 scholars keep on learning and keep up their love
18 for learning because every nation there's
19 something new, and she's eager to learn and move
20 on.

21 Give scholars and schools what they were
22 promised and work with Dream charter school to
23 find another solution, not here. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. BETTY MUNDI: Good evening, my name is

1 Betty. I speak Spanish. I understand some
2 English, but I can't explain myself well in
3 English. I'm a very responsible mother. I have
4 a child - - . I come from 145th Street and
5 Broadway. I'm very hurt here because when they
6 elect people to make decisions here, they take
7 the other children first.

8 That's why I'm here for us all to fight
9 together to get what our children need. Enough
10 space so that our children could have a good
11 future tomorrow. This is what as parents we
12 want for our children. Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. KATRINA HERNANDEZ: Hi, good evening. I
15 am a parent of a scholar here at Success
16 Academy, and I just want to say that space is
17 very important, not only to our school, but each
18 school that we share this building with. It
19 impacts all of us. Every one of us is feeling
20 negatively, and it is unfair that the DOE can
21 get their act together to figure out a proper
22 solution for our scholars and our students.

23 Most important people here in this building
24 today are the students of this school, and I
25 don't think that they're being taken into

1 consideration. Thank you.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. LUCY SOSIANO: Hi, I'm Lucy Sosiano, and
4 my daughter - - attends Success Academy and - -
5 System. I love the teachers here. I see the
6 difference in my child's ability in which - -
7 day to day. The way she speaks. She has a
8 strong leadership, and also - - space. That's
9 why--we were promised the space. It's important
10 for our kids to have this space because their
11 imaginations - - and I feel if there is less
12 space, that means more distractions. If there's
13 more distractions, that means there's less and
14 less - - to be learned. Thank you.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. LAURIE CALLAGHAN: Hi, my name is Laurie
17 Callaghan and I have a son who goes to the
18 Manhattan ACE middle school - - this building.
19 I'm an educator myself. I teach at the college
20 level. I've been living in New York for a long
21 time, and it does all come down to real estate.
22 There is the DOE wants our space. They don't
23 care about our students - - because this is bad
24 for our students. I also want to speak for our
25 teachers because they are doing so much for our

1 students. I love - - . I think every, single
2 one that is sitting in this room right now.
3 What does that mean? That means they're sitting
4 here worrying about this issue and not planning
5 for tomorrow's lesson. In fact, they haven't
6 done very much teaching because they've been
7 doing testing all week, and those tests, and if
8 there's poor performance on tests by any
9 students, it's going to land on the teachers,
10 and everything's going to be blamed on them, when
11 in fact this problem is being imposed on every
12 teacher in every school in this building from an
13 outside source, from another school and from the
14 DOE because of poor planning and poor management
15 and lack of a contingency plan.

16 And teachers make contingency plans all the
17 time, whether it's a hurricane, a snow storm, a
18 fire, we're doing it really well here. Please
19 don't mess with us. This is really wrong-
20 headed. It needs to go back to the drawing
21 board and the fact that we all get along means
22 that we really just need to pull together and
23 make sure this doesn't happen. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. ESTRELLA: Amanda Torres? I'm going to

1 spell this name. X-O-C-H-I-L-T-H Cosmon, or
2 Cosman. D. Moore, Z. Gonzalez, Ian Morgan,
3 Alisha Hendrix. Please come in the order that
4 you were called.

5 And when you come up, please state your
6 name.

7 MS. ESTRELLA: Just state your name.

8 MS. Z. GONZALEZ: Z. Gonzalez. Good
9 evening, everyone. I am the proud grandmother
10 of a 7th grade scholar at Harlem Prep. I truly
11 have the utmost respect for all teachers and
12 their profession. However, there were many
13 shortcomings prior to my grandson coming to
14 Harlem Prep in the past. Lack of books, low
15 performance and violence. So when my daughter
16 chose to--my grandson switched into Harlem Prep,
17 what she wanted for my grandson was an
18 opportunity to flourish and a safe environment.
19 What we found here at Harlem Prep were teachers
20 committed to these--to our children, not only
21 committed, but they have gone even further than
22 we ever expected. These teachers give up their
23 Saturdays for our children. Not only do they
24 give up their Saturdays, they are allowed--our
25 children are allowed to call them up until 9:00

1 p.m. with any concerns or any problems that
2 they may have. I have never throughout the
3 years, I have had two children that I have
4 raised, one in public school and one in - - . I
5 have never seen a committee more of these
6 teachers and this faculty, and what I ask of you
7 is to please allow us just one more year.

8 [Applause]

9 FEMALE VOICE: Hi, my name is - - . I have
10 a 7th grade scholar here at Harlem Middle. My
11 son's always been bright, but he's always had a
12 very difficult time - - schools. Since - - from
13 the instruction environment, the very patient
14 staff and many support systems available. I
15 especially appreciate the way the school keeps
16 me very well informed of what's going on in my
17 child's - - is their students is - - really
18 struggling, and - - so much of my time and
19 energy - - creative solution that helped him how
20 to focus and become a very student. He is now a
21 motivated - - outstanding - - . Please allow
22 them to continue - - in this building for one
23 additional year. Thank you so much.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. ESTRELLA: At this time, - - , Julie Tom

1 Benitas, Monique Wright, Samantha Robinson,
2 Stacy Ann R., Hasan Fengo, please come up.
3 Please remember when you come to speak to state
4 your name.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. My name is - -
6 , and I'm a parent of a Harlem Prep scholar. I
7 would say that current circumstances at this
8 school are not ideal, but as the parent of a
9 Harlem Prep Scholar, I feel that it is
10 imperative to keep the Harlem Prep school open
11 and functioning. It's not only relative to the
12 community but the impact that it has on scholars
13 is - - . There needs to be a lot more
14 consistency throughout the school and--I'm
15 sorry, the scholars love the school and the
16 school needs--the scholar's love the school and
17 they need to continue to excel and they need to
18 have a positive level of direction. There's no
19 better way to prepare the scholars for a higher
20 education than to have this school here. Their
21 continuous rigorous curriculum needs to be
22 applied. The current ritual can fail without a
23 solid foundation. They have a proper team in
24 place.

25 If you remove this foundation, you have

1 failed a massive unit. One does not operate
2 well - - . The educators here are consistent,
3 they're dedicated, they are sincere. Please
4 understand if you remove this foundation, these
5 scholars will suffer. As a parent priding
6 themselves in my daughter's education, I know
7 that Harlem Prep is a continuing foundation and
8 we need to support them. On behalf of all the
9 students and parents here at Harlem Prep, please
10 work with us on this proposal. Thank you.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. ESTRELLA: Hassan Fengo? - - Gonzalez?
13 Lydia Gonzalez? Zubel Rodriguez, Alexandra
14 Marshani, Katrina Humbert, Antonio Bausillia,
15 Maria Diaz Flynn, Jordan S., Charles Yore.

16 Remember to please state your name.

17 MS. LYDIA GONZALEZ: Hi, my name is Lydia
18 Gonzalez, and my granddaughter, Janice, attends
19 Success Academy. I was born and raised in
20 Spanish Harlem, and I'm so--you know, - - attend
21 kindergarten, I was so terrified to put her in
22 any district school because of the overcrowding,
23 and I was afraid for her, and I was so grateful
24 that my granddaughter was picked to enter
25 Success Academy. By you taking away space for

1 these children, it's hurting the children, and
2 the Department of Education cares, they say they
3 care, about the children. They should do
4 something for these children because I want my
5 grandchild to be a successful person and to
6 finish school and get a good education. She
7 gets Success Academy. I cannot spell a word
8 around her anymore when I'm trying to say a
9 secret. I can't spell it out because she knows
10 what I'm talking about, so I got to tell her
11 that my grandchild, five years old, Success
12 Academy, knows how to read, knows how to write,
13 speaks very well and acts very well.

14 I know it's very - - to put my grandchild in
15 the public school because it's overcrowded, and
16 not only that, she will be lost, and then I will
17 have - - special ed., she's behind, she's this.

18 I want my grandchild to be successful,
19 successful and to be a good citizen in New York
20 City. Thank you very much.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. ALEXANDRA MARSHANI: Good evening. My
23 name is Alexandra. I'm here because - - the
24 space is crucial in New York City, period. My
25 son is in Success Academy. He will not have a

1 science room, an art room, and the - - room
2 for counseling, which he needs. This is
3 unacceptable for each child in this building.
4 There has to be another way. We have to come
5 together as professionals, as parents and find
6 another way. I think if the rotation will be
7 completed, the contingency plan will be
8 followed, I think we - - . Thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 FEMALE VOICE: Hello, my name is - - . I
11 have two lovely daughters that are - - Charter
12 school. Their names are - - and Raylene. This
13 charter school has helped my children a lot.
14 They're reading, writing and spelling so much
15 better. The teachers - - the students. They
16 teach the students to respect each other.
17 Sometimes I find my children teaching me, and I
18 thought I was the one that knew it all. - - in
19 school, it also shows that the teachers are
20 doing such a wonderful job of teaching her.
21 When my children - - do we have school today
22 because I can't wait to see my teachers. So
23 that really meant a lot for me to know that they
24 are - - learning things every day. I am
25 fortunate to have my children at - - elementary

1 school. Thank you for your time and patience.

2 [Applause]

3 MR. ANTONIO BAUSILLIA: Antonio Bausillia.
4 I'm a school counselor at Innovation High
5 school, and I apologize if my back is toward
6 anybody at any time. So as a school counselor,
7 one of the most important things that we do is
8 we take ethical - - to our students as the
9 individuals that we're here to serve. So yes,
10 we're here at a school. We're - - the DOE
11 charter high school that we're in, but really
12 we're here to support our students. In addition
13 to that, that also puts counselors at many times
14 at odds depending on administration, which I - -
15 high school where I have to advocate for our
16 student. Many times we're put in positions - -
17 my job where we have to advocate for our
18 students. They don't feel that way at
19 Innovation high school. My students feel
20 supported by the building that they're in, but
21 at the same time I'm also trained to look at - -
22 . So there's emotional - - throughout the
23 building. We have cramped areas where our
24 students and staff have been provided and told
25 that we're - - to stand out. As a school

1 counselor, you've heard about us. You've
2 heard from our students about the space that we
3 have, so I'm not going to go into that in - - .
4 Yes, we have - - . We have a hole in our
5 ceiling that we've been dealing with for months.
6 We walk into the office - - space, our office
7 space, and it is uncomfortable to walk into that
8 space. In addition to that, - - one of us, we
9 are supporting 102 students, that's 23% of our
10 population, and it - - it's really unfortunate
11 that I can't feel that I can advocate really for
12 my students any longer where we don't have the
13 appropriate space. I feel uncomfortable there's
14 - - potential suicide - - and I can't provide
15 that students a space to make that assessment.
16 I'm in the cafeteria or somewhere else is
17 providing that space for that student. That's
18 one of countless events that I don't feel - -
19 given opportunity to provide that space for our
20 students that we need more space than that for
21 our students.

22 [Applause]

23 MS. MARIA DIAZ-FLYNN: Good evening,
24 everyone. My name is Maria Diaz-Flynn. I'm
25 here for Innovation High School. And I'm here

1 as one of two test coordinators in support of
2 extending our space with respect to - - our
3 students. We have a situation where we were
4 accommodating these students with regards to the
5 testing - - what we were doing just with interim
6 assessments and then - - as you well know - - .
7 So it's usually - - . This is just a little
8 taste of the - - what we face at this point.
9 Right now to - - director, we have 25. What we
10 need to do out of 25 classrooms, plus several
11 offices, was to accommodate 18, and I mean 18
12 classrooms with regard to accommodating
13 students, ESL students, students who need to be
14 read aloud. That is a huge number of rooms that
15 need to be taken into account with regard to
16 accommodating students. As you well know, when
17 you have to accommodate these students, these
18 students have to be eight to a class. They
19 cannot be more.

20 So we might have three huge - - . You may
21 think that we have a huge spot, but we can only
22 accommodate eight students there. So the
23 problem here is we have 233 students integrated
24 - - next Tuesday from - - . Of that, 120
25 students are - - students, students with needs,

1 with accommodation needs. And taking any
2 space away from us or what was promised to us
3 will really be an injustice to these students
4 come regents - - .

5 [Applause]

6 MS. ESTRELLA: At this time, the following
7 speakers. Jonathan Howard, Rachel Martin,
8 Nicole P., Sherisse Marie, Alexis Diaz, Odell
9 Horton, Anthony Meekin, Melissa Clark, Pablo
10 Torres, Matt Boyle. Please remember to state
11 your name.

12 MS. RACHEL MARTIN: Hello, my name is Rachel
13 Martin. I am a kindergarten teacher at the - -
14 elementary school for - - elementary. And it is
15 a pleasure and a privilege every day to - - to
16 work. We as a parent - - laying the groundwork
17 that middle school students use every, single
18 day, and we work very hard. I am sitting in the
19 audience with two fifth grade teachers who are
20 just - - the whole entire time. They speak
21 volumes as to that - - students and the impact
22 that our students have on us.

23 Having our students in fifth grade, having a
24 middle school for them to go to where they can
25 learn and continue to grow and seeing the high

1 school scholars that we have seen today,
2 sorry, I speak normally. I have five minutes.
3 The high school scholars that we saw today with
4 their success in their education, it speaks to
5 how much and how passionate we are and how
6 important Harlem Prep's education and Democracy
7 Prep's education is for our students, for their
8 teacher and for their education. So I strongly
9 advocate that we continue to work together and
10 that we are putting our students first because
11 that's why we're here at the end of the day, and
12 I really would love to have a strong successful
13 place like Harlem Prep Middle that our students
14 can go to next year.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. NICOLE PELLETTIER: Hello, my name is
17 Nicole Pelletier. I'm a teacher at Innovation
18 High School as well as a resident in the
19 community. My first concern, I've heard about
20 such wonderful success from - - schools, but
21 before we can be successful at all these
22 wonderful things, our first goal is to create a
23 safe learning environment. I feel that - -
24 happen if this goes through, especially since
25 I'm looking in this proposal, and not only is

1 this school to remain, but we're going to add
2 a grade. It looks like about 100 more students.
3 So we are going to be even more crowded than we
4 are now. Okay.

5 My next thing is my struggle every day. I
6 go to meet my students at the door, and I can
7 barely get them into the door, and yet I want to
8 shake their hand. I want to say hello and greet
9 them with a smile, and I'm crushed against the
10 wall. I'm five feet tall, 110 pounds. My next
11 challenge is my CHR. It is drawn with four
12 children and two desks. I have three desks--
13 three children assigned to one desk. If all my
14 children attend that day, I don't have a seat
15 for every child. Then the children are not my
16 size. They are six foot three at 14 years old.
17 Their legs are extended out. So that's just a
18 byproduct of having high school - - children.

19 Beyond this - - , I don't have anywhere to
20 bring those - - special ed. needs, and as a
21 special ed. student myself, that is very
22 important for success, especially with reading
23 struggles and emotional problems. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 MR. ANTHONY MEEKER: Hi, my name is Anthony

1 Meeker. I am - - . The extension of Harlem
2 Prep and any students who will be added to the
3 building, and the building will be over-utilized
4 by about 104%. In 2012/2013, as we have heard,
5 the Department of Education stated that even if
6 the building--new building was not ready, Harlem
7 Prep would be moving out, but apparently this is
8 not the case. What I would like to know is what
9 kind of message this is sending to our children.

10 Are we telling them not to pay attention to
11 our words, our promises? Are we saying that - -
12 their own - - and also what is it saying to the
13 parents? That we're not supposed to trust the
14 Department of Education? What about the future?
15 What about what we say in the future? There's
16 no question that the co-location proposal and
17 the students in this building, the method used
18 to allocate space was flawed, is flawed. We're
19 talking here about people, students, children,
20 teachers, administrators, not mathematical
21 equations.

22 One of the advantages to being one of the
23 last speakers is you get a chance to hear what
24 everybody else has to say. Most of the people I
25 have heard are questioning this proposal, and I

1 hope the Department of Education takes this
2 into account.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. ODELL HORTON: Good evening, everyone.
5 My name is Odell Horton, and I am the proud
6 parent of two charter school students. I have
7 an 11-year-old daughter at Democracy Prep, and I
8 have a--I mean an 11th grade daughter at
9 Democracy Prep, and - - student in Harlem - -
10 Academy. I'm an advocate for charter schools, I
11 think that - - do anything and go anywhere to
12 the charter schools.

13 I heard this argument about space, but I
14 really don't buy it because first of all, I'm 52
15 years old, and it reminds me of the stories that
16 my mother told me when she told me she had to
17 walk five miles to go to school and they were
18 huddled in a one-room building just to learn.
19 I've heard it said, what is a school. A school
20 is anywhere, where we can gather our children
21 and help give them an education that's going to
22 make them productive citizens in this world and
23 help them compete in this very competitive world
24 that we live in, especially this city. Right
25 now, they're building \$150 million apartments in

1 the sky in this city that we live in. How are
2 our children going to compete? How are our
3 children going to live in this city and be
4 productive people in this city? When I went to
5 - - I see more people. I don't let this - - the
6 people that I see, and I won't let a little bit
7 of space in the building divide our people.

8 I hear a lot of good stories about the
9 education that's taking place in this building,
10 and this is a beautiful building. I have a lot
11 of respect for teachers. As a matter of fact, a
12 teacher once saved my life.

13 I want us all to just think about our
14 children in this situation, and let's put all
15 our efforts into doing the best we can for our
16 children to give them the best education that we
17 can and so that they can be successful,
18 productive people in this society. Thank you.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. MELISSA MARK: Thank you. My name is
21 Melissa Mark, and my son attends Harlem Prep
22 Middle. Thank you. I have to tell you, I
23 understand what the proposal's about, and I
24 initially had something written down, but as I
25 sat here - - I had an opportunity to listen to

1 everything. And what I had written down, it
2 just didn't do. So here's my revision.

3 My son is coming from a building, his
4 elementary school, that housed just one
5 elementary school. It's now in the process of
6 closing as a failed school. It has four floors
7 and all the things associated with a school.
8 Gymnasium, everything that was available for the
9 children. The auditorium, etc. And now you're
10 going to tell me that in eight months in one
11 building with upward of four schools, he has
12 demonstrated education growth that was lacking
13 in six years in that one building, in one
14 school. This - - difficult for me to believe
15 that in the 2014/2015 school year, the students
16 will not do what they're here to do, due to
17 space. And - - . That's the bottom line. A
18 huge part of - - creatively and objectively, and
19 that creativity and objectivity is acknowledging
20 that sometimes they have to go back in order to
21 forward. Sometimes you have to stand still in
22 order to move forward. Things happen, and this
23 is one of those times.

24 So with this proposal, the school leaders
25 will continue to think creatively to make this

1 work and I expect the DOE to think objectively
2 about what their purpose is there. And that
3 purpose is to continue becoming educated. Thank
4 you.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. ESTRELLA: We have now read out the last
7 names in our speaker list. If you have a pink
8 slip and have not spoken yet, please come up
9 with your speaker slip at this time.

10 MR. RUBEN RODRIGUEZ: My name is Ruben
11 Rodriguez. - - at Success Academy. I've been
12 listening for the past hour-and-a-half. I have
13 a wonderful--the teachers are - - and finally, I
14 find it ludicrous that we're having this
15 discussion April 3rd, 12 weeks away from the end
16 of the school year, and five months away from
17 the beginning of the new school year. It seems
18 to me that somewhere down the road, they forgot
19 to plan, and if you fail to plan, you fail. And
20 the DOE failed.

21 Simply put, you have put forward a proposal
22 of educational - - , the very title is
23 repulsive. You have put forward a proposal of
24 grievous educational neglect, not only for our
25 students, but on a number of schools that have

1 made plans, that have essentially done
2 everything they need to do to plan for the
3 following academic year, and now here you are
4 April 3rd putting forward a solution that's
5 simply not acceptable. You have - - problem,
6 which was a failure one school to plan--to
7 adhere to the contingency plan and the failure
8 of DOE to supervise to make sure that that
9 particular school adhere to that contingency
10 plan. So you have to rethink, withdraw this
11 plan, withdraw this plan and come up with a
12 solution that addresses the problem, a solution
13 that gives you the least educational impact.
14 Thank you.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. MATTHEW BOYLE: Good evening. My name
17 is Matthew Boyle. I work for the Renaissance
18 Charter High School for Innovation. I'm the
19 coordinator for software engineering and a
20 school designer. I wanted to just show a quick
21 video that we shot of some of the spaces that
22 we've been talking about this evening, and just
23 to give some of our DOE members a firsthand look
24 at what we're actually--what we're actually
25 dealing with here. There's just a couple facts

1 in the video, but as you watch this, I wanted
2 you to take into consideration the fact that the
3 current educational plan put out this past
4 February states that M099 currently is only at
5 80% of our utilization of the whole building,
6 and the idea that we're operating in this kind
7 of conditions and having to utilize every,
8 single little closet space that we have
9 currently, not even a full enrollment number,
10 and that we have that extra 20% breathing room
11 is just clearly not the case on the ground.

12 Just to reiterate what my colleague said
13 earlier, we do have counseling space in these
14 tiny closet rooms. They're highly inadequate
15 for privacy and the caseloads that our
16 counselors have and we also have classrooms that
17 are subdivided into cubicles to provide them
18 kind of - - services and special need services
19 that our student - - . So thank you.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. ESTRELLA: We have heard many
22 significant comments this evening. We
23 appreciate your feedback and contributions to
24 this hearing. Thank you as well to those of you
25 who shared your thoughts and feedback with us at

1 our Monday, March 31st visit to the building
2 and community meeting. The information will be
3 shared with the Panel on Educational Policy,
4 which will have its meeting on May 6, 2014, at
5 6:00 p.m. at the Murray Bertram High school for
6 business careers located at 4:11 Pearl Street,
7 New York, New York 10038 to vote on this
8 proposal. The email address and phone number
9 where comments may be made at is
10 D04proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and (212) 374-
11 3466. Thank you for all coming--for all of you
12 coming here today. The joint public hearing is
13 now officially adjourned. Have a good night.

14 [END RECORDING]

15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

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

Signature 

Date April 8, 2014_____

1 ||