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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION – OFFICE OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Global Enterprise High School
January 7, 2010**

1 [START 154_490.A.MP3]

2 MR. SANTIAGO TAVERAS: We are now ready to
3 start. It is 6:00. Ladies in the front, ladies
4 in the front, please find a seat. Translation
5 services, please come up. Translators, are we
6 all here? Please let them know that we're ready
7 to—we need it in the native languages.

8 MALE VOICE: Buenos noches. La persona que
9 necessitan la traduction en Espanol [speaking
10 Spanish]. Muchas Gracias.

11 FEMALE VOICE: [speaking foreign language].

12 MALE VOICE: [speaking foreign language].

13 FEMALE VOICE: [speaking foreign language].

14 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Ladies and
15 gentlemen, it is very important that we bring
16 this meeting to order, so that we can have an
17 orderly environment, so that we can hear every
18 single one of the people who have signed up to
19 speak.

20 First, I would like for everyone to know
21 that we have translation services available.
22 And they were the ladies and gentlemen that just
23 spoke. And if you need translation, if somebody
24 that you know needs translation, please have
25 them go to the back to get a - - .

1 I'm going to pass the microphone down, so
2 that the people who are sitting next to me can
3 introduce themselves.

4 MS. TAMARA MITCHELL: Hi, I'm Tamara
5 Mitchell. I'm the president of the PA for
6 Global Enterprise.

7 [cheering]

8 MS. CATHY DELUKA: Hi, my name is Cathy
9 Deluka [phonetic]. I'm a member of the school
10 leadership team. I've been working at Columbus
11 for 21 years.

12 MS. DENISE SULLIVAN: Hi, I'm Denise
13 Sullivan. I'm the recording secretary for the
14 citywide council for all high schools in the
15 Bronx.

16 MS. ELENA PAPALIVERAS: Elena Papaliveras
17 [phonetic], superintendent, Bronx high schools.

18 MR. TAVERAS: My name is Santiago Taveras.
19 I am the deputy chancellor for teaching
20 learning. And I will be the moderator for
21 tonight's debate. First of all-

22 [cheering]

23 --I want to say good evening and buenos
24 noches. I'm really happy to see everyone here
25 tonight. Thank you for coming tonight, enjoying

1 this public hearing for the proposed phase-outs
2 and eventual closures of Global Enterprise high
3 schools and Christopher Columbus High School. I
4 am Santiago Taveras, the deputy chancellor for
5 teaching learning. We ask the citywide council
6 on high school, the district 11 CEC, and the
7 school leadership teams to participate in this
8 joint hearing.

9 I am joined tonight by Catherine Deluka from
10 the School Leadership Team at Columbus High
11 School.

12 [cheering]

13 I'm also joined by Tamara Mitchell, School
14 Leadership Team for the Global Enterprise
15 Academy.

16 [cheering]

17 I am joined by Denise Sullivan from the
18 Citywide High School Council. We may be joined
19 by Monica Major [phonetic] from District 11CC.
20 We also have the high school superintendent
21 Elena Papaliveras.

22 This hearing is being recorded. Following
23 the hearing, a transcription of the proceedings
24 will be sent to all members of the council
25 participating in the hearing and will also be

1 made available on the Department of Education's
2 website.

3 The purpose of this hearing is for you,
4 everyone in this audience, to provide comments
5 about the proposals. Before I describe the
6 proposals, I want to make sure you are aware
7 that you have an opportunity to provide input.
8 All those who wish to speak must sign up and
9 speak at the sign up areas outside of the
10 auditorium.

11 Because we're starting five minutes late,
12 that will last until 6:20, at which time we will
13 close the signup sheet area. All comments are
14 limited to two minutes. And that's important
15 because we have I believe over 100 people signed
16 up to speak right now. And if you do the math,
17 we will be here over four hours. And that's
18 fine, as long as we all give every single person
19 speaking the opportunity and the respect to say
20 what they came here tonight to say.

21 In addition, we welcome any comments and
22 feedback you may have at any time before the
23 Panel for Educational Policy votes on these
24 proposals on January 26, 2010 meeting. The
25 email address and phone number where you can

1 have additional comments are listed in the
2 Department of Education's website under the
3 section for the panel for educational policy.

4 These proposals have been taken very
5 seriously and considered in comprehensive manner
6 by the Department of Education. Over the past
7 six years, the Department of Education has faced
8 out over 90 schools and opened 335 new schools
9 that have demonstrated remarkable success in
10 helping students excel.

11 For example, our new high schools have
12 achieved an average four year graduation rate of
13 75 percent, which is well above the citywide 60
14 percent average graduation rate. These
15 proposals will continue to—that important work.
16 The department is not blaming any individual or
17 group for the schools lack of success. But we
18 have determined that it is important to give the
19 students the best possible opportunity for long
20 term success.

21 We know that there are a lot of people
22 working incredibly hard every single day to
23 support the students at these schools. But we
24 simply cannot continue doing the same things and
25 expect that we will get better, the results.

1 The first proposal we're addressing this
2 evening relates to Global Enterprise High
3 School. Global Enterprise has not demonstrated
4 the capacity to serve students well.

5 [booing]

6 The school's 2009 graduation rate was only
7 51 percent. This rate is below the citywide
8 average and far below the 75 percent average
9 graduation rate for small schools that the
10 department has opened since 2002.

11 The 49 percent of students who are not
12 graduating represent more than just statistics.
13 These are real kids with names. And they
14 deserve better.

15 At this school, students fall behind early
16 in their education, making it very difficult to
17 get back to-back on track. Only 64 percent of
18 the students are accumulating 10 credits in
19 their first year. In order to graduate high
20 school, students need to complete 44 credits,
21 which means that they should be accumulating an
22 average of 11 credits per year. Therefore, only
23 64 percent of the students earn 10 or more
24 credits in their first year. And that does not
25 indicate adequate preparation for graduation.

1 A school that allows students to fall
2 behind and only graduates half of its students
3 does not meet any standard of success. Further,
4 the school has received a "C" on two consecutive
5 progress reports, while two consecutive quality
6 reviews have deemed the school underdeveloped
7 with proficient features. These factors, along
8 with the reality that only 67 percent of the
9 students, say they feel safe at the school, have
10 convinced us that the school lacks the capacity
11 to reform their instruction and culture of the
12 school to better serve its students.

13 The Department of Education's proposal to
14 phase out Christopher Columbus High School is
15 based on chronically poor performance and low
16 demand. The school has a long history of
17 sustained academic failure. The school received
18 a "D" on the 2008/2009 progress report.
19 Further, the school ranked in the 2nd percentile
20 of all high schools in the entire city.

21 This means that 98 percent of all high
22 schools in the city performed better. Since
23 2004, four year graduation rates have hovered
24 around 40 percent. This is 20 points below the
25 citywide average. If only regents diplomas

1 counted for graduation, which they will, which
2 they will in the case of two years, Columbus
3 must have a graduation rate of 16 percent.

4 While some have grad—argued that a six year
5 graduation horizon may be more applicable, the
6 six year graduation rate is only 54 percent. If
7 a school is only able to graduate one out of
8 every two students in six years, the school is
9 not serving the students or the community.

10 The demand for the school is also alarmingly
11 low. Only 165 students ranked Columbus first on
12 their high school applications. This is among
13 the city's lowest. The Department of Education
14 will create new schools and options to provide
15 supportive academic environments for high need
16 population in the community.

17 Let me be clear about the consequences of
18 these proposals. All students currently
19 enrolled in these schools will have the
20 opportunity to graduate from both Global
21 Enterprise and Columbus. We will absolutely
22 continue to support the school during the three
23 year phase-out process.

24 I look forward to hearing your comments and
25 questions. If there are any elected officials

1 in attendance, who would like to comment,
2 please step forward in a few minutes. In order
3 to ensure that all people have, that have signed
4 up to speak are given the opportunity, they will
5 be given a two minute limit. After 1.5 minutes,
6 you will see a sign indicating that you have 30
7 seconds remaining. After those 30 seconds, you
8 will see a sign indicating that the end of the
9 allotted time is up. Please make sure to state
10 your name and the school which you are relating
11 your comments to.

12 So I will remind you if we need to during
13 that time, oh, sure, what's her name?

14 MS. MONICA MAJOR: Good evening. My name is
15 Monica Major [phonetic]. I am the president of
16 CEC 11, the local school board. And I apologize
17 because this is the first invitation I received
18 to sit on this panel. And this is the—and we—
19 and they knew about this for some time. So I
20 really apologize for coming unprepared. I do, I
21 am familiar with the situation, but I am here to
22 support the parents, the students of this
23 community, of this school, and of these parents.

24 [cheering]

25 MR. TAVERAS: Before we begin, do we have

1 any additional CSL team members that came in?
2 Excuse me? I can't hear you. Oh, that we have
3 some additional folks in the—in another room? I
4 can't hear you. Okay, got it. So there are
5 three schools in the building. And if you want
6 to senior school leadership member from one of
7 the other schools, and would like to come up to
8 represent the campus, you're welcome to do so at
9 this point.

10 I also understand that Global Enterprise has
11 a Powerpoint presentation, which will be
12 presented by Frank Laporto [phonetic].

13 [cheering]

14 So Frank Laporto? Yes, you may start.

15 MR. FRANK LAPORTO: Thank you. Good evening
16 and welcome to the Christopher Columbus campus.
17 I am Frank Laporto, Social Studies teacher, data
18 specialist, member of the school leadership
19 team, and an internal stakeholder at Global
20 Enterprise Academy High School.

21 [cheering]

22 My task this evening is to provide you with
23 factual, verifiable evidence that will refute
24 the misinformation contained in the Educational
25 Impact Statement.

1 [cheering]

2 The EIS provides us with no clear insight as
3 to why GEA should be phased out. Reading
4 through the EIS, we have confronted with the
5 following. The proposal to - - woops, that's
6 great. The proposal to phase out and eventually
7 close Global Enterprise is based on the school's
8 overall score. And then later on, we find the
9 overall scores on the DOE's accountability tools
10 do not meet standard criteria for closure.

11 Then we find the school lacks the capacity
12 to improve student performance. We cannot
13 agree. We do not agree. And even the DOE's own
14 data sources cannot substantiate this statement.

15 [applause]

16 The EIS tells us that an assessment of GEA's
17 capacity to improve was undertaken, and that the
18 proposal was formed after consultation with
19 internal stakeholders. So quite simply, there
20 are no facts presented that indicate any kind of
21 authentic assessment was undertaken, or that any
22 of the internal stakeholders noted were
23 consulted.

24 As professional educators, we constantly
25 monitor our progress. We have real time data

1 that shows that Global Enterprise certainly
2 has the capacity to improve.

3 [applause]

4 Just want to go over some quick factual
5 data. Scores at GEA improved significantly
6 from '08—from 07/08 to 08/09. 24 percent
7 increase in the scores. Similar improvements in
8 the subsections of the progress report. School
9 environments improved 21 percent. Student
10 performance improved 48 percent. Progress
11 improved 22 percent.

12 [applause]

13 For the past two years, 07/08 and 08/09, we
14 missed getting B's by the grand total of 1.1
15 points. The fact that the progress report data
16 shows that significant gains are being made, the
17 premise that Global lacks the capacity to
18 improve is false.

19 Some of my colleagues will speak to the
20 statistics during the public forum, but I want
21 to draw particular attention to the student
22 performance and student progress subsections.
23 Both of these are mentioned as indicators that
24 GEA lacks the capacity to improve student
25 performance and has not made sufficient progress

1 for its students.

2 If Representative Joe Wilson which will the
3 EIS, I fear that he would once again shut out -
4 - . Every indicator points out to the fact that
5 GEA is a viable, vibrant community of students,
6 parents, and educators, working very hard
7 towards a level of excellence. Even the school
8 quality review recognizes this.

9 Mr. Taveras is quite right. The last two
10 quality reviews showed us as being
11 underdeveloped with proficient tendencies. What
12 is telling, however, are the comments of the
13 reviewing concerning the direction in which the
14 school is now heading. Time and again, the
15 quality review highlights the action steps that
16 have been taken during the year, and indicates
17 quite clearly that GEA is well positioned to
18 improve.

19 I won't waste a lot of people's time going
20 through every section of the quality review.
21 I'll just highlight a few from the overall
22 evaluation section. The new principal is
23 working exceedingly well with faculty and
24 administration and staff in creating a school
25 culture of collaboration, data analysis, and

1 effective organizational decisions.

2 The principal is focusing on improving
3 instruction by providing mentoring, professional
4 development, formalized observations, and
5 curriculum planning to ensure that all students
6 are suitably challenged.

7 The exchange of information between the
8 school and parents is effective in improving
9 attendance and increasing parental involvement.

10 The overview section of the quality review
11 comes in two different parts. What I was able
12 to do was I was able to kind of manipulate the
13 information that's there into two columns. If
14 you take notice, every area where we were cited
15 that we need improvement is offset by a strength
16 of Global Enterprise. Thanks.

17 We're going to zip right through the
18 quality, the main findings. Quality statement
19 one, strategy has been effective in increasing
20 the number of students in the 2009 cohort
21 eligible to meet graduation requirements. Data
22 indicates an increase in the 2009 graduation
23 rate from where it had started.

24 A variety of bulletin boards and hallway
25 displays promote attendance and achievement,

1 which parents and students say makes them feel
2 good about themselves and their school.

3 The mid-year reprogramming is allowing more
4 students the opportunity to graduate in their
5 cohort, and is increased regent's passing rate.
6 These are all directly from the quality review.

7 So let's go back to the factual data for a
8 moment and focus on Global's capacity to improve
9 student performance in significant and
10 consistent ways. Overall scores, we spoke of
11 before. Improvement in 2008, 2009. Actually, a
12 higher score than in 2006, 2007 when we received
13 a "B." Kristen?

14 Student performance, which is cited, from
15 "C" to a "B." The rate of decline in the
16 graduation rate has been arrested. And all
17 indications are that we will see an increase in
18 June. There's been a 41 percent increase in the
19 four year weighted diploma rate. And this is
20 giving us great cause for optimism. 17
21 students, according to information, data in - -
22 are already-have already passed five regents
23 exams required for regents diplomas. And we are
24 looking at five students to receive advanced
25 regents diplomas, something that Global has

1 never had before.

2 [cheering]

3 Yeah, this is the one, the one piece of data
4 that I didn't take directly from the progress
5 report. The data is correct. The manipulation
6 of the data is mine. In the progress report, we
7 believe that the DOE is comparing apples to
8 oranges. What happens in that report is we're
9 comparing first year students this year, to
10 first year students next year, to first year
11 students in another year. We don't believe
12 that's appropriate. Students change.

13 So what we look at is we look—we try to,
14 what we call, follow the cohort. So what we see
15 there is a graphic representation of the credit
16 accumulation of students as they go through
17 their first, second, and third year, then the
18 students that entered in 07/08, their first and
19 second year, and the students that entered in
20 08/09 their first year.

21 So also statistics are funny because nine
22 would be less than 10, but that's okay. The
23 regents weighted pass rate, we saw significant
24 improvement in that during 08/09. Math,
25 science, and global history pass rates more than

1 doubled in 08/09. And the English pass rate
2 improved by a third.

3 [applause]

4 This, excuse me, this subsection of the
5 progress report was not addressed in the EIS.
6 For a school that has graduated only three
7 classes, and is under new leadership, one can
8 make a pretty strong argument that this is the
9 most important of the subsections.

10 Results in the subsection are derived from
11 the Learning Environment Survey that are
12 completed each year by parents, students, and
13 faculty. Basically, this measures the
14 atmosphere under which student learning will or
15 will not flourish. Particular attention should
16 be paid to the academic expectations and
17 engagement components. These are direct
18 measures of academic rigor.

19 As I said before, the rate—

20 MR. TRAVERAS: One more minute.

21 MR. LAPORTO: One more minute?

22 MR. TRAVERAS: Yes, please.

23 MR. LAPORTO: Sift through. - - . This
24 one, just skip it. In the last, thank you, the
25 last part of the quality review, the last thing

1 that said is that the principal admitted that
2 work needs to continue. We certainly believe
3 that a fair and impartial reading of the data
4 and facts presented will leave you with little
5 doubt that Global Enterprise Academy High
6 School, under the leadership and guidance of
7 Michelle Joseph, and together with her faculty,
8 staff, parents, students, our PSO, and the DOE,
9 has the ability to provide a meaningful and
10 quality education, and has successfully
11 demonstrated the capacity to improve student
12 performance in significant and consistent ways.

13 [applause]

14 Global Enterprise, thank you, is clearly
15 making progress. The data tells us so. For the
16 panel to vote in favor of a phase-out of Global
17 Enterprise on January 26 is a repudiation of the
18 DOE's own data. The message that they would be
19 sending is that every city, every New York City
20 public school exists as a matter of chance and
21 whim. The panel must not allow expediency to
22 overrule objectivity. The Nike Corporation said
23 it best. Just say no. Thank you very much.

24 [applause]

25 MR. TRAVERAS: Ladies and gentlemen, we need

1 to really get to every single speaker. I
2 understand the passion. I respect the passion,
3 but we will never get through every single
4 speaker if we continue to chant after every
5 person presents.

6 I understand that Columbus High School also
7 has a presentation, but I was not given the name
8 of the person presenting. So the school
9 leadership team from the Christopher Columbus
10 High School is ready to present, please. Please
11 try to maintain the 10 minute timeframe.

12 MS. LISA FUENTES: Good evening, everyone.
13 I am Lisa Fuentes, the principal of Christopher
14 Columbus High School.

15 [applause]

16 Thank you. Thank you. I'd just like to
17 thank the panel for this opportunity. We really
18 do appreciate it. And I cannot continue unless
19 I thank my staff and my students for all their
20 hard work. And how wonderful it is to be their
21 principal. Thank you.

22 [applause]

23 As you know, Christopher Columbus High
24 School has a very long history. It is 70 years
25 old and has been serving the neighborhood for

1 that long.

2 In 2002, 2003, we sectioned off, we became
3 five schools on the campus. And due to that, at
4 that point, we did experience severe
5 overcrowding. And they were deplorable learning
6 conditions as a result of the expansion in the
7 building. My students were on a split schedule.
8 The seniors and juniors came in at 7:30 and left
9 at 12:30. And my freshman and sophomores came
10 in at 12:30 and left at 5:15, 5:30 in the
11 evening.

12 Due to that expansion at that time, it was
13 also noted that we did become an impact school,
14 due to we did not have enough security in the
15 evening. And after that, we were able to change
16 that around.

17 We also restructured into smaller learning
18 communities in 2005. We do have four currently.
19 And we created many, many innovative programs
20 for my students, which include renaissance, boys
21 to men, women empowerment, as well as a
22 newcomers program for my "L" population.

23 Now if you look at this chart, during the
24 cohort of 09, for those who don't understand,
25 the cohort of 2005 are all the students who

1 graduated this past June. That's the cohort
2 of 2005. So this goes back several years. And
3 I just want you to look at the reading level
4 started in cohort 98 from 41.7, and last cohort,
5 those students came in only 5.9 percent red on
6 grade level that met the standards. Only 5.9
7 percent. And I was still able to graduate 40
8 percent of those students. It was the same
9 graduation rate—

10 [applause]

11 --which was the same graduation rate as the
12 cohort of 98. Then you look at the math. 56.9,
13 those students who graduated this past June.
14 Only 14 read on level. And I still was able to
15 graduate 40 percent of those students.

16 [applause]

17 As everyone knows, I'm a special educator.
18 Students with special needs are very important
19 to me, as well as every child in my building.
20 From that point on, from 2001, the special
21 education population has just increased entirely
22 to almost 25 percent of my population are
23 students who with IEP's who need extreme amounts
24 of support. And we definitely give it to them.

25 [applause]

1 Okay, the DOE, according to the DOE's
2 rubric, they say that schools, including
3 Columbus High School, do not meet the criteria
4 for schools to close. They say that we do not
5 meet the criteria for schools to close, but then
6 they change their mind. And they decide to say
7 Christopher Columbus has shown a lack of
8 capacity to improve student performance in
9 significant and consistent ways. at the same
10 time, you see them contradicting themselves, the
11 DOE themselves.

12 [applause]

13 We as the SOT do not believe this is true.
14 Okay, so we have a graph here. Let me break it
15 down to you quickly so you understand. The gray
16 area is the citywide statistic, the New York
17 City public schools and the city. And the red
18 area is Christopher Columbus High School. The
19 Class of 2002 in four years from the city
20 graduated 44 percent. Christopher Columbus
21 graduated 51 percent. We beat the city.

22 [applause]

23 And if you look at the Class of 2003 in four
24 years, the city was 47. We graduated 56
25 percent. And if you keep looking, you see the

1 city has a lower percent than Christopher
2 Columbus High School every year consistently.
3 We manage to graduate and beat those standards
4 citywide every year.

5 [applause]

6 Sorry. So basically, if you look, the DOE,
7 the final graduation rate ended in 72 percent
8 for the Class of 2004. It was 5.3 percent
9 points higher than the Class of 1986. This is
10 the DOE stats. They're saying this. Even
11 though the school, the graduation requirements
12 became much more difficult, we still managed to
13 increase our graduation rate.

14 [applause]

15 The citywide, even the stats became
16 difficult, we still managed to increase our
17 graduation rate.

18 FEMALE VOICE: Sorry, I'm speaking for one
19 of my parents who's a little shy. So the
20 results, the DOE results, the results are--this
21 is what was stated by the DOE. The results are
22 a further indication that high school is not a
23 four year academic sequence to be completed by
24 want the time a student is 18 years old. So it
25 has been stated that some students do need more

1 than the regular four years.

2 Now if you look at the next chart, this is
3 the percentage of the cohort 2005, which
4 graduated in June, who met ELA's standards. In
5 the 8th grade, as you can see, only about 5
6 percent met standards when they came into this
7 school. By the 12th grade, 50 percent met those
8 standards, standards which is a-increase of 853
9 percent.

10 [applause]

11 Math, if you look 8th grade, is 14 percent
12 from the 8th grade when they came in 9th grade.
13 All students, the middle column is all students,
14 which is, was a 56.6 by the 12th grade. And my
15 students who are IEP students, they went up to
16 81.6 percent met standards.

17 [applause]

18 Okay. The DOE points to our progress report
19 as a reason to close us, but our most recent
20 progress report showed a 13.8 percent overall
21 improvement. The previous report showed a 23.79
22 percent improvement. This was so impressive,
23 that the entire faculty all received a bonus.

24 [applause]

25 MALE VOICE: All right, now this is what the

1 DOE says for student impact. They're saying
2 current Christopher Columbus grade 10 students
3 or students who are repeating grade 9 are
4 encouraged to meet with their guidance
5 counselors to explore their options for the 2010
6 to 2011 school year. They're also saying
7 throughout the course of the phase-out of
8 Christopher Columbus and its closure, there will
9 continue to be a sufficient number of high
10 school seats in the Bronx and throughout the
11 city to serve students who would have attended
12 Christopher Columbus.

13 MS. TIFFANY RIVERA: My name is Tiffany
14 Rivera. I am a senior at Christopher Columbus
15 High School. And I—I'm speaking on behalf of
16 the school leadership team. If our school gets
17 phased out, our favorite teachers may not be
18 here next year. As a senior who will be
19 graduating this June, you may be thinking why
20 would this be my problem? But I am not speaking
21 as a senior. I'm speaking as a future alumnus
22 and an active leadership student.

23 [applause]

24 As an active leadership student, I am aware
25 and involved in all the sweat and effort that

1 goes into keeping the school going. As a
2 future alumnus, I want to come back to
3 Christopher Columbus High School and see the
4 teachers that helped me get where I am.

5 Teachers enjoy this as much as alumni do.
6 It gives the teachers the satisfaction that they
7 made a difference in their students lives.

8 If our school gets phased out, we will have
9 fewer elective choices. As a former student of
10 culinary arts, sorry, sorry, I'm a little
11 nervous.

12 [applause]

13 As a future—as a former student of culinary
14 arts, I was able to have an experience that
15 students from other schools do not receive. In
16 this—in the class, we learned how to properly
17 prepare food, use kitchen appliances, and create
18 meals. This may not be a big deal to some, but
19 our parents aren't always able to take the time
20 to teach us these basic life skills.

21 [applause]

22 MR. TAVERAS: Before—just hi. You have—

23 MALE VOICE: My name is—

24 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry. I'm sorry to
25 interrupt you. I really—we already have passed

1 the 10 minutes. I give you guys a chance to
2 wrap up. So I'll give one additional minute.
3 So if you could help him summarize, I'd really
4 appreciate that. Thank you.

5 [booing]

6 MS. RIVERA: In conclusion, we believe
7 Columbus has shown a remarkable capacity to
8 improve student performance in significant and
9 consistent ways. It is deserving of recognition
10 and support, not phase-out. Help us to build
11 and nourish this school, instead of giving up on
12 the lives of many students. Bring us to a
13 higher level and encourage us to strive towards
14 perfection because we all want a chance to aim
15 for a better education.

16 [applause]

17 MR. TRAVERAS: Thank you. Thank you very
18 much. We also have a few elected officials. We
19 have Councilman Vaca [phonetic]. We have
20 Assemblywoman Rivera. We have Bronx President
21 Representative Jesse Mohica [phonetic]. And we
22 have District Manager for Community Board 11
23 John Frata [phonetic]. So I'm going to ask in
24 this order for Councilman Vaca, Assemblywoman
25 Rivera, borough President Representative Jesse

1 Mohica, and then John Frata to take turns
2 addressing the audience. Thank you.

3 And I just want to remind that we have over
4 90 folks who have signed up to speak. And we
5 will listen to every single one of them. Two
6 minutes each. That brings us over three hours.
7 So please, I ask that you respect every single
8 speaker. Thank you.

9 MR. JAMES VACA: Thank you. Thank you very
10 much. Members of the Department of Education,
11 my name is James Vaca. I'm a city councilman.
12 And I represent this community in City Hall.
13 And-

14 [applause]

15 --thank you. But I come to you tonight
16 because I'm a proud graduate of Christopher
17 Columbus High School.

18 [applause]

19 You know, you know, I graduated Columbus
20 when if you did not make Bronx High School of
21 Science, Columbus was the place to be. I
22 remember well. I remember because I served as
23 student council president in my senior year. I
24 was on what was then was called the Consultative
25 Council, which is now called the School

1 Leadership Team. And I remember.

2 But I tell you among the many things I
3 remember, because I have many fond memories of
4 this building, I remember that when things were
5 broken, they were fixed. I don't remember high
6 schools being closed and re-opened, and then
7 closed and re-opened again. I don't remember
8 high schools being closed when the middle
9 schools the children are coming from are in the
10 5 percent range. And rather than closing the
11 middle schools, you tell them, you tell them,
12 we've know in this city for years that the
13 middle schools are not performing. And when you
14 have a principal from a high school that says to
15 you that 5 percent of her children arrive in
16 this building at grade level, then I say where
17 has the Department of Education been all these
18 years? Where have they been?

19 [applause]

20 Global High School was a creation of this
21 chancellor, this, let's not bring 110 Livingston
22 Street all the time. Those days are gone. It
23 was a creation of this chancellor. Christopher
24 Columbus High School was reconstituted under new
25 visions under this chancellor.

1 Now if things are not working, and we need
2 reform and support, it is up to the Department
3 of Education to provide that. We all know what
4 happens with schools that are closed. You put
5 them in limbo for three years. For three years,
6 they are phased out. But my concern during the
7 phase-out is not just the quality of education
8 that our kids receive. My concern during phase-
9 out is the morale of our students, the morale of
10 our faculty. What are we saying? What are we
11 saying?

12 [applause]

13 And when it is said, when it is said tonight
14 that Columbus High School had very few children
15 who chose Columbus High School as their first
16 choice, do you mean all of a sudden in one year,
17 very few people chose Columbus? That ought to
18 happen over the course of many, many years.
19 Where was the Department of Education when they
20 saw that children were not selecting Columbus.

21 [applause]

22 Do we have to spell it out? Signals were
23 sent for a long time. Somebody only had to wake
24 up and smell the coffee. And we didn't have to
25 get to this point.

1 [applause]

2 Now and when no one shows Columbus the
3 Department of Education's sent this school a
4 disproportionate number of children with special
5 needs because all the new small schools you
6 opened had no place for them.

7 [applause]

8 These children with special needs who came
9 with Columbus, they're not leaving New York City
10 to go to Utah. And there's no—Lehman and Truman
11 are already up there. There is no more moving.
12 There's no more changing the wine in the bottle.
13 We should make Columbus—this school has a proud
14 history. This school has a tradition. I'm here
15 to say that we have to go forward, not backward.
16 We have a tradition we want to maintain. Those
17 of us who graduated here love this place. You
18 should keep the place open.

19 [applause]

20 MR. TAVERAS: Assemblywoman Rivera?
21 Assemblywoman Rivera, thank you. Please be
22 mindful of the time. We're getting near to
23 7:00. And people who came in to speak also
24 would like an opportunity to do so. Thank you.

25 MS. RIVERA: Well, I absolutely want to give

1 all of our parents and neighbors an
2 opportunity to speak, so that they can share
3 with you their thoughts about how the notion
4 that the Department of Education is giving up on
5 our students, because that's what it's doing.
6 It's saying Columbus High School is not
7 deserving of the time or attention, when in
8 fact, you have seen the staggering statistics.
9 Clearly, this school has been functioning
10 without the support of the Department of
11 Education, the mayor's office.

12 [applause]

13 When the mayor says no child left behind,
14 when the mayor says that it's time to close, the
15 school is failing, I have to ask, I have to ask
16 what did the mayor or the Department of
17 Education do to ensure that this school had all
18 of the resources it needed, so that it didn't
19 fail, so that it didn't close.

20 Our kids are not failing. They're not
21 getting the resources that they need. The money
22 is not being invested. They're here. They're
23 saying we want to learn, but we need the tools
24 to learn. And you know, the notion that we can
25 close up schools, and I, you know, in Albany

1 kind of get an idea about what this is about.
2 And this is about that new trend charter
3 schools.

4 [applause]

5 Charter schools. You know, my mother always
6 taught me that when you're trying to hit a
7 target, you aim as many arrows at that one bulls
8 eye. You don't start trying to come up with all
9 these other ideas and spread out all your
10 resources, because it just doesn't work.
11 Charter schools don't have the same mandates.
12 Charter schools get to pick the cream of the
13 crop. And when they decide that you're not
14 working so that their numbers don't demonstrate
15 that their kids are succeeding, that they can
16 release you from their schools. That's not
17 teaching. That means that any child can succeed
18 that has the ability, that has the tools at that
19 particular school.

20 Not a child that maybe doesn't have the same
21 kind of resources or environment. You know,
22 it's sad that today, we're still being
23 segregated. That is what is happening as well.

24 [applause]

25 I can't imagine, you know, I can't imagine,

1 you know, how anybody in good conscience comes
2 together and says that this is a good idea.
3 It's not. And charter schools, as far as I'm
4 concerned for anybody that knows Assemblywoman
5 Naomi, not all my colleagues agree, I am totally
6 against charter schools. Why? Because they're
7 not the kids from the community that need the
8 support. And in the Bronx for far too long, we
9 have been neglected and abandoned. And now that
10 we're finally coming together as a community and
11 neighbors and families and saying we, we are
12 taking the time to reinvest because nobody else
13 has bothered to do it.

14 Now we're being stripped away of what little
15 we've had. So I say no, you cannot close
16 Columbus High School, because when you close
17 Columbus High School, you're turning your back
18 on our kids. Once again, you're turning your
19 back on the Bronx and people of color. And
20 enough is enough.

21 [applause]

22 [chanting "save our school"]

23 MR. JESSE MOHICA: Good evening, everyone.
24 My name is Jesse Mohica, and I'm the Director of
25 Education Policy for Bronx Borough President

1 Ruben Diaz Junior. At December's Panel for
2 Educational Policy meeting, I submitted a letter
3 from the borough president to the panel, raising
4 concerns of the school closure process. Under
5 the current closure proposals, there are
6 inconsistencies with the Department's own
7 measurement standards that we believe require
8 review by the Department of Education, and the
9 panel for Educational Policy prior to any vote.

10 According to the Educational Impact
11 Statements released, Columbus High School and
12 Global Enterprise High School should not be
13 closed. The Educational Impact Statements for
14 Columbus High School and Global Enterprise High
15 School state that while overall scores in the
16 DOE's accountabilities tools do not meet
17 standard criteria for closure, after
18 consultation with internal stakeholders, it was
19 determined that the schools had not made
20 sufficient progress to remain open.

21 The Educational Impact Statements mention a
22 conversation with internal stakeholders, but
23 nowhere in those statements are the—those
24 stakeholders identified, nor is the content of
25 those conversations described.

1 We want the Department to identify who
2 were the internal stakeholders referred to in
3 the Educational Impact Statements? We want to
4 know what they discussed, and how they came to
5 the recommendation for closure. This is
6 critical information for all to have, since by
7 the Department's own criteria, these schools
8 should not be facing closure. We cannot create
9 a target, have a school meet the target, and
10 then move the target after the fact. That is—

11 [applause]

12 That is not fair to all who sacrificed their
13 lives for our students. In addition, there are
14 many instances amongst the schools slated for
15 closure that there seems to be a great
16 disconnect between the statements and ratings
17 and the quality reviews of these schools, versus
18 the recommendations for closure. To use
19 Columbus and Global Enterprise as an example,
20 this is a quote from the latest quality review
21 from Columbus High School. "Christopher
22 Columbus High School makes all students feel
23 value and part of a community, which also echoes
24 the experience of faculty and parents. The
25 principal and assistant principal for the

1 organization give strong direction with a
2 nurturing and positive framework, where they
3 listen to all constituent voices, and foster and
4 personal responsibility throughout. That's from
5 the recent statement, the last quality review
6 statement for Christopher Columbus.

7 The latest quality review statement for
8 Global Enterprise High School, part of it was
9 stated before, but I'll read it fully. "The new
10 principal's working exceedingly well with
11 faculty and administrative staff in creating a
12 school culture of collaboration, that analysis
13 and effective organization decisions. Since
14 August 2008, the school has identified school
15 goals by using mid and interim assessments.
16 This has resulted in reprogramming for students
17 and planning for professional development, focus
18 on differentiated learning and attendance
19 initiatives. These decisions are improving the
20 overall school tone and student behavior."

21 So we have to ask the question, - - has to
22 ask the question, either the quality review
23 process is flawed, or the school closure process
24 is flawed. Either way, these inconsistencies
25 raise serious concerns for our office. No one

1 should make a decision to close a school if
2 the information and argument presented is
3 incomplete, inconsistent, and lacks full
4 transparency.

5 [applause]

6 In closing, I want to say that we have a
7 representative to the Panel for Educational
8 Policy. Borough President and I have been
9 speaking to our representative. And we will not
10 support any decision without—that is incomplete
11 and inconsistent and lacks full transparency.
12 We want these questions answered. And we
13 really, really have serious, serious concerns.
14 And we will not support any proposed closure of
15 a school with such inconsistencies that we've
16 seen here today and that have been shown by the
17 presentations before. I thank you so much for
18 the opportunity.

19 [applause]

20 MR. JOHN FRATA: Good evening. My name is
21 John Frata. I'm District Manager, Community
22 Board 11. I'm here tonight to—I want to start
23 my statements by saying shame on you,
24 chancellor. Shame on you, Board of Education.

25 [applause]

1 You let the children down. It's not their
2 fault. It's not the fault of the teachers.
3 It's the fault of the Board of Education that
4 denied the resources that was needed.

5 [applause]

6 I've been working Columbus from before the
7 break-up. I'm working with Columbus now from
8 1995. And I've watched, I've watched a
9 transformation at Columbus. There was a time at
10 dismissal we had this community ringed with
11 police. We don't have that any more. Columbus
12 is a safe environment now. There's a time—there
13 was a time when children really were having a
14 hard time graduating. They're doing wondrous—
15 wonderful things with our children with a lack
16 of resources that they're getting. Our children
17 are learning. They don't have the ability to
18 pick the best students. They take whatever
19 child walks through that door. And it's their
20 job, and guess what?

21 [applause]

22 Not only is it their job to educate, it's
23 your job, your job to make sure they have the
24 resources to educate. Children aren't
25 graduating in four years. How can you expect a

1 child that's new to this country that comes
2 into this community, moves on Pullen [phonetic]
3 Parkway, comes into Columbus in the 11th grade,
4 can't speak a word of English, how do you expect
5 that child to graduate in four years? That's
6 not going to happen. Not going to happen. And
7 you know it. You know it. The chancellor knows
8 it. And the mayor knows it. The mayor has this
9 grandiose plan for charter schools all over the
10 place. We don't need charter schools. We need
11 to educate our children the way they've always
12 been educated.

13 Give them the resources. Community board
14 passed a motion unanimously demanding that the
15 Department of Education, instead of—it's very
16 easy to close the school. It's very easy to do
17 that. It's an easy decision to make. Instead
18 of closing it, send down the experts. Work with
19 the staff. Give them what they need. Give the
20 staff the resources that they need. You can't
21 build a building without brick and mortar.
22 You're asking them to educate. They need more
23 resources over here to get the job done the
24 right way. Leave the school open.

25 And I'm going to say one more thing. I

1 really hope, I really hope this hearing
2 tonight is a true hearing. And you're not just
3 here because you have to be here. I want to
4 make sure you're listening. Listen to these
5 people. Listen to everybody here.

6 [applause]

7 And we'll know that answer, by the way.
8 We'll know whether you're listening if you
9 determine to close the school. Then we know you
10 just don't give a damn. Thank you.

11 [applause]

12 MR. TAVERAS: We have a representative from
13 the state senator's office, Mr. Jeff Klein
14 [phonetic]. Please come forward to speak.
15 Representative from Jeff Klein's office? Not
16 speaking? Okay. So now we're ready to listen
17 to the 85 speakers that have signed up. Those
18 folks have a ticket with a number on the ticket.
19 We're going to have, Christopher Columbus on
20 this side and Global Enterprise at this side.
21 Thank you, elected officials for joining us for
22 the first hour.

23 [applause]

24 I hope you make it home safely. So if we
25 could have everyone with tickets number 1

1 through 10 line up so that we could have one
2 speaker speak after the other. So if you have
3 signed up to speak tonight, you are given a
4 ticket, that ticket has a number. If you have
5 numbers 1 through 10, please come up to the
6 microphones.

7 FEMALE VOICE: Number 1?

8 MR. TAVERAS: So let me just, so to my left,
9 to your right, you have Columbus High School.
10 We have chairs set up on the sides for people to
11 sit down if you want to wait your turn. And on
12 this side, my right hand side, your left hand
13 side, we have Global Enterprise Academy. So
14 we're going to start. We're going to start with
15 Christopher Columbus side, but I really please
16 ask you to provide your utmost respect and
17 attention to your colleagues and peers that are
18 here to represent you. So we want to be able to
19 listen. You asked us to come and listen.

20 Thank you. You asked us to come and listen.
21 I'm prepared to do that, but I need your
22 cooperation in order to do so. So the first
23 gentleman, please address the audience.

24 MR. ROSS MAY: Well, I don't have any
25 orders. I just want to kind of like introduce

1 myself. My name is-

2 MR. TAVERAS: Introduce, your name?

3 MR. MAY: My name is Ross May. I used to go
4 to Christopher Columbus. I'm a Columbus alumni.
5 I graduated in 2007. So I'm here for Columbus
6 and everybody else who's here tonight.

7 You know, that stage right there behind you
8 is where I got my chance to actually perform my
9 first play that I actually wrote, produced, and
10 starred in. And if it wasn't for the drama
11 program, Ashley, honestly, I wouldn't be doing
12 what I'm doing today. I'm actually an actor.
13 And I also model as well. And if it, if it
14 wasn't for me starting right in Columbus, I
15 wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today. And I
16 don't agree with you taking Columbus away from
17 the community, because Columbus is a part of the
18 community. And I'm not only just speaking for
19 Columbus. I'm speaking for everybody, for GEA,
20 for that school, and the other school over here.
21 I speak for everybody.

22 So I would just like, if you guys actually
23 just reconsider and think about taking Columbus
24 away from the community, away from the future,
25 because these guys right here that are sitting

1 here in these seats, they are the future. So
2 I'm just-

3 [applause]

4 --I'm just here for all-I'm here for
5 everybody. So that's all I wanted to say. And
6 good night.

7 [applause]

8 FEMALE VOICE: We're going to have number 2
9 from Global. Number 2?

10 [applause]

11 MR. RAKIMA KOLIVICH: Good evening, panel.
12 Good evening, parents. Good evening, students
13 and guests. My name is Rakima Kolovich. I am
14 the dean Global Enterprise High School.
15 Department of Education released their EIS
16 statement. And it said that they consulted with
17 all the stakeholders regarding Global Enterprise
18 Academy. That is the consulted with
19 administrators. They consulted with the school
20 leadership team. They consulted with faculty.
21 They consulted with students and they consulted
22 with parents. Yet the DOE has not released a
23 single name of an individual or as they call
24 them stakeholders that they have spoken with.

25 However, I'm an honest guy. So I believed

1 you guys. So I did my own research. I also
2 contacted stakeholders. I contacted school
3 leadership team members. I spoke with
4 administrators. I spoke with parents. I spoke
5 with students. I spoke with faculty. Not a
6 single person said that they were contacted by
7 the Department of Education.

8 Members of the DOE, you are making a mistake
9 by closing Global Enterprise High School or as
10 you call it, phasing out. Your own data does
11 not support or provide sufficient support to
12 phase out Global Enterprise Academy.

13 Someone has given you misinformation. That
14 is the only fact here. I am asking you to stop
15 this mistake. I'm asking you to stop this error
16 and let Global Enterprise continue to grow.
17 Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: Number 3, Columbus?

20 MR. LEO CASEY: My name is Leo Casey and I
21 am the vice president for Academic High Schools
22 from the United Federation of Teachers.

23 [applause]

24 And I have to tell you that a sign of a
25 mature adult is someone who can take

1 responsibility for his or her own actions.
2 And when I listen to this Educational Impact
3 Statement, I can come to only one conclusion.
4 There are no mature adults leading the
5 Department of Education.

6 [applause]

7 Let me say that you created in these schools
8 the greatest concentration of need in this whole
9 city by your own statistics, by your own peer
10 index. There is no high school in New York City
11 that has greater need than Columbus High School.
12 And this school didn't give up. They didn't say
13 because you send us 400 kids in the middle of
14 the year, we're not going to teach them. This
15 school stood up and it educated those kids. And
16 the one statistic which is not in your
17 Educational Impact Statement is that after seven
18 years when this school stands by those students,
19 it graduates at a 10 percent greater than the
20 entire city.

21 [applause]

22 This is not an educational decision. It's a
23 political decision. Once your school progress
24 reports your broken school progress reports gave
25 97 percent of the elementary and middle schools

1 A's and B's, you decided you were going to
2 take space out of high schools and you were
3 going to get it by any means possible.

4 [applause]

5 You cannot turn off the truth. If there is
6 any educational integrity left in - - , if there
7 is any educational integrity on the panel, they
8 will stop-

9 MR. TAVERAS: Please summarize your
10 statements.

11 MR. CASEY: --these closures. This is
12 wrong.

13 [applause]

14 FEMALE VOICE: Number 4 from Global, 4,
15 Global?

16 MS. MICHELLE JOSEPH: My name is Michelle
17 Joseph and I am the principal of Global
18 Enterprise Academy.

19 [applause]

20 I was hired the first day of school 2008. I
21 inherited a school that lacked oversight by the
22 Board of Education. Students were not allowed
23 to set regents in a timely fashion. Students
24 were not promoted as per the DOE regulations.
25 And as a result, me, my staff, and my students

1 had in a very space of time to address some of
2 the lack of things that occurred within the last
3 four years.

4 My critical point to you is as a educators,
5 as adults, we need to demonstrate a couple of
6 things to young people. Yes, you make mistakes.
7 No, you cannot just give up. And when I took
8 this position, I understood what I was getting
9 into. I understood the challenges that faced
10 me. And I took them on head on.

11 I am proud to be a member of the Global and
12 Columbus family. I believe that public
13 education should be open to every single child,
14 irregardless of level, bottom third, immigration
15 status, ethnicity. That's why I am here and I
16 show up every day.

17 My final point is Mr. Taveras indicated
18 there are names associated with every child that
19 fails. We know those names at Global Enterprise
20 Academy. We know what they need to graduate.
21 We know every credit. We know every regents.
22 And we work individually with every single child
23 to make sure they graduate. Will that happen in
24 six months? Of course not. But what you're
25 asking and what you're proposing is a phase-out

1 of a school that was restructured in January
2 of 2009. And I think that is indictment against
3 your procedure, which is that certain things
4 need to occur prior to phase-out. Unless you
5 give us the opportunity to prove we have greater
6 capacity to improve our performance, the phase-
7 out is simply like Mr. Casey said, a political
8 maneuver. And you're teaching students
9 education and improvement actually does not
10 count. Thank you have a good evening.

11 [applause]

12 FEMALE VOICE: Number 5?

13 MS. CHRISTINE ROLLINS: Good evening. I'm
14 Christine Rollins and I work for the UFT
15 Teachers Center at Christopher Columbus campus.

16 [applause]

17 Thank you. I'd like to speak to your today
18 about our English language learners.

19 Christopher Columbus has about 250 English
20 language learners. And they comprise about 19
21 percent of our population. They come—they speak
22 many different languages when they arrive. We
23 have 13 different languages here. And they come
24 many different educational levels.

25 At Ms. Fuentes request, I've been working

1 for years now with teachers on helping them
2 learn skills to help teach student, the content
3 area teachers teach students language and
4 content together. We've worked in small groups.
5 We've worked on professional days. We work in
6 collaborative teaching settings.

7 In fact, we're being featured in a book
8 that's being type set as we speak here. And
9 we've documented our work very carefully. In
10 fact, we gave a workshop this year at the
11 Channel 13 Celebration of Teaching and Learning.
12 We were accompanied by our students, who helped
13 explain what strategies worked for them in the
14 classroom. And this was a very powerful
15 experience.

16 Our best testimony is really our students.
17 Of the cohort students who graduated this past
18 year, 65 were English language learners, who
19 were in that cohort. Of those students, 57
20 percent graduated on time. And of that—of those
21 whole 65, only 37 percent were with the school a
22 full four years. And we're still working to
23 graduate the rest.

24 The old program at Columbus can't be
25 compared with an L only school because we take

1 all L's. An L only school doesn't take
2 special ed. The one in this district only takes
3 1 percent special ed. We're 25 percent special
4 ed in our L population. And we take students
5 who arrive when they are 20 years old and with
6 English. Here at Columbus, we serve all English
7 language learners. Please allow us to continue
8 to do so. Thank you.

9 [applause]

10 FEMALE VOICE: 6?

11 MR. CHRISTOPHER LEMUR: May it please the
12 panel, my name is Christopher Lemur [phonetic].
13 I am an English teacher at Global Enterprise
14 Academy--

15 [applause]

16 --as well as the United Federation and
17 Teachers - - Leader and a member of the School
18 Leadership Team. First, sir, let me say I would
19 like to thank you for actually looking up and
20 paying attention, unlike your boss, who stares
21 at his crotch for the entire meeting, texting
22 throughout the entire meeting. Thank you.

23 You have mentioned, sir, that according to
24 our learning environment survey, that our
25 students feel unsafe at our school. One thing

1 that you failed to mention about the learning
2 environment surveys overwhelmingly, both our
3 parents and students felt—they feel welcome at
4 our school. Also, according to the learning
5 environment survey, the biggest change that our
6 parents want to see is smaller class sizes, sir,
7 smaller class sizes. I challenge you to come
8 here during fifth period any day and walk into
9 the cafeteria and tell us we do not have a
10 problem with overcrowding in this school.

11 Now I have a brief statement I'm going to
12 read on behalf of the United Federation of
13 Teachers, a resolution to oppose the closing of
14 Global Enterprise High School. Whereas at great
15 expense of time and money, the Department of
16 Education has created progress reports and
17 quality reviews, and has also created standards
18 based on those accountability tools in order to
19 discern which schools might be candidates for
20 closing. And whereas the Department of
21 Education created its standards that say that
22 schools that may be considered for closing are
23 those that receive an overall grade of "D" or
24 "F" on the progress report or three "C's" in a
25 row, and a score below proficient on the quality

1 review, and whereas the DOE asserts in its
2 Educational Impact Statement that Global does
3 not meet the standard criteria for closing,
4 since Global did not receive a "D" or an "F",
5 and did not receive three "C's" in a row.

6 And finally, whereas the school community of
7 Global Enterprise, the students, their family,
8 the staff have been outspoken in their
9 opposition to its closure, be it therefore
10 resolved that this Community Education Council,
11 District Leadership Team, School Leadership Team
12 opposes the closure of Global Enterprise
13 Academy, and calls upon Mayor Bloomberg and
14 Chancellor Joe Klein to retract their plans for
15 closure and provide the proposed schools with
16 the resources necessary for academic success. I
17 yield my time. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: 7?

20 MR. PAUL MUSSINGER: Hi, my name is Paul
21 Mussinger [phonetic]. I have been teaching at
22 Columbus for 27 years. And I have enjoyed
23 coming to work every single morning from the
24 first day I began.

25 I was on Wall Street for 10 years prior to

1 that. I opened a restaurant and ran that for
2 10 years prior to teaching. And so when I came
3 to Columbus and joined the Business department,
4 I was in total bliss. But I soon realized that
5 the bottom line is not the same in business and
6 in education. I now teach entrepreneurship,
7 which offers our kids a chance to take hold on
8 life, to take a grasp of their future. And it
9 gives me great pleasure when I see kids see that
10 they can take hold of this themselves.

11 The entrepreneurship program's only one of
12 many programs in this school that Ms. Fuentes
13 has started. We have, I'm very nervous as you
14 can see, we have YABC. We have the Renaissance.
15 We have Boys to Men, Women Empowered. These are
16 all intended to give kids a chance that might
17 not otherwise function as well in a regular
18 school setting. In 2000, I became the
19 coordinator of a pilot program in this school
20 called College Now. It was a wonderful
21 successful program. Our first graduating class
22 graduated 89.4 percent of the students.

23 [applause]

24 Ms. Fuentes got the word from the DOE to
25 close it. And that's when I first realized that

1 the philosophy of the DOE is if something
2 works, kill it. And I see the same thing
3 happening now. And I implore you not to do
4 that. Save our school.

5 [applause]

6 FEMALE VOICE: Number 8?

7 MR. LUIS RAMOS: Hello everyone. My name is
8 Luis Ramos. I'm part of the School Leadership
9 Team at Global Enterprise.

10 [applause]

11 Now I just want to look at some of the
12 statements that the DOE claims are true. And if
13 they fear the overall scores in the DOE's
14 accountability - - do not meet standard criteria
15 for closure. So why is GEA is being closed?

16 MR. TAVERAS: Get a little bit closer to the
17 mike, please.

18 MR. RAMOS: If it doesn't meet the criteria?

19 MR. TAVERAS: Can't here you. Get a little
20 closer to the mike, please.

21 MR. RAMOS: All right. If it doesn't meet
22 the criteria, why is GEA being closed? Is this
23 just an inconvenient truth that the DOE wants to
24 overlook? I challenge you to look at the facts.
25 This school deserves to exist because we are

1 progressing. So what are we left with then is
2 a proposal to face our eventually close Global
3 Enterprise, based on the DOE's determination
4 that the school lacks the capacity to improve
5 student performance.

6 My esteemed colleague Frank Laporto came up
7 here and showed you the data. The data says
8 that we are improving in many areas. All I ask
9 you or I ask the panel is to give us the chance
10 to finish the job and give us the resources,
11 rather than giving up on us.

12 Also, the EIS indicates that the DOE
13 consulted with internal stakeholders. I am an
14 internal stakeholder. I did not talk to these
15 phantom DOE people. I don't know if they even
16 exist. I know that the stakeholders, my
17 students, the administration, and the teachers
18 that I work with, we believe in our school. And
19 let us exist and let us finish the job.

20 [applause]

21 FEMALE VOICE: Number 9 from Columbus?

22 MS. JAMIE ALLEN: Hi, my name is Jamie Allen
23 [phonetic] and I'm a special educator at
24 Christopher Columbus High School.

25 [applause]

1 And I want to know why when the
2 educational trend is all about inclusion,
3 inclusive learning environments, the city is
4 strategically excluded its neediest children
5 from their local schools, and concentrated them
6 here at Columbus? And why didn't these children
7 go to community schools in their neighborhoods?
8 I'll tell you why. Because the DOE's Office of
9 Strategic Enrollment and Planning chose to
10 exclude them from their community schools, and
11 concentrate them at Columbus instead. No matter
12 how far they had to travel to get here. Shame
13 on you.

14 And now, now that they've found a home here,
15 and have been welcomed with open arms to our
16 family, you want to take that away from them,
17 too. This exclusion, this segregation, these
18 practices are discriminatory. Save Columbus and
19 give this school back to its community. Give
20 all children the right to get an education in
21 their neighborhoods, regardless of need. We
22 love our students. Do not replace Columbus with
23 students from District 10. This is a District
24 11 school. Don't take it away from us. Thank
25 you.

1 [applause]

2 FEMALE VOICE: We need the next 10 to be
3 lining up.

4 MR. TAVERAS: Will the next 10 speakers
5 please come up and line up to speak, so we can
6 continue?

7 FEMALE VOICE: Number 10 from Global?

8 MR. TAVERAS: Next 10, line up so they can
9 continue speaking.

10 MR. GEORGE HALL: Good evening, members of
11 the Education Panel, no, am I correct? The
12 panel in front of me. Mr. Deputy. My name is
13 George Hall. I am a teacher at Global
14 Enterprise Academy.

15 I would like to address a particular aspect
16 of the DOE findings. In the report that we got,
17 I was very upset, very upset. And do you know
18 why? I was upset basically at the beginning
19 because as teachers and as parents, we don't say
20 to the kids we teach or to the children who call
21 us mommy and daddy that you can't improve. This
22 is something that came out of the mouths of
23 members from the Board of Education. We lack
24 the capacity to improve student performance.
25 That's a slap in the face of our teachers and in

1 the face of our students. And I wish that in
2 the future, there would be no such repetition
3 coming from what I once considered was a rather
4 noble board.

5 I look at the results of student
6 performance. And one of the things that we have
7 noticed in something that the board overlooked
8 deliberately or otherwise was the rate at which
9 the weighted graduates and the rate over four
10 year period was actually improved by 41 percent.
11 Here is something that the board did overlook by
12 some means, by some—because of some reasons or
13 whatever.

14 So we're asking you, sir, the school has
15 shown that it is performing, and it is
16 improving. Do give us the opportunity to
17 continue to grow. Thank you very much.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: I'm going to ask again
20 numbers 11 through 21, to line up. We are
21 missing some numbers. We want to ensure that
22 you get your opportunity. Numbers 11 to 21.
23 Number 11?

24 MR. JAMES MENIN: Good evening, ladies and
25 gentlemen. My name is James Menin [phonetic].

1 Since the time of the Great Depression, no,
2 not this one, the other one, my family has
3 served the people of the Bronx, providing
4 generations of New Yorkers with vocational and
5 technology skill sets that help make this city
6 into the world leader it is today. For 23 of
7 those years, I have worked with my other family
8 here at Columbus, helping the young people of
9 this neighborhood gain valuable, clear, and
10 technology skills that allow them and their
11 families access to the American Dream.

12 Now the DOE has proposed what I feel are ill
13 conceived changes that will eliminate a great
14 asset to this neighborhood. That is the
15 Columbus Career and Technology Education
16 Program. Both I and my colleagues, Allen
17 Richter and Michael Barone, Allen and Mike if
18 you're here, stand up.

19 [applause]

20 We provide an opportunity that simply does
21 not exist elsewhere in this neighborhood.
22 Industry recognized certifications for the
23 Information Technology and Culinary Arts
24 industries.

25 At a time when parents will likely be forced

1 to pay for school transportation, the DOE will
2 force the neediest students from this
3 neighborhood to travel unacceptable distances to
4 receive the type of job training that already
5 exists in this neighborhood. New York was built
6 by neighborhood students going to neighborhood
7 schools. What will happen to the tax base of
8 this city if we cannot train the young people in
9 this neighborhood that will guarantee them
10 access to the American Dream?

11 Students in need need job skills. Don't
12 close Columbus.

13 [applause]

14 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

15 FEMALE VOICE: Number 12?

16 [applause]

17 FEMALE VOICE: Hi.

18 MR. VINCE MALFATANO: Good evening. My name
19 is Vince Malfatano [phonetic]. I do appreciate
20 your attention this evening. I've been a
21 teacher for about 35 years, 28 with the city.
22 About 8 or 9 in private school. I've been an
23 attorney for 20 years.

24 And I come here to lament the problem of the
25 folks at Global Enterprise. They have become

1 the victim of a continuing very tragic play,
2 that I have had the unfortunate pleasure to bear
3 witness to in my years of experience serving as
4 a teacher with the city of New York.

5 There's been many good things to say. But
6 in support of the folks at Global Enterprise,
7 who are trying to save their jobs and their
8 students' futures, some might say, well, this is
9 a very self serving process they're engaging
10 with you this evening. They're interested in
11 saving their jobs. Of course they are, but
12 they're interested in a lot more, as are the
13 people at Columbus.

14 And I'm hoping that you folks will take to
15 heart what they have said. I can't add to the
16 statistical information. They've proven their
17 case. As an attorney, I would say they win, but
18 that's just me.

19 But now you've been given an out. And
20 behind closed doors, I hope that some of these
21 politicians and others who did not have the
22 wherewithal to support Mr. Thompson's candidacy,
23 and our union who didn't do either as well, can
24 hang your heads in shame as President Obama
25 should for never having shaken his hand when he

1 came here. And now we have to still endure
2 Mayor Bloomberg.

3 But now behind closed doors, you do have the
4 out. Yes, we've made a mistake. Let's
5 reconsider this. Global should have been given
6 their own school. They should have had their
7 own space. But this was all a fraud to begin
8 with. We know that. But let's not make them
9 pay for it and score some political points just
10 so Mayor Bloomberg can look good. Look, we've
11 closed another school. Thank you.

12 [applause]

13 FEMALE VOICE: Number 13?

14 MR. RICHARD BARR: Good evening, my name's
15 Richard Barr, and I'm a graduate of Columbus.
16 My yearbook. I was here in the early '60s when
17 Joe Klein was at Bryant High School. And 1988
18 at the 50th anniversary and in 1998 at the 60th,
19 and at each of those, there were hundreds and
20 hundreds and hundreds of very proud graduates of
21 Columbus, proud to be there and wanting to
22 continue to be associated with the school.

23 And I would not want to have to say if
24 somebody says to me what high school did you
25 graduate from, that it doesn't exist anymore,

1 anymore than I think Joe Klein would.

2 So that being said, I've also been an active
3 public school parent for the last 17 years. And
4 I've looked at how the DOE functions, both
5 before mayoral control and since. And what I
6 have to say is that if the mayor and chancellor
7 feel they need to be in control, then they need
8 to be in control of regulating enrollment, so
9 that you don't have some schools that are more
10 crowded than others. They need to be in control
11 of disbursing the student with special needs so
12 that each school has an equal proportion of
13 them, so that later, when they do their
14 accountability and judge progress and success,
15 they're comparing apples with apples, and apples
16 with oranges.

17 And when a school that they've hopefully
18 given the kind of administrators and teachers
19 and guidance people that the school needs to
20 help it succeed, when it still needs more help,
21 then what should be coming from the district
22 superintendent's office in - - Central is more
23 education resources to help the school go the
24 rest of the way towards success, rather than
25 people in downtown with lawyers and business

1 people and management people, who just devise
2 bizarre accountability measures to find reasons
3 to close schools, as if they more want to close
4 them than to help them succeed.

5 Thank you.

6 [applause]

7 FEMALE VOICE: Number 14?

8 MR. ANGELA INJUSTIAN: Okay. Thank you. My
9 name is Angela Injustian [phonetic]. And I'm a
10 math and business teacher at Global Enterprise
11 Academy. And I want to address two things.

12 First of all, during the reading of our
13 Impact Statement by Mr. Taveras, he said that
14 students start behind in their first year at
15 Global. I agree. But there are certain things
16 that need to be addressed before we start with
17 that.

18 Students come in to the school behind
19 because the mayor is allowing middle school
20 students with 1's and 2's to graduate from
21 middle school. I know this, because I was once
22 a 7th grade math teacher who watched as my
23 students, who could add, subtract, multiply, and
24 divide, got 2's and high 2's and 3's on their
25 state math test because it was severely watered

1 down.

2 If we are going to talk about high
3 standards, they need to start before high
4 school. We cannot chastise a high school that
5 has students coming in five years behind for not
6 being able to graduate students in four years.
7 It might take five or six.

8 Also, in terms of the graduation rate, I
9 want to address one thing. The DOE predicts our
10 graduation rate to go down. I want to talk
11 about the problem with predicting, making
12 decisions based on predictions. To use
13 predictions as the reason for a phase-out is
14 unacceptable. The DOE has predicted our
15 graduation rate will decline as of June 2009
16 data. However, we project an increase of 10
17 percent. We know we will increase because we
18 have individual programs for our students.
19 That's realtime data. Based on first and second
20 marking period grades, we project an increase in
21 graduation rate.

22 The DOE should use actual data, not
23 predictions. If they do plan to use
24 predictions, they need to put them on public
25 record to be examined.

1 Also, I ask that the DOE keep in mind to
2 conclude that when making important decisions
3 based on predictions, please make sure the data
4 is current. Thank you.

5 [applause]

6 FEMALE VOICE: Number 15?

7 MR. MALFATANO: Yes, good evening. I'd like
8 to give you something for the record. I'd
9 appreciate if my written submission could be
10 made part of the record.

11 MR. TAVERAS: It will be.

12 MR. MALFATNO: Thank you. Again, my name is
13 Vince Malfatano. You've heard some of my
14 introductory remarks, but I'd like to speak more
15 specifically regarding Columbus High School.

16 I was selected some years ago to serve on
17 the initial screening committee for the first
18 six small schools to be cited in the Bronx. And
19 when I sat on that committee with I believe it
20 was a Mr. Garfin [phonetic] was the principal at
21 that time, I witnessed a fraud being perpetrated
22 on the public. I asked questions. How are you
23 going to handle special need students? How are
24 you going to handle gym, football? How are you
25 going to handle music, band? How are you going

1 to handle AP classes? How are you going to do
2 budget?

3 And Mr. Wechler [phonetic] and others and
4 their proponents had no answers. Matter of
5 fact, when I made the proposal, look, there are
6 people in the Bronx very concerned about what
7 we're doing here. Why don't we delay this for a
8 year till we get it right? And here's a quote.
9 Mr. Wechsler says to me Mr. Malfatano, we can't
10 delay. We're going to lose \$750,000 of Bill and
11 Belinda [sic] Gates money. That's what it's
12 about. That's why Columbus, as somebody said,
13 was forced into an idiotic program, where people
14 began teaching not at 7:30 in the morning, but
15 7:00. And we had freshman girls getting out of
16 this building at a quarter to 6:00 in the middle
17 of February in the pitch black, standing on the
18 2 train to go home. And when I asked the
19 geniuses in this building and others, who by the
20 way, unfortunately, some of our colleagues and
21 others, chose to ride the tide of small schools,
22 but now when you ride the tide, when you ride
23 the tide, sometimes you wind up inside. I said
24 to these geniuses, would you want your 14 year
25 old daughter going home at quarter to 6:00 at

1 night? Not one of these \$100,000 geniuses
2 raised their hand. Well, I'm going to tell you
3 we destroyed Columbus High School back then.
4 And our union and many people in this building
5 went along with it. Now that was a fraud back
6 then. It was perpetrated to keep the minority
7 parents in this city from God forbid going along
8 with voucher programs. So we created, if I
9 could finish this last sentence, schools with
10 fancy names, Pelham Prep, Academies Institutes,
11 which did not accept special ed kids. And
12 basically, ate away at the heart of the city of
13 New York.

14 Now let's not perpetrate another fraud
15 again.

16 [applause]

17 FEMALE VOICE: Number 16?

18 MR. BRYSON SOTOS: Good evening. My name is
19 Bryson Sotos. GEA has been my home for the past
20 2.5 years. When I heard that it was being
21 proposed to close, I was very disappointed. But
22 my disappointment turned into anger when I found
23 out that we were being phased out based on
24 untrue reasons.

25 Since we have Ms. Joseph as principal for

1 GEA, we had nothing but progress. I remember
2 before, people just wanted to leave or stop
3 coming. Now everybody wants to graduate. And
4 everybody wants to see each other exceed.

5 Global Enterprise is the best school in the
6 world. Global Enterprise—

7 [applause]

8 Global Enterprise is making all my friends
9 that were considering dropping out want to go to
10 school and want to do, go to college, and want
11 to do good for themselves. If Global closes
12 down, this will make the people—if you close
13 down Global, you're closing down the door to our
14 future.

15 [applause]

16 FEMALE VOICE: Number 17?

17 MR. BERNARD LOPEZ: Good evening. My name
18 is Bernard Lopez [phonetic]. I'm high school
19 director for the Council of School Supervisors
20 and Administrators, otherwise known as the CSA.
21 CSA represents all principals and assistant
22 principals in New York City.

23 The Department of Education has announced
24 the closing of 20 schools. Some of them with
25 new principals. Some of them just beginning to

1 turn around. And eight of them were open not
2 very long ago by the head of the Department of
3 Education himself, Chancellor Klein.

4 CSA embraces accountability and believes
5 that schools should be closed if they failed
6 over a period of three or more years, despite
7 receiving full support from the Department of
8 Education.

9 We don't tolerate the propagation of
10 failure. But in the case of several of these
11 proposed closures, we must ask if some of the
12 schools are being held accountable, while the
13 apparatus that supports them is not. In those
14 cases, we must inquire if the schools were
15 really failing, and by what measures they were
16 failing. We must ask if the chancellor truly
17 put each of these schools through a thorough
18 process to ascertain whether they had been
19 provided adequate supports and guidance by their
20 superintendents and SSO's, otherwise known as
21 School Support Organizations.

22 If the Office of Student Enrollment had
23 leveled the playing field, CSA is asking the
24 Department of Education to lay bare the process
25 by which they determined that each of these

1 schools be closed. In the case of each
2 school, we want to know what the superintendent
3 did besides visiting the schools to announce
4 their closings. We need to know how thorough
5 the superintendent was in the process of helping
6 these schools.

7 DOE should include an analysis of the role
8 of the appropriate school support organizations.

9 Finally, the Department of Education should
10 assess how fairly the Office of Student
11 Enrollment minimized challenges in schools that
12 face so many other challenges. It's important
13 to know if these institutions were sent an
14 unusually large population of ELL students and
15 children with special needs.

16 MR. TAVERAS: Please summarize.

17 MR. LOPEZ: When every question is—I'm
18 almost finished, Santiago. Please? When every
19 question is asked and answered, we are likely to
20 discover that some of these schools can't be
21 saved. We are also likely to discover that many
22 of them can remain open and thrive with adequate
23 superintendent and support networks and fair
24 enrollment practices. Thank you.

25 [applause]

1 FEMALE VOICE: Number 18?

2 MR. TAVERAS: I just want to remind everyone
3 that the two ladies that are being asked to let
4 the speakers know how much time is remaining is
5 just simply so that every single one of you that
6 has signed up gets that opportunity to do so.
7 So please, when you get the 30 second notice,
8 please start to summarize and wrap up. Thank
9 you.

10 MS. MARIAM DEVS-OPA: Hello, good evening.
11 My name is Mariam Devs-Opa [phonetic]. I'm
12 Director or Prep for Success, an afterschool
13 internship program here at Columbus and GEA.
14 I'm going to read something very brief from
15 W.E.B. Dubois.

16 It says, "The high school journey at least
17 gave leisure for reflection, self examination.
18 It changed a child of emancipation to the youth
19 with dawning, self consciousness, self
20 realization, self respect. And yet he saw
21 himself some faint revelation of his power, of
22 his mission. For the first time, he sought to
23 analyze the burden he bore upon his back, the
24 dead wait of social degradation, partially
25 masked by a half named Negro problem. He felt

1 his poverty without a cent, without a home,
2 without land, tools, or savings. He entered
3 into a competition with rich, landed, skilled
4 neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be
5 a poor race in a land of dollars is the very
6 bottom of hardships.

7 He felt the weight of his ignorance, not
8 simply of letters, but of life, a business, of
9 humanities. But this burden's not all poverty
10 and ignorance. W.E.B. Dubois believed the
11 meaning of progress was to train the mind with
12 proper education and sufficient resources. How
13 do we transfer such knowledge and get the
14 students to the self consciousness realization
15 and respect Dubois speaks about by phasing out
16 the academic institution, not providing
17 appropriate resources when the very institution
18 is understaffed, undersupported by DOE, and
19 unscreened?

20 Instead of phasing them out, invest their
21 high school journey that will benefit us as one
22 race, the human one. Thank you.

23 [applause]

24 MR. TAVERAS: The next 10 speakers, please
25 start lining up to speak. So speakers 20 though

1 29, please start lining up so that we could
2 continue to move. Thank you.

3 FEMALE VOICE: Number 19?

4 MR. TAVERAS: Number 19?

5 FEMALE VOICE: 19?

6 MR. JOHN MULHERN: My name is John Mulhern
7 [phonetic]. I'm a teacher, English teacher at
8 Columbus High School. And this is Angelique.
9 We're going to read a poem called "Save Our
10 Ship."

11 ANGELIQUE: "This ship won't go down, not
12 without a fight. We will go against these
13 pirates."

14 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry, can you just get a
15 little closer to the mike, please?

16 ANGELIQUE: Do you want me to start over?

17 MR. TAVERAS: I just—I can't hear you.

18 ANGELIQUE: You want me to start all over?

19 MR. TAVERAS: Just get closer to the mike.
20 I think we'll be fine.

21 ANGELIQUE: "This ship won't go down, not
22 without a fight. We will go against these
23 pirates, and the captain who thinks he's always
24 right."

25 MR. MULHERN: There may be more of them, but

1 we are the secret weapons. They will lose
2 with disappointments, while we win as champions.

3 ANGELIQUE: The captain may have brought
4 down the other ships, but he won't make us sink.
5 He says he's committed shutting us down hard,
6 that's what he thinks."

7 MR. MULHERN: "We've been standing long
8 enough to grow stronger each day. Troops, will
9 you help our ship, our home? Don't let them
10 throw us away."

11 ANGELIQUE: I would - - . Why don't you let
12 the staff members, the teachers, and the
13 principal finish what they started here at
14 Columbus High School?"

15 I get nervous.

16 MR. MULHERN: And what you see before us
17 right now is evidence of how we do support each
18 other.

19 [applause]

20 FEMALE VOICE: Number 20?

21 MR. TAVERAS: Number 20?

22 MS. KYA GEORGE: Hi, my name is Kya
23 [phonetic] George and I-in Global Enterprise.
24 And I'm a senior. And I'm talking on behalf of
25 my mother and other parents, which is the

1 president of the PA.

2 Well, I feel that the school shouldn't be
3 closed down, because all the data that they're
4 providing to us doesn't add up. I don't think
5 that with a "B" and a "C" and another "C" should
6 cause a phase-out actually.

7 I don't think that we have been—we have not
8 been improving, because since Ms. Joseph has
9 been here, she's been actually providing the
10 classes we need in order to graduate. Just like
11 they said, there's people with—that's going for
12 their advanced regent's diplomas, five students
13 for the first time. And a lot of people are
14 starting to really graduate.

15 And by the end of June, I bet you mostly all
16 the students will graduate. And that's the
17 reason why I think why they shouldn't close the
18 school down. And I do—me and my mother both
19 agree that you're making a very big mistake.
20 And you're jeopardizing a lot of people's
21 futures. Thank you.

22 [applause]

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

24 FEMALE VOICE: Number 21?

25 MR. TAVERAS: Hi, Jerry.

1 MR. JERRY GARFIN: Hi, Santi. Hi, there.
2 My name is Jerry Garfin [phonetic], and I'm a
3 graduate of Christopher Columbus High School.

4 [applause]

5 And I'm also the former principal of
6 Christopher Columbus High School. I find it
7 very difficult to understand how the Department
8 of Ed. has decided to close Columbus High
9 School. When I look at my career as a student,
10 I remember an outstanding school, outstanding
11 community, outstanding teachers. When I
12 returned here as principal, I found even greater
13 teachers, more outstanding students with
14 outstanding programs.

15 Just to give you a quick summary, in the
16 last couple of years, Columbus was recognized by
17 the New England Board of Higher Education for
18 having the outstanding high school college
19 partnership between Columbus High School and the
20 University of Vermont.

21 [applause]

22 In addition, Columbus was recognized for
23 having—by the Siemens Foundation having an
24 outstanding AP program. In addition, the New
25 York State Department of Education recognized

1 Columbus for having an outstanding math
2 program, helping students achieve math
3 standards. In addition to that, the United
4 States Department of Education recognized
5 Columbus for having an outstanding small
6 learnings community program. And before us
7 today, we heard from graduates of Columbus who
8 are members of the state legislature, city
9 council, judges, members of businesses. And I
10 just say you're making a mistake by closing
11 Columbus. Thank you.

12 [applause]

13 FEMALE VOICE: Number 22?

14 MR. JARED GASTON: Good evening. I'm Jared
15 Gaston. I'm a senior at Global Enterprise
16 Academy. I'm the vice president of student
17 government association. And I'm an internal
18 stakeholder, who was never told about the
19 shutdown and phase-out of Global Enterprise
20 Academy.

21 For the last four years, Global has been my
22 home. We here at Global are a family. I've
23 been here through the good and the bad times.
24 And I must say right now, as of now, we are the
25 best we have ever been.

1 Over the last 16 months, Mr. Joseph and
2 his spectacular staff have been working hard to
3 rise the academic achievement of the students.
4 Students love to come to school now. People are
5 wanting to make the honor roll more than ever.

6 As a senior, I'm advanced recent diploma
7 candidate. I will graduate with eight regents
8 and 12 college credits. I am what Global puts
9 out. We will not go down.

10 GEA creates opportunities that no other
11 school can create for all students, black,
12 Latino, Spanish, special ed 1 and 2 and
13 immigrants. At Global, no child is left behind.
14 We are a family. We are together. We stand
15 together. We will fight together. Thank you
16 and have a good evening.

17 [applause]

18 FEMALE VOICE: Number 23?

19 MR. CORLY SIMONI: First of all, I would
20 like to thank the people that came here. Thank
21 you for coming to support Columbus and Global.
22 Thank you.

23 [applause]

24 My name is Corly Simoni [phonetic] doing my-
25 I'm an alumni. I graduated in 2008. During my

1 time at Columbus, I was school president. I
2 was in leadership. I was athlete of the year.
3 I was prom prince. And I did other programs
4 here.

5 I would like to say think about it. We have
6 a 19 percent of immigrants coming to this place,
7 to this school. So think about it. How about
8 if you, let's say we sent a couple of group of
9 American students to my country, Albania. Think
10 about it, how hard it's going to be for you to
11 achieve that graduate diploma. Think about it,
12 because when I first came here, I was—I came to
13 4th grade. I came to this country. I didn't
14 know a single word. And I was forced to learn
15 English. I went to the class. I was like oh,
16 what is this, you know, because I couldn't
17 understand what to read. I couldn't understand
18 nothing. I couldn't understand what time we're
19 leaving. So I had to ask, try to find someone
20 who spoke my language.

21 So you got to understand that immigrants
22 that come to this country, it's hard for them
23 because they have to learn their—the language.
24 And it takes time for them to learn the
25 language.

1 You don't expect someone that comes in
2 junior year in their high school to graduate
3 same time that someone else that been here for
4 18 years. You don't expect that, right? I
5 don't expect that either. You come to my
6 country, I don't expect that either.

7 So I would like to say Columbus to me has
8 been a great school, because it has brought me
9 my chance of becoming a leader. They have
10 brought me so much to me.

11 In college now, I'm currently the freshman
12 representative. I'm a student senator. And I'm
13 in the—I'm in planning for budget and planning
14 in my school. So I help change John Jay, the
15 school that I go. And also, I'm in that master
16 plan, which is helping shape the next five years
17 of John Jay's history. So please, don't try to
18 take down this school, because this school right
19 here is going to bring out great leaders. It
20 has brought me out.

21 [applause]

22 If we shut this down—

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

24 FEMALE VOICE: Number 24?

25 [applause]

1 MS. FRANCIS JAVIER: Oh, God. Good
2 evening, my name is Francis Javier [phonetic]
3 and I am a junior and president of Global
4 Enterprise Academy.

5 [applause]

6 Global has changed by providing internship
7 programs for students. The attendants in Global
8 has gotten better. The students' attitudes has
9 also changed—gotten better. Since Ms. Joseph,
10 our principal, has come into Global, there has
11 been so many improvements in, not only grades,
12 but in my classmates' motivation. Once I
13 graduate, it would hurt to not to be able to
14 return and visit my teachers in school. Thank
15 you.

16 [applause]

17 FEMALE VOICE: Number 25? Again, number 25
18 for Columbus?

19 TARA: Hello, everybody. For those of you
20 who don't know me, my name is Tara. And
21 basically—

22 MR. TAVERAS: Tara, get closer to the
23 microphone, please?

24 TARA: Okay, I'm sorry.

25 MR. TAVERAS: That's okay.

1 TARA: Again, my name is Tara. And
2 basically, I'm just here to talk about how I
3 really think Columbus is just a great school.
4 And I've been here for three years almost. And
5 I'm a junior here. And my grades are really
6 high up. I have really good credits in
7 everything.

8 I care about this school so much for the
9 fact that before I came here, I was a freshman
10 at a different school. And that school was just
11 horrible. When I came here, I was in shock. I
12 didn't even know there was like—when I met the
13 principal, I didn't even know there was someone
14 who could care that much for the school.

15 I've never known anyone who cares about the
16 students more than her, Ms. Lisa Fuentes. She
17 works so hard every day. And yet, still manages
18 to make time for students to meet with her about
19 any problems they're having, if any.

20 [applause]

21 As mentioned before, the mayor and DOE
22 didn't give us much help to support our school.
23 However, Ms. Fuentes and all the other staff
24 members cared enough to support us students in
25 every way, helping us rise to the very top.

1 And I just, that's basically all I have to
2 say. And if anything, I just really think that
3 if you close this school down, it's just really
4 unjust. And it just, in my eyes, after what
5 everybody had to say, it makes no sense
6 whatsoever.

7 [applause]

8 FEMALE VOICE: Number 26?

9 MR. MICHAEL PIERSON: Good evening, ladies
10 and gentlemen. My name is Michael Pierson. I'm
11 a science teacher at Global Enterprise in
12 addition to being the boys track and field coach
13 for the Columbus campus family.

14 Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to sound like a
15 broken record, but the DOE has no substantiating
16 data pertaining to Global Enterprise, which
17 supports their criteria for schools, which need
18 to be phased out. On a daily basis, Global
19 Enterprise continued to enroll new students or
20 principal, faculty, and staff, embrace each one,
21 irregardless of their color, creed, or learning
22 ability.

23 We have been still, we have been and we're
24 still committed to educating each children, each
25 one of our children. The falcon cannot hear the

1 falconer. The center can no longer hold.
2 You, the DOE, has put a knife on the string that
3 has held us together, thus things are falling
4 apart.

5 Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen,
6 I stand here as a boys track and field coach for
7 this campus. Two days ago, I received a phone
8 call from a university inquiring about two of
9 our students, student athletes, two of the best
10 in New York state. However, I'm left pondering
11 as to what will happen, because if the DOE has
12 their own way, we no longer will have a track
13 and field program here in this building. What
14 will happen to our students? We have to
15 understand that learning is ongoing. It happens
16 outside of the classroom.

17 Finally, our schools have been successfully
18 fulfilling the needs of children in our
19 community. Mayor Bloomberg, Chancellor Klein,
20 and the DOE panel, do not leave our children
21 behind.

22 [applause]

23 FEMALE VOICE: Number 27? 27?

24 [applause]

25 MR. DAVID DIAZ: Yeah, whole crew, that's

1 right. Thank you. All right, how are you
2 doing? My name is David Diaz. I'm a ESL
3 teacher, as well as the head football coach here
4 at Christopher Columbus High School. And I'd
5 like to thank you for letting me speak.

6 The gentleman made a statement about how
7 unsafe Columbus is. This is my six year old
8 daughter. She's been at this school since she's
9 been born. She's been in the waiting room with
10 these football guys. She's been on the football
11 field. She's been in the hallways of
12 Christopher Columbus ever since she's been born.
13 So I don't see how it's unsafe. Okay? That's
14 number one.

15 Number two, I'm a product of the New York
16 City Schools. I went to Julia Richmond High
17 School, which no longer exists. It's one of the
18 first schools that was phased out back in the
19 '90s before it became fashionable to start the
20 small schools. So I can't go back to a
21 homecoming. I can't go back to a reunion,
22 because the school's closed.

23 So you know, we-I get in touch with my
24 classmates through what, classmates.com. Thank
25 God for that, because I don't do Facebook. I

1 don't do Facebook, I'm sorry.

2 But that's the situation you're going to put
3 on these kids here. These are my former players
4 who have graduated from college, who are in
5 college. And I mean, I really don't know if
6 this makes a difference that you're listening to
7 us. It's cool you're listening. That's nice,
8 but I really, you know, I thought back—I went
9 Tuesday night I was at Stuyveson. You were
10 there. And there were - - SCRL. And they were,
11 it's funny because you say what should I say?
12 It's like I'm coming up here. Everybody's being
13 nice. They want to get their turn. And then
14 you're going to say no school for you. You know
15 "Seinfeld?" No soup for you. No school for
16 you. That type of thing? And that's what it
17 feels like, but I'm going to say what I, you
18 know, want to say.

19 And just one more thing to paraphrase one of
20 the greatest rappers of all time, the Notorious
21 B.I.G., - - give us one more chance. - - give
22 us one more chance. What about there chances.
23 Give us one more. Thank you.

24 [applause]

25 FEMALE VOICE: 29? We need the next 10 to

1 be lining up.

2 MR. TAVERAS: The next 10, 29 through, what
3 number are we up to there? 39 to 41, please
4 start lining up, 29 through 41.

5 MS. PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Hi, my name is
6 Patricia Williams. I'm-

7 MR. TAVERAS: Hi, Ms. Williams.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: I am a PRM volunteer.

9 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry, Ms. Williams,
10 please hold on. I came here to listen and I
11 can't hear you right now. Please give the
12 respect to everyone who's speaking. Thank you.
13 Thank you, Ms. Williams.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I'm a PRM volunteer
15 here at Columbus High School. I've been that
16 for more than 10 years. And what I have seen at
17 Columbus High School with the principal, this
18 woman is the children mother here, the student's
19 mother. She takes them into her office no
20 matter what problems they have. She helps them
21 solve it. That is one.

22 Two, I heard you said all the other speakers
23 said what I wanted to say already. But I heard
24 you say that the graduation rate, they made that
25 decision already, how much the kids are going to

1 graduate, how many kids. Well, let me tell
2 you all something. Unless the DOE have a
3 crystal ball, then come tell me in June about my
4 kids at Columbus and Global, because this is
5 wrong what's going on. I know I can't say
6 everything I want to say. I am asking you
7 Deputy Chancellor to have a meeting with us
8 PRN's. Give us that respect before you all make
9 this decision. Give us that respect. Please
10 have a meeting with us with all of the—with the
11 PRM's because this is a two minute thing. We
12 can't say what we want to say.

13 So please, and I'm going to follow up with
14 this, we need a meeting before any decision is
15 made. Before the January 26, we need a meeting.
16 So please, and okay, 10 seconds, that's fine,
17 but we want a meeting. We'll come down to City
18 Hall, wherever we have to go. We'll come to
19 this—we want a meeting with you all. Thank you.

20 [applause]

21 FEMALE VOICE: 31?

22 MS. CHARITY HILTON: Hi, my name is Charity
23 Hilton and I teach special education at Columbus
24 High School. And I've done so for five years.
25 I want to address two of the myths that I hear

1 frequently repeated about school closings that
2 bother me deeply.

3 One of those myths is that the reason that
4 these schools aren't meeting the graduation
5 rates or aren't meeting the city's standards or
6 getting these bad grades on the report cards is
7 because the teachers or the staff at that
8 schools are simply lazy, don't care, or
9 inadequate. And those of us here know that
10 that's not true.

11 I've taught here for five years. I taught
12 for a sixth year in a middle school. And I am
13 here to testify that the staff at this school is
14 professional, hard working people, and that they
15 have spent years building relationships with
16 each other, with their students, and with the
17 community. And that's what you flush down the
18 toilet when you close a high school, like
19 Columbus High School, that has such deep roots
20 in the community.

21 The other myth that I want to address is
22 that when you close a high school like Columbus,
23 you're going to flush away those bad staff that
24 don't really do their jobs. And you're going to
25 bring in new staff. And they're going to be

1 successful with those same students, where we
2 weren't successful, somebody else is going to
3 come in and be successful.

4 And that's a lie, because we know the truth.
5 The University of Chicago did a study. And what
6 they found is that when large high schools
7 closed in Chicago, the students that were slated
8 for those schools were shuffled off into other
9 large high schools that also had D's and F's on
10 their report cards.

11 And we see the exact same pattern here in
12 New York City. The high school that is slated
13 to come into Columbus High School's spot, Kappa,
14 does not even take self contained special
15 education, which is a large part of the
16 population we have.

17 And one last point that I want to bring up
18 is that the DOE's accountability reports do not
19 adequately distinguish among the different
20 levels of need within this special education
21 population. The schools that get A's and B's
22 have special education students that are
23 resource room students, that are two or three
24 years behind grade level. We have 8 percent of
25 our special education population is in the most

1 restricted environment. That means these kids
2 read at kindergarten, first or second grade
3 level when they come in the building. They're
4 16, 17 years old. They're coming out of
5 juvenile delinquency institutions. They have
6 never been successful academically in their
7 lives. And we have the hardest jobs in the
8 nation, jobs that other teachers in the nation
9 would not be willing to take. We do those jobs.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Please summarize.

11 MS. HILTON: And we work day and night to
12 make those kids successful.

13 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 FEMALE VOICE: Number 33? Number 33?

16 [applause]

17 MS. CHANEL SIMMONS: Good evening to all.
18 My name is Chanel Simmons. And on behalf of the
19 School Leadership Team and Leadership Class,
20 I've prepared this speech.

21 I transferred to Columbus my sophomore. And
22 it was one of the best decisions I have made in
23 my life. Columbus is my home away from home. I
24 spend most of my day here. Over 12 hours
25 involved with the many clubs and activities the

1 school has to offer.

2 Once I enrolled into Columbus, I immediately
3 found my family, a family that I know I will
4 cherish forever. Ms. Fuentes has tried her very
5 hardest to make each and every one in Columbus
6 feel welcomed and loved. She has bent over
7 backwards to maintain this school, focus on our
8 academics, while adding special events that
9 benefit the interests of the students in the
10 building.

11 I will never be able to express the love I
12 have for Ms. Fuentes or the love I have for this
13 school. This is the place where I became
14 captain of my dance team. This is also the
15 place where I became part of the step team,
16 choir, school leadership team, leadership class,
17 yearbook club, and gymnastics team.

18 [applause]

19 Honestly, if all CCHS faculty and students
20 in this auditorium received the opportunity to
21 speak tonight, there would not be enough time
22 for you to understand what this school means to
23 us. We need more than just a few hours. I
24 couldn't possibly share with you memories that I
25 have built in almost three and a half years

1 because three and a half years is what it
2 would take for me to explain.

3 My memories at Columbus are priceless.
4 After I graduate in June, I would love to come
5 back to visit, just so I could reminisce on all
6 of the good and event difficult times, because
7 the difficult times I have experienced have
8 helped me to develop into the young woman I am
9 today.

10 I have learned that I need to give back to
11 my community and the people around me, not only
12 to make myself feel good, but to give people in
13 my community a sense of hope towards the future.

14 This school is my life. And with all my
15 strength, I pray that the decision to close
16 Columbus will go from permanent to obsolete.
17 Please have a heart and keep my home, my
18 everything, Christopher Columbus High School
19 open.

20 [applause]

21 FEMALE VOICE: Number 35?

22 MR. TAVERAS: And I just want to remind you,
23 it is very difficult for these youngsters to
24 come up here and speak. It is very difficult
25 for these youngsters to come here and speak in

1 front of all of you. And it's really
2 difficult to hear them when you're whispering to
3 each other. Really, I ask you that you give
4 them the respect they deserve, so that I can
5 listen. Thank you.

6 MR. CHRISTOPHER ROGERS: Hi, how are you
7 doing? My name is Christopher Rogers, right?
8 Now I'm going to ask you a question real quick
9 before I start. How would you feel if somebody
10 came into your house, right, you know what I'm
11 saying, somebody came, and you let them stay.
12 They come into your house - - their bed and
13 everything. And then like, you know, you
14 evicted. Kick you out your house? You tell me
15 how you feel? Now you think about that. I'm
16 going to let you think about that.

17 Now I love Christopher Columbus High School,
18 right? I'm a graduate here. I was here for
19 four years. I'm a graduate. Now I love Ms.
20 Fuentes, all the staff, and all the teachers. I
21 love teachers that I gave a hard time, because
22 you know what? They stuck with me. And they
23 say, you know, Chris, I ain't going to let you
24 knock me down. I'm going to make sure you get
25 out here. And I gave them a hard time. And I'm

1 out of here. That's why I come back and I
2 show love. So now when I have kids later on,
3 and when they grow up, I want to be like, you
4 know, this is the school I came here. You know,
5 I want to bring them in here and show them the
6 teachers that helped me become the man I am
7 today. You see I have a suit and all this—about
8 five, six years. I wouldn't wear this. You
9 know, I—but they showed me how to wear this.
10 You know what I mean? I had people like Mr.
11 Brown when I was in renaissance show me how to
12 wear this. You know what I'm saying?

13 I want you to know seriously, I hope you're
14 listening, because I'm like a pit bull when it
15 comes to my family. And these are my family.
16 And I ain't going to let you take my family away
17 from me. That's number two.

18 [applause]

19 Now when I was messing up in school, I was
20 messing up in school, I came here messing up,
21 you know, Ms. Fuentes didn't know because she
22 knows I'm like a—I'm like one of her sons. She
23 didn't know I was messing up. She found I
24 wasn't graduating, she said what? Listen, we
25 put you in this program and you're going to get

1 out of here. And I'm going to make sure my
2 son, like she called everybody her son and
3 daughters, sons and daughters and children, I'm
4 going to make sure you get out of here.

5 So I went under the wing of Mr. Brown. And
6 they made sure I got out of here. So how would
7 you take—how are you going to take the
8 opportunity of that away from every other kid
9 who comes from off the street or come out of a
10 juvenile facility to come and learn, when they
11 come to little charter schools, you think
12 they're going to have the opportunity to get
13 into a program to come out of school? Never.
14 Never.

15 And I know somebody who go to charter
16 school. And they—how you going to take the
17 opportunity of a special needs child to get the
18 learning they need? All right, I see you, sir.
19 To get the learning they need and get out of
20 school? You acting they not even alive. They
21 people. They need to get education. They want
22 their diploma, too. So I'm going to let you
23 think about that. And if you have kids, you
24 see—this is what you want to bring them. I
25 don't know about charter, but this is what you

1 want to bring them because this is a family.
2 A charter school's a school. This is a family.
3 A charter school, they don't care. If you don't
4 come to school or class, they won't learn. This
5 is a family.

6 MR. TAVERAS: Please wrap it up.

7 MR. ROGERS: I'm going to wrap it up now.
8 I'm out of here - - .

9 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you very much.

10 MR. ROGERS: Christopher Rogers.

11 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Chris Robins.

12 [applause]

13 FEMALE VOICE: Number 37?

14 MR. TAVERAS: Would everyone with numbers 39
15 through 49 please come to the side to line up
16 and speak?

17 MS. JOY GROULICK: Hi, good evening. My
18 name is Joy Groulick and I have been a school
19 counselor at Christopher Columbus High School
20 since 2001.

21 Columbus is a school that serves all
22 students. I would like to bring to your
23 attention that the high school enrollment
24 directory lists 17 schools in District 11 in
25 rolling high school grades. Of these schools,

1 15 of the 17 get priority to students who
2 attend information sessions as their first
3 priority. We're not one of those schools.

4 That means we get the parents who don't
5 understand the high school application. Can't
6 read the high school application, don't speak
7 English do they can't read the high school
8 application. Only Columbus and Truman give
9 first priority to Bronx residents. And only
10 four of the 17 schools, including Columbus and
11 Truman advertise the availability of special
12 classes, MRE, or special ed inclusion classes.

13 Columbus has the highest percentage, the
14 highest of self contained special education
15 students in District 11. And Global Enterprise
16 is the third. Truman's in between a second. If
17 both Columbus and Global are closed, where will
18 these students go? Students such as ours will
19 no longer have a home on the Columbus campus.

20 Kappa, the school that the DOE plans to move
21 to our campus in September, is a low needs
22 school. It comes from relatively strong skills
23 in reading and math. They take few ELL's and no
24 self contained special ed students.

25 Students from Kappa will need to travel

1 almost two miles to get to Columbus. We
2 heard there's an excellent space for this school
3 on the 6th floor of the Sears building on Fordham
4 Road, just a couple of blocks from their current
5 location.

6 Kappa does not advertise they serve Bronx
7 students. They do not offer special classes.
8 And they register no students who need special
9 classes.

10 Columbus has always been a school that meets
11 the needs of all students in the neighborhood.
12 The composition of the campus as a whole still
13 meets the educational needs of all children in
14 this neighborhood. Please keep it this way.
15 Please support Columbus. Thank you.

16 [applause]

17 FEMALE VOICE: Number 39?

18 MR. TAVERAS: 39 through 49 please-

19 MR. DANIEL TRAPP: 39's over here.

20 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

21 MR. TRAPP: My name is Daniel Trapp
22 [phonetic]. I'm a special education teacher at
23 Columbus. It is well documented that Columbus
24 High School is one of the greatest
25 concentrations of high need students among all

1 New York City high schools. However, the
2 city's evaluation system does not account for or
3 recognize the high percentage of special
4 education, ELL, or transfer students in our
5 student body. This frustrates us to no end.
6 This is not acceptable.

7 And while the city is planning to shut
8 Columbus and Global down, it has not offered an
9 adequate proposal for how they plan to educate
10 the students that our two schools serve. This
11 frustrates us to no end. This is not
12 acceptable.

13 Our mayor announced at his inauguration that
14 he plans to listen. If he truly listens, he
15 will realize schools like Columbus and Global
16 must be supported, rather than subjected to
17 unrealistic standards and expectations in its
18 evaluation system.

19 But most importantly, if our mayor truly
20 listens, he will realize that shutting down
21 these two schools will be disastrous for
22 tomorrow's Columbus and Global students, because
23 they will be displaced to schools that are ill
24 equipped and ill experienced to meet their
25 needs.

1 Mr. Bloomberg and Mr. Klein, I certainly
2 hope that you are both listening to what we are
3 all saying today, listening loud and clear.
4 Everyone in this room, if you agree with me,
5 then please repeat after me so Mayor Mike and
6 Klein can hear from wherever they are.

7 This is not acceptable. This is not
8 acceptable. Thank you very much.

9 [applause]

10 FEMALE VOICE: 41?

11 MR. DAVID LEVIN: My name is David Levin.
12 I've been a teacher at Columbus for nine years.
13 Columbus has always responded to challenges by
14 engaging in reflective practices, by doing so
15 our school has been able to create several
16 innovative programs and successfully educate
17 some of the highest need students in New York
18 City.

19 Facing closure today, our staff committee
20 has reflected on the practices that currently
21 work best for our challenging student body, and
22 has laid out the transformations we will adopt
23 in the year to come, given the opportunity,
24 which will further improve student outcomes.

25 To quote Mayor Bloomberg, we have taken a

1 fresh look with fresh energy and fresh
2 thinking. Our students must have tangible
3 skills to build upon for lifetime learning. We
4 will increase their motivation to learn and
5 succeed by providing an academy structure with a
6 choice of three career paths, technological and
7 mechanical, culinary arts and business, and
8 health care. But these paths will be
9 differentiated-

10 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry, can you stop the
11 time and please hold. It really is
12 disrespectful to the person speaking. If you
13 do not want to be here, you do not have to be
14 here. But please give the person on the mike
15 the respect that they deserve after they have
16 exhibited so much patience. Really would
17 appreciate it. I apologize, sir.

18 MR. LEVIN: Thank you, sir. These three
19 tasks will be differentiated by course
20 offerings, internships and industry
21 partnerships, and will also include students of
22 all academic abilities.

23 Before making their academy choice, our new
24 9th graders will have their own freshman academy,
25 where they will strengthen their social and

1 study skills, and learn more about these
2 career paths in a special class. This class
3 will be taught by administrators and will
4 include interest inventory skills tests, and
5 visits from our industry partners. Teachers and
6 the freshman academy will endeavor to integrate
7 their curriculum with this class, and involve
8 parents in this holistic process.

9 The strategic committee believes that
10 empowering students in this manner lead to
11 higher scholastic achievement through their
12 improved attendance. And personal self interest
13 is a combination of old values and a new 20th
14 century reality. Columbus High School is on the
15 precipice. And only when we are on the
16 precipice can change occur. Thank you.

17 [applause]

18 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

19 FEMALE VOICE: Number 43?

20 MS. LESLIE PAGE: Okay, okay. Hello, my
21 name is Leslie Page. I'm a mother four, three
22 of which goes to one of the schools—two of the
23 schools in the building. Two of them go to
24 Columbus. I want to say thank God for Columbus
25 because at one time, there were two students

1 that were in Astor and one in Columbus.
2 Columbus embraced my son, who needed extra help,
3 that couldn't get it from Astor, but he got it
4 from Columbus. They also saw to it that he
5 didn't just, as they say, left—got left behind,
6 that he excelled. I have my other son, who is
7 in Astor, who had no voice, who was so shy, who
8 didn't want to do anything. Thank God for the
9 football coach and the football team that he now
10 is one of the sought after boys from colleges
11 all over the country.

12 And I say this as a mother of pride. And I
13 just, I'm going to make it brief and sweet.
14 Please don't close this school. I have one more
15 child that I wanted to come here to actually
16 accomplish something. Let me not leave out my
17 daughter. She's played tennis since she was 10.
18 She plays soccer. She played volleyball. And I
19 try not to miss any games, but you can't just
20 take this from us parents. It's not just the
21 students. It's us parents. When you have a
22 piece of mind, knowing that when your child goes
23 to school, they're going to come home safe and
24 sound. Or when that child gets lazy, which my
25 son did, that teacher was on his behind. And I

1 was right behind her to hold her up, because
2 he knows that he couldn't play both ends against
3 the middle.

4 I'm going to say something that I read and I
5 thought was a beautiful thing. If you don't
6 stand for something, you will fall for anything.
7 And we are standing for something.

8 [applause]

9 FEMALE VOICE: Number 45?

10 MS. KAREN SHURWOOD: Hello, everybody. My
11 name is Karen Shurwood [phonetic]. I have been
12 teaching in Columbus for 17 years. And I've
13 been teaching in the New York City system since
14 1973. I'm an English teacher. So I try not to
15 do too much math. I also don't speak Pedagogese
16 [phonetic] or statistics. I love to deal with
17 literature with language, with poetry, with
18 doing anything I can to get my students
19 enthusiastic and inspired.

20 So when you started off asking about talking
21 about the failing students, or no, I'm, well, I
22 will say failing students. You were talking
23 about our failing statistics. And kind of a
24 paternalistic attitude that you have to save
25 them from us, I thought that it would be great

1 if you could ask some of the students, you've
2 heard from them here.

3 Why don't you ask the students why they
4 failed classes or didn't graduate on time? They
5 will tell you the truth. They always speak the
6 truth about themselves. They will tell you, for
7 example, that they came here at age 16 not
8 speaking any English and that they needed an
9 extra year or two to learn enough English to
10 pass the regents.

11 They'll tell you that they were bounced back
12 and forth between family, friends, relatives in
13 different boroughs, sometimes different states.
14 And they somehow managed to miss what they had
15 to what was required.

16 They'll also tell you some of them that they
17 had to take jobs to help support their families.
18 And when there was a conflict between school and
19 job, they chose job.

20 And some of them will freely admit that they
21 had spent too much time cutting class, playing
22 video games, or sleeping late. But then they
23 will also tell you that their teachers, their
24 principal hunted them down, begged them,
25 counseled them, cajoled them, scolded them,

1 loved them, brought them back to the fold.
2 And when they do graduate, even a year or two
3 late, we cheer them on. And we're proud of
4 them. And I wish that the DOE would take a look
5 at that, and look at their successes, and look
6 at the positive part, and save Columbus, save
7 Global. We all deserve to exist. Thank you.

8 [applause]

9 FEMALE VOICE: Number 47?

10 MR. TAVERAS: And 49 through 59, please
11 start making your way over to the right side, so
12 that you can get-speak next. Thank you.

13 MR. ESCADERO: Good evening. My name is Mr.
14 Escadero [phonetic]. And I am proud teacher at
15 Christopher Columbus High School.

16 [applause]

17 I love teaching math in this school so much,
18 that I work per session after school and
19 including summer school. And let me tell you a
20 story about summer school. For the past two
21 years, I teach mathematics, taking my kids,
22 going-taking their regents in Algebra and
23 Geometry. And for the past two years, I've
24 noticed that I've had students coming from that
25 school up there in Roosevelt High School called

1 Kappa. They send their kids to this building
2 because they cannot pass their regents over
3 there.

4 I looked at the stats. And the stats for
5 the last two years, especially this summer, I
6 had 25 kids coming from Kappa and 18 of them
7 passed the regents with a 65 and above.

8 [applause]

9 That is the school that wants to come here
10 and replace us. Let me tell you something about
11 the teachers in this school. Mr. Klein has a
12 video in Youtube where he talks about his mentor
13 in high school that provided him leadership to
14 help him become the person that he is today.
15 Let me tell you about Christopher Columbus High
16 School. This school is full of those kind of
17 teachers that stay after school with kids and
18 provide everything that the kids need in order
19 for them to go on.

20 Two weeks ago, Mayor Bloomberg said the
21 following. He came with some stats about P.S.
22 middle school 15, where seven years ago, their
23 grade level was 15 percent. Today, their grade
24 level is above 88 percent. All I'm asking is
25 that the same time that they gave that school to

1 improve. I need you to go back to Mr. Klein
2 and tell him that that's all we're asking for.
3 Thank you.

4 [applause]

5 FEMALE VOICE: Number 49?

6 MS. CHELESTINA TINAE: Hello, my name is
7 Chelestina Tinae [phonetic]. I graduated last
8 June. And I go to a four year college, John
9 Jay. I had a speech ready, but with everything
10 said, I don't need no-nothing to read out there.

11 I'm just going to say short story. I came
12 here on November 2005.

13 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry. Just hold on, hold
14 the time. If you're making your way out, please
15 do it in an orderly fashion so we could continue
16 to listen. Thank you. Apologize.

17 MS. TINAE: Yeah, I came here on November of
18 2005 with no English whatsoever, not even yes or
19 no. And the first days, every day I went back
20 home, I was crying. I felt hopeless. I said I
21 don't understand anything. I can't do good in
22 school. It's not going to happen. And the
23 teachers, every day I started writing, they
24 didn't just give me an "F" and give it back to
25 me because I know that's what I did, like I

1 didn't know how to do better. But they asked
2 me to go in their lunch break, after school,
3 whenever they could, just to help me bring that
4 "F" so "D," "C," "B," "A," and "A+." I just
5 want to thank every teacher in here, starting
6 with Ms. Rollins and Mr. Escadero, who I was
7 actually able to take AP Calculus in high school
8 before I went to college.

9 [applause]

10 And my reading and my writing is actually
11 great. I got a B+ in my English class, which
12 I'm very happy. I only been here for four
13 years. And this is what Columbus does. Thank
14 you.

15 [applause]

16 FEMALE VOICE: Number 51?

17 [applause]

18 MR. JOSHUA ROBERTO PAVONE: Why good
19 evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is
20 Joshua Roberto Pavone. And I am a proud alumni
21 of your own and only Christopher Columbus High
22 School.

23 [applause]

24 Before I begin, I need to ask one group of
25 people here just one question. That being you,

1 sir, which I don't know your name, by the
2 way. How would you feel if somebody in your
3 family, let's say your children, were actually
4 told about a recent matter like this? Because
5 when I first heard about this, I was like, I
6 couldn't believe it. Okay?

7 And now on to what I have to say. So here
8 we go. Christopher Columbus High School has
9 been around for such a long time. Not only has
10 it been around for a long time, I as a person
11 have experienced so many good things coming to
12 school here.

13 Those things being making friends, how good
14 it really was for me to be treated good, well
15 and fair by so many people here. And everyone
16 here helped me get around throughout my four
17 years here.

18 Since that time, I have been real happy
19 because this place is what made me feel right at
20 home. And not only that, it has also helped me
21 become who I am today. It would be a real
22 terrible thing if this high school was closed
23 down by the chancellor Joe Klein, the mayor, and
24 oh, is that right? Okay. So if I were you, I
25 would reconsider for I don't feel the need to

1 actually shut down the school for any reason
2 at all. Ladies and gentlemen here tonight,
3 thank you very much. And good night.

4 [applause]

5 FEMALE VOICE: Number 53? 5-3, 53?

6 MR. TAVERAS: Right behind Chris.

7 MR. DENNIS KLASS: Thank you.

8 MR. TAVERAS: Can you adjust the mike?

9 MR. KLASS: My name is Dennis Klass. And I
10 must start off by saying I am deeply saddened
11 and bothered that there's a possibility of
12 closing down Christopher Columbus High School.
13 The faculty, staff, and coaches of this
14 prestigious school have helped so many people
15 since it opened its doors in 1938.

16 I am proof positive that the dedicated
17 leaders of Christopher Columbus High School care
18 for their students. I began my journey with
19 Christopher Columbus High School in the fall of
20 1998. I was a lost and confused teenager. Once
21 I walked into Christopher Columbus High School,
22 I was met by the friendly face of Lisa Fuentes.
23 Lisa Fuentes was an assistant principal at the
24 time. And she helped me get acclimated to the
25 strenuous times known as the high school years.

1 I am happy to say I eventually graduated
2 in 2001 and made it to SUNY Canton College of
3 Technology.

4 Unfortunately, family troubles forced me to
5 return to the Bronx in 2003. Lisa was so kind
6 as to offer me a position as a school aide for
7 Christopher Columbus High School, because she
8 knew I developed a strong work ethic. This
9 characteristic was attained because of the
10 quality of support I received as a Christopher
11 Columbus High School student and student
12 athlete.

13 I worked as a school aide and volunteer
14 assistant football coach for the now Principal
15 Lisa Fuentes at Christopher Columbus High School
16 from 2004 to 2007. In that time, I am proud to
17 say I have helped numerous students develop into
18 mature, caring, and responsible members of their
19 communities.

20 While working for Principal Fuentes, I
21 developed an interest to pursue a life as a high
22 school mathematics teacher. Because of her
23 continued support, I am less than one year from
24 obtaining a bachelors degree in Adolescence
25 Education Mathematics.

1 [applause]

2 All my continued success can be contributed
3 mainly to Principal Lisa Fuentes and her staff
4 at Christopher Columbus High School. I truly
5 hope there can be a way to keep Columbus High
6 School open for future incoming students, so
7 they can benefit from the love, care, and
8 respect from Principal Lisa Fuentes and her
9 staff. Thank you for your time.

10 [applause]

11 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

12 FEMALE VOICE: Number 55? We're going to
13 get somebody.

14 MR. TAVERAS: Just if somebody can get
15 someone to just put something down here, there's
16 a spill on the floor. I don't anyone to get
17 hurt. So could somebody get - - to please clean
18 that up? Thank you.

19 FEMALE VOICE: 55?

20 MR. STEVEN PASQUERELLA: Thank you very
21 much. My name's Steven Pasquerella [phonetic].
22 I'm an English teacher at Christopher Columbus
23 High School and also a coach at the school.

24 Everybody says an awful lot of things. And
25 it's going to be very difficult to even add on

1 to that, but I-

2 MR. TAVERAS: Closer to the mike.

3 Mr. PASQUERELLA: I have to tell you that
4 well, for one point, the young man that just
5 came up here was a former student of mine. And
6 when you talk about statistics, I really think
7 that I'm not sure if you really quite understand
8 what statistics you are talking about. My third
9 year here at this school, I was given a group of
10 students, three of which were only reading on
11 the first grade level.

12 I had to teach them how to take a high
13 school English regents exam, of which they were
14 supposed to be reading on the 11th grade level.
15 That's almost 10 grades above what they were
16 reading when they came in. I actually had to
17 call my mom, who taught at PS 36 for 28 years,
18 and ask her how you teach reading to a first
19 grade reading level child at the age of 15.

20 Do you know that, and this has to do with
21 your statistics because your statistics always
22 talk about how kids fail. And this failing is
23 one of the reasons why you want to close this
24 school. Yet in order for a student to take an
25 RCT exam, they actually have to fail the English

1 regents. They have to fail it in order to
2 take RCT, which then gets added into the slew of
3 statistics that you have.

4 So I'm not sure if statistics really, the
5 ones that you give and the reason why you are
6 going to close this school, are very justified.

7 Community, I'm the third generation of
8 teachers from my family. I have a relative and
9 many of the students who've graduated from 1980
10 to '90's taught those students who taught in
11 this school and came back.

12 So it is a community because I'm a
13 generation of person who has come to this
14 school, too. So I think the decision to phase
15 out this school is incorrect. I think it's
16 wrong. And I'd like to thank the students who
17 stayed here, because it's very important for all
18 of you, Global and Columbus to see the people
19 who are going to phase out this school. Thank
20 you.

21 [applause]

22 FEMALE VOICE: Number 57? 57?

23 MR. TAVERAS: 59 through 69, if you have
24 numbers, 59 through 69, please start coming over
25 to the side. Thank you.

1 MR. FRANK TASONE: Good evening. I am
2 Frank Tasone [phonetic], a special education
3 teacher and a proud member of the Christopher
4 Columbus family.

5 [applause]

6 The Department of Education's proposal for
7 why Christopher Columbus should be closed,
8 should be phased out is that we have failed our
9 students. With respect, this is not the case.
10 You've heard from my colleagues. You've heard
11 the statistics. You've heard probably more than
12 enough data than you care to hear for this
13 evening or any other.

14 But understand this. We did not fail our
15 students. We did not fail them because we have
16 never given up on them, not a one. We have
17 tirelessly worked for every child that we've
18 embraced. And we have accepted every child the
19 Department of Education has offered to us. We
20 have offered them the service, the commitment,
21 the heart, the blood, the sweat, and the tears.
22 And we have done everything we can do. And
23 we're still not satisfied because we want to do
24 more.

25 You've already heard from some of my

1 colleagues how when we are being told we are
2 phased out, we regroup and reconsider again how
3 we can best serve the kids we have.

4 The students who come to us, who are our
5 family. And I ask you honestly to consider
6 could any school you choose to propose, any
7 charter school or any other, show that kind of
8 heart, that kind of commitment like we have?

9 Answer that question for yourselves
10 honestly. And understand we are a family here.
11 And we never give up on any children. So
12 please, do not give up on us. Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 FEMALE VOICE: 59?

15 MS. HELENE ROSEN: Good evening. My name is
16 Helene Rosen. I will share thoughts from my
17 experience as a 34 year special ed teacher, 16
18 of those years at Columbus.

19 If Columbus closes, a travesty of justice
20 will be committed, especially for special ed
21 students and English language learners, who
22 comprise more than half the population of
23 Columbus. I will briefly describe the range of
24 disabilities of this population.

25 Our students are dyslexic, disgraphic, and

1 have discalcula. Large students—large
2 numbers of students have ADHD, long and short
3 term memory deficiencies, auditory processing
4 difficulties, an inability to synthesize
5 information. Simply put, they are
6 developmentally delayed and need more time to
7 meet the state and city's unrealistic standards.

8 Then we have those who have a history of
9 pitiful social problems, abuse, neglect, rape,
10 poverty, homelessness, gang violence, prison
11 sentences. In a special ed class, you have
12 students with a variety and range of these
13 disabilities. But we work with them. How we
14 can we expect to graduate them in the same four
15 years as those without these difficulties?

16 Many developmentally delayed children simply
17 need more time to mature. And many do
18 eventually pick up and start succeeding where
19 they weren't able to before.

20 And yet, we're being penalized, even though
21 we have an 82 percent graduation rate after
22 seven years. Don't you think they need more
23 time to learn? We do not throw our students
24 away after four years. We help them and nurture
25 them and tutor them and counsel them, get them

1 jobs and hugs, and encouragement, and lots of
2 love and support.

3 We need help from you. We need a civil
4 compassionate plan that will support these
5 children and their families. We also have
6 successful programs in place, academic work
7 study and the arts. And we could use some more.

8 We're not exclusive though. We welcome all
9 students and want you to allow us to stay open,
10 to service this District 11 community. Do not
11 further disenfranchise those who need our help
12 the most. Keep Columbus open and give us the
13 sport we need. Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 FEMALE VOICE: Number 61?

16 MS. ANNA SANTIAGO: Good evening.

17 MR. TAVERNAS: Good evening.

18 MS. SANTIAGO: My name is Anna Santiago.

19 And I no longer have a child here or children
20 here. But then again, you could say that I do
21 have a lot of children here because I'm a
22 volunteer for 21 years. Not only do I work, but
23 I volunteer for every single school that my
24 children have been in.

25 I am football mom to every single boy in

1 this school. And my son was a product of
2 college now. And they were going to lose it.
3 Guess what? We fought. And we got it back.
4 And my son graduated. And he's in Penn State.

5 And I have a daughter here that used to come
6 here to one of the small schools. And she's in
7 the University of Vermont. She graduated from
8 SIMS. If you drop and you get rid of Columbus,
9 and you get rid of Global, what's going to
10 happen to the rest of these schools? Because
11 all you're saying is I don't give a damn!

12 [applause]

13 FEMALE VOICE: Number 63?

14 MR. FRANK PEREZ, JR.: Good evening, ladies
15 and gentlemen. My name is Frank Perez, Junior
16 and I'm here—

17 MR. TAVERAS: Frank, get closer to the
18 microphone, Frank. Thank you.

19 MR. PEREZ: And I'm here to represent one of
20 the alternative programs at Christopher Columbus
21 High School, the renaissance academy.

22 This academy has given me a second chance to
23 finish my courses and to get my high school
24 diploma. Without this program, I would simply
25 be another statistic, a high school dropout.

1 Since I am the main caretaker of my
2 mother, who is disabled, I have to be from 8:00
3 to 1:00 p.m. And because of this program,
4 operating from 2:00 p.m. to 7:30, I'm able to
5 complete my education.

6 I stand here representing students like me,
7 those who have been ignored, forgotten, and
8 unheard. Shutting down the school is like
9 shutting the doors that lead to our future.

10 [applause]

11 FEMALE VOICE: 65?

12 MR. TAVERAS: As you hear the numbers, we're
13 up to 65. And you have numbers close to that,
14 please continue to file to the side so that we
15 could continue moving. Thank you.

16 MR. KOFI MENSA: 65. Sorry about that. So
17 good evening, folks. My—thanks, everyone for
18 coming everyone that's still here. My name is
19 Kofi Mensa [phonetic], proud member of the Class
20 of 2007. And I currently attend the University
21 of Vermont on a full scholarship, thanks to the
22 education and resources that I received during
23 my CCHS.

24 Let me say that again. A full scholarship
25 to a public Ivy school, which are not easy to

1 come by. Because of the hard work of not
2 only myself, but of all the teachers that I had
3 the opportunity to work with. And let me say
4 that again. Opportunity, because it is a real
5 blessing to work with teaches like Ms. Shirvan
6 [phonetic], Ms. Martin, and Ms. Kmika-Smith
7 [phonetic] and all of the other teachers that
8 run this building. The support of staff, such
9 as Ms. Cathy Deluca and the unwavering support
10 of our truly amazing principle, Ms. Lisa
11 Fuentes, who everyone really needs to give a
12 round of applause to.

13 In my short time here, I truly excelled
14 because of the resources offered at this school.
15 I was an AP and Honor courses, graduated second
16 in my class, joined almost every club I could
17 get into, such as the National Honor Society.
18 You name it, like if it was joinable, I was
19 interested.

20 That interest was sparked, not just by me,
21 but by the push of caring teachers that truly
22 wanted to see me and my fellow students succeed.

23 And success is the road that I'm currently
24 on. I have a year and a half left in college.
25 And if I want, I can graduate a full semester

1 early because of the college now program,
2 which sadly was taken away. Wrong mistake by
3 the Department of Education.

4 I am working with the skills I have gained as
5 CCHS and continue to gain in my educational
6 career to become a successful corporate lawyer
7 and hopefully run for office day, like President
8 Obama hopefully.

9 Without the care and the resources I
10 received at this amazing school, I hardly think
11 I would be where I am today. And now the DOE
12 wants to shut it down. Sure, we have
13 challenges, but tell me what school doesn't. We
14 have a plethora of ESL and special needs
15 students. And we work through those challenges
16 to give them the education that they need and
17 can utilize to make a real change in their
18 communities.

19 Please listen to what we're saying tonight.
20 And please realize that shutting down this
21 school is a unconscionable mistake. As the 19th
22 century French poet Victor Huges said, he who
23 opens the door closes a prison. Thank you.

24 [applause]

25 FEMALE VOICE: 67? 67?

1 MS. ESTHER NEWMAN: Good evening. I'm
2 Esther Newman. And I'm not a parent from the
3 school. And I'm not—I've never been on staff.
4 I'm not an alumni. I've never even lived in the
5 Bronx.

6 But I come to this school—I've come for the
7 past six years as part of my responsibilities
8 from the Department of Ed. To give support for
9 the schools on the no child left behind list.

10 You've heard all the accolades about school
11 from everybody and I've been inspired by it.
12 But over the six years, I know that this school
13 truly cares about the students, understands the
14 data much better than Department of Ed.
15 understands it about the students in the school,
16 and have designed programs to meet their needs.

17 I prepared something a little bit different
18 now I've kind of canceled it because I don't
19 want to waste your time repeating the stories
20 of, you know, the successes that the
21 administration has brought to this school.

22 I want to say one thing that I go to schools
23 all across the city. And if I were to go back
24 to the classroom after 15 years of being a math
25 teacher in a high school in Brooklyn, this would

1 be the school I would want to teach in.

2 [applause]

3 The respect for the staff, the respect for
4 the students, the respect for the parents is the
5 reason. And you've heard that. So I just
6 wanted to share my views and pray that you side
7 in saving this—decide to save this school.
8 Thank you.

9 [applause]

10 FEMALE VOICE: 69?

11 MS. LYNN WYNDERBAUMALE VOICE: My name is
12 Lynn Wynderbaum [phonetic]. I'm a 39 year
13 teacher in New York City and a 20 years, thank
14 you, 20 years at John F. Kennedy High School. I
15 want to ask you frankly because I've been around
16 so long and I've seen this process unfold for
17 the last 10 years or so, how many students will
18 you be willing to sacrifice by closing schools
19 like Columbus? What kind of road are we on?
20 The ripple effect of this closing will impact
21 the data of remaining large high schools as
22 surely as there has been damage down to Columbus
23 High School from the prior closings that you
24 have done.

25 The relentless process of closing Roosevelt,

1 Taft, Monroe, Morris, Stevenson,
2 Vanderchild's new school Walton has caused the
3 very displacement of the high special needs
4 children, the high needs children that has
5 directly affected the data of Columbus High
6 School. Based on this, we could project that
7 phasing out schools like Columbus will add to an
8 adverse impact on Kennedy High School, Truman
9 High School, Lehman High School, Clinton High
10 School in the future.

11 Is this the outcome that you want to
12 endorse? There's been a relentless march to
13 close large high schools for several years
14 Before the Department of Education, the plan was
15 actually, and a few people here actually
16 remember this, to have the teachers within these
17 schools design their own innovative plans to
18 create their own small schools. And some of the
19 best came out of this 21st century grand project.

20 Marble Hill was created by the teachers at
21 Morris. And Salecruz [phonetic] and Clinton in
22 Lauren Finance came out of Kennedy teachers.
23 And-but since Joel Klein has taken over the
24 pushes to mandate the top down opening of small
25 schools, providing varying quality of education,

1 some of which are also on the failing list.

2 Look, Chancellor Klein says that a dropout
3 will be destined to a life of failure. Schools
4 like Columbus are trying, as we've heard
5 tonight, to educate all of our students. The
6 schools that replace them while possibly
7 graduating a high number of students too often
8 have not educated them, but simply granted them
9 diplomas based on bogus credit recovery,
10 teaching to the test, and dubious statistical
11 tricks.

12 [applause]

13 There is a political will to show a failure
14 of certain schools in New York City. And the
15 students who now attend these schools and want
16 to remain there will be the losers. Thank you.

17 FEMALE VOICE: 71?

18 MR. TAVERAS: We have numbers 71 through 81?
19 Please start lining up on this side?

20 MS. JOAN MIDORI: Good evening. My name is
21 Joan Midori [phonetic]. I'm a Social Studies
22 teacher here at Columbus High School. Thank you
23 for listening to me tonight, but who I really
24 would like to listen to me tonight are the
25 people who are going to actually vote to close

1 the school. Are any of them here tonight?

2 MR. TAVERAS: No.

3 MS. MIDORI: No, that's what I was very
4 distressed to find when I got here this evening.
5 There is a public hearing. I don't know how
6 many people came here but there were many. And
7 the people who were actually voting to close
8 this school, not one of them are hearing any of
9 the voices that are here tonight.

10 I neglected my own children to be here till
11 whatever time it is now to be heard by someone
12 who actually has the power to keep this school
13 open. And there's a face to speak to.

14 [applause]

15 If Columbus is closing because it's a great
16 state of-great piece of real estate, and it is,
17 it's in a good neighborhood. The parking's not
18 too bad except for Fridays, and they want to put
19 charter schools in here, well, then this is all
20 for naught. And it's a game. If that's true,
21 there's nothing anybody can do.

22 If it's not true, and it really is about
23 numbers, well, I think you can see what happens
24 with numbers. They're as pliable as Play-doh.
25 And for every number you guys can give about

1 Columbus being bad, I'll give you two that
2 were doing well.

3 [applause]

4 What's clear is that we have a tough
5 population. And at the end of the day, 82
6 percent of them are walking out of here with a
7 diploma. I walked out of Columbus High School
8 with a diploma. I am an alumni. 10 percent of
9 the teachers who teach here are alumni. Our
10 principal is an alumni. Do you think we teach
11 with not only education, but with heart? We do.
12 Don't close this. Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 FEMALE VOICE: 73?

15 MR. TOM CHOUDHURY: Good evening. I'm Tom
16 G. Choudhury [phonetic], junior in the school,
17 Christopher Columbus High School. When I came to
18 the United States about three years ago,
19 Christopher Columbus High School was my life
20 line away from ignorance and boredom. As a
21 student who was new to this country, I was
22 anxious not only to learn, but also to learn
23 about the American culture.

24 Respective panels and guests, three years
25 later, I stand in front of you a president of

1 Arista, the National Honor Society of
2 Christopher Columbus High School.

3 [applause]

4 To explain what Columbus means to me and to
5 hundreds of people who are students and
6 graduates from the school over 70 years of
7 history. This is a school that has turned
8 average students into outstanding students, who
9 can face the challenge of exploring the world.

10 It has allowed me to rise to the top of my
11 class and given me the option next year of
12 choosing from a variety of competitive colleges.
13 This would not have been possible without the
14 environment and the motivation that we receive
15 from the faculty. Individuals such as Oscar
16 winner Ann Bancroft and BC-TV News anchor
17 Darlene Rodriguez, Councilman James Vaca and of
18 course our principal Ms. Fuentes and many others
19 have set an example for present and future
20 Columbus as well as graduates from other
21 schools.

22 Christopher Columbus High School is more
23 than just a school. It's a family, a family
24 that has created so strong bonds with every
25 student that when there is no one to look out

1 for, they're are teachers and our counselors,
2 and most importantly, our principal.

3 I would like to conclude by saying a
4 proverb. It says if you give a man fish, he
5 eats for one meal. But if you teach a man to
6 fish, he eats for a lifetime.

7 [applause]

8 Likewise, Columbus does both. It feeds us
9 daily. And at the same time, teaches us how to
10 fish. Thank you.

11 [applause]

12 FEMALE VOICE: 76? Sorry, 75?

13 [applause]

14 MR. PHILLIP RAMERA: My name is Phillip
15 Ramera [phonetic]. I'm a teacher of English at
16 Christopher Columbus High School. I thought
17 about talking about some of the shenanigans
18 that the DOE pulled to torpedo this meeting,
19 forbidding our permit, changing the time of the
20 meeting. With enough pressure, we got the
21 meeting changed back. But that's not really
22 what I want to talk about.

23 Let's talk about something nobody else
24 talked about, which is the incredible success of
25 diversity at this high school. We have Hispanic

1 kids of countless kinds, Honduras, Mexicans,
2 Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and from all parts of
3 South and Central America. We have black kids
4 from the Caribbean Islands, from Africa and from
5 here in the Bronx and the rest of the city.

6 We have special needs kids. We have ELL
7 kids. We have kids from Pakistan, kids from
8 Palestine, kids that are Muslim, kids who are
9 Christian. And what I never see in this school
10 is discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or
11 religion or special needs by any of our
12 students.

13 And they—these students are that way because
14 their teachers are that way. And that is what
15 they learn. It is something that shows up on no
16 statistic, but it is one of the very special
17 things about this high school. Thank you very
18 much.

19 [applause]

20 FEMALE VOICE: 77?

21 MR. PETER FROELICH: My name is Peter
22 Froelich [phonetic]. I'm a mathematics teacher
23 and Director of the Liberty Academy at
24 Christopher Columbus High School. I'm in my 18th
25 year of teaching in my second career. And I've

1 been at Christopher Columbus High School
2 since 2004.

3 I've seen many changes in the
4 characteristics of entering student and the
5 culture of management and the nature of the
6 collaborative effort.

7 But there is one thing I've seen that has
8 not changed since I've been here. And that is
9 the spirit, the enthusiasm, and the dedication
10 of the staff at Christopher Columbus High
11 School.

12 I can honestly say that I have never worked
13 with a team of people who are more dedicated,
14 more professional, and more committed to
15 students in this profession. This is a good
16 place. This is a real school. Is it perfect?
17 Of course not. Is it the only possible
18 environment for these students, for our
19 students? Of course not. Is it the—is it one
20 of the best possible environments for our
21 population of students? And honestly, yes, I
22 really believe it is one of the best.

23 Regardless of your political perspective and
24 politics already has a place in this spotlight,
25 you must agree that the staff of Christopher

1 Columbus High School has shown a strength and
2 determination uncharacteristic of a failing
3 school. So some questions should be asked about
4 what counts in the statistical accountability
5 model the DOE is using.

6 The model is complex and does not value all
7 students equally. There are things that should
8 be corrected. All students should be—there are
9 students that aren't counted in the process.
10 The students here that we serve are successful
11 here. Their success costs more and takes more
12 time, something a business model has trouble
13 with, but something an educational model knows
14 is priceless.

15 We want to be here. We want to go on for
16 the next generation. Please help us in our
17 mission. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: 79?

20 MR. TAVERAS: We're up to 79. So if you
21 have number 79 through 89, please start lining
22 up.

23 MS. MARCIA VEREZ: Good evening. I am
24 Marcia Verez [phonetic]. I'm a teacher. I've
25 been a teacher for 20 years. I've been teaching

1 at Columbus High School for almost 18 years.

2 It breaks my heart tonight to stand before
3 you because Columbus have been a family to me.
4 I was one—why? Because once I was a teenager
5 who came to the United States without speaking a
6 word of English. And a teacher, some of the
7 teachers that taught me, motivated me,
8 eventually to become a teacher, I went ahead and
9 I went to some schools, one of the best schools
10 in the United States, I graduated - - from
11 Columbia University. I—

12 [applause]

13 Okay. It's breaking my heart because being
14 a teacher, having been there, coming from the
15 projects, a family who live on welfare, and had
16 no means of living, my father once told me,
17 Marcia, the only thing I can give you is
18 education. And I don't care what you do,
19 whether it rains or shines, you got to go to
20 school. With this same belief, I decided to
21 become a teacher, because it was time for me to
22 pass down the torch. And I really think that if
23 society reputation, I mean, the society's
24 responsibility to educate all our youth,
25 regardless of their abilities, regardless of

1 socio economical situation.

2 And I think that we're turning our backs to
3 the kids that are the most needy in the Bronx.
4 Please do not turn your backs to Columbus High
5 School students. Do not commit that crime. It
6 is immoral not to teach our students even if it
7 comes to be that they're needy. And provide us
8 with services and help with these young people.
9 And please do not close Columbus High School.
10 Thank you.

11 [applause]

12 FEMALE VOICE: 81?

13 MS. ROBIN NIDAL-FREYMAN: Good evening.

14 MR. TAVERAS: Good evening.

15 MS. NIDAL-FREYMAN: My name is Robin Nidal-
16 Freyman [phonetic]. I'm proud, not only am a
17 proud faculty member of Christopher Columbus
18 High School for over 23 years, I am also a proud
19 graduate of Christopher Columbus High School,
20 the class of 1976.

21 [applause]

22 My education here was wonderful and
23 memorable. And to return to my alma mater was
24 sort of a homecoming for me, especially as a
25 special education teacher.

1 Many things have changed over the years
2 since I've attended and since I've started
3 working here. But there is some things that
4 have remained the same.

5 First, Columbus still has a very
6 knowledgeable and caring faculty, who make our
7 students' needs a priority. We share their
8 successes and their failures like a family does.

9 Second, our student body is comprised of
10 children from different backgrounds as you've
11 heard, from different countries and different
12 abilities, who never cease to amaze us on a
13 daily basis.

14 For many of them, we are the only consistent
15 adult figures in their lives. We are like
16 family to them.

17 And finally, our community. People come and
18 go, but Columbus has stayed here for over 70
19 years, serving the children and their families.
20 Our school never seems to close. It's always
21 open. And we have so many programs to help our
22 students succeed and to finally graduate.

23 But let us not forget the Department of
24 Education has sent us many, many students who
25 have special needs. We have worked hard to help

1 these students find success on their own
2 terms. They are allowed, for example, extended
3 time as a testing modification. So they may
4 reach—they may need this extra time to fulfill
5 the requirements towards their graduation. Why
6 can't we have that extra time to succeed?

7 In conclusion, as a teacher, I am always the
8 one to answer the questions my students pose to
9 me every day. Today, I'm going to leave you
10 with a question. When do you plan on making our
11 students' needs a priority instead of serving
12 your own political agendas? Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 FEMALE VOICE: Number 83?

15 MS. SUSAN SHAPIRO: My name is Susan
16 Shapiro. I graduated Christopher Columbus High
17 School with an academic diploma in June of '61.
18 My son, a special ed student, graduated
19 Christopher Columbus High School in June 1989
20 with a full diploma.

21 It is outrageous for the Board of Education
22 to close Christopher Columbus High School.
23 There are neighborhood schools, which are feeder
24 schools into Columbus High School.

25 MS 89, PS 76, MS 135, MS 83 and MS 96.

1 Where are these students supposed to go? The
2 Board of Education should realize that by
3 previously closing other schools, it has caused
4 a natural influx into Columbus. The special ed
5 department is one of the best. If a student
6 wants to learn, the teachers are willing to work
7 with them. Parents must attend open school week
8 to find out what their children are doing.
9 Students won't get better services by closing
10 the school. Where are students in the
11 neighborhood supposed to go? I'm totally
12 against sending students out of their home
13 neighborhoods to school. If students are forced
14 to attend schools in other areas, parents will
15 be forced to pay car fare if the darling mayor
16 decides to charge parents full fare for their
17 children. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: 85?

20 [applause]

21 MS. LUISA PAVLOV: Hello, my name is Luisa
22 Pavlov [phonetic]. I currently attend
23 Christopher Columbus High School. I'm in the
24 Renaissance Academy. Just to start something
25 off, I saw you on the panel last time at the new

1 school. So you have word with the DOE.

2 You're from—you're part of the DOE. So you can,
3 whatever's being said here, you can get it
4 through to them. You know, there's a lot of
5 very important facts that have been told, right?

6 Now while I was growing up, even in middle
7 school, as I started and I came to high school,
8 you know, I've seen that the DOE basically has
9 really set up, was you know, African-Americans,
10 Hispanics. They've set us up for failure, you
11 know, the middle schools, for instance. You
12 know, they don't act when they see that middle
13 schools are coming—middle school students are
14 coming into high school with low reading levels.
15 And that's wrong.

16 And then the one thing that's going good for
17 me, you know, in high school and you want to
18 close it down, that's not right. And if your
19 parents have taught you something, it's right
20 from wrong. All right?

21 [applause]

22 And now I saw the news here today. And
23 you're pushing, everybody is really pushing all
24 the students on the edge. You know, no more
25 metro cards.

1 You see the students here? That's
2 probably the same students you're going to see
3 in classes because no metro cards. How are we,
4 you know, there's people with-on welfare, you
5 know, they don't have any money. And they're
6 supposed to come up with \$890 for 10 months on
7 living on metro cards to come to school? That's
8 something that's practically almost impossible.
9 You understand?

10 It's like you're really, really pushing
11 students so that they won't learn. And really
12 right now, this is my third year in Christopher
13 Columbus High School. And I'm graduating early.
14 And I can say thank God for that.

15 [applause]

16 Have a good night.

17 FEMALE VOICE: 87?

18 MR. TAVERAS: 87--

19 FEMALE VOICE: 87 to-

20 MR. TAVERAS: --through 97? Anyone else who
21 has numbers to speak?

22 FEMALE VOICE: I'm going to hold on 87. 89?
23 Holding off on 87 and 89. 91?

24 MR. SUCRA ROSARAIIO: Good evening, everyone.
25 My name is Sucra Rosario [phonetic]. I'm a

1 member of Columbus family. I got the flu,
2 but I didn't want to miss opportunity to be
3 here.

4 [applause]

5 And also, I want to let you know that I'm a
6 member of this community because I have my
7 residence at 181st Street between Park and
8 Washington.

9 And I have a daughter. She's four years
10 old. And my wife is pregnant five months and a
11 half. And the reason why here is because I
12 believe in the staff at Christopher Columbus
13 High School. Because when you have a principal,
14 that - - last name, Maffey [phonetic], which is
15 an Italian last name, for Fuentes, which is a
16 Spanish, I relate in one of here. I relate to
17 that fact, one over here.

18 [applause]

19 Why I want to be here in school? Because I
20 know my daughters are going to have the same
21 opportunity that I have here at Christopher
22 Columbus High School. Somebody said that,
23 person - - like 12 hours. I don't know how many
24 hours I spent here. I don't want to go home,
25 because this is my house here, Christopher

1 Columbus High School.

2 [applause]

3 And I think that basically, I don't want to
4 speak to your mind as somebody says at one of
5 the meetings. I want to speak to your heart.
6 And I want to ask you this question. Who's
7 going to take these kids that goes to school
8 that you say that you have closed 92 schools and
9 over 300? Who's going to take kids with my
10 background? Over here without speaking a word
11 in English? Who's going to take those kids?
12 Please answer the question.

13 [applause]

14 FEMALE VOICE: Going back to number 87? 89?
15 93?

16 [applause]

17 MALE VOICE: While I'm here, let me give you
18 number 93. Number 89, number 87 and number 107.
19 So you see, the system doesn't work.

20 [applause]

21 They were not on sale outside the building.
22 Every time we turn our heads the other way when
23 we see the law flouted, when we tolerate what we
24 know to be wrong, when we close our eyes and our
25 ears to the corrupt, because we are too busy,

1 too tired, or too frightened, when we fail to
2 speak up, and we fail to speak out, we strike a
3 blow against freedom, against decency, and
4 against justice. None of which you represent.
5 You have opened a rift not only in the school
6 community, you have opened a rift in the greater
7 Pelham Parkway community.

8 This community is continuously shortchanged
9 financially. The fire houses must not be
10 closed. The services must be provided to the
11 people because that's your job. Very simply
12 put, the mayor owes this community the
13 opportunity for a town hall meeting, where he'll
14 stand on this stage and take the questions of
15 the people of the Bronx, the neglected borough.
16 You know, the borough that became a part of New
17 York City in 1898. We've never caught up.

18 I ask the mayor to come and have a town hall
19 meeting at Christopher Columbus High School.
20 And when he comes, his favorite restaurant is
21 Enzo's. Tell him to leave his wallet home.
22 Tell him to leave his wallet home. I'm buying
23 him dinner.

24 [applause]

25 FEMALE VOICE: 95?

1 MR. TAVERAS: Does anyone else have a
2 number?

3 FEMALE VOICE: 97?

4 [applause]

5 MS. FU NGUYEN: My name is Fu Nguyen
6 [phonetic]. And I've been sitting here
7 listening to everybody's story. I'm like what
8 am I doing here? You know? And then the answer
9 comes to me, I love this school. This is my
10 second home. And everybody here as my teachers,
11 they're my second parents. They teach me. This
12 school gave me a second opportunity to graduate
13 in June. I was a cutter like every other
14 student, you know. And if you—if people gave
15 Mayor Bloomberg a third chance to become mayor,
16 which I think is not fair, and why can't you
17 give us, you know, why can't you give us a
18 chance to redeem ourselves? We're not a bad
19 school. If you actually sit here as each day
20 pass, you will see all the things we do.

21 You don't think about the positive things
22 that Columbus has, but you think about the
23 negative things about us. We're not a bad
24 school. Open your heart and give us some
25 sympathy. What if you lost your jobs as these

1 teachers would? And what happens to the
2 freshmans that are not trying to graduate? Our
3 school would be so small, that if they drop out,
4 they're going to blame the DOE. You know,
5 that's something I would do. You know, so I beg
6 you to give us a second chance. That's all we
7 ask for. Thank you.

8 [applause]

9 FEMALE VOICE: 99? 101? The last. Okay,
10 I'm just going to call the numbers and just make
11 sure so I can—103, 105, 111, 113.

12 [applause]

13 MR. ROCCO PETRILLO: My name's Rocco
14 Petrillo [phonetic]. I'm the art teacher, one
15 of the art teachers here at Christopher
16 Columbus. And you heard everything before. You
17 heard tonight, you heard a bombardment of all
18 kinds of statistics of—about the school, about
19 the teachers. And there's nothing else to say.

20 What I'm going to tell you right now is I've
21 been teaching this school since 2001. And I
22 found it to be the best school I ever taught at.
23 I'm a second teacher. I mean, this is a second
24 career for me. I was in construction before. I
25 was a welder, a pipe fitter. And then I became

1 an artist for 10 years. And that was my
2 dream. Never expected to be an art teacher
3 until I came to New York. And I was in another
4 school besides this. I came to Columbus. And
5 they welcomed me open arms.

6 And I'm just going to talk with my heart
7 because these kids and this staff is the best
8 staff in the world. They'll do anything for the
9 children. And the same thing with me. I take
10 my class. And I love my kids. I love all the
11 kids. And I treat them like my own. But you
12 got challenging kids. It's very hard to teach
13 these children, but they excel in other—they
14 might not excel in taking the regent exam, but
15 they excel in art. And that's what I wanted to
16 say. You're forgetting about the other
17 potentials they have. They excel in painting,
18 in sculpturing, in pottery. All different kinds
19 of art they excel at. And there's all different
20 jobs that they can have later on in life. And
21 that's what I try to teach my students. I try
22 to teach them that this, coming here and staying
23 in school, okay, I have 30 seconds.

24 I just want to let you know that these are
25 the best students. And we do our best to make

1 them be the best they can be. And don't
2 close—save our school. Don't close it.

3 [applause]

4 FEMALE VOICE: 115? 115?

5 JESSICA: Hi, my name is Jessica. I just
6 wanted to say before I give my story, I wanted
7 to say I came from middle school 22. And
8 unfortunately, I didn't get the education I
9 needed to come to high school, but I still
10 managed to graduate from middle school.

11 I came as a freshman without knowing
12 anything, anything from Social Studies, anything
13 from math. Nothing.

14 I graduated from Columbus High School last
15 year in 2009. And now I can say that I am
16 proudly in college, knowing everything I know
17 because I learned it from here from Columbus
18 High School.

19 [applause]

20 I could also say that I am proud to know how
21 to write a college skill essay, because I
22 learned how to write essays here in Columbus
23 High School. Thanks to my English teachers.
24 And I also know my math in college because I
25 already learned that math from my math teachers.

1 I know my U.S. history very well, thanks to
2 my U.S. teachers also.

3 And I will not want to leave behind Ms.
4 Fuentes, Mr. Vinales [phonetic] Ms. Rollin. And
5 I can name so many teachers from the back of my
6 head because they helped me move on in my life,
7 because I didn't want to go to college before.
8 But now, thanks to them, I'm doing a bachelor's
9 degree in health service management in Berkeley
10 College.

11 [applause]

12 And that's all I wanted to say. And I also
13 wanted to say that this is my home. This is not
14 my second home. This is my first home, because
15 when my house burned down, when my house burned
16 down, they helped me get everything I needed.
17 They gave me money. They gave me supplies.
18 They rebuilt my life. They rebuilt my home.
19 That's why I'm fighting today for this school.

20 [applause]

21 FEMALE VOICE: 117?

22 MS. MONICA MARTIN: Hi, my name is Monica
23 Martin. I'm the coordinator of student
24 activities, the yearbook advisor, the
25 cheerleading and dance coach, an English

1 teacher, and a member of the Columbus family.
2 I travel from Queens every day. I pay tolls
3 like a lot of the teachers here. I'm here six
4 days a week sometimes. I'm here in the
5 evenings. And I think that what we try to do is
6 give the students an opportunity to get the
7 things that they would not get in the suburbs.
8 I know that's why I've been here for 10 years,
9 planning pep rallies, and fashion shows, and
10 taking them skiing . I mean, I don't know many
11 kids in the Bronx who get these opportunities.
12 And it's because our principal allows us to do
13 these things. And I just think that schools
14 have to be more than just numbers. They have
15 to be experiences. And when students can text
16 you at 11:00 at night because someone in their
17 family is taking advantage of them, and then I
18 can come speak to the principal the next day,
19 and get this person arrested, this is a building
20 that needs to stay open. Because that means
21 that the kids trust us enough to share the most
22 painful experiences and trust that we're going
23 to take care of them. And that's what we do
24 here. We provide the fun times. And we give
25 them academics, but we also have created a

1 family where students feel safe enough to
2 know that I'm not being taken care of at home,
3 but I have a home here, where people will take
4 care of me.

5 And if you get rid of something like this,
6 where are they going to go? So I mean, you've
7 heard a lot tonight. And we've been here since
8 7:00 in the morning. And I don't want to keep
9 you, but I just want to let you know that I grew
10 up here as a teacher. I was 23 when I started.
11 And I've learned more from the students and the
12 faculty than I think I learned in six years in
13 college with a Master's degree because this is
14 where you learn how to teach. Thank you.

15 [applause]

16 FEMALE VOICE: 119? 121?

17 [applause]

18 MR. STEPHANIE RAPTUS: I feel like I'm on
19 the Price is Right and you just called my name.
20 Okay. Hello. My name is Stephanie Raptus
21 [phonetic]. And I'm an alumna, class of 1990.
22 I'm here on behalf of the alumni association, on
23 behalf of Community Board 11, and on behalf of
24 the Allertin [phonetic] Homeowners Association,
25 basically on behalf of the entire community.

1 As a student here, I performed on that
2 stage for four years. And as an alumna, I
3 performed on that stage for the last 20 years.
4 We have had many concerts with the Bronx
5 Symphony Orchestra, benefit concerts. Probably
6 the biggest one on veterans day in 2011, where
7 we raised over \$2000 for the policeman's,
8 widows, and fire fighter's widows fund.

9 I have to wonder if all of the faculty here
10 that knew that this might be coming would have
11 just passed all their students, instead of
12 grading them honestly, and letting them
13 graduate, would they now be praised instead of
14 punished?

15 [applause]

16 An honest question and a fair question, I
17 think. I don't know if you know this, but
18 Portland, Oregon, Portland is a very large city.
19 About five years ago, they went to the charter
20 school system. They are now in the process of
21 phasing it out, and bringing back zone
22 schooling.

23 [applause]

24 All of the research says that the charter
25 system was not academically helping the

1 students. It was harming them, because there
2 was no school that wanted to take all of the
3 students that Columbus takes. Just food for
4 thought. Jimmy Vaca said it best, you're trying
5 to fix the problem at the end, rather than
6 fixing it at the beginning. Don't close this
7 school. I'm a constituent. I vote every year.
8 And now, after seeing this, I will look more
9 closely at each candidate's platform regarding
10 education. Okay? And I know a lot of people,
11 you know, they'll tell two friends, and they'll
12 tell two friends. We're all constituents here.
13 And we are future constituents sitting here.
14 And Mayor Bloomberg needs to know that. Thank
15 you.

16 [applause]

17 FEMALE VOICE: 123? 125? 127?

18 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. I am not a
19 teacher. I am a parent. My daughter goes to
20 the renaissance program, which I have to tell
21 you from the beginning is a life saver.

22 The renaissance is built at giving people
23 second chances. My daughter first choice, and
24 for that I apologize to Ms. Fuentes and her
25 staff, was "a better school Lehman High School."

1 And guess what? I didn't trust the subway
2 system. I drove my daughter to and from school.
3 They lunched outside the building. I went there
4 at lunch time, picked her up, sat there, had
5 lunch with her, and brought her back to the
6 school. I made all this sacrifice because I
7 honestly thought that my daughter was attending
8 a good school. So we sacrificed for our
9 children to get the best.

10 And guess what? Lehman High School slapped
11 me in the face. My daughter was attending
12 school because she was new to the school, the
13 area. She went unnoticed. I never got phone
14 calls telling me my daughter wasn't attending
15 class, never mind a letter. I would call the
16 school to try to check up on my child. I
17 wouldn't get return calls until three business
18 days later.

19 At that point, I decided that Lehman was not
20 the school for my child. So I decided to go
21 where I should have gone from the beginning in
22 my own backyard. I enrolled my daughter in
23 Columbus. And in the beginning, she tried,
24 excuse me, 30 seconds, but I'm the last one. So
25 you're going to have to wait.

1 Okay, my daughter came-

2 MR. TAVERAS: I just want to correct you on
3 that. There may be other people that are
4 speaking. And they all-

5 FEMALE VOICE: I have the last number,
6 sweetie.

7 MR. TAVERAS: --with two minutes.

8 FEMALE VOICE: Okay. Again--

9 MR. TAVERAS: And please give them the same
10 respect that they gave you.

11 FEMALE VOICE: Okay, guess what? Listen to
12 me. Like I said, again, I chose to bring my
13 daughter to Columbus. And it was through this
14 school that saved my daughter with my help, me
15 being an active parent, and getting 100 percent
16 cooperation from the school, we were able to
17 make a plan, act on it. I've seen single
18 handedly some of these teachers go into the
19 projects across the street and knock on doors
20 looking for their students. Okay?

21 Who's going to do that? I went with them
22 because that's not just my child. I look at
23 everyone's child in here as mine. And that's
24 what we're based on. That's what this school is
25 about. Family oriented. We take care of each

1 other. And right now, you're jeopardizing
2 and you're trying to mess with one of ours. And
3 we're not going to take that sitting down. This
4 is not the last that you've heard from us.

5 And another thing, you want to talk about
6 the system failing in the last 07, 08, 09?
7 Guess what? You've cut millions of dollars in
8 the public education. You guys, not you per se,
9 but you are sitting there at this desk looking
10 at everybody emotionless. You haven't shed no
11 kind of emotion on our face. I was given a
12 number, but guess what? I'm not a number. I'm
13 a person. And there's human beings in here.

14 MR. TAVERAS: Please wrap it up.

15 FEMALE VOICE: And you need to go home and
16 think about that.

17 [applause]

18 [shouting]

19 MR. TAVERAS: Guys, I know—

20 FEMALE VOICE: I have every right to speak,
21 sir.

22 MR. TAVERAS: Let me just say, let me just
23 say, yeah, some people speak twice, but I also
24 have to say every single person who still has a
25 number has patiently waited just like you did.

1 [shouting]

2 FEMALE VOICE: You had a person give you
3 three numbers.

4 FEMALE VOICE: And you let him speak.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Go ahead, speak.

6 FEMALE VOICE: Let her take my number.

7 MR. TAVERAS: Go right ahead, finish.

8 FEMALE VOICE: Again, all I ask is that for
9 you to stop looking at numbers and look at us as
10 human beings and individuals. We cannot, it is
11 our right to not give up on our children as
12 parents and as human beings. And just to end my
13 note, you guys are no different. The Board of
14 Education from the CEO gurus who forged numbers
15 to our government money and our taxpayer monies
16 and then took vacations. You're not going to be
17 able to get away with closing this school down.
18 We're not going to take it. Okay? So again,
19 think long and hard, because like we teach our
20 children, there are consequences to be paid when
21 you make a mistake.

22 [applause]

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

24 FEMALE VOICE: 129? 131? I'm going to read
25 the following numbers to ensure that people are

1 here. 133, 135.

2 [applause]

3 MS. SANDRA VEGA: My name is Sandra Vega.

4 And I graduated from Christopher Columbus High

5 School in 2002. I went to graduate from Union

6 College. My sister also, Sylvia Vega, graduated

7 from Christopher Columbus High School. She went

8 on to graduate from Smith College.

9 Right now, I'm a second year New York City

10 teaching fellow. And my love and passion for

11 education were born in the walls of this very

12 building. I would not be where I am today if it

13 were not for the hard work and dedication of the

14 teachers, guidance counselors, and

15 administration at Christopher Columbus High

16 School. This incredibly valuable institution of

17 learning must not be closed.

18 Currently, I also work at a school proposed

19 to be phased out, Frederick Douglas Academy 3

20 Middle School. It seems to me that the DOE

21 doesn't know what they want. One year, they

22 decide they want small schools, so they chop up

23 large schools like Christopher Columbus High

24 School, driving away excellent teachers, and

25 dividing a well established educational

1 community in doing so.

2 Then the DOE blames the newly divided
3 schools for not being as successful as they were
4 in the past. It seems clear to me that the DOE
5 has been setting our schools up for failure.

6 They must give teachers and administration
7 the time, tools, and resources they need to be
8 successful. The DOE cannot get away with these
9 overnight school closings.

10 What vague criteria is the DOE using to
11 assess schools anyway? You say it is based on
12 school progress reports, but is it really? Or
13 are the proposed school closings just a
14 political move to make room for Bloomberg's
15 beloved charter schools?

16 Closing Christopher Columbus High School
17 will be doing the students and community an
18 injustice. This pillar of education has been
19 existence for decades. You must continue to give
20 them the opportunity to educate and inspire the
21 youth of the Bronx. Thank you.

22 [applause]

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

24 FEMALE VOICE: 137? 139?

25 [applause]

1 MR. SCHULMAN: Good evening, Santi,
2 Elena.

3 MR. TAVERAS: Long time, no seen.

4 MR. SCHULMAN: Yeah, long time no see.
5 Yeah. I'm David Schulman [phonetic]. I'm the
6 former UFT district representative for Bronx
7 High Schools. I'm here, however, speaking as an
8 individual.

9 And there was one prior speaker who was
10 close to what I want to say to the two of you
11 and through you to people downtown. You've gone
12 down the wrong trail with reference to school
13 improvement. And here's what I'm going to
14 suggest to you. It's impossible for a school
15 system to say that every kid is unique. And
16 yet, push them all in the door in September, and
17 have them pop out in June with exactly the same
18 knowledge and skills plugged in. You both know
19 that, you principals, you've been in other
20 positions in the system.

21 If you really want to do stuff for kids,
22 it's not about closing this school. It's not
23 about closing a lot of the schools. It's about
24 changing the way we educate kids so that every
25 single child has an individual education plan,

1 and that we meet that child's educational,
2 social, psychological skills. And we make sure
3 that by the time they get out, that for the rest
4 of their productive adult life, they can go
5 about doing the job that we want them to do.
6 And if it takes a child three years to go
7 through what we call fondly high school, or it
8 takes a child six years, who cares? What really
9 counts is, is this an educated person?

10 And New York City has an opportunity to step
11 it up now. And instead of running around
12 dumping difficult and troubled students or
13 students who are ELL students, who have just
14 come here, or students with special needs into a
15 school, and then using the statistics to close
16 the school down, what we really need to do is to
17 change the system so that we meet the needs of
18 each and every student, so that that student can
19 go on and live a productive adult life. Thank
20 you.

21 [applause]

22 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, David.

23 FEMALE VOICE: Our last speaker, it's 143,
24 if they're here. 143?

25 [applause]

1 MR. RYAN DECHIMBA: I love Columbus. My
2 name is Ryan Dechimba [phonetic]. I'm a junior
3 here at Columbus. And I was hearing you speak
4 about numbers, statistics. And here's what I
5 say. When I came here last year, my average was
6 a 68 percent, but now I'm on an honors roll. My
7 average is 95 percent.

8 [applause]

9 And I also want to touch on the judgment of
10 this proceeding. I believe in the First
11 Amendment, which says all people have the right
12 to protest. And this is what we're doing right
13 now. And also, this country's a democracy,
14 which is a government by the people for the
15 people.

16 [applause]

17 And right now, we are the people. We are
18 the community. And I believe when making a
19 decision, you should really count our opinions,
20 our say in this matter. This is our school, our
21 community.

22 And I wrote a poem, which might not be the
23 best you've ever heard or the best you will
24 hear. And here it goes. Oh, Columbus, you old
25 baby. It seems like yesterday you were just

1 two. But like a shooting star, you are
2 fading away. Your future was like a glimpse,
3 but I remember it so vividly. You hold a strong
4 place in my—in our hearts, Oh, Columbus, you old
5 baby. If only you would stay. Thank you.

6 [applause]

7 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. I just want to
8 first of all thank everybody for your patience,
9 for your honesty, for your passion.

10 [END 154_490_A.MP3]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

5
6 Signature Chris Hwang

7 Date January 10, 2010

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