

Good Afternoon Senate Finance Chair Krueger, Senate Education Chair Mayer, Senate New York City Education Subcommittee Chair Liu, Assembly Ways and Means Chair Weinstein, Assembly Education Chair Benedetto, and members of those respective committees. Joining me today is Lindsey Oates, Chief Financial Officer for the New York City Department of Education.

It is my honor and distinct pleasure to come before you today to advocate for New York City's public schools, and our 1.1 million students and their families.

Last year, I testified before you that I had recently embarked on the amazing adventure of serving as the Chancellor of the New York City Public School system. On this journey, every day presents me with new lessons to learn, new challenges to overcome, and new perspectives to consider.

I am pleased to share some of the major accomplishments our children are making and the significant improvements in our schools.

Last month, we announced that this year New York City's graduation rate reached a new record high of 77.3 percent, which demonstrates progress for the fifth year in a row citywide. Racial gaps are narrowing. More New York City public school students are enrolling in college. And a new study by the RAND Corporation found that our ambitious Community School initiative has resulted in improved attendance, test scores, and school culture for the thousands of children who attend community schools.

When I visit schools across the City, I am hopeful for the future but reminded of the steep climb to overcome some stark disparities. Our children are inspiring, and it is up to us to ensure that the opportunity gap continues to close. Ours is the largest and most diverse public school system in the United States: 70 percent of our students are economically disadvantaged, 20 percent are students with disabilities, and 13 percent are multilingual learners.

More than 80 percent are children of color: 40 percent are Hispanic, 25 percent are black, and 16 percent are Asian. Fifteen percent are white. We are proud that in all five boroughs our students are making great strides.

Our investments in our children are paying off. From our youngest learners through high school, our schools are launching more and more students to successful futures. Pre-K for All is serving roughly 70,000 students and this fall, 3-K will serve up to 26,000 students in 16 districts, more than ever before. Early childhood education is strengthening foundational skills and instruction earlier and earlier and helping us narrow the opportunity gap.

And now, for the first time, we know that Pre-K for All is improving academic achievement. Our third-graders are the highest-performing grade on both ELA and math. Students who went through Pre-K for All are outperforming students who didn't. This is a promising sign for the hundreds of thousands of students who have benefitted from this initiative.

Through AP for All, the number of students with access to Advanced Placement courses has increased from 160,000 to 226,000, with 75 percent of high school students now having access to

at least five AP classes. We also recently announced that 81 percent of our High School graduates are enrolling in college.

As a strong believer in family empowerment, I am also thrilled to say that we have elevated the importance of our parent leaders. Starting in July, Community Education Council (CEC) presidents will appoint a member to the Panel for Education Policy (PEP). This will give our elected parent leaders a greater voice in all of the decisions that come before the Panel. That includes voting on contracts, adjustments to school building utilization, and changes to Chancellor Regulations.

Recently, we altered our C-30 principal selection process to include more parent voice, because families are our most important partners in creating strong and supportive school communities. These policies build on the legislation to extend and strengthen Mayoral Accountability that you passed last year. I thank the legislature for your partnership and leadership on this incredibly important legislation.

Another important step we have taken is to get a head start in developing curriculum educating students on diversity and tolerance, consistent with the new statewide goals. We are also sponsoring thousands of field trips to the Museum of Jewish Heritage, because understanding history is one of the best ways to create a better society today. We continue to take it upon ourselves to support the enrichment and cultural competency of our children in New York City.

All of the unprecedented investments we have made in our schools include the citywide initiatives under the Equity and Excellence for All agenda, and support for every school through Fair Student Funding (FSF). FSF distributes funds to schools employing a weighted student funding formula. Simply put, this means that a school's student population—and their needs—determine the majority of the school's budget.

I've long said that if you show me your budget, you've showed me your priorities. FSF makes that real: it is driven by equity, and the data shows that it's been successful in advancing both equity and excellence. Per capita budgets are higher at schools with high concentrations of students in poverty, students with disabilities, and multi-lingual learners.

We have invested over \$1 billion to make sure that every school has at least 90 percent of its FSF funded each year, and the neediest schools are receiving 100 percent. But while the City has made major new investments in FSF, we simply cannot afford to close the FSF gap alone.

In that context, and consistent with our focus on equity and excellence for all, I have concerns about the Executive's Budget Proposal.

Our analysis of the Executive's language revealed that, as the proposal stands, the New York City Department of Education would face a \$136 million shortage against its fiscal year 2020-21 operating budget. That would seriously impact our ability to deliver results for students because state aid funding supports school budgets, mandates for specialized student populations, and charter school tuition.

It is crucial to remember that in the Executive's Proposed Budget, tuition for charter schools would increase next school year by over 5 percent. Without additional State funding, DOE must assume the costs of these mandated increases. Let me be clear: all children deserve the necessary resources to be successful in school, no matter what institution they attend. That said, shortchanging the system that serves the vast majority of students—many of whom are also the neediest—is not advancing equity and not something I support.

Of course, the biggest challenge of all continues to be the failure to fulfill the promise of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. The foundation aid formula must be fully funded.

The landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision in 2007 brought the promise of new State funding to provide all students with the resources they desperately need. As you know, that promise remains unfulfilled, and New York City public school students are owed \$1.1 billion in this fiscal year alone. I'd like to thank Chairs Mayer, Liu and Benjamin for their leadership they showed this past fall when they hosted statewide roundtables, as well as a hearing we participated in, in New York City. We were encouraged to hear the united voices of so many school leaders, parents and advocates joining our call to fully fund CFE. We look forward to continuing to work with each you, and your colleagues, to ensure that this promise to our students is finally fulfilled.

In addition to my concerns about state funding levels in the proposed budget, transparency is also a significant problem. The merging of state aid funding streams would make it more difficult to ensure compliance with State mandates. Consolidating existing support into Foundation Aid without increasing the amounts provided reduces the amount owed under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity ruling without providing any actual additional funding. Finally, proposed caps and reformulations of essential support such as Building Aid and Transportation Aid would result in further budget hits to the DOE and the children we serve. .

Finally, we were disappointed to see that the Executive's Budget does not provide additional support for Pre-K Special Education programs, particularly those known as "4410" schools. These private preschool providers serve the special needs of some of our youngest learners. The continuity of 4410 services is essential to enriching those students' academic futures. The Mayor and I have been clear that we need to ensure every child has a strong start for kindergarten, and so we need you, our partners in Albany, to increase the rate these providers receive to provide special education programs and services to three- and four-year-olds.

The City is ready to deepen and expand our partnership with these 4410 providers to ensure all students have access to the same high-quality programs and services that families across the city have come to rely on through the Pre-K for All program. But we cannot do this without your partnership in securing rates for 4410s that reflect their increased cost of operating. We hope to work with you to address this issue in the state budget.

Beyond the proposed budget, I want to reaffirm that as Chancellor, my commitment to inclusion and equity means all students should have access to the schools that best meet their learning

needs and goals. Everyone here today knows that I have clearly stated on the record that this is not currently the case for many screened schools and programs in New York City—especially at our specialized high schools. We still have much work to do to ensure that all school communities reflect the unparalleled diversity of our City, including at the specialized high schools where, year after year, we see a troubling status quo in admissions.

Through Mayoral Accountability, the Mayor and I take seriously our need to oversee each of our 1,800 public schools, yet because of Hecht-Calandra we cannot. For that reason, I continue to support the repeal of Hecht-Calandra, and ask that in doing so we work together alongside parents and students in our City to ensure that we can design an enrollment process that works for all of our children.

We owe our students a future that is not stifled by a lack of resources and a continuation of long-standing underinvestment in many of our communities.

In my role as Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, the vision I pursue every day focuses on these priorities: Accelerating Learning and Instruction, Empowering Communities, Developing Our People and Advancing Equity Now. I thank you for giving me the authority to design and create this vision, empowered by Mayoral Accountability. And I continue to embrace your partnership, as we work together to provide the resources needed for our children's future and continue to move the Children's Agenda forward.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and look forward to your questions.