

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED) TEST

Roosevelt Hearing Room C,
2nd Floor, Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York
12248

May 19, 2010

10:05 a.m. to 2.45 p.m.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CATHERINE T. NOLAN, Chair

ASSEMBLYMEMBER MICHAEL A. BENJAMIN

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CARMEN E. ARROYO

ASSEMBLYMEMBER MARK J. SCHROEDER

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DANIEL O'DONNELL

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

INDEX

	Page
PANEL 1:	
JOHN B. KING, JR. SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT	8
Also present from NYS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:	
HOWARD GOLDSMITH	23
DAVID R. JONES PRESIDENT AND CEO COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY	58
LAZAR TRESCHAN COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY	65
JACQUELINE COOK LITERACY EXPERT AND RESEARCHER	65
LAURIE BARGSTEDT COORDINATOR, ADULT LITERACY AND CORRECTIONS EDUCATION, HAMILTON-FULTON-MONTGOMERY BOCES	112
DANIEL T. WHITE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, MONROE # 1 BOCES	124
CAMI ANDERSON SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT 79	129
LIANNE FRIEDMAN CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, OFFICE OF ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION	144
ELYSE BARBELL LITERACY ASSISTANCE CENTER, NEW YORK CITY	185
SIERRA STONEMAN-BELL CO-DIRECTOR, THE NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY SERVICES COALITION	193
LINDA AVITABILE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, HIGHBRIDGE COMMUNITY LIFE CENTER, BRONX	199

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

LESLEE OPPENHEIM	205
UNIVERSITY DIRECTOR OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PROGRAM, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK	
BRUCE CARMEL	217
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TURNING POINT	
CHRISTINA CURRAN	221
DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY, FIFTH AVENUE COMMITTEE, BROOKLYN	
JULIE QUINTON	225
DIRECTOR OF ADULT LITERACY, MAKE THE ROAD, NEW YORK	
KHAYRIYYAH ALI	230
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK QUEENS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER	
MARTIN DANENBERG	247
GED HOTLINE	
JAMES VIOLA	265
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE	

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

(The public hearing commenced at 10:05
a.m.)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CATHERINE T. NOLAN,
CHAIR, ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION:
I am pleased that on a rainy non-session day we
have some members of the public here with us and
I want to first introduce I guess myself for our
record. My name is Catherine Nolan and I am an
Assemblywoman from Queens, New York and I have
the privilege of chairing the Education Committee
here in the Assembly. I also want to acknowledge
my colleague, Assemblyman Michael Benjamin who is
here from the Bronx and we expect Assemblyman
Danny O'Donnell from Manhattan and I think
Assemblywoman Rabbit from upstate New York from
our colleagues on the other side of the isle to
be here but I am going to get started. As they
come in we will acknowledge them again.

I do want to say this is the first
hearing I am having in this new format and I miss
our stenographers, you know, I hope it will be a
good hearing using this electronic format. I
want everyone to understand that you need to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 identify who you are so that it goes on the
3 record and is typed properly. We are also I
4 think through the miracle of the computer; we are
5 in some way rebroadcasting this hearing on a
6 website. So for me, old veteran that I am that
7 is a new format and just bear with me if you will
8 as we go through it. I guess I will have to
9 learn to talk a little slower, okay, because the
10 stenographers could keep up with me no matter how
11 fast I spoke, I am not so sure the electronic
12 devices will.

13 But we are really pleased to be here
14 today. It's very interesting as we did a little
15 research on this hearing, even though the GED is
16 sort of a common New York expression, right,
17 everyone talks about it and I actually thought it
18 stood for a different phrase but it is actually
19 the General Educational Development Test, has
20 been around our State since World War II, post
21 World War II era.

22 There is actually very little in
23 education law about the test, just a provision
24 that says that we should not charge for it and I

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 was speculating with the Commissioner before that
3 there must have been an attempt to charge for it
4 and the legislature said "No." But except for
5 that wisdom the legislature has by and large left
6 the administration of the test to the State
7 Education Department and has really left kind of
8 issues about the test to advocates and the
9 Department to work out.

10 I do think though even despite our
11 limited fiscal, our changed and difficult fiscal
12 situation, the legislature does need to hear from
13 both the Department and advocates and to perhaps
14 weigh-in, in some way, on what we want to see for
15 the future of the GED. There have been a number
16 of significant reports in the last two years
17 written about the GED, in 2008, 2009 and now
18 there has been some comments in hearings in
19 various localities in the State, but we thought
20 it was important for us to weigh-in.

21 So I know it is a busy time for everyone
22 but we would like to start with Deputy
23 Commissioner John King, the Senior Deputy from
24 State Education and I know you have some State Ed

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 [phonetic] with you. I also want to acknowledge
3 Commissioner Steiner in the back, thank you Dr.
4 Steiner for the leadership, really the intense
5 and strong leadership you have provided in the
6 very short time that you have chaired this
7 important Department in our State.

8 I do want to thank everyone for coming.
9 We have some coffee and bagels upstairs if you
10 get tired. We really didn't expect as many
11 people, I'm so pleased, and it shows the interest
12 in this important issue and how many adults in
13 our State really use this important service and
14 why we are here today. So I want to thank you
15 and Michael did you want to say a word or will we
16 go right to the... Thank you, thank you.

17 MR. JOHN B. KING, JR., SENIOR DEPUTY
18 COMMISSIONER, NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION
19 DEPARTMENT: Good morning Assemblywoman Nolan and
20 Assemblyman Benjamin, I am John King, Senior
21 Deputy Commissioner in the New York State
22 Education Department. Commissioner Steiner asked
23 me to represent him today because I am
24 responsible for overseeing our GED testing

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 program. I am joined today by Howard Goldsmith,
3 who is our Executive Coordinator of the Office of
4 Curriculum and Instructional Support.

5 On behalf of the Board of Regents and
6 the Commissioner I appreciate this opportunity to
7 discuss the status of the General Educational
8 Development Test, known as the GED and present
9 recommendations for improvement.

10 The GED has, over time, symbolized
11 opportunity for adults and out of school youth
12 wishing to pursue a better life for themselves
13 and their families. That is why maintaining
14 broad access to the GED is needed as a pathway to
15 success in higher education, post secondary
16 training and the workforce for those who, for
17 various reasons, did not graduate high school.

18 SED does not administer the GED test
19 directly nor do we have the capacity to do so.
20 It is a national assessment developed by the
21 American Council on Education known as ACE which
22 we use as a basis for issuing a New York State
23 high school equivalency diploma. All other
24 states use the GED for the same purpose.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 We have two challenges with respect to
3 our GED testing program. First, the State's
4 current fiscal situation is threatening our
5 ability to keep the GED broadly available.
6 Second, we need a revised and more effective GED
7 testing policy that not only will maintain access
8 and opportunity for all but it also will include
9 test preparation and quality instruction to
10 ensure that students are ready for success before
11 being admitted to take the test.

12 Funding for SED to run the GED program
13 has been reduced over the years as a result of
14 cuts in the State budget for our Department
15 operations. In 2008/09 \$3.9 million was
16 available for the GED program. This is proposed
17 to be reduced to \$2.4 million in 2010/11, 40%
18 less in just the past three years.

19 Meanwhile demand for GED testing remains
20 an all-time high. In 2008 over 58,000 tests were
21 administered and in 2009 almost 56,000 were,
22 about the same number as California which has
23 twice our population.

24 Section 317 of the Education Law enacted

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 in 1994 prohibits charging a fee for admission to
3 the GED test, so our only direct source of
4 funding is what the legislature provides in the
5 budget.

6 There are three major expenses connected
7 with the GED testing program. First we pay
8 approximately \$1.45 million annually to ACE, the
9 test developer for exam materials, for the test
10 sites, scoring rubrics, a \$10 fee for each person
11 who takes the test and \$175 a year for each
12 testing center. Our contract with ACE also
13 ensures its oversight and support and funds other
14 fees and ACE-mandated protocols. Every State has
15 a similar contract with ACE which in turn permits
16 the State to administer the test.

17 The second major expense is about
18 \$900,000 a year to support the staff and
19 operations of our GED testing office. GED staff
20 score the assessments, issue high school
21 equivalency diplomas to successful GED
22 candidates, issue transcripts, respond to
23 questions and concerns from students and the
24 approved test administration sites provide ACE

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 mandated training and oversight to all GED chief
3 examiners and proctors, maintain the GED
4 database, handle phone calls on student status
5 inquiries, man a walk-in window to provide copies
6 of diplomas to students who need them immediately
7 and conduct test site visits for security and
8 compliance.

9 The third major expense is for our
10 system of state-wide test administration. As I
11 mentioned before we do not administer the GED
12 test directly instead we grant permission to a
13 variety of entities to administer it. Tests are
14 given at approximately 300 approved sites
15 throughout the State, 134 of which are chose
16 through a competitive request for proposals
17 process as required by the Office of the State
18 Controller.

19 These 134 test sites are supported
20 through contracts with testing center operators
21 who receive a \$20 per test reimbursement. There
22 are eight contracts in New York City for 22
23 sites, located in New York City Department of
24 Education buildings on CUNY campuses and at

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 facilities owned by community organizations and
3 employment and occupation centers. Outside New
4 York City there are 45 contracts with 112 sites
5 located at BOCES and school districts. These
6 contracts total about \$1.1 million per year.
7 Prisons, jails, residential facilities and
8 rehabilitation centers constitute the remainder
9 of the 300 test sites. These other sites do not
10 receive the per-test reimbursement; however SED
11 supplies them with test materials and provides
12 test scoring.

13 Given the fiscal constraints facing SED
14 the regions have concluded that we will not have
15 sufficient funds to continue supporting the \$20
16 GED reimbursement contracts after June 30th of
17 this year. We need to maintain our contract with
18 ACE to ensure student access to the test and our
19 currently level of activity in a GED testing
20 office so we can provide services to students and
21 test sites as ACE requires.

22 Our second challenge concerns our
23 statewide GED testing policy. New York
24 administers more tests than any other State in

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the nation because we have an open access policy,
3 meaning we do not charge a fee for the test or
4 require any type of prerequisites for admission.
5 We have more testing sites than any other State;
6 we are one of only a few States to provide the
7 GED in Spanish and French in addition to English.
8 We also offer accommodations for individuals with
9 special needs. These policies are expensive to
10 maintain and therefore require sustainable
11 financial support.

12 With this policy of open access comes
13 lower overall pass rates and inadequate test
14 readiness for many of our test takers. New York
15 has the lowest GED pass rate in the nation, about
16 59.7%.

17 There are three types of GED test
18 takers. Approximately one-third are individuals
19 over 21 who attend adult preparation programs and
20 students in alternative high school equivalency
21 preparation programs (AHSEP) run by BOCES and
22 school districts. The AHSEP programs are geared
23 towards students under 21 who for various reasons
24 are over the usual graduation age, lack enough

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 credits to graduate and are not on track to earn
3 a local or Regents high school diploma. AHSEP
4 programs often provide counseling and connections
5 to career and technical education.

6 Two-thirds of test takers are candidates
7 who have no demonstrated test preparation and had
8 not participated in a GED prep program.

9 Preparing for the GED makes a big difference in
10 the pass rate. The pass rate for those enrolled
11 in GED prep or AHSEP programs are close to 70%
12 while non preparation candidates have a pass rate
13 below 51%.

14 Lack of a coordinated registration
15 system has resulted in applicants having to wait
16 a long time to take the test or reserving a seat
17 at different locations simultaneously. Because
18 of high demand and limited capacity New York City
19 candidates often must wait six months or more to
20 obtain a seat and many candidates will apply to
21 multiple centers and not withdraw their
22 applications to other sites once they obtain a
23 seat, so test centers are only 50% to 75% full.

24 There is an opportunity to address and

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 resolve both the lack of adequate funding for the
3 GED testing program and the need for more
4 effective and efficient statewide testing policy.
5 The Regents are committed to open access for
6 candidates who are ready to take the GED test
7 which will greatly improve student success and
8 the State's overall pass rates.

9 The data shows that adequate preparation
10 dramatically improves the pass rate. We want to
11 develop a system that encourages preparation and
12 ensures greater success through effective and
13 efficient access to higher education,
14 post-secondary training and the work force. For
15 that we will need sufficient funding.

16 The Board of Regents has proposed short
17 and long-term strategies for creating a new
18 testing policy. The Board at its March meeting
19 approved four short-term action steps. First
20 requesting from the legislature an additional \$2
21 million in the 2010/11 budget for SED's current
22 operations and to create online test
23 registration, create open availability of the
24 official practice test, the OPT and expand

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 pre-collegiate bridge programs to ensure student
3 transition from GED to college and the work
4 force.

5 Second to request approval from the
6 Federal Government to use Work Force Investment
7 ACT, WIA funds, for GED test candidates who need
8 special accommodations.

9 Third to secure approval from the
10 Executive to access funds from the GED revenue
11 account to continue providing the \$20 per-test
12 reimbursement to the 134 testing centers from
13 April 1st to June 30th of this year. This fund is
14 supported by the \$10 fee collected from students
15 who have requested duplicate copies of their
16 diplomas and transcripts. We did receive from
17 the Executive permission to use these monies for
18 that purpose.

19 The fourth short-term step was to
20 suspend providing the \$20 per-test reimbursement
21 to the 134 testing centers after June 30th in the
22 absence of sufficient funding.

23 Unfortunately we expect this will cause
24 many testing centers to reduce the number of test

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 administrations. We will however resume payment
3 of this fee if and when funding becomes
4 available.

5 Among the Regents long-term strategies
6 are first to require all candidates and
7 equivalency programs and SED funded adult ed.
8 programs to take and pass the OPT. We are
9 exploring with the publisher of the OPT making it
10 available to anyone wishing to take the GED and
11 are looking into expanding test locations to
12 include libraries, one-stop centers and literacy
13 zones.

14 A second long-term strategy is to
15 promote greater use of the 18 literacy zones
16 which are required to make the OPT available to
17 eligible candidates. Literacy zones were created
18 to close the achievement gap in urban and rural
19 communities of concentrated poverty and to serve
20 families and individuals with limited literacy or
21 English language proficiency.

22 The third long-term strategy is to
23 develop a curriculum potentially online that will
24 prepare candidates for the test with a focus on

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the GED as a first step towards college and
3 career opportunities instead of as a one-time
4 goal.

5 The third long-term strategy would be to
6 develop a three-hour course on GED instruction
7 which could be made available online.

8 And the final long-term strategy would
9 be to require instructors in alternative high
10 school and high school equivalency programs and
11 instructors of adults to be certified in GED
12 instruction.

13 At this time the Regents are not asking
14 for the legislature, are not asking the
15 legislature for authority to charge a fee to take
16 the GED test. On the other hand the Regents and
17 SED want to ensure a sufficient network of intake
18 and review science to provide evaluation and
19 preparation for GED candidates.

20 Recent reports from the Community
21 Service Society and the Schuyler Center for
22 Analysis and Advocacy indicate that students who
23 fail the GED become disillusioned, disappointed
24 and unlikely to sit for the test a second or

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 third time.

3 We do not believe we are doing the best
4 for GED candidates by providing open access to
5 the GED test without also requiring reasonable
6 prerequisites that will improve their chances of
7 passing it. Demonstrated readiness will offer
8 these students a greater opportunity for success
9 on the test. This will enable them to access
10 linkages to higher education and training
11 programs that will lead to better prospects for
12 success in the work force.

13 The reforms I have discussed today will
14 improve a system that isn't serving GED test
15 candidates well. It will take your investment
16 through adequate funding to help make it happen.

17 I am happy to answer your questions.

18 MS. NOLAN: Thank you very much, would
19 your colleague want to add anything or are you're
20 here to...?

21 MALE VOICE: No just here to support Dr.
22 King and Dr. Steiner.

23 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, I want to also
24 acknowledge, we are really pleased that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Assemblywoman Carmen Arroya, a very active member
3 of the education committee has joined us and has
4 really been a leader on so many of these issues
5 regarding adult education as well as someone in
6 legislature a little bit newer but who has really
7 carved out this issue area and that is
8 Assemblyman Mark Schroeder from Buffalo who has
9 worked extensively with adult learners and adult
10 education issues and we are glad that they are
11 both here.

12 I think it shows even on a day that is
13 sort of an off day and the legislature that a
14 number of colleagues would stay the interest of
15 the legislature in this issue. I want to thank
16 you for probably the best presentation I have
17 ever heard State Ed. make in the 26 years I am
18 here. It was coherent, it was understandable,
19 right there, that was a big step forward and I
20 really appreciate that.

21 MR. KING: Thanks.

22 MS. NOLAN: Not that anybody else, but,
23 you know, we need to get things said in a way
24 that we can understand and I appreciate it as a

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 lay person, not an expert educator, that you made
3 it clear. I realize that a lot of this has kind
4 of come over time but I just would like to ask a
5 question or two about the testimony. One is that
6 I am really a little unclear about what you did
7 before this RFP, like, maybe you can give us a
8 little bit of the history of this RFP process and
9 how you chose where to put these sites and was
10 there any rubric of need or, you know, ability to
11 do it, what were the requirements and when did
12 you move to this RFP? I know this was a Court
13 case but I would like to get some idea of the
14 before and after and then I am curious why some
15 sites get the reimbursement of the \$20 and some
16 don't and what is that all about and, you know,
17 what are the test material, so maybe a little bit
18 more on that.

19 Then the literacy zones, I don't even
20 know what they are, so maybe you can give us a
21 little, so a little bit more of the history if
22 you could?

23 MR. KING: Sure, given that I have just
24 joined the Department in October, I will defer to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Howard on the history.

3 MR. HOWARD GOLDSMITH, NEW YORK STATE
4 EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: Thank you John, I guess
5 that-

6 MS. NOLAN: You had better, it should
7 come on, there should be a little light, like I
8 said-

9 MR. GOLDSMITH: There it is I think it's
10 on, it's lit. Assemblywoman Nolan, prior to the
11 RFP process we actually had sites that we
12 selected and paid directly and as you are right
13 there was a Court action, actually by the IRS
14 that made determination that these people are
15 state employees and would be required to be state
16 employees as opposed to outside contractors.

17 Then we got a ruling from the Office of
18 State Controller and they recommended that we
19 move towards an RFP process to make them
20 independent vendors with state education
21 financial support. So I think about three or
22 four years ago we worked with the Office of State
23 Controller to create these sites that we support
24 financially. How we divided up the RFP, we

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 looked at poverty levels, literacy levels and
3 population needs throughout the State. We came
4 up with a model that basically divides the State
5 into two parts, New York City and rest of State.
6 The rest of State, most of those RFPs went to
7 sites that we already conducting the GED
8 including our big five school districts and the
9 BOCES locations.

10 The New York City RFP, those locations
11 went out to RFPs as well to handle the capacities
12 in the City including the five boroughs. The New
13 York City Department of Education won one of
14 those RFPs to provide testing as well as CUNY;
15 Community-based organizations and a few private
16 testing providers.

17 MS. NOLAN: Was there any requirement
18 that these be non-profits and how long is the RFP
19 going to be in effect for?

20 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well the RFP I believe
21 is a three year contract and the contract gets
22 renewed every year. As Dr. King mentioned due to
23 the funding they work on different scales. The
24 rest of State contracts for the BOCES and the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 districts those actually terminated June 30th of
3 this year. So we renew those contracts, so they
4 are three year contracts, renewable every year,
5 so we don't go through the RFP process again, we
6 just renew the contracts.

7 MS. NOLAN: Wouldn't it be better to do
8 it on a three-year basis, would that be a saving
9 to the Department right there?

10 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well it's the
11 recommendations of the State Controller and there
12 are some formalistic languages under contracts
13 that you bid them for a three year period but you
14 have the right to renew every single year and
15 such cases because they are contingent upon
16 ongoing funding.

17 MS. NOLAN: And prior to that you just
18 put them wherever somebody expressed an interest?

19 MR. GOLDSMITH: No we had centers that
20 people reported directly to the State Education
21 Department but they were situated in many of the
22 same locations, BOCES and districts. It was our
23 capacity within those opportunities.

24 MS. NOLAN: And then I asked you about

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 profit companies versus non-profits, is there
3 some...?

4 MR. GOLDSMITH: I believe they have to
5 be not-for-profit, it is the requirement in the
6 RFP that went out and we have not-for-profits.
7 We have a few church organizations,
8 community-based organizations that apply for
9 that. The other, just to respond to your other
10 questions, we have more sites such as DOC
11 facilities, Department of Correction facilities,
12 some job core sites, things like that. We do not
13 support those through the \$20 sites because those
14 are what we call non-public sites, in other words
15 they are not open to the public. People cannot
16 walk in to a prison facility or a correctional
17 facility to take the GED so we don't support them
18 with the \$20 but we do support all those sites,
19 the 300 with test materials, we score all the
20 tests, we make sure that they are meeting
21 protocols and test requirements.

22 MS. NOLAN: In any given year is it
23 about 30,000 people a year who take it or pass it
24 or what is the...?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well in 2008 a little
3 over 58,000 people sat for the GED.

4 MS. NOLAN: Great, and then about
5 25,000, how many people passed it?

6 MR. GOLDSMITH: About 59% in 2008, it
7 went down a little bit in 2009.

8 MS. NOLAN: Right and when, there is no
9 requirement that the people who teach to this,
10 you know, prep people for this, are they
11 teachers, are they certified teachers or are they
12 just anyone who wants to be a willing volunteer,
13 I mean is there any standard that is required
14 through RFP or in the...?

15 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well the test
16 administration is actually separate than our prep
17 programs. We have a complete network of prep
18 programs and people go from prep programs right
19 into the test administration which is these RFPs.
20 Of those 58,000 people we administered the test
21 in 2008 only, of the 58,000, only one third came
22 through prep programs or high school preparation
23 programs and those pass rates were more
24 successful and that is the focus of our work.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 People who are prepared for this test
3 are what we deem test ready, do much better than
4 our overall state rate, pass rate.

5 MS. NOLAN: So let me just understand
6 this, there are 300, how many sites?

7 MR. GOLDSMITH: About 300 sites that
8 administer the test.

9 MS. NOLAN: And that is separate, those
10 are just people who proctor an exam?

11 MR. GOLDSMITH: Right, they administer
12 the test. Some of those sites, just to clarify,
13 are also prep centers as well and a great example
14 would be the New York City Department of
15 Education which is a huge site. Our BOCES and
16 districts, many of them have preparation; GED
17 prep programs as well as they have the ability to
18 administer the test.

19 MS. NOLAN: Okay and then the prep
20 programs are in a different, 345 different sites
21 or the same sites or simultaneous overlap or what
22 is it?

23 MR. GOLDSMITH: Some of the sites are
24 the same. We have probably about 500 prep

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 programs around the State. Many of them are WIA
3 funded through Work force Investment funding.
4 They are in most districts. BOCES have prep
5 programs, programs are all over the State and we
6 try to track these.

7 MS. NOLAN: Would this all be online,
8 you know, if I was at my local library and I
9 wanted to find out probably with the help of a
10 librarian, could I find this online? Is there
11 one comprehensive database for all 500 prep
12 sites?

13 MR. GOLDSMITH: One of the problems we
14 have and the challenges that Dr. King talked
15 about, online you could go to our website, if you
16 want to take the GED, you could find the location
17 of where the test is being administered. What we
18 are moving towards is online registration, so
19 rather than just finding a list of test centers
20 where you could sit for the test, you could
21 actually register online to take the test, be
22 provided with a seat, a date and then you would
23 be blocked in, so we wouldn't have multiple, you
24 know-

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. NOLAN: Right it seems like it is
3 time to fix that, that's for sure.

4 MR. GOLDSMITH: Yes we are working on
5 that.

6 MS. NOLAN: I am very intrigued by all
7 your recommendations and I am sure my colleagues
8 will have questions. I just want to, and I want
9 you to know that in our recommendations, our
10 committee recommendations we would like to see
11 more money put into the system. It is
12 unfortunate that the, you know, the fiscal crisis
13 of the titans, you know, the banking industry and
14 others, the financial industry are causing all
15 these ramifications but we are still going to
16 continue to advocate for that. I just, my last
17 question was about literacy zones, I am sorry I
18 don't, I didn't know what you were talking about
19 with that?

20 MR. GOLDSMITH: Literacy zones are a
21 network of partnerships, they are pure New York,
22 they have been created by our staff with the
23 Board of Regents that promote partnerships of
24 services focusing on families and children. We

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 had an RFP and they are federally funded and
3 State funded a combination of sources of funding.

4 Right now we have 17 literacy zones
5 throughout the State with great success. We have
6 some in Buffalo, Syracuse, the Commissioner has
7 visited those. We have had some legislatures up
8 there as well. They are usually based in
9 libraries and partner with social service
10 agencies to provide services.

11 MS. NOLAN: Can we get a list of all of
12 this, you know, so that we can review it and we
13 will share with all the members of the committee
14 because very often we are not as aware as we
15 should be perhaps of the good works of SEG. You
16 know I can tell you I have people come into the
17 office, in my district office looking for GED
18 sites and it doesn't seem to work as seamlessly
19 as you are saying. You know it seems to be a lot
20 of fits and starts, though I agree with you the
21 multiple seat registration issue has to be
22 tackled and we understand that.

23 I do want to say there are other issues
24 involving minimum age for GED testing. In New

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 York you have to be 19, right that's the case,
3 that's the State Ed. regulation, not...?

4 MR. GOLDSMITH: That is a requirement of
5 ACE, they are the owner of the test, you can take
6 the test under 19 under certain conditions,
7 students who are out of school youth, entry to
8 the military, things like that, alternative high
9 school preparation programs-

10 MS. NOLAN: I am confused here, I have a
11 document that says the minimum age for GED
12 testing without exception, Maryland is 16, North
13 Carolina is 16, Colorado 17 and a lot of States
14 are 18 and they all use the ACE test.

15 MR. GOLDSMITH: Right it depends also on
16 your maximum age, maximum age for schooling. In
17 New York City it is 17, the rest of the State it
18 is 16, you have to be an out of school youth-

19 MS. NOLAN: Wait so just go back again
20 because I asked it cleanly and you said, you are
21 confusing me now. The minimum age for GED
22 testing in New York is 19 and you said the answer
23 was because that is what ACE requires, but that
24 is not what ACE requires because all these other

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 States have different ages. It is what they
3 require based on what our State's...?

4 MR. GOLDSMITH: What your maximum school
5 age is and you have to be an out of school youth.
6 You have to be out of the school system in an
7 approved program or entry to the military or job
8 core to be eligible to sit for the test.

9 MS. NOLAN: Okay, so why are there all
10 these discrepancies if it is a nationwide testing
11 company that does it?

12 MR. KING: Essentially ACE has tried to
13 create this exception of out of school youth
14 based on the mandatory school age within each
15 State. In part because ACE is trying to
16 discourage the practice that schools might have
17 of pushing kids out into GED programs and so they
18 have created this exception and how the exception
19 works varies in States depending on what their
20 compulsory age requirements are.

21 MS. NOLAN: You know at some point we
22 are going to try to reach out for them and have a
23 dialogue with them so we can understand that
24 better. There are a number of States that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 require the official, the OPT stands for the
3 Official Practice Test. I love education people,
4 I love that, how everything becomes initials that
5 sound so important and then you just find out it
6 stands for Official Practice Test. But a number
7 of States do require that and they have, some of
8 them are free and some of them actually have
9 people pay for that, you know. Do you have any
10 comments on that, on the Official Practice Test?

11 MR. KING: Our view is that having
12 students take the Official Practice Test will
13 result in a higher level of preparation for the
14 GED because then students will know how prepared
15 they are and that will hopefully cause them
16 either to do more prep work if they don't do well
17 or move forward if they do well in the Practice
18 Test.

19 We want ideally to be able to make the
20 Practice Test broadly available and we are now
21 exploring with the publisher being able to make
22 it available as widely as possible even through
23 libraries and through One-Stops and through the
24 literacy zones so that people can have open

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 access to the Practice Test.

3 MS. NOLAN: In one of the reports that
4 the Community Services Society did, they said
5 there is no single entity that tracks the
6 performance of these programs, I think they were
7 referring to the City but how do you feel about
8 that as pertains to your role?

9 MR. KING: One of the challenges here is
10 that we, that the regulatory oversight of GED
11 prep programs is quite modest so on your point
12 about the preparation of teachers, we don't have
13 a process by which we certify or ensure that
14 there is a level of preparation of the
15 instructors. We don't have a process by which we
16 ensure the quality necessarily of the prep
17 program providers.

18 MS. NOLAN: Who are those instructions
19 in the 500 preparation things, are they willing
20 volunteers or are they just, are they paid, are
21 they, who are they?

22 MR. KING: There is a range, is our
23 sense, across the different community bases
24 organizations, certainly in the ASHEP programs

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the ones that are run by districts or BOCES, then
3 often they are teachers but across the
4 community-based organizations there is a pretty
5 wide variety.

6 MR. GOLDSMITH: If I could just say one
7 thing John, we have a system within our office
8 that we built called AAES [phonetic], the Adult
9 Accountability Education System where we are
10 keeping centers accountable and we actually issue
11 report cards for every single one of our adult
12 education centers and we are in our third year of
13 those report cards. They are available online
14 for centers to see how they are doing, how is
15 their job placement, how is their literacy rate,
16 are they achieving results?

17 MS. NOLAN: Have you ever closed any,
18 have you ever defunded anybody?

19 MR. GOLDSMITH: Not at this point
20 because it requires three years of corrective
21 action in our protocols so we have a couple of
22 centers that are in corrective action and if they
23 don't move out of corrective action which would
24 be the lowest - - of performance they would be

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 defunded.

3 MS. NOLAN: I think we need to see that.
4 I mean, I guess this is only based on this
5 relatively new RFP process or did you evaluate
6 them before?

7 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well AAES is separate
8 because that doesn't focus on the test sites,
9 that focuses on the prep programs which are
10 clearly related. We want to make sure we have
11 good prep programs, accountable prep programs
12 setting students up for success when they sit the
13 GED.

14 MS. NOLAN: And you are not funding them
15 though, WIA money funds them?

16 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well it is Federal
17 dollars through our office, we fund Federal WIA
18 dollars to centers through a competitive process.

19 MS. NOLAN: And you want to expand the
20 use of WIA to do what, in your recommendations?

21 MR. GOLDSMITH: Okay, well we have put
22 through a letter to the Federal Government to use
23 WIA money specifically to help support the
24 administration of the GED test to students with

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 special needs. It was determined back in 2004
3 from the Federal Government that you cannot use
4 WIA money to administer GED tests and that
5 started the beginning of some of our budget
6 challenges because we were using money to
7 administer the tests. Those funds moved out of
8 that but they did respond or they didn't respond
9 through the process so we can use some of that
10 money to finance special accommodations.

11 MS. NOLAN: I think I would like to also
12 revisit that in some follow-up discussions with
13 the agency. I actually serve as one of the
14 speaker representatives to this WIA advisory
15 thing that sad to say never meets, doesn't meet
16 very often, you know, and sometimes when it
17 meets, it was during session, I was actually
18 unable to be there but Assemblyman Schiminger
19 [phonetic], I think is usually able to make more
20 of the meetings that I have been. But as I said
21 and it is sort of in limbo a bit, there was some
22 turnover and it hasn't really met, it is not
23 required to meet that often I gather, so we are
24 just skating by there. But I am going to go back

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to that and find out a little bit more. But I
3 think these are where perhaps we can be more
4 collaborative with SEG, with our colleagues at
5 the Federal level, you know, and see if we, it
6 seems to me that the WIA money is an ideal source
7 for this and, you know, should be expanded.

8 I apologize for taking so much time. I
9 know my colleagues may have questions and I want
10 to let Michael, since he was here first start and
11 if anybody else has anything more we will go. We
12 do have a lot, a pretty large witness list so I
13 apologize for taking so much of your time. But I
14 like the agencies to come first and show you that
15 courtesy and then have the most questions. Go
16 ahead.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER MICHAEL A. BENJAMIN
18 MEMBER, ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION:
19 Good morning.

20 MS. NOLAN: Thank you.

21 MR. BENJAMIN: That's alright. Earlier,
22 I think it was last month, Assemblyman Schroeder
23 and I had an opportunity to meet with some of
24 your staff and I believe it was said that part of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 SED's commitment to GED and - - first development
3 is that you are hiring a new Deputy Commissioner,
4 could you explain that further?

5 MR. KING: Yeah so as part of the work
6 that the Regents have been doing, I think about
7 how to make SED more customer service oriented
8 one of the things that we are doing is realigning
9 some of our activities across different units and
10 so we are creating a new office of adult
11 education workforce development and - - rehab.
12 So that new office will have a new Deputy who
13 will oversee sort of all of the different
14 department activities that relate to adult
15 education and workforce issues. The GED will
16 move over along with our other adult education
17 activities to that office rather than being
18 merged with - - .

19 MR. BENJAMIN: And the reason why you
20 are doing that, is that because of...?

21 MR. KING: In part so that we have a
22 dedicated deputy level leader who is focused on
23 adult and workforce development issues. Right
24 now adult issues are sort of divided between the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 P12 office, GED and Adult Ed being in the P12
3 office and - - Rehab services being with our
4 VESED [phonetic] special ed. office. So we are
5 going to move the special ed. component of VESED
6 over to P12 so that general ed. and special ed.
7 are together in one P12 office and then there
8 will be a separate adult ed. office and we are
9 currently doing a search for a deputy for that
10 role.

11 MR. BENJAMIN: Okay you said earlier in
12 your testimony that you are looking to make sort
13 of a GED, sort of a part of education career
14 ladder with GED then going onto college and
15 moving up in educational attainment and work,
16 what exactly is tested by the GED?

17 MR. KING: Well the GED has six
18 subtasks, they are, they test language arts
19 reading, language arts writing, social studies,
20 science, math and they can also test English as a
21 second language if it is a French or Spanish
22 version of the test. But the goal of the test is
23 to assess whether the student has a competence in
24 the skills that one would get through K through

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

12 education. But what we have found is that
students are most successful when there are GED
preparation experiences embedded in preparation
for a trade school program or a career program or
some sort of college readiness program and they
are also learning the study skills and
organizational skills that they might need for
college or the skills that they might need for a
trade. Then they see the GED as embedded in some
of our other aspiration as opposed to just a
replacement for the high school diploma.

MR. BEJAMIN: Okay great because I think
we don't want students, you know, to be thought
to the test and only focus on one area and if
they can just see their lives in a much broader
fashion. I guess a couple of other questions I
wanted to ask. The curriculum for I guess GED
instruction, you want to create a three hour
course, at present what is the requirement for
those who are non-board of ed. employees, for
those community-based organizations, what are, I
guess the requirements to become a GED
instructor?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. GOLDSMITH: Well all our
3 requirements right now is that the students need
4 to be certified, not necessarily certified in
5 adult education. They need to have a teachers
6 certification and that varies from district to
7 district and what area. The prep program itself
8 varies in content, you know, our protocols
9 require that students come into an entry, they be
10 evaluated, an intake process, they are usually
11 given the Tate [phonetic] test to evaluate their
12 literacy levels and then they are provided with
13 suitable, you know, training or prep programs.
14 Some whose levels are so low are put into basic
15 English at first as a stepping stone going
16 towards GED prep. So we like to get an
17 evaluation, the focus is always on prep, making
18 sure students are ready for success when they
19 move into the GED test. As Dr. King cited the
20 reports and some of our knowledge we realize
21 students have a false sense of illusion, you
22 know, when they go into the test that they can
23 pass this and they are not even close to the
24 required literacy level, so that preparation and

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 readiness is critical for students to succeed on
3 the GED.

4 MR. BENJAMIN: How are you going to get
5 that message out because I have heard from a
6 number of critics who are saying that by
7 requiring the OPT you are preventing people from
8 coming off the street and taking it cold, from
9 having the incentive to want to try to get the
10 GED?

11 MR. KING: That is really a worry. I
12 think that what we have seen in the pattern of
13 test takers is that many of the students who take
14 the test and fail get disillusioned and won't
15 come back and take it again. So the hope is that
16 by having students take the OPT and get a real
17 sense of how ready they are that that will cause
18 them to go back and prepare more. I think often
19 what happens is that you have students who have
20 had some high school education, they have dropped
21 out of high school but they have gotten a set of
22 credits and they assume that that is sort of
23 enough preparation for the GED. The GED actually
24 is quite a rigorous assessment of those areas

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that I described and so often times those
3 students are much less prepared than they think.

4 MR. BENJAMIN: One last question, in
5 seeing the GED as part of a continuing of
6 education and employment how do we get the
7 message out to the public that the future
8 workforce is going to require beyond a high
9 school diploma and possibly beyond a Community
10 College Associates degree that we really need to
11 get our preparation done early and for those who
12 are members of, I guess minority groups, black
13 African American, you know, Asian, Hispanic, the
14 barriers to employment that pop up when one
15 doesn't have a GED or a post-secondary education?

16 MR. KING: You know I think that is
17 probably the responsibility of all institutions
18 of government but I would say particularly P12
19 education. I think unfortunately there are
20 students who think to themselves "Oh if I drop
21 out of high school I will just get my GED and
22 that will be easier" and they are mistaken both
23 at how easy it will be to get the GED and then
24 what they will actually be able to do with that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 GED. So I think it is really a question of how
3 we improve our high schools, state wide and have
4 high schools do a much better job of giving
5 students when they come into ninth grade a
6 clearer sense of how high school fits in their
7 long-term career and post secondary education
8 aspirations.

9 MR. GOLDSMITH: I just have one thing to
10 add to John's point is that we have some great
11 what we call bridge programs in CUNY and some of
12 our community colleges throughout the State that
13 get that message out at the GED prep level. Your
14 question was how do we get that message out,
15 people coming in for the GED we are planting that
16 in them, it is not just about preparing for the
17 GED, that is just going to get you so high, it is
18 not enough in today's job market, so the prep
19 programs work right away become these bridge
20 programs that will get you ready for the GED but
21 we have got to get you ready for success in
22 higher education, the workforce, apprenticeship
23 programs whatever the next step is because in
24 today's market the GED unfortunately becomes the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 dead-end without those logical bridges.

3 So some of the forces and the vision of
4 the Regents was to expand those bridge programs
5 and we have great models in all parts of the
6 State.

7 MR. BENJAMIN: One last question for
8 sure. What is the pass rate for those persons
9 taking the GED in a language other than English
10 whether it is in Spanish or French, any idea?

11 MR. KING: I don't think we have that
12 number relative, in the thirties or so-

13 MS. NOLAN: We have other people here
14 from SED-

15 MR. KING: Other SED staff, yeah, so we
16 think it is in the thirties but we will get back
17 to you and confirm that.

18 MR. GOLDSMITH: But the biggest factor
19 in determining success rates is in a prep program
20 or not. While our statewide pass rate is about
21 59%, if you are in a prep program your pass rate
22 is closer to 70%, if you are not in a prep
23 program no matter what language you are taking it
24 your pass rate is closer to 42%. So the biggest

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 factor or variable is prep or non-prep.

3 MR. KING: Thank you.

4 MR. GOLDSMITH: You are welcome.

5 MS. NOLAN: Carmen or Mark, a question?

6 ASSEMBLYMEMBER CARMEN E. ARROYO, MEMBER,
7 ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION: I
8 don't want to repeat any of the questions that
9 were made before me but I have one question. Is
10 there any space or approach to the private sector
11 to participate in this program and let me say why
12 I put this question at the table? There are so
13 many companies and people that make good money in
14 our neighborhoods and probably we should approach
15 them to participate in this type of event and
16 program because they can supply money to help the
17 people that will be their employees or the
18 employees in any companies in their neighborhood.
19 Is there any approach to it; is there any
20 participation or any way to see if we can seek
21 that?

22 MR. GOLDSMITH: We are looking at an
23 option and we have met with our office of
24 council, we want to reach out to possible private

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 funding sources to support test centers, not
3 money that would go to State ed. but to actually
4 support those test centers. We continue to
5 support test centers with materials, by scoring,
6 by providing training but actual outside private
7 sources in communities that could support the
8 actual administration of the assessment.

9 So we are looking at those opportunities
10 to make sure there is no legal or regulatory bans
11 to such activities.

12 MS. ARROYO: I am basing my statement on
13 the fact that there are so many companies that
14 make a lot of money in our communities and some
15 of them give opportunities for basic programs in
16 the community. We should approach them. For
17 example we have in the Bronx the Yankees, we have
18 in Queens the Mets, we have in Manhattan other
19 organizations plus we have contractors that come
20 to build in our community and what we have found
21 in the last years is that most of these
22 contractors don't even pay taxes in the United
23 States; they come from other places. We should
24 approach them, they should put part of the money

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that they are making back in the community and
3 this is one of the issues that we should bring.

4 MR. KING: Thanks.

5 MS. NOLAN: Mark?

6 ASSEMBLYMEMBER MARK J. SCHROEDER,
7 MEMBER, ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION:
8 Thank you. Well first of all I am delighted to
9 be here with my partners in government and I just
10 want to say that our Chair of education is
11 absolutely standing. She is tireless, she does
12 things that are incredible and for us to have
13 this opportunity because of her leadership is
14 something I think is very, very important
15 especially because of where we are with the new
16 leadership in SED.

17 I also would like to commend and
18 congratulate Dr. Steiner who I believe is
19 outstanding. For him to be in this room to watch
20 this deliberation is a message to me and to my
21 colleagues that this is a serious matter and when
22 I met with him privately and with the leadership
23 of Cathy Nolan he used the term "Radical",
24 radical changes will be made within SED and I am

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 very happy to hear that. To you Dr. King your
3 background is absolutely outstanding and you do
4 have the background to talk about this because I
5 know who you are and I know what you have
6 accomplished. I think what I would like to do is
7 just to give a brief statement and then I will
8 ask a question. But I think the comments that I
9 make will show you the incredible disconnect that
10 is in this State regarding this subject matter.

11 I have been in the New York State
12 Assembly for six years. I ran for the Erie
13 County Legislature nine years ago so I served in
14 the Erie County Legislature for three years and
15 what I told people is that I think we need a
16 Chamber of Commerce.

17 So we established a Chamber of Commerce
18 on the strip that was 54 vacant deplorable
19 buildings and so on the very first day we took
20 office we established the Chamber of Commerce and
21 I was just about to pat myself on the back, job
22 well done, I am looking out on the street corner
23 and it is say Tuesday morning 10 o'clock, seven
24 kids on the corner. So I call my wife and I said

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 "I don't think I got the message, you know, maybe
3 school is off today", she said "No, school is not
4 off today." Okay, next day look out to the
5 corner, seven kids. So I went out there and I
6 began the investigation. Four of them would go
7 up the front stairs of South Park High School
8 wave and say hello, sign in and then go out the
9 back door and then they would join the three
10 other kids on the street who were dropouts on the
11 street.

12 So it then occurred to me that the
13 Chamber of Commerce thing was great but if we are
14 going to have kids hanging in front of every
15 business all day long that doesn't work either so
16 we need to do something about it. Now I was
17 shocked. In the community that I come from, it
18 is in the city of Buffalo, it is a very large - -
19 district, not one GED program in that community.
20 So that was pretty shocking, so having been in
21 the private sector for 20 years I would like to
22 do a little homework first and so we did the
23 homework.

24 What we found in Erie County, 66,000

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 people workforce age do not have a high school
3 degree or a GED. I then have found out through
4 my years here in the Assembly over seven million
5 New Yorkers across this state are in need of some
6 sort of adult education, primarily a GED. This
7 is shocking. The graduation rate in this State
8 regardless of what the last Commissioner of SED
9 said to the last Commissioner of the Federal SED
10 is not true at all; it is less than 50% in every
11 single city in this State.

12 That is problematic and so therefore
13 what I would suggest Dr. King and I have
14 suggested this to Commissioner Steiner I implore
15 you, I actually beg you to come to the South
16 Buffalo Education Center that we established
17 seven years ago. I take no credit for it anymore
18 except for founding it, the Executive Director is
19 a woman that is known across this State. She is
20 the only one who understands this issue of out of
21 school youth and GED, her name is Stacey Watson,
22 she serves on the Governor's task force. She is
23 here periodically and I would ask you please to
24 assign your new deputy commissioner and to come

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 and pay a visit because I believe this - -
3 Education Center we have the highest graduation
4 rate in the State and in all due respect SED
5 doesn't really know how to count very well, we
6 do, we have the highest retention rate in the
7 State of New York. We have six other programs in
8 this site and to your point that you made Dr.
9 King which is, it is bizarre to me, it is
10 berserk, look at, when you say the first
11 challenge and when you talk about in 2008/09 it
12 was \$3.9 million available to GED and then
13 whatever it is in 2010, it is ridiculous. It is
14 a travesty.

15 We have almost a \$24 billion education
16 budget and we are going to put \$3.4 million, it
17 doesn't, if you look at the Board and you look at
18 the numbers it doesn't, it is probably less than
19 a per cent. It is ridiculous and then if you
20 take the EPI money, which is \$96 million, it is
21 ridiculous. We need to turn this thing
22 completely upside down. We have so many people
23 in this State who need a second chance and so
24 therefore we have partnered with the Buffalo

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Education, Dr. Williams is a partner of our
3 Education Center. Erie Community College under
4 SUNY is a partner with us. We have four other
5 programs to help these people come in and get a
6 second chance, these young people and then get a
7 job and so on and so forth.

8 So I would recommend that you consider
9 looking at this program and consider it for a
10 pilot program. There is no reason why the South
11 Buffalo Education Center should have another one
12 on the East side of Buffalo which - - agrees,
13 another one on the West side to which Sam White
14 [phonetic] agrees. Every borough in the City
15 should have a program like this. It is
16 comprehensive, Syracuse, - -, Rochester all the
17 way through.

18 We have to figure out a way to do it and
19 we have to figure out a way to fund it. When we
20 first started the South Buffalo Education Center
21 I funded it out of my campaign fund and then when
22 that wasn't good enough I would go to what I
23 called the Bank of Kate, my wife, and we paid the
24 rent. We still, the education system in this

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 State doesn't underwrite this education center
3 that has the number one graduation rate in the
4 State. What is wrong with that and so I would
5 strongly suggest that we emulate the South
6 Buffalo Education Center, that we get officials
7 from SED and the Board of Regents to come and to
8 take a look and to make a distinction as to
9 whether or not something like this would work
10 across New York State, thank you.

11 MS. NOLAN: Thank you. I do want to
12 point out that we have, I try to run the hearings
13 kind of dry, but we will have a lot of passion on
14 this issue and it is in my opinion an era that we
15 have not when times were better expended the
16 monies available to this program.

17 I was actually really not in realizing
18 that and feel very badly about it. I think it is
19 something that should be a priority and though we
20 have of course worked in other parts of adult
21 literacy and we were able in the time that I have
22 chaired the committees - - in the conference
23 enhanced the adult literacy program by several
24 million dollars.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 This is where I want to stress the need
3 for dialogue with State Ed. because I think if we
4 had had a better understanding perhaps when times
5 were better we could have done a little more.

6 I also do want to get to the heart of
7 that Workforce Investment Act and why that is
8 structured the way it is. So in general I just
9 want to say we support I think as much as we can
10 what you are trying to do, we are going to try to
11 do a little more of a partnership on our end and
12 we appreciate you coming.

13 We were joined by Assemblyman Daniel
14 O'Donnell who I mentioned would be here. I don't
15 know if he has a question but we are going to
16 move on to our other witnesses but we really want
17 to thank you Dr. King and want to thank State Ed.
18 and Commissioner Steiner for being here and being
19 available and renewing everyone's commitment to
20 this important issue, thank you.

21 MR. KING: Thank you, thanks very much.

22 MS. NOLAN: Our next witnesses are two
23 of the people who produced, I mentioned reports,
24 I guess one of them was unable to, the Schuyler

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Center was unable to come but David Jones the
3 President and CEO of the Community Services
4 Society and Jacqueline Cook, the researcher for
5 Our Chance to Change are here and we are really,
6 really pleased. I know Ms. Cook's report in 2008
7 seems to have really re-sparked a renewal and
8 David your report in 2009.

9 MR. DAVID R. JONES, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
10 COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY: I have taken the
11 liberty of having Lazar Treschan one of the co-

12 MS. NOLAN: Right, you know, you are
13 going to have to do it in the mic or they are
14 going to shoot me up there. So just sit and we
15 will introduce everybody, thank you. Yeah we
16 like to do panels when we can and I assume you
17 have submitted testimony, you can read it or you
18 can summarize it, that's always good and answer
19 questions, thank you.

20 MR. JONES: Okay, well I would like to
21 thank the members of the committee. I am David
22 R. Jones, I am President of the Community
23 Services Society and I think I am concerned that
24 far too many individuals are without a high

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 school equivalency. In New York City we continue
3 despite all sorts of reform efforts to leave
4 behind about 40% of young people from the
5 graduating senior class and we are literally
6 almost a geyser of people who are being dropped
7 out and pushed out of the city educational
8 system.

9 At the moment we are the estimated, the
10 best estimates we have, about 1.3 million
11 individuals in the City of working age who do not
12 have high school or a high school equivalency and
13 more than double that for the State.

14 Rather than go through the parts of my
15 testimony I would like to put this in context of
16 why we are particularly concerned about this.
17 CSS obviously is one of the oldest charities in
18 the country. We have been working on issues of
19 poverty since before the civil war and in some
20 cases the crisis that is hitting us out of this
21 recession is certainly unique in my lifetime.

22 We have currently more than 10%
23 unemployment in the city of New York. We have
24 across the nation about 6.5 million people who

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 have been out of work for more than 27 months and
3 that is less than half of the unemployed rate.
4 But the worrisome thing is all the economic
5 indicators are we are never in our lifetime going
6 to return to the employment rates that we had
7 before this recession.

8 This is something unique that in fact we
9 are looking for extraordinarily high rates of
10 employment going through potentially 2115 to 2020
11 and we are starting to look at something that we
12 haven't seen in the United States since the Great
13 Depression, chronic unemployment rates. The
14 difficulty is this is not going to be an equal
15 opportunity unemployment problem this is going to
16 be massive unemployment rates for people without
17 credentials and skills.

18 New York State is sitting in sort of
19 Ground Zero of this problem. We have not been
20 particularly effective in improving our
21 graduation rates not only for blacks and Latinos
22 but also across the State we have serious
23 problems with large numbers of young people of
24 all races who just don't get credentialed.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 In the economy we are entering into they
3 are going to be essentially unable to get work
4 and let me tell you what this is about and then I
5 will stop and also talk about how concerned I am
6 about the cuts here.

7 Essentially what seems to be occurring
8 that no one seems to recognize, we assume that
9 people dropping out could always join the ranks
10 of the unskilled, unemployed. We had a
11 commission in the city of New York that was
12 co-chaired by Mayor Bloomberg and Charlie Wrangle
13 [phonetic] two or three years ago looking at
14 construction trades.

15 Construction trades have been a very
16 difficult area particularly for blacks and
17 Latinos to break into. When we talk now about
18 the construction trades not one of their
19 pre-apprenticeship programs are accepting people
20 with a GED or a high school. So suddenly the
21 notion of people who decide to drop out like they
22 did in the 19fifties when I was growing up and
23 that was no big deal, actually I think the former
24 head of Con Ed. did not have a high school

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 diploma, it has suddenly shifted to virtually
3 every job in the economy requires a high school
4 equivalency or high school diploma to participate
5 at any level.

6 The anecdotal evidence and it may be - -
7 now Starbucks is looking for a couple of years of
8 college for their Baristas because six people are
9 applying for every job, particularly low-wage
10 jobs. So who needs somebody who has dropped out
11 of high school and doesn't have a GED?

12 We are talking about a potential massive
13 disaster that is going to hit New York and
14 destabilize communities not only like my own in
15 Crown Heights and - - but across the State where
16 you have large numbers of people who can't find
17 work anywhere and will be chronically unemployed.

18 This has happened in Europe and it has
19 led to real disruption. A permanent social
20 safety net to essentially support people who
21 never work, enormous sharp increases in crime, a
22 whole host of problems that not only are a
23 disaster for the individuals and their families
24 but also for the communities where they are

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 living in because you cannot keep communities in
3 tact when you start to look at 20% and 30% and
4 40% unemployment rates and it starts to unglue
5 everything.

6 So I bring this in context, the GED is
7 important because we have to make sure we start
8 cutting into that 1.3 million and many more
9 across the State if we have a hope of getting
10 many communities in New York State to recover
11 after this recession.

12 Let me just turn very briefly to the
13 issue of the cuts. Again I don't think it is any
14 surprise, these cuts come at precisely the wrong
15 time. I think everyone recognizes that at a time
16 of deep recession you don't cut the very programs
17 that are going to help people navigate and put
18 this State in the position where they can compete
19 again. This is counter intuitive.

20 I recognize we are in tough times but if
21 we are going to strip the very limited resources
22 to help people actually get back on their feet,
23 get back into the economy, we are clearly
24 preparing the groundwork for a long-term problem

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 for New York State and its tax payers. So we
3 urge this group to obviously take a serious look
4 at what we can do with restoration. We are happy
5 to hear what the State Regents are talking about
6 as a long-term solution.

7 I think it is also, I have to own this
8 myself, I was Youth Service Commissioner under Ed
9 Koch for four years and the notion of focusing on
10 GED was not on my radar screen. The notion we
11 had to focus on high schools and elementary was
12 everyone's notion and I was still under the
13 assumption that dropouts could always go into the
14 low wage economy and if they worked hard could
15 move their way up and out. I am afraid that
16 everything indicates that is never going to
17 happen again and if we don't do that we are going
18 to be sitting in these rooms for decades to come
19 dealing with the problem of larger and larger
20 proportions of our population who never engaged
21 in work. Thank you.

22 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, would you like to
23 introduce the person who is with you for the
24 record?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. JONES: Lazar Treschan is one of the
3 co-authors of our report that I think many of you
4 have. This was in some ways a break through for
5 us. It was not our main intent. We were looking
6 at high rates of black and Latino unemployment
7 and disconnected youth problems and it started to
8 come out as a major factor that had to be
9 investigated. So this report was funded by the
10 City Council of the City of New York, one of the
11 first times we have done that and it started to
12 unpack a problem that is growing much faster
13 than anyone had expected certainly within the
14 advocacy community that I was working in.

15 MS. NOLAN: Would your colleague like to
16 say a word as well and you better say your name
17 again a little slower.

18 MR. LAZAR TRESCHAN, COMMUNITY SERVICES
19 SOCIETY: Lazar Treschan from the Community
20 Services Society. I second everything that my
21 President says.

22 MS. NOLAN: That sounds good, alright
23 and then Ms. Cook thank you.

24 MS. JACQUELINE COOK, LITERACY EXPERT AND

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 RESEARCHER: My name is Jacqueline Cook and I am
3 a literacy expert and researcher and author of
4 the recent report Our Chance for Change.

5 MS. NOLAN: You had better make sure
6 that is on because you have a nice soft spoken
7 voice.

8 MS. COOK: Thank you.

9 MS. NOLAN: I miss the stenographer.

10 MS. COOK: Ah there it is, is it on now?

11 MS. NOLAN: Yes.

12 MS. COOK: Okay thank you. I will start
13 over. My name is Jacqueline Cook, I am a
14 literacy expert and researcher and recently
15 completed a report Our Chance for Change - A
16 Four-Year Reform Initiative for GED Testing in
17 New York City.

18 First let me thank you for hosting this
19 hearing Chair Nolan and committee members. It
20 speaks to, you know, the attention that this
21 issue needs and I am hopeful it will be a
22 catalyst for further reform and investment by the
23 State.

24 Tens of thousands of New Yorkers each

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 year receive a high school diploma. Last year it
3 was over 32,000, it was like 32,500, so you can
4 get a sense of what the scope is.

5 I also want to thank David Jones for his
6 comments and their report that Lazar and David
7 Fisher authored really is a terrific overview
8 particularly of the dividends that we gain by
9 investing in the GED and achieving the GED
10 diploma.

11 I know you will be hearing from others
12 about their, you know, motivations for obtaining
13 the GED practice that is happening in the field
14 and changes that need to be happening but I will
15 focus my testimony on the GED testing system, how
16 it developed, current changes that are needed and
17 reforms that are necessary.

18 The current challenges that we face and
19 reforms that are necessary, my comments are
20 informed by a long history in the field, several
21 years of researching GED testing and practices in
22 New York City have given me an in-depth
23 understanding of the motivations and experiences
24 of testing candidates, of the procedures and

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 challenges and in test administration and of the
3 resources and structures that are urgently needed
4 to support a successful GED system statewide.

5 New York State used to be a leader in
6 GED testing. It was the first State that gave
7 the exam to civilians in 1947. New York State
8 has led the way in recognizing the needs of older
9 youth and adults who need to demonstrate their
10 skills and knowledge by obtaining a GED.

11 It was the first State in the union to
12 use this credentialing system for non-military
13 persons. The State's commitment to access was
14 further demonstrated when it passed legislation
15 that prohibited the imposition of fees for the
16 GED exam. But this philosophical commitment to
17 broad access system has not been matched by
18 effective systems and financial resources which
19 are needed to support such access. In fact the
20 crisis we face today stems from a decades-long
21 struggle to establish a workable New York State
22 GED testing system.

23 With the passage of the war on poverty
24 legislation in the late sixties the number of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 adult education classes expanded throughout this
3 State. Additional growth in the size and scope
4 of these services occurred with an investment in
5 1984 of major State and local resources into
6 adult education.

7 However inadequate staffing, lack of
8 updated technology and too few test
9 administrations created enormous pressure on this
10 poorly funded State system.

11 For a brief time in the early nineties
12 there was a fee, \$25, it was charged when you
13 submitted your application for the exam. But
14 this system was abandoned as the demand for fee
15 waivers increased and the pure administrative
16 burden of collecting the fees outweighed the fees
17 collected.

18 Several years later a new crisis
19 developed when a backlog of un-scored exams
20 surpassed 11,000. The task force established to
21 recommend reforms reported that test candidates
22 waited as long as 39 weeks for their test
23 results.

24 So this is not the first legislative

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 hearing on GED testing. Legislative action,
3 Regents task forces and SED administrative
4 changes have been used for years to mitigate the
5 impact of each crisis and yet they really have
6 not addressed the comprehensive reform that is
7 needed.

8 Comprehensive statewide systemic reform
9 is critical to ensure that New York State GED
10 testing system supports the largest number of
11 people obtaining the diploma and achieving their
12 broader goals.

13 So how do we reach the bottom, why do we
14 have the lowest pass rate in the country and
15 where do we go from here. As I said the roots of
16 our current crisis go back many years and
17 undermine the State's commitment to open access
18 and success to the GED exam. In research
19 supported by the New York City Department of
20 Youth and Community Development and the New York
21 Community Trust that I conducted in 2008 and
22 summarized in Our Chance for Change gives the
23 characteristics of the GED system.

24 Simply stated the GED system functions

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 poorly and is greatly underfunded. However
3 targeted reforms really could turn this system
4 around. I will briefly describe a few of the
5 current conditions that I found in the testing
6 systems and recommendations proposed for reform.

7 You have a chart in front of you just
8 with six key things that I found and I will go
9 over them briefly. Right underneath them it
10 gives the evidence for it that is page three in
11 the report you have got there.

12 First, test takers lack test readiness.
13 We know that many of them are not academically
14 prepared but what we also found is that they do
15 not know what they are going to experience when
16 they arrive at a test center. Many of them don't
17 know that they are going to be there all day, the
18 whole day, they didn't arrange for childcare.
19 They don't know that they are going to be using a
20 calculator; they don't know that they are going
21 to be filling out bubble forms and grids on math
22 problems etc.

23 This is clearly something that can be
24 addressed. It is not just a matter of academic

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 preparation which is a serious matter it is also
3 a matter of providing that basic information and
4 doing it in a systemic way so that it is a step
5 in the application process.

6 Test site operations do not support the
7 success of test takers. In New York City where
8 there are about 25 open test centers many people
9 because there are wait lists will apply to three,
10 four or five of them, they get into one, the
11 other three, four or five never knew that they
12 took the test someplace else and those seats are
13 left empty. So on the one hand we have demand,
14 wait lists, on the other hand we have a capacity
15 that is not been fully utilized.

16 Additionally the infrastructure is
17 inadequate for coordination, communication,
18 collaboration across sectors so that collectively
19 people can address these problems as was said in
20 the earlier comments the need for an oversight
21 coordinating structure really needs to be in
22 place that has authority for this coordination.

23 Practitioners and the general public
24 lack awareness, you hear all the time that it is

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 easy, you know, that all I have to do is go take
3 that easy exam and are shocked when they find out
4 that it is all but easy. But as well the general
5 public doesn't recognize how critical this is as
6 a threshold to next steps and the importance it
7 has to our economy.

8 GED test administration as you have
9 heard is critically underfunded. That \$20 that
10 they get per test site is a fraction of the total
11 cost and it puts enormous pressure on already
12 restricted resources that exist in the education
13 system.

14 My final point is really about stressing
15 the need for oversight and planning. The
16 planning piece is critical, people asked about
17 accommodations for people with special needs,
18 exams in French, exams in Spanish. Looking at
19 those issues is critical to actually serving the
20 broader population in New York State that is in
21 need of a high school diploma.

22 The good news is that some steps are
23 already being underway to truly reform the
24 testing system but it requires ongoing support

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 from the State legislature to make this happen.

3 I am going to quickly mention three of
4 them and in-part because these three would be in
5 jeopardy if the current plans for reductions were
6 implemented.

7 The first is the GED Compass. The
8 Literacy Assistance Center, the Department of
9 Education, the New York City Council, the New
10 York Community Trust have worked in partnership
11 with broad input from other key stakeholders in
12 the field to develop the GED Compass website.

13 Among other important features the GED
14 Compass will provide a test seat registration
15 system online and a tool to locate programs to
16 help test candidates to develop their
17 preparedness. This is an obvious and workable
18 solution for problems of underutilized test site
19 capacity and an enormously inefficient GED test
20 application process. But public and private
21 resources that have begun to support this
22 initiative are, the public and private resources
23 that have begun, that are supporting this
24 initiative are recognition of how important this

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 reform is however those resources are jeopardized
3 if there is not the ongoing support for the basic
4 test operations.

5 The GED Official Practice Test has been
6 talked about, the OPT. There has been
7 considerable discussion about the role of the
8 OPT. It is the practice test that uses half the
9 numbers of questions in a practice environment.
10 New York State currently requires that all
11 students enrolled in programs supported by GED
12 administered funds pass the OPT prior to being
13 referred to the exam. So those people who are in
14 classes are taking this exam. This practice has
15 shown results and is consistent with practice in
16 other States where the OPT is required. The pass
17 rate is 14% higher in States where this is
18 required.

19 Although New York State does not require
20 individuals who are not in GED programs to take
21 the OPT before sitting for the exam a number of
22 programs have designed ways to serve this
23 population, community residents who are not in
24 programs so that they have the information to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 assess their own experience as well as to
3 understand what is involved in taking the exam.

4 So there are several promising things
5 that are happening in these pilot sites. One of
6 them is that the OPT is being used to simulate
7 the actual testing experience, so it provides
8 immediate important feedback on your test
9 readiness. It also provides seamless referral
10 for individuals who past the OPT right into a
11 test seat so they aren't lost in the muck of an
12 administrative process.

13 Furthermore it supports transitions into
14 educational programs for those individuals who
15 are not ready for the practice test. Right now
16 the individuals who come into testing and are not
17 prepared get lost and do not find their way into
18 programs and do not find their way back into test
19 centers.

20 One final thing that is happening that
21 is really also a terrific development announced
22 by Speaker Quinn in her State of the City address
23 is that they would combine resources in the
24 Department of Education and the One-Stop centers

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 so that the over 27,000 people that come into
3 One-Stop centers every year in New York City
4 without a high school diploma would at the One-
5 Stop site be assessed, be able to take the
6 Official Practice Test. Those who succeed would
7 have additional test readiness to go right to the
8 exam and those who don't succeed would be
9 immediately transitioned into programs so that it
10 would be a population that currently now is not
11 engaged in study that could immediately be
12 connected with study and would also be part of
13 the employment system so that they would have the
14 link for job placement as well.

15 So four recommendations, the first is
16 that \$1.15 million to support test sites has got
17 to be restored. It cannot be implemented on July
18 1st as is currently being proposed. Without these
19 funds the entire State support system for
20 administration of sites would be eliminated.
21 These cuts along with proposed cuts to the adult
22 literacy education funds would greatly undermine
23 state education and workforce priorities.

24 Test administration, if provided at all

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 would rely solely on local and in-kind resources
3 already stretched to capacity. Not to restore
4 testing funds would derail each of the critical
5 reforms outlined above and others being developed
6 CUNY, by SED, by the Department of Education and
7 other partners.

8 Furthermore the financial investments by
9 local governments and the private sector so
10 critical to reforms in these challenging economic
11 times would be thwarted. So most importantly the
12 number of individuals who obtain the state, the
13 diploma in New York State would go down. Right
14 now we tested 56,000 in 2008 and 32,500 obtained
15 their diploma.

16 The second recommendation is to develop
17 a comprehensive plan to fund GED test operations
18 that balances the two goals of having a high
19 percentage of a pass rate on the exam with a
20 commitment to increasing the number of diplomas
21 granted each year.

22 The level of State funding for GED
23 testing has remained flat while the demand for
24 test appointments continues to grow. In an

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 effort to expand the number of test seats
3 available and to connect testing programs to the
4 test sites the State Education Department
5 redesigned the system for funding test
6 administration. While closer integration of
7 testing and preparation programs happened as a
8 result of the RFP process that was described
9 earlier some of the projected expansion was
10 really not realized.

11 The funding mechanism that reimburses
12 test centers for each individual that is tested
13 was intended to expand the number of seats
14 available by providing a nominal cost, \$20 that
15 would leverage other resources.

16 However there have been several
17 unintended consequences by this \$20 fee or \$20
18 reimbursement. It has in fact lowered the pass
19 rate in the strategy. Two things have happened,
20 one is it encourages you to test people, large
21 numbers of test people at once because if you are
22 getting \$20 no matter what they are being tested
23 in large rooms and most often in a one-shot deal,
24 sitting all day for the exam or possibly twice.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 There is no incentive for really giving the exam
3 in a way that is most likely to support success.

4 Secondly when you are paid \$20 for a
5 student that is likely to pass as well \$20 for
6 someone who has no idea what they are going to
7 encounter in the test there is no incentive there
8 either to really develop a system that gives
9 people the information they need upfront as well
10 as giving them the transition to programs as well
11 as supports them in next steps for college and
12 employment.

13 Two more quickly, prior to the
14 implementation of these new statewide
15 requirements that are likely to be developed,
16 there needs to be analysis of existing research
17 and practice. It is very important that reliable
18 data are used to analyze results and inform
19 policy. At this point some of the, as was
20 described, the data system is very encumbered and
21 the basic management of GED applications and GED
22 scores, we need to recognize that much of the
23 data are unreliable, that people who fill in, if
24 they were in a prep program or if the fill in if

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 they took an Official Practice Test "Oh what am I
3 supposed to put there, what score should I put
4 on, is this the test center or is this the prep
5 program?", much of that data really needs to be
6 analyzed more thoroughly before we make broad
7 statewide decisions.

8 The second thing that needs to be done
9 in that regard is that we should pilot things
10 before we implement things statewide. There is a
11 lot of discussion about increasing the OPT as a
12 requirement for taking the exam. Right now you
13 need a 2250 to take the exam and it has been
14 talked about being increased, it is already
15 increased in some of the education programs where
16 students have a different threshold but we need
17 to look at really the impact that this would have
18 on many people who are taking the exam because
19 they need it for parole reasons or they need it
20 for reasons of getting into a specific training
21 program. Many of these people who currently now
22 are able to get a diploma and estimates are that
23 this would be thousands of diplomas would no
24 longer have access to that exam. So we would be

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 losing people that in fact could pass the exam
3 and would not be allowed to sit for it.

4 The last recommendation is that you
5 establish a statewide advisory council to provide
6 ongoing and regular review and evaluation of
7 testing operations and outcomes. That it be
8 statewide, that it be ongoing. The GED is
9 broadly recognized as a motivating factor for
10 individuals seeking to improve their lives and
11 the lives of their families and as a gateway for
12 further training and advanced education.

13 The message is clear from all sectors
14 that the testing system must support academic
15 preparation, test readiness and testing
16 operations that support access and results.

17 Practitioners, policy makers, state
18 administrations, experts, test takers themselves
19 and other stakeholders involved in each of these
20 phases need an ongoing role in the continuous
21 development and evaluation efforts. As the GED
22 increases as a threshold to further education, as
23 it increases as a threshold to training and work
24 opportunities with growing public awareness of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the importance of the GED and with local public
3 and private investment now is the time for the
4 state legislature to restore basic funding for
5 test administration, embrace needed testing
6 reform and join others as champions for the GED
7 system that truly provides a gateway for
8 individual advancement, for economic growth and
9 stability of the State.

10 So thank you and I would be happy to
11 respond to questions as well.

12 MS. NOLAN: Thank you for a
13 comprehensive testimony and I enjoyed reading the
14 report, looking at it again last night. I do
15 want to say in terms of an advisory board, we are
16 hoping that this hearing to a certain extent
17 serves that function for the legislature on one
18 level and it is our first opportunity in quite a
19 while to have a hearing on this topic.

20 One question, one thing that calls to
21 mind, I should have asked SED is how long is it
22 currently taking to score the exam?

23 MS. COOK: Right now that piece of the
24 system really has been addressed and there is a

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 phone line system that you can call up and find
3 out the pass/fail and you can do that sometimes
4 within two weeks and the score comes another two
5 to four weeks after that. So that part of the
6 system really is a strong piece and is working
7 quite well.

8 MS. NOLAN: The other thing, in your
9 testimony you talked about people coming in
10 unprepared and there was a suggestion that the
11 seven hours is a very lengthy day, do other
12 States administer it over two days and is this
13 ACE, this company or non-profit that develops all
14 this, do they allow that?

15 MS. COOK: Yes it is allowed to give as
16 the local agency believes is most appropriate and
17 many States do give it over more than one day.
18 We are often compared Iowa where they have a 99%
19 pass rate, well okay they do have like 6,000 test
20 takers so it is a whole different scale but on
21 the other hand they give the exam in five days
22 and give each sub-test on a different day.

23 MS. NOLAN: So English language, Arts,
24 Mathematics, Social Study, Science, each, so you

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 have to take a week in a sense to take the test?

3 MS. COOK: That's right.

4 MS. NOLAN: And what would it be, about
5 two hours every...?

6 MS. COOK: That's exactly right, it
7 would be about two hours, I mean some of the
8 actual sub-tests are only 45 minutes; others are
9 75 minutes, so it might vary. In New York State
10 we would, it is unlikely we would go to a five
11 day model but we could cluster some of the exams
12 together and make it so that it is an experience
13 because while the exam itself is seven hours when
14 you fill out the application and you have a break
15 for lunch you are there 10 or 12 hours.

16 MS. NOLAN: Of course it sort of a
17 grueling thing.

18 MS. COOK: Absolutely.

19 MS. NOLAN: You know, again sometimes
20 you might want to give people options right, some
21 people might want to try to take it all in one
22 day, others might want to break it up.

23 MS. COOK: Exactly.

24 MS. NOLAN: Then I guess, you know, in

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 terms of funding, again one of the reasons we are
3 having the hearing today is to try to generate
4 some interest in this issue and the fact that we
5 had a number of members come today even on an off
6 day I think indicates to there is support in the
7 legislature but we are facing a tremendous
8 barrier to any kind of expansion. I guess one of
9 the questions I have is that since there are so
10 many sites in the State I would imagine there is
11 a fair level of local support as well. Your work
12 for example was funded by the Mayor's fund and
13 other things, do you have an idea what the local
14 support is or perhaps David might want to answer
15 this, or varies from locality to locality?

16 MS. COOK: It does vary from locality to
17 locality but it is at least 50% more per test
18 taker and estimates are as high as \$120 per test
19 taker.

20 MS. NOLAN: So there is no required
21 local match so every county can do its own thing.

22 MS. COOK: There is not.

23 MS. NOLAN: Perhaps some parts of the
24 State give it more support than others.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. COOK: That's right.

3 MR. JONES: You should be aware that at
4 least in the city of New York they have also
5 installed another cut, massive cut, to GED both
6 testing and prep, mainly prep, so we are facing a
7 sort of double-barreled problem obviously as both
8 the city and the State, you should be aware that
9 the real reason our pass rate is so low is
10 largely attributable, not exclusively to what is
11 happening in New York City.

12 Actually there was a comment made by the
13 Regents that I would like to clarify, this issue
14 of the different variable outcomes by different
15 prep programs, support programs and the lack of
16 oversight and in fact some of the worst outcomes
17 are coming out of city run programs by the
18 government itself particularly dealing with TANEF
19 [phonetic] so we do think a strong oversight to
20 really start evaluating how successful the
21 different programs are in preparing people for
22 the GED would be one of the real reforms. We
23 have to give the public an understanding of what
24 is working and what is not and where they can

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 actually get the kind of supports they need.

3 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, anybody, sure
4 Danny?

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER DANIEL O'DONNELL, MEMBER,
6 ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION: It's
7 good to see you Mr. Jones, I do a reading
8 challenge in my district every year and I go to
9 the three public libraries and I talk to kids
10 about the importance of reading. One of my
11 standard jokes is that I want them to learn to
12 read so that they can go to college because if
13 they go to college they make more money, if they
14 make more money they pay more taxes and I get to
15 spend it, okay, so they think that's pretty
16 funny.

17 But just recently, I don't remember
18 which day there was an article in the New York
19 Times that sort of said "That's not really a good
20 approach, that many people have this mantra that
21 you need to go to college and blah, blah, blah,
22 but that many people are not really suited for
23 college and that they spend a lot of money trying
24 to get a college degree and they fail in getting

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 either an Associate's or a Bachelor's." So I
3 just wanted to know whether or not you read that
4 article and have a sense about how that fits into
5 this particular equation?

6 MR. JONES: Well we have read it and we
7 have actually done some investigation on this
8 whole issue. There is a question of college
9 being the only path into the middle class. What
10 the GED and high school passage however get into
11 this is now you can't even get into what was
12 formerly considered the trades which were non-
13 college without a high school equivalency. They
14 have sort of sealed off the problem we are
15 dealing with now of actually not being able to be
16 an electrician, a plumber, a carpenter, things,
17 an entrepreneur, anything unless you have a basic
18 credential.

19 MR. O'DONNELL: You have walked me right
20 to my next question and my question is whether or
21 not in those training programs that you mentioned
22 earlier whether or not this is a question of
23 having the credential or is this a question of
24 actually having the information and the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 intelligence and skills that the credential
3 reflects because it seems to me, I mean you know
4 there are a lot of geographical differences. I
5 was a public defender in Brooklyn during the
6 crack years in the eighties and the early
7 nineties and I was amazed to see how many of my
8 clients were not functionally literate. They
9 couldn't write their own names, right, and I came
10 from Long Island, Commack, and you know, 90% of
11 the people I went to high school with, you know,
12 graduated and of course there is nothing else to
13 do in Commack but graduate from high school so I
14 suppose that's part of the reason why there was
15 no place else to go, right, but to actually go to
16 school. But in the end I can't really believe
17 that, you know, the intelligence factor spread
18 across society is not so, is so disparately
19 different, so the question I really want to know
20 is, is it that by passing the GED you have
21 information and skills that allow you to do this
22 job better or is it just a bunch of letters after
23 some one's name that they now say you have to
24 have to become a carpenter?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. JONES: Again from the evidence we
3 know it is the former, that this is the basic
4 skill level you need to participate in a complex
5 society and there is a lot of evidence. I served
6 for 10 years on the board of something called
7 Jobs for the Future, which was the leading
8 research operation for the Clinton Administration
9 and Labor. It is no necessity to get into the
10 middle class to have a high school, to have a
11 college diploma but having requisite skills that
12 allow you to do higher level work whether that's
13 being a carpenter or being an auto mechanic or
14 aviation, to allow you to actually get a living
15 wage requires what the GED and high school
16 diploma require.

17 As a matter of fact I was with, in the
18 panel, I talked about the Mayor and talked about,
19 I was talking to one of the heads of the
20 electrician's union which basically four years of
21 college, basically does prepare most of the
22 people to actually be a - - electrician because
23 of the high level of math required to do this.
24 So there is a shift going on here but clearly

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 everyone is making this the basic litmus test
3 before you can even get advanced skills in a non-
4 college technical performance area.

5 MR. O'DONNELL: Thank you, Ms. Cook; I
6 have a couple of brief questions. Would you say
7 that your average high school graduate would be
8 able to pass the GED without taking a prep class?

9 MS. COOK: The exam is built on norms
10 from high school graduates and so that is how the
11 passing rate is set and 40% is the threshold that
12 is established so in fact, you know, 40% of high
13 school graduates would not be able to pass this
14 exam.

15 MS. NOLAN: I don't want to, I have a
16 copy of one of the exams for the members to see,
17 I don't want suggest what would happen if we had
18 the legislatures take the test. Some of the math
19 questions were way beyond my-

20 MR. O'DONNELL: Yes our stars must be
21 aligned because you just teed up my next
22 question. My next question, Ms. Cook, is I watch
23 T.V. and there is a show "Are you smarter than a
24 fifth grader or fourth grader or second grader"

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 and I think I am fairly smart and I went to law
3 school, blah, blah, blah and I turned that T.V.
4 show on, one night. They asked the first
5 question and guess what I got it wrong, so being
6 who I was I just turned the T.V. off and didn't
7 listen to anymore questions. In my defense I was
8 never very good at astronomy or that stuff but
9 having said that there is some degree which
10 information that comes in at some point in order
11 to make room for more information, some of that
12 information has to go out, right? So when some
13 of the issues that you raised in terms of how
14 quickly and how the test is administered, if you
15 believe T.V. commercials you can sort of get a
16 medical degree on the computer these days, right?
17 I mean they sort of say "Sign up, you know, the
18 University of Arizona says you can go online to
19 answer five questions and boom you have a
20 bachelors degree." So why is it that we can't,
21 why is it that that is not the way this sort of
22 test is administered so that it is done almost,
23 you know, as quickly and as efficiently, I mean
24 and in the 21st century rather than, like the IQ

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 test I took in 1966?

3 MS. COOK: Well you are definitely not
4 the first person to ask that question and the
5 American Council and Education is the developer
6 of this exam is addressing that. In their next
7 version of the exam they are doing several
8 things, one is they are making greater
9 articulation of college readiness and really
10 examining that this is a better predictor of
11 success in college and assesses skills needed for
12 college. They are also tying it to the core
13 curriculum state standards initiative so that it
14 will be more tied to the initiatives that have
15 been adapted by most Governors and most States in
16 terms of high school curriculum.

17 The third is that the plans are that
18 this exam would also be available online. Right
19 now if you Google GED the first 10 or 20 hits you
20 will get will say that it is available online and
21 that's a whole other issue in terms of the whole
22 proprietary network that is out there, granting
23 diplomas that really aren't valid. At this point
24 it is not available online but that is the plan.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. O'DONNELL: I am sure some 12 or
3 14-year-old can fix that problem but I couldn't
4 probably address it. My last question, we have
5 somebody on staff - - who came, is an attorney on
6 staff here in Albany and got their GED, took a
7 very long time to get to college, is one of the
8 most talented and effective lawyers in this
9 building and so the question I want to ask you
10 is, if you know, is the GED used as a mechanism
11 for college entry for a vast majority or is GED
12 used as a bunch of lettered credentials to cover
13 up, to overcome the lack of a high school diploma
14 and then they are just going to go on with the
15 rest of their life, if you know?

16 MS. COOK: Yes nationally 99% of
17 colleges and universities accept the GED as a
18 threshold for entrance. They may have
19 particular, other additional requirements but it
20 is equal to a high school diploma. In New York
21 City the percent of people who are enrolling in
22 college with a GED continues to grow and is a
23 major initiative within the university to try to
24 provide the best support and transition for these

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 students. You will be hearing further testimony
3 specifically about that initiative and indeed
4 these students struggle to stay in school and
5 their performance is not what we would like it to
6 be. But we have found just like with the exam
7 itself that with appropriate screening, support
8 and readiness they are able to accede and become
9 as you said some of our most outstanding lawyers
10 and other professions.

11 MR. O'DONNELL: Let's not go with the
12 lawyer stuff; let's push it in another direction.

13 MS. COOK: Okay.

14 MR. O'DONNELL: But do you have any
15 percentages, like is there any way to know what
16 percentage of people who get GEDs either are
17 doing so for the purpose to go onto higher
18 education or what percentage of actual...?

19 MS. COOK: That I do know, in fact it is
20 very interesting in that regard. The information
21 is collected on "Why do you want the exam?" It
22 used to be that the number one reason was
23 employment; people were taking the exam, the
24 diploma for employment. About two years ago that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 shifted and the number one reason 60% of people
3 take the exam because they say they are going to
4 college and in fact employment dropped to number
5 three. The number two reason was personal
6 reasons, reasons for personal fulfillment,
7 satisfaction as an individual but also for roles
8 of being a parent, adjudication issues, other
9 issues. So employment became number three,
10 college became number one as the reason for
11 people taking the exam.

12 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, thank you, Mark?

13 MR. SCHROEDER: Thank you, first of all
14 my colleague asked some tremendous questions and
15 I just wanted to comment that at the South
16 Buffalo Education Center that I mentioned before
17 which is about seven years old we have graduated
18 over 500 young people with GEDs. 72% of them
19 have entered college. If you were to say to
20 them, the first day they were at that school that
21 they were going to go to college they probably
22 would have thought that you were insulting them
23 but it makes a big difference if they are
24 prepared and they are able to take the GED

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 properly and then go onto community college,
3 which if you ask community colleges across the
4 State what percentage of GED students they have
5 it is enormous, so my colleague asked great
6 questions.

7 I just wanted to make two brief comments
8 on both testimonies. First of all Mr. Jones
9 thank you for your service and earlier in your
10 testimony you said something about the civil war
11 and it seems so long ago that it reminded me that
12 the only thing older than the civil war that I am
13 aware of around this place is the Board of
14 Regents which pre-dates State Government 1777, so
15 I would strongly suggest that you make your case
16 to them as well, let them be heard by then.

17 Also in all due respect rather than be
18 upset about the cut be upset about the whole
19 number, \$2.4 million that is disgraceful. In
20 your testimony it says "In New York City each
21 year we leave behind 40% of what is supposed to
22 be the graduating senior class", let me suggest
23 that we don't have to wait until the senior
24 class. In Buffalo Dr. Williams to his credit,

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the superintendent is very concerned about the
3 over 1,300 students who are over age, under
4 credited, they are going nowhere, they are
5 waiting for compulsory day so that they can get
6 out. I have a Bill in the Assembly that would
7 voluntarily move them into a GED center with
8 information and with support from their teachers
9 and that is something that I would strongly
10 recommend.

11 MR. JONES: I fully agree.

12 MR. SCHROEDER: Thank you and also Ms.
13 Cook thank you for your service. You talked a
14 great deal about the GED testing and I understood
15 what you were saying and I understood also when
16 you said that when they come to the testing
17 center they don't have an idea what the day is
18 going to be like, they don't know they are going
19 to be there all day. They don't know they have
20 to use a calculator and so my suggestion would be
21 that we need to set them up for success not for,
22 it's misguided in my view to have students who
23 have traditionally not being able to go through
24 high school and then all of a sudden they are

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 going to show up at a GED testing and they are
3 going to pass the test, they are not going to do
4 it. We are not setting them up for success. So
5 I would like to emphasize preparation and so to
6 go back to the civil war, Abraham Lincoln was
7 said "If we have 60 minutes to give a speech,
8 take 40 minutes to prepare and only 20 minutes to
9 give it" and so what I would suggest, are you
10 aware of what is called TABE testing? It does
11 not happen in this State, it happens in Buffalo
12 because we don't let them into the South Buffalo
13 Education Center unless we assess the student
14 coming in and see where they are educationally
15 and then we set them up for success. It doesn't
16 happen in this State, it's ridiculous. So again
17 I would urge you to center in on, not only the
18 testing which I heard your whole testimony and I
19 looked through it, but also the preparation.
20 Let's get these students to come into a Center
21 and let's teach them. Do you know that there is
22 not even a curriculum; there is not even a
23 curriculum, a GED curriculum.

24 Stacy Watson had to develop her own

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 curriculum. These are things that are serious
3 and I am so glad that we have this opportunity
4 based on our chair having us here today to be
5 able to talk about these things. But thank you
6 both thank all three of you.

7 MS. COOK: Thank you, just a comment on
8 that, they are absolutely serious and the
9 consequences are great and some of the
10 initiatives underway are to address just that.

11 Take this 75% of people who are not in
12 programs that come to our test centers and those
13 that are ready tell them how long it is going to
14 take, show them the calculator, but the majority
15 who are not, connect them to programs so that
16 they in fact are developing the skills and
17 knowledge that they need to be successful,
18 absolutely.

19 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, Carmen?

20 MS. ARROYO: First of all thank you for
21 your testimony, it is a very useful one for all
22 and I am sure that we are learning things,
23 because I am learning. I have been for more than
24 10 years involved in education, 36 years as a

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 matter of fact and I was very - -, I came here to
3 learn and I am learning a lot. But let me tell
4 you something, I represent a district that is
5 situated in the poorest congressional district in
6 the United States of America, New York City, and
7 I mean the Bronx, I mean the South Bronx.

8 One of the problems that we have is lack
9 of educational services for our children. But we
10 have transitional families every day and then how
11 can we help these people that move from one place
12 to another and most of them drop out in the
13 process because the statistics are there and it
14 is part of the problem that we face.

15 That's why I mentioned before bringing
16 the private sector to the table. We need, we
17 need to encourage, thank you Cathy, we need to
18 encourage the Department of Education, the
19 Regents and everybody else to put more attention
20 to GED programs because GED programs are the ones
21 that are going to prepare our workforce for the
22 future and we are very low in employment but
23 those that are in the least of unemployment, are
24 they prepared to take any job in the new era of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 technology. I would like to see what kind of
3 instructions in technology, accessing the GED
4 exam because how we are going to prepare them if
5 we don't give them the opportunity to touch that
6 area. Many of the people that are coming to our
7 neighborhoods come from countries in which they
8 didn't have any type of this kind of education.

9 Those are the preparations that we have
10 to prepare for the future because otherwise we
11 are going to be losing the fight and I am very
12 concerned about it.

13 Let me explain something to you. I have
14 a daughter that is a council woman in the city of
15 New York and she was a drop out at a certain
16 point and she took a GED diploma and she passed
17 it. She went to college, she graduated magna cum
18 laude in college and she graduated in a Master's
19 Degree program in University of New York with
20 another, you know. 3.4 average. That means that
21 she is only one example of the intelligence that
22 our children have if they are prepared and we
23 help them. She always says when she speaks to
24 the public "I appreciate that I took a GED in a

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 center where they gave me the preparation to pass
3 the test and enter college." This is what
4 matters here because don't ask me to put more
5 money, if the money is going to be wasted. We
6 need to put the money where the money belongs and
7 to help those children and those youngsters.

8 Let me say this, those women that by any
9 reason who had to drop out from school and
10 sometimes when they come to take the GED they are
11 already mothers, single mothers, we have to help
12 them, we have to put the money where the money
13 belongs, thank you for all your help, thank you.

14 MS. NOLAN: Thank you Carmen. It is
15 always good when our hearings have some advocacy
16 as well. I want to let Assemblyman Benjamin
17 follow up and then, we took a little time with
18 our first panel, we are going to have to keep
19 moving. But I am so appreciative that so many of
20 our witnesses are here and travelled from the
21 city. I know our advocacy groups have been very
22 patient, so Michael yeah?

23 MR. BENJAMIN: David Jones, I want to
24 thank you for your testimony today. I want to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 thank you for Lazar helping me and my staff to
3 get up to speed with GED process. My question is
4 I asked you once before, the workforce we are
5 developing, what does it prepare people to do in
6 the future, what sort of jobs are out there?

7 MR. JONES: And this becomes a major
8 discussion. You may have heard of Van Jones, I
9 had the misfortune of being on a panel with him
10 in Seattle; Van Jones is one of the leaders of
11 the Green Economy idea of trying to get people,
12 help people out of poverty by getting into the
13 green economy, whether it is wind or the rest.
14 What my concern was with, when I talked to Van is
15 always the fact that unless we get some basic
16 preparation going, people from the communities I
17 know about and across the State aren't going to
18 be able to successfully move to the new
19 technologies.

20 You can't participate unless you have
21 the basic schools that a GED and high school
22 diploma has. You can take off from there but
23 unless you have those basic skills and basic
24 literacy and numeracy skills you can't

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 participate and I am afraid, as I have said
3 before earlier, we are creating a whole new
4 generation of people who will be so marginalized,
5 worse that it was when I was a boy in the fifties
6 in Crown Heights in Bedstock, who have no place
7 to go in the economy.

8 I am going to see my community go in
9 reverse and clearly that's personal but I think
10 communities across the State are facing the same
11 kind of problem and that's why I think there is a
12 basic, this is the most, the lynchpin for what
13 people can if they decide to go towards trade or
14 mechanical skills, they need it. If they decide
15 to go to college, they need it and we are failing
16 on giving people a second chance in this
17 engagement.

18 MR. BENJAMIN: If we build the systems
19 as you would like to see us building will they
20 come?

21 MR. JONES: I think they are already and
22 I think you will hear from other advocates, there
23 are so many people who want to get into this. I
24 think these are the most motivated students of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 all time. It is not like I was in high school,
3 you are sitting around waiting for it to be over.
4 These are people who go into the economy and for
5 a variety of reasons "I am going to get this; I
6 need this for me and my family." So you have a
7 motivated student body.

8 The difficulty is I think the assessment
9 of where they are and what kinds of supports they
10 will need is not being done. The kind of
11 regularized curriculum, this is not brain
12 surgery, we don't need a new marshal plan to fix
13 this.

14 I guess I deal with things that are much
15 more systemic but this one I can fix and that is
16 what is so bothersome here. That this is one
17 with investment by the government, by the private
18 sector as the Assemblywoman talked about and by
19 philanthropy we can fix the State and that's why
20 it is so frustrating. We are so close to it, now
21 I think because of Cook and our report we have
22 the parameters of what should be done. Now it is
23 a minor investment that we are talking about.

24 MR. BENJAMIN: Ms. Cook I want to thank

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 you for your testimony as well. Let's say a 30-
3 year-old wakes up this morning and he or she is
4 tired of looking up all the time and wondering
5 why life is so miserable and they decide that
6 it's because that they haven't got their high
7 school diploma, what do they do, where do they go
8 to begin the process of pursuing and obtaining
9 their GED?

10 MS. COOK: In the current system, I mean
11 typically as we all do is we ask our community,
12 we check who we know and what they are doing and
13 just as we find our plumbers and everything else.
14 But we also need a systemic way to find out is
15 this really the right one for me. Does it have
16 the childcare I need, is it closer, I want one
17 closer to my work and I don't know anybody, so we
18 need to have that systemic access and that is
19 part of what is being designed through the
20 initiative on the GED Compass that would really
21 lay out exactly where programs are. You could
22 search it by a subway stop, you could search it
23 by, you know, a borough, all kinds, by the kind
24 of instruction it provides. Then you could go to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the site, be connected to the program. So you
3 could hear what their particular approach is, are
4 they serving mostly at risk youth or do they have
5 groups for 30-year-olds. I mean, you know, are
6 they targeting a different age group and all of
7 that information would be easily accessible,
8 would be advertised, would like to how you find a
9 program, how you practice for the exam, how you
10 reserve a seat for the exam, information about
11 the impact of the GED on the general public. You
12 could find that in one spot.

13 So you would use our networks that
14 exist, social networks, but also have a
15 centralized system. The third piece in that is
16 that there is a growing emphasis on using
17 neighborhood hubs for access as well and as that
18 system develops and like the ones mentioned at
19 the One-Stop centers through workforce, others
20 that exist for under 21-year-olds and others that
21 are emerging through other initiatives such as
22 the State's literacy zones allow for various
23 access routes.

24 MR. BENJAMIN: So if this person walked

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 into her local school and asked for help as to
3 where they ought to go what would be the
4 response, to your knowledge?

5 MS. NOLAN: I want to answer that, I
6 have had that, most schools carry a piece of
7 paper or some material, the parent coordinator
8 has some information for people, so it's not, I
9 mean I think it's not that hard to find out.
10 Every library pretty much in the city has
11 information about the GED.

12 I mean I do want to say and it is always
13 great to have data and study but we are also
14 involved here in trying to with limited ability
15 to move forward. You know, you could study
16 something to death in the New York State
17 government, so you know, I think, you know, it is
18 pretty available. You know, maybe there are gaps
19 here and there but I would say the most people,
20 at least in the city, they maybe upstate, I don't
21 know Mark would be different, but I think most
22 schools would have something because it is such a
23 need. You know, so they hand you a piece of
24 paper from a library or school with the sites, I

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 mean that's what happens in my experience.

3 MR. BENJAMIN: The reason I asked was
4 just to see just how many barriers there are to
5 persons who are looking to improve their lives.

6 MS. COOK: Yeah, I mean the barriers are
7 much more that this individual made it to 30 and
8 didn't have the social supports to really engage
9 in schooling and that all those years went by. I
10 mean that is the biggest barrier and taking that
11 first step.

12 Once that first step is taken there are
13 access points. Where the problem is that
14 sometimes, you know, like if someone goes
15 straight to the exam and didn't have any
16 preparation or didn't have any assessment to see
17 if that was the appropriate next step so that is
18 where some of the gaps are. It is really in the
19 coordination and really developing policy that
20 supports that.

21 MS. NOLAN: Thank you. Thank you very
22 much we appreciate it. Our next group of
23 witnesses is from BOCES and we really appreciate
24 it, yes they deserve a nice shout out. Daniel

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 White I believe is here from Monroe, BOCES, we
3 really appreciate that. I think we were hoping
4 someone from Capital Region, BOCES, Kim Brizzell
5 but I don't know if they have arrived, so we will
6 move forward and Laurie Bargstedt the coordinator
7 of Adult Literacy at the Hamilton-Fulton-
8 Montgomery, BOCES. I also want to have come
9 down, I think it would make good sense, we have
10 Cami Anderson from District 79, from the City,
11 DOE and maybe you can join them and I think we
12 were waiting also for Robert Zweig who is a GED
13 principal but if he is not here we might as well
14 have Ms. Anderson come and sit too. You can get
15 started, we are just trying to do that to move
16 things forward, yeah, go ahead and say your name
17 again please for the record.

18 MS. LAURIE BARGSTEDT, COORDINATOR, ADULT
19 LITERACY AND CORRECTIONS EDUCATION,
20 HAMILTON-FULTON-MONTGOMERY BOCES: Good morning I
21 am the coordinator of Adult Literacy and
22 Corrections Education at Hamilton-Fulton-
23 Montgomery BOCES. On behalf of my staff and
24 especially my students I want to thank

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Assemblywoman Nolan and the members of this
3 committee for your attention to this matter
4 because the GED truly makes such an important
5 change in their lives and their opportunities.

6 As a coordinator of Adult Services I am
7 responsible for both providing opportunities in
8 English as a second language and in GED
9 programming.

10 My classes are held in community-based
11 settings and in County Jails. My BOCES, HFM
12 BOCES in Johnstown is also a testing center and I
13 am a GED examiner.

14 In my 20 years as an adult educator I
15 have had a variety of positions as an educator, a
16 case manager and now an administrator. I have
17 been delighted through the years to see students
18 enroll in class, study hard and pass the test,
19 resulting in their High School Equivalency
20 Diploma from New York State.

21 The credential opens doorways for
22 vocational training, post secondary education and
23 employment. I delight to see my students work
24 hard to attend class, manage their adult roles,

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 dedicate time to their studies and participate in
3 assessments that evaluate their academic
4 progress.

5 The assessment process allows students
6 to demonstrate their skills and allows teachers
7 to recommend a student to take the test based on
8 data.

9 However I am here to tell you that I am
10 frustrated by the expenditure of public funds to
11 serve learners who have not participated in a
12 class nor participated in any type of assessment
13 to indicate their test readiness.

14 As an examiner I can tell you that these
15 test takers come to centers with incomplete and
16 often incorrect information with unrealistic
17 expectations of our staff and of our New York
18 State Education Department's GED testing unit.

19 More than a decade ago my BOCES accepted
20 the responsibility for the management,
21 supervision and support of the GED testing
22 program. In 2008 we responded to the RFP to
23 become a testing administration center and we
24 were, and we accepted an award. In an effort to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 use the limited public funds most efficiently my
3 test center determined it would give priority
4 seating to those students who could determine
5 they were ready to pass the exam.

6 Test candidates who receive priority
7 seating are those who score a total of 2500 or
8 better on the OPT with no less than 450 in any
9 subtest. The Official Practice Test can be given
10 by preparation programs that are offered through
11 school districts, BOCES, workforce development
12 centers and other community providers.

13 These students have made a personal
14 investment in themselves through class
15 participation, demonstrate test readiness and
16 therefore deserve priority seating.

17 We have a second tier of priority
18 seating for those individuals for whatever reason
19 cannot or do not attend a preparation program.
20 There are online and in manufactured books
21 pre-GED tests that a student is available to
22 take. When a student can come to us with a
23 demonstrated ability to pass the exam, even if
24 they are not in a course, we give them a second

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 tier priority seating.

3 Finally the seats that remain are
4 available to test candidates who do not meet the
5 previously mentioned criteria, yet meet other
6 eligibility guidelines set forth by New York
7 State Education Department.

8 Since we have implemented this process
9 we have seen a phenomenal success rate in our GED
10 pass scores. Youth programs, the ASHEP programs
11 which you have heard about, in 2008 we had a 90%
12 pass rate and for the adults in the HSE program
13 had an 85% pass rate. For those individuals in
14 one of our correctional facilities we had a 100%
15 pass rate.

16 I do have students who are frustrated
17 that I hold them to this standard however because
18 I have the role to spend public dollars wisely I
19 feel that I am serving my students well in seeing
20 that the first time they sit for that test that
21 they meet success, that they feel the confidence
22 as they walk out the door that they are able to
23 work hard and take on the challenges that they
24 will meet as an employee, as a parent and as a

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 community member.

3 I am also here to suggest to you that
4 our current reimbursement schedule that is in
5 place until June 30th is insufficient, the
6 previous person to testify, Jacqueline Cook,
7 shared that with you as well.

8 To qualify as a GED examiner, someone
9 must attend training, which means they must leave
10 their place of employment and travel, they cannot
11 be a GED instructor, therefore they have to come
12 from somewhere else in our school program and I
13 will use as an example a special ed. instructor.
14 So the special ed. administrator needs to allow
15 that person leave time from their job. We have
16 to get a substitute teacher to come in and cover
17 that person's class or the person has to take
18 vacation time. They then have to travel to
19 Albany or another center to become a qualified
20 examiner. That is one aspect of the cost
21 involved.

22 Once they are trained an examiner is
23 expected to inventory tests each month, act as a
24 public resource to answer questions, order

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 supplies and materials, screen applications for
3 eligibility, remediate and process requests for
4 accommodations, schedule tests, correspond with
5 the GED testing unit, correspond with candidates
6 and more.

7 Other program personnel organize seating
8 charts, mail postcards notifying test candidates
9 of the information regarding testing and complete
10 related paperwork.

11 After a test session an examiner is
12 responsible for the processing of the tests and
13 submitting those materials for shipment. Beyond
14 that at the end of the year the examiners are
15 responsible to inventory all materials, prepare
16 them for a secure shipment back and order
17 materials for a new year.

18 GED teachers remember are not allowed to
19 be involved in the administration of a GED exam.
20 This prohibition creates an undue burden to find
21 examiners and proctors who are willing and able
22 to take the time from their existing work
23 assignments to attend the required training and
24 fulfill the existing roles.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 In New York State content teachers can
3 proctor and administer a New York State Regents
4 exam therefore one of the items that I am going
5 to ask that New York State moves is that we
6 encourage the American Council on Education to
7 reconsider this policy to allow our GED teachers
8 to become involved. This is one step that I
9 believe will help increase the efficiency of GED
10 testing in New York State.

11 My other suggestions, in New York State
12 we have the Employment Preparation and Education
13 funds, otherwise known as EPE, that are available
14 for adults 21 and older without a high school
15 diploma. I am encouraging the State legislature
16 to consider amending our current legislation so
17 that EPE funds can be used to support the costs
18 of GED testing in addition to GED preparation.

19 I am also asking that you consider to
20 amend our legislation to allow those same funds
21 to be carried into fiscal years so that they may
22 support programming and examination costs without
23 interruption.

24 Furthermore I would like to encourage

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 New York State to encourage our Federal officials
3 to amend Title Two of the Workforce Investment
4 Act to also allow us to use those funds to
5 support GED testing.

6 I would like to ask that we consider
7 amending New York State Education Law 317 that
8 prohibits the imposition of a GED testing fee. I
9 believe that any time we allow free access
10 without either a fiscal or personal
11 responsibility that we diminish the value of the
12 credential that we put forth.

13 We have special considerations for out
14 of school youth. There are limited funding
15 options, out of school youth need to be enrolled
16 in an AHSEP program which must meet 12 hours a
17 week. In order for many programs, especially,
18 you know, rural areas such as mine, we need to
19 combine our funds in such a way that we can serve
20 youth and adults.

21 Many of our school systems will not
22 support the fiscal responsibilities of sending a
23 youth to a program that needs to meet 12 hours a
24 week.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Therefore I am asking that we consider
3 allowing young adults aged 18 and older to
4 generate EPE funds and to allow those same young
5 adults to enroll in a high school equivalency
6 program that is only required six hours a week so
7 that they may qualify to take the GED exam at 18
8 and therefore move into post secondary education
9 and training opportunities more quickly.

10 I am encouraging our legislature to make
11 changes that require the personal investment on
12 behalf of test candidates both in academic and or
13 fiscal support of the program.

14 My observation through the years is that
15 students make an elevated commitment to setting
16 and achieving personal and educational goals once
17 there is a form of personal investment.

18 I recognize that we have many students
19 from a lower socioeconomic grouping that a fiscal
20 investment will be difficult for them, so I offer
21 these considerations. That we waive the fee for
22 individuals who attend a preparation program and
23 receive a recommendation for testing from an
24 administrator based on benchmarks. That we waive

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the fee for individuals who demonstrate test
3 readiness by achieving an NRS level of six in
4 both Reading and Math as measured by the TABE and
5 receive a 2500 or better with no less than 500 on
6 any subtest.

7 I also suggest that we allow sponsoring
8 agencies to pay the fee for any tester who does
9 not meet those qualities but they believe they
10 want to send that person to a test.

11 I want to share that I really believe
12 test candidates need to understand that a minimum
13 passing score is just that, it's the minimum. It
14 does not indicate that their skills are fully
15 developed or that the candidate is ready to be
16 successful in a post secondary transition.

17 Students with that goal should be
18 expected to achieve a higher level on an OPT.
19 One of the greatest joys in this academic year is
20 the establishment that HFM BOCES and Fulton-
21 Montgomery Community College have established a
22 GED preparation program specifically with the
23 idea of college enrolment. Any student who
24 voluntarily enrolls in that program knows they

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 will not be referred to the exam until they can
3 achieve a 3000 on the OPT and write an essay of
4 college entry level quality.

5 The GED program provides New York State
6 residents with an opportunity for a second chance
7 to earn that credential and the economy of the
8 Empire State is dependent on an educated
9 workforce which is capable of learning throughout
10 a lifetime.

11 I ask that you please support business
12 and industry, families and communities by
13 implementing timely changes to maintain and
14 improve the GED testing program in New York
15 State.

16 In closing I appreciate the commitment
17 of New York State Education Department to
18 continue supporting the infrastructure of the GED
19 testing program in New York.

20 I appreciate the time and efforts of the
21 adult education and workforce development team as
22 they have dealt with this challenge before them.

23 I truly appreciate the attention given
24 to this matter by the Assemblywoman, the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 committee members and the support staff who will
3 see us through this GED testing crisis. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, we are going to
6 have everybody and then we will do questions,
7 yes.

8 MR. DANIEL T. WHITE, DISTRICT
9 SUPERINTENDENT, MONROE # 1 BOCES: Thank you very
10 much. Dan White, District Superintendent, 1
11 Monroe BOCES, Assemblywoman Nolan and committee
12 thank you very much for this opportunity. I am
13 going to make my remarks very brief as much of
14 the information that I was going to share has
15 already been shared. So let me hit on a couple
16 of salient points if I may do that and then I
17 will move on.

18 First of all, Monroe 1 BOCES outside of
19 Rochester, New York we operate school aged or 16
20 to 21-year-old alternative GED programs for
21 regular education students as well as students
22 with disabilities, adult education programs and
23 we are a GED test administration site as well.

24 I think we all believe that GED is

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 clearly a gateway to higher education and
3 improved opportunities and I would echo the
4 information shared earlier that the greatest
5 ambition of our adult learners in those programs
6 is to go on and continue their education. Be
7 that at a vocational or to two year colleges as
8 well, we are seeing that trend as well out of our
9 adult learners, clearly that is a pathway.
10 Actually many programs provide counseling towards
11 that end as well.

12 The great concern is this, that the
13 reduction in support of the testing sites, number
14 one, will decrease access and that's of grave
15 concern. In our testing site about 50% of the
16 students we test both school age and adults are
17 what you might call walk-ins, they are not in any
18 formal preparation program.

19 The difference we are seeing in passing
20 rates there frankly is about 10%. Students that
21 are in programs, they pass at about a 75% rate;
22 students that are not in any official preparation
23 programs it is about 65%. Many come in without
24 having taken the TABE which we use in all of our

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 programs or having had access to the Official
3 Practice Test. They really do not know where
4 they are at in this examination and it does make
5 a difference.

6 We are looking for some private funding
7 currently to try and support as much access as we
8 can but that is a short-term solution frankly.

9 Number two is this; the State spends
10 about \$1.15 million on these testing contracts to
11 administer. You mentioned \$2.4 in general, I
12 would point out that none of that goes to support
13 or directly support any adult programs whatsoever
14 that is really testing administration. So I may
15 differ a little bit with my colleague next to me.
16 I would not support access to WIA Title 2 funds
17 or EPE funds to support test administration,
18 frankly because I think it is our responsibility
19 in this State to do so and that further straps
20 programs that are really struggling financially
21 in general. Those funds are not substantial and
22 they are really the only funds we have to operate
23 those programs. I would support flexibility
24 there when necessary if we could do that. To say

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that is the solution I think is faulty from a
3 long-term perspective, to be frank with you.

4 I would also support looking at
5 Education Law 317 having adult learners
6 contribute a nominal fee that could be waived, if
7 I believe test administration sites and
8 registration could handle dealing with those fee
9 waivers. We are woefully un-automated as a State
10 in all of our assessments including school age,
11 however this is something I think that we could
12 handle and do it with dignity for those learners
13 and test takers so that at least those capable
14 will be contributing toward taking that test.
15 Nonetheless adequate funding is absolutely
16 necessary.

17 I am concerned a little bit for how we
18 administer a test online. We have got to
19 remember that one of the greatest growing gaps in
20 this State in terms of access is access to
21 technology. The more we automate, there is an
22 increasing gap and that can increase access
23 problems right there.

24 At the heart of the issue also is our

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 test passing rate in this State. To be frank
3 with you 50% to 60% is not enough. I would
4 advocate for the statewide use of the TABE as
5 well as having students achieve a minimum score
6 on the Official Practice Test. It is of primary
7 importance that they have that Official Practice
8 Test be readily available throughout the state so
9 that potential test takers can have access to
10 where they might be and testing programs, excuse
11 me, preparation programs can have access to where
12 these students are.

13 Again I would not support the use of EPE
14 or WIA as a long-term solution to that. I think
15 frankly it is our responsibility.

16 The bottom line is this; I think if we
17 take a step back we have two issues. We have a
18 pragmatic, immediate issue on access and we have
19 a longer term issue in terms of what we are going
20 to do with the overall program.

21 There has been many steps and many
22 things that have progressed over the last couple
23 or last number of years in GED. I do believe our
24 current administration Commissioner Steiner and

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Deputy King are committed to looking at our
3 entire educational program, GED included and
4 making the necessary changes.

5 I think there is a long-term solution
6 and they are listening to the field on this. The
7 short-term solution frankly is access. I think
8 that, as you have heard from multiple folks
9 already this morning, in difficult economic times
10 we are hurting our neediest citizens, we need to
11 make sure the access is there. Thank you.

12 MS. NOLAN: Thank you and I think we do
13 have our opening BOCES right?

14 MS. CAMI ANDERSON, SENIOR
15 SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT 79: Hi how are you? I
16 think my light is on.

17 MS. NOLAN: Yes thank you.

18 MS. ANDERSON: Thank you very much Chair
19 Nolan for having this hearing. I am excited to
20 be here representing the Department of Education
21 and all of the work that we have done on
22 reforming GED I think speaks to some of the
23 issues that a lot of my colleagues have already
24 put on the table.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 What I think is very exciting is that
3 there is a high level of alignment on certain
4 items and it seems like we can work together at
5 the national, state and local level to make some
6 dramatic leaps. It is rare that you see such
7 agreement on some basic points although there are
8 certainly some disagreements. It seems like New
9 York State is poised to be a national leader here
10 in really addressing some of the issues in the
11 GED.

12 I am the Superintendent of District 79,
13 Alternative High Schools and Programs. Just to
14 give you a sense of the scale and what we do. We
15 run all of the programming and schooling for
16 young people who are in involuntary settings
17 including Rikers Island, Department of Juvenile
18 Justice sites, students who are in drug treatment
19 programs.

20 We also run a very large GED preparation
21 program in addition to a very large adult
22 education program and they are all part of our
23 portfolio. So all-in we serve about 20,000
24 students under 21 and about 50,000 adult learners

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 annually on any given day about a third of those
3 are present given the high level of turnover on
4 our programs.

5 We are fortunate to have that diverse
6 portfolio in one place so we have had a lot of
7 experience in administering, we also run a very
8 large testing engine as you heard earlier in New
9 York City through the office of Adult Ed. and
10 through GED Plus. So we have a lot of experience
11 with administering the GED both on the
12 preparation side as well as on the testing side.

13 I am also going to cut to the chase and
14 highlight a few things from where we have been
15 and make a couple of recommendations about where
16 I think we need to go.

17 We, in 2006 we sort of embarked on a
18 pretty deep dive to figure out how to make, bring
19 more coherence to GED programs in New York City.

20 MS. NOLAN: The city at one point had a
21 million hours less than, you know, unfortunately
22 the onset of mayoral control for whatever reason
23 resulted in the city literally having a million
24 hours less instructional time. It was one of the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 first things we talked about when I took the
3 committee so I think we have-

4 MS. ANDERSON: Addressed that?

5 MS. NOLAN: I hate to use that
6 legislative cliché "Throw out the baby with the
7 bathwater" but it seems like that is what
8 happened. So I am glad to hear that you were
9 brought on in 2006 and I didn't mean to
10 interrupt.

11 MS. ANDERSON: No that's fine I am
12 actually, the way in which EPE funds are
13 distributed have to do with contact hours and it
14 is not as if we were administering less
15 programming I think our ability to account for
16 those hours was diminished and thanks to Lianne
17 Friedman and others on my right, we were able to
18 basically bring our accounting for the
19 instructional hours in line with reality. So we
20 hadn't diminished hours we just were not
21 accounting for them properly. And we thank you
22 for your supports in that, I know you were open
23 to what we needed to do to correct that and we
24 have.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 So in 2006 in addition to making sure
3 that we were receiving the funding we needed to
4 receive further contact hours we also looked at
5 hour governance structure and as you have pointed
6 out Chair Nolan, aptly there was a lot, it was
7 very decentralized, I will put it that way. It
8 was very difficult for a learner under 21 or over
9 21 to figure out how to access the large number
10 of services we provided.

11 So we had about 275 sites, some of them
12 were in DOE facilities, some in community-based
13 facilities, but it was really difficult for
14 someone who was looking to reconnect to school to
15 find those sites. That was in part because the
16 way GED programs are funded as we have all heard,
17 kind of inset that, kind of, lack of connection.

18 So we went about really trying to bring
19 order to the Department of Education's offerings
20 and we did a couple of things that we think are
21 worth noting and worth pursuing statewide. It
22 sounds like some of my colleagues are doing
23 similar things.

24 One is we created a single point of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 entry for students at the adult level and at the
3 under 21 level. So instead of giving a young
4 person a list of 100 sites, they can go into any
5 one of our One-Stop centers and we have those for
6 adults, a couple per borough and those for young
7 people. They can walk in and say "I want to come
8 back to school, I am pursuing my GED." At that
9 point in the process which I think is really
10 critical when we talk about GED reform they are
11 met with highly trained guidance counselors who
12 actually talk to them about their past school
13 history, are able to call up their public school
14 records to see if they have credits or if they
15 are a new student etc and also to consider their
16 age. Quite frankly we do need to think about
17 this idea of compulsory schooling and the fact
18 that there are very different outcomes for those
19 students who obtain a GED as opposed to those who
20 gain a high school diploma.

21 So we will not automatically enroll that
22 young person in a GED program, especially if they
23 are passing the TABE which is the test that we
24 use to determine literacy at a high level and/or

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 if they have credits and/or if they are younger,
3 frankly they have time to get over the benchmark.
4 We will do that kind of work.

5 You have heard from a number of people,
6 we have an unhealthy dynamic in our system that
7 goes as follows, if a young person wants to drop
8 out or is having a tough time whether they are
9 academically on-track or not, we often say "Go
10 take the GED, take the GED pill, it goes down
11 easy" and we know that that is actually not going
12 to help that young person.

13 So the referral centers and the single
14 point of entry really help to serve as a
15 gatekeeper so that those young people who can
16 continue to pursue a high school diploma get
17 those options.

18 So we have transfer high schools in New
19 York City that are quite skilled at credit
20 recovery. We have Young Adult borough centers
21 that are quite skilled at credit recovery and we
22 have engaged in rigorous high school reform that
23 all of those options know how to meet young
24 people where they are and frankly help accelerate

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 them and keep them on path to a high school
3 diploma. That is always our first, second and
4 third choice, before enrolling the young person
5 in the GED program, having said that, as we have
6 also heard lots of individuals need a different
7 pathway, particularly those who are older. If
8 you are 19 years old with zero credits it is
9 going to be really tough to obtain the 44 credits
10 you need by the end of the school year in which
11 you turn 21. The GED can be a successful pathway
12 for those groups of students.

13 So the single point of entry has helped
14 us to ensure we know what kind of learner we are
15 dealing with and to refer them to the diversity
16 of options that we have, evening, part-time,
17 full-time, adult ed., not adult ed., with a
18 career focus, without a career focus, with a
19 college link, without a college link and that
20 single point of entry has helped us to get better
21 that.

22 The other thing we have done more
23 consistently, you have heard from my colleagues,
24 is to make sure that we are assessing students

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 upon intake to see what their literacy needs are
3 so that we can make sure and differentiate our
4 programs to their needs. If you are reading at a
5 fifth grade level and you are 19 you will need
6 something quite different than someone who may
7 have a diploma from their home country and are
8 looking to quickly pass the GED so that they can
9 enroll in the military as an example. Those are
10 two different kinds of learners and we are able
11 to funnel those young people more effectively.

12 We have worked very hard on instruction
13 in terms of curriculum development and just like
14 some of my colleagues we are aligning our
15 curriculum to not only the GED test but we are
16 also adding in elements of the CUNY entrance exam
17 into our curricula including the CUNY writing
18 piece because we found that was actually, if you
19 look at the CUNY study that came out a year ago,
20 many of the GED students who were taking the CUNY
21 entrance exam were also failing the writing part,
22 portion, and then had to go into remedial courses
23 which cost them a great deal of money and then
24 dropped out. So we are adding in elements into

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 our curricula that are raising the bar in terms
3 of academic rigor.

4 To Assemblyman O'Donnell's question I
5 believe strongly it is about college level skill,
6 the credential turns out to be critical as well
7 but as the Community Service Society, our friends
8 there testified, we agree that college level
9 skill and we just happen to have a high school
10 diploma and GED as the thing that certifies that
11 is critical for almost all of our 21st century
12 jobs. We are aligning our curriculum to those
13 higher standards.

14 Just a few other things that we want to
15 highlight that have come up. We are, we have
16 been working to make the OPT more readily
17 available in New York City. For example, through
18 a partnership with the City Council and, I am
19 sorry, I am forgetting our two partners right
20 now, LAC is going to testify to this, I had a
21 little brain moment there, excuse me. LAC, we
22 are going to be launching an online portal that
23 will allow test takers more efficient access to
24 the broad range of testing sites.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 We have also been, we have been working
3 on the very recommendation that someone made
4 around the One-Stop centers so that if you walk
5 into a One-Stop center and you say "I would like
6 to enroll in a training program", we are able to
7 administer the OPT in those One-Stop centers so
8 that if that student realizes at that moment
9 "Look I have got to do a bunch of preparation or
10 I am not going to pass this test", we can then
11 funnel them to our GED preparation programs
12 without having them sit for the exam and fail it.

13 So we have had some great success, with
14 all these reforms we have had some terrific
15 success and our, both our overall pass rate has
16 gone up, it was already higher than the statewide
17 average but it has gone up about 10 percentile
18 points in the last year.

19 But lets me clear that the pass rate is
20 actually not necessarily a measure of quality,
21 the pass rate is just the percentage of people
22 who pass who sit for the test, so we are also
23 instituting a lot of work at looking at gains, of
24 every 100 students who enroll regardless of where

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 they came to us, who actually ends up sitting for
3 and passing the test which is different than the
4 pass rate. I think we need both, we need to have
5 a higher pass rate and we also need to make sure
6 that we are tracking the overall success of our
7 programs in terms of how students are growing
8 throughout the process.

9 I am going to close with basically the
10 five recommendations we make here. You can read
11 them and they are similar to what you have heard.
12 I will be brief.

13 So one is that we must, GED programs
14 have to have, teach academically rigorous content
15 aligned to the new test. So as you have heard
16 from others the new test is going to be aligned
17 to the common core which is high school
18 equivalent content. We think this is a great
19 opportunity to put our students at the front of
20 the line instead of the back of the line for a
21 change. We want to make sure that our curricula
22 is aligned to that and just like Deputy
23 Commissioner King testified to, some of that
24 needs to be online, some of it needs to be in

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 person but we should get in front of that instead
3 of, you know, waiting for the new test to come
4 out. We know generally what the common core is
5 going to look like and our instructions should be
6 aligned accordingly.

7 The second thing we need to do is make
8 sure we have well trained teachers. It is the
9 case that all of our teachers are certified but
10 in community-based organizations where they
11 receive funding through other sources those folks
12 administering instruction may or may not be
13 certified or trained in literacy instruction.
14 That is something we think should change and we
15 believe that GED teachers in some ways need to
16 have a higher level of skill in teaching young
17 people how to read and do math at high levels and
18 in particular in how to do accelerated learning
19 in those fronts because a lot of our students
20 will come to us far behind.

21 The third, we need to make sure that we
22 are measuring value added, not, the pass rate is
23 critical and I don't want to take the focus off
24 that because it is really important that we get

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 our pass rate up for two reasons. Number one, it
3 is not, students who don't pass on the first try,
4 by and large don't come back. The data is pretty
5 compelling here, it is about 17% of those who
6 actually sit for and fail the exam actually come
7 back in New York City. Of those only about a
8 quarter end up passing, so this notion that broad
9 access is actually a good thing doesn't really
10 turn out to be all that true.

11 The second reason why we need to have,
12 to keep watch over the pass rate is because it is
13 an inefficient use of scarce resources. As we
14 have diminishing resources all of us are going to
15 want to make sure that our testing seats are made
16 available quickly to those who are likely to sit
17 for and pass the test. I think you hear a lot of
18 alignment around that.

19 The fourth thing I want to point out is
20 that GED programs should serve as an option for
21 older youth, not a dumping ground for compulsory
22 aged kids and we might have some debate about
23 that. I know this isn't the purpose of this
24 hearing but I do think it is critical to make

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 sure we have options without, you know, frankly
3 having an escape hatch for districts to do
4 everything possible whether it takes three or
5 four shots to keep a young person on a high
6 school track. I believe we have done some really
7 good work on this in New York City and I think we
8 need to be doing the same thing nationally and
9 statewide.

10 The final thing is that the GED test
11 taker should have efficient access to seats and
12 that goes to what you have heard about requiring
13 folks to pass the Official Practice Test and of
14 course we have to do that in conjunction with
15 making the OPT more available.

16 You heard Deputy Commissioner King's
17 commitment to that and as we move towards this we
18 need to be better about giving the OPT and making
19 sure that folks have access to it.

20 In conclusion I guess I am the
21 interminable optimist but I am very hopeful
22 because I feel that we are the precipice of
23 really making the GED a true alternative pathway
24 to college and career readiness. I don't think

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 we are there now as a City, as a State or even
3 nationally but I do think with the support of the
4 test makers, with the support of the State
5 Education Department, with your support and with
6 work at the State and the local levels that New
7 York State can really be a leader in that charge
8 and I think it's time.

9 So with that I close.

10 MS. NOLAN: Thank you very much. Could
11 you just clarify, introduce the person who is
12 with you again, I am sorry, are you testifying or
13 are you...?

14 MS. LIANNE FRIEDMAN, CHIEF OPERATING
15 OFFICER, OFFICE OF ADULT AND CONTINUING
16 EDUCATION: I am not testifying but I am Lianne
17 Friedman, I am the-

18 MS. NOLAN: You have just got to speak a
19 little louder into that.

20 MS. FRIEDMAN: I am Lianne Friedman, I
21 am the Chief Operating Officer for the Office of
22 Adult and Continuing Education.

23 MS. NOLAN: Okay, thank you, because we
24 don't have you on this list but we want to make

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 sure it shows up. Just a couple of pre questions
3 for our panel. We actually had a slight
4 difference in emphasis, you know, our friend from
5 BOCES in Montgomery County was saying that we
6 should think about using WIA funds and that was
7 something that Mr. Jones and I think the other
8 group had talked about it. You think perhaps
9 not, our friend from Monroe County so maybe you
10 can both just, you know, talk a little bit more
11 about why you feel that way?

12 MS. BARGSTEDT: I would be glad to
13 begin. I think it is very important for the
14 committee to recognize that across the State from
15 a rural area like mine to more metropolitan areas
16 there are often differences in these opinions.

17 For myself, speaking from a rural
18 program perspective, for the number of students
19 that I serve and the number of times of year that
20 I give the test-

21 MS. NOLAN: How many students is that,
22 just out of...?

23 MS. BARGSTEDT: I serve between 400 and
24 500 students a year in programming. I test

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 probably, I am going to guess around 200 per year
3 which, in a rural area like mine, is a
4 significant number. We do four sessions a year
5 at approximately 50 people per session. So for
6 me the amount of those funds that I would use are
7 significantly less than what my colleagues would
8 use. So I would say that that probably creates
9 some of the discrepancies between our opinions
10 but I would also agree my suggestion is based on
11 if this money is not replaced but I would agree
12 with my colleagues that I think our first
13 priority should be to replace the money and my
14 suggestion would be in the next case.

15 MS. NOLAN: Just to give us some idea,
16 go ahead.

17 MR. WHITE: You have been, she hit it
18 right on the head-

19 MS. NOLAN: People are allowed to
20 disagree at a hearing, that's why we have these,
21 it's a good thing, it's a good thing.

22 MR. WHITE: Actually I want to make two
23 points, one I would support it from flexibility
24 for a short-term solution because I think we need

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 a short-term solution to access right now.
3 Number two I don't support it long-term for that
4 exact reason. We sit a number of students for
5 the test, we could not adequately run our
6 programs on those grants and support the numbers
7 of students that we test and make ends meet. So
8 I think it is potentially a short-term solution
9 with some flexibility, long-term for some
10 programs with would not be viable.

11 MS. NOLAN: Alright thank you. Then for
12 the city, I just want to, where are these five
13 borough referral centers?

14 MS. ANDERSON: I am sorry?

15 MS. NOLAN: Where are these one in each
16 borough referral centers, where are they?

17 MS. ANDERSON: So we have the ones, for
18 under 21 are in sort of centrally located
19 locations throughout, for example the one in
20 Manhattan is on 8th and 34th.

21 MS. NOLAN: Are they in pre-existing
22 schools or rented space?

23 MS. ANDERSON: Both, basically we put
24 them in the most centrally located places we

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 could that were suited for that kind of thing.

3 MS. NOLAN: Can we get that list?

4 MS. ANDERSON: Sure.

5 MS. NOLAN: And they run throughout the
6 12 months of the year?

7 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah they are open and
8 then the adult education One-Stops are, there are
9 more than one per borough and those are also by
10 cluster, geographic cluster.

11 MS. NOLAN: Are they NHRA, are they NHRA
12 centers or are they...?

13 MS. ANDERSON: No we have large adult
14 education learning centers and that's where most
15 of them are located.

16 MS. NOLAN: And they are in different
17 locations and there are more than five of those?

18 MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

19 MS. NOLAN: I must say I am stunned to
20 find out that City has 40,000 adults, 21 years
21 and older, in adult continuing education
22 programs. I, you know, have been pretty active
23 for a long time and I am really not that familiar
24 with what you are doing so I think this is an

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 opportunity for us to learn more about it. I
3 said to Assemblyman Benjamin I remember the old
4 center on Crescent Street - - which had these
5 tremendously dedicated people but I believe it
6 was closed when we went under Mayoral control. I
7 don't know what happened to them or to it. We
8 thought it was a shame at the time. So I am not
9 that familiar with what you are doing. I think
10 that is important for us to know that. Did you
11 want to respond, I know you are not an official
12 testifier but since you are the senior...?

13 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah for better or worse
14 we are the best kept secret but we are starting
15 to not be. I mean that is obviously not the
16 goal-

17 MS. NOLAN: We wouldn't want you to be.

18 MS. ANDERSON: That's not the goal.

19 MS. NOLAN: I was here when, what was
20 her name, Cahill, was in and oh my God we had
21 hours of testimony and then it all went, you
22 know, she left, so that was the end of that. So
23 it has been a lot of fits and starts in the nine
24 years of the Bloomberg administration on this.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Obviously I see some support when I heard Ms.
3 Cook testify earlier. It's not a criticism but I
4 don't think anybody could say there hasn't been a
5 lot of fits and starts, at least from our
6 perspective. Maybe you could just tell us...?

7 MS. FRIEDMAN: Sure we have large adult
8 learning centers in each borough and then we have
9 clustered intakes depending on the location of
10 each class and students have access from that,
11 six days a week, Monday through Saturday and in
12 the evenings.

13 Every student that comes in does take
14 the TABE test and then is assigned to a class,
15 around a class. Also we have a large, 52% of our
16 population is ESOL and they also then are placed
17 upon using the best-

18 MS. NOLAN: So the 40,000 adults over 21
19 are getting primarily adult basic ed.?

20 MS. FRIEDMAN: Correct.

21 MS. NOLAN: It would be interesting to
22 see, and those are not, those are in leased
23 spaces also or regular?

24 MS. FRIEDMAN: No we have, we are in the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 K12, we have over 175 sites, we have some in CBOs
3 where we partner. We have as I said stand alone
4 adult learning centers, one in - - and one in
5 Haarlem that each seat an average of around 4,000
6 students a year and then we have also small
7 satellite offices.

8 MS. NOLAN: And the city basically is
9 expending its own funds for this or using some
10 State money and some federal money?

11 MS. FRIEDMAN: We receive a variety of
12 State, Federal and local funds.

13 MS. NOLAN: Okay.

14 MS. ARROYO: What you have in the Bronx?

15 MS. FRIEDMAN: We have a learning center
16 on East - - and we have over 90 classes in the
17 Bronx. We also have-

18 MS. ARROYO: In East - -?

19 MS. FRIEDMAN: That's-

20 MS. ARROYO: You don't have nothing in
21 the South Bronx?

22 MS. FRIEDMAN: I would love something in
23 the South Bronx.

24 MS. ARROYO: No hold on a second, hold

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 on a second?

3 MS. FRIEDMAN: In 2006 when we came that
4 was the location that the Department had. We
5 have learning, we have many classes in the South
6 Bronx.

7 MS. ARROYO: Then you have the center in
8 a middle class community.

9 MS. FRIEDMAN: That is where the-

10 MS. ARROYO: Okay, alright, I like your
11 answer.

12 MS. NOLAN: We would like to get them
13 and the committee would like to request all the
14 sites and then we are going to look at them and
15 find out more. Even with some of our BOCES, I
16 mean I want to ask the same question of you, are
17 the sites in existing schools or do you have like
18 store fronts somewhere, you know, for us, not
19 from the rural parts of the State, sometimes
20 BOCES, we have to walk our way through it to
21 understand it. Where would you test, in an
22 existing school or do you lease sites or things
23 like that?

24 MS. BARGSTEDT: Our testing center is at

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 our new HFM BOCES facility which is co-located
3 with Fulton-Montgomery Community College.
4 Programs in the, it is very common where I live
5 that people have to have cars to live where I
6 live.

7 MS. NOLAN: Of course we know that, we
8 know that.

9 MS. BARGSTEDT: So it is easily
10 accessible, but my ESL programs and my
11 preparation programs are located in communities.
12 I only have one class that happens in my building
13 and one class on the Community College campus.
14 Everything else, my teachers are out in
15 libraries, in our cooperative extension, in
16 Central - - which is an Hispanic-based community
17 operation and our literacy programs are
18 co-located. So we have a real commitment for
19 those individuals who can't have regular
20 transportation to go to them.

21 MS. NOLAN: How many school districts,
22 your BOCES serves who?

23 MS. BARGSTEDT: 15 school districts.

24 MS. NOLAN: I was thinking that, yeah.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Okay, thanks, the same thing with Monroe, what
3 are we talking about?

4 MR. WHITE: Same thing, same thing. We
5 have 10 component school districts, about 52,000
6 school age students in those 10 components,
7 multiple different sites, one testing site
8 located on public transportation.

9 MS. NOLAN: Okay thank you. Just
10 because all three of you are practitioners,
11 federal stimulus money, did any of that show up
12 in your budgets or is it supplanted or
13 supplemented or what's the, any effort to use
14 federal job development monies and your new
15 stimulus money for this critical adult ed. piece?

16 MS. FRIEDMAN: In adult education we
17 receive some stimulus funding which supported our
18 LPN and an LPN prep program where we graduated
19 last year 173 students.

20 MS. NOLAN: I am sorry you said LPN and
21 what else?

22 MS. FRIEDMAN: The prep program, also
23 automotive certification, culinary and a computer
24 technology.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. NOLAN: I must tell you I had no
3 idea the city did any of that outside of the high
4 school setting. So we definitely have a lot to
5 know. I kind of work hard to find out what the
6 city does so it is intriguing and I guess, you
7 know, we need to do a little bit more on that.
8 The same thing with you guys, you would offer
9 culinary arts also and other things that BOCES
10 traditionally.

11 MR. WHITE: Correct.

12 MS. NOLAN: So you are sort of the BOCES
13 equivalent for the city I guess we would say. We
14 do put some money into that, the State
15 Government, I think the city gets the money
16 separate from BOCES.

17 MS. FRIEDMAN: In my program AARA funds
18 were received for our correctional facilities and
19 that was used to expand the programming in
20 computer technology, English as a Second
21 Language, Health Literacy, Financial Literacy and
22 Civic Participation. All of that involved in
23 helping people transition from an incarcerated
24 setting to the community setting with skills that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 would help them be successful.

3 MS. NOLAN: Alright, thank you.

4 MR. WHITE: Pretty much the same for us.

5 MS. NOLAN: I am going to just step out
6 for a minute. I know that Assemblyman O'Donnell
7 will help me chair this, I just want to and I
8 know all my colleagues have questions. After
9 this, the way we structure a hearing here is that
10 we have our State Agency, we have our
11 researchers, now we have our localities, now
12 after you will come all our advocates. So we try
13 to have a progress. I am sure some of my
14 colleagues have questions. I want to let them do
15 that, Mark do you have a question and we will go
16 right down the line. I will be right back, okay?

17 MR. SCHROEDER: Thank you, thanks Cathy.
18 First of all I just have some comments for Laurie
19 Bargstedt for HFM BOCES. I just wanted to say I
20 agree with your general assessment in terms of
21 preparation and class work before sitting for a
22 test. Again I think the reasons we need to set
23 up our students for success and that is the only
24 way to do it. Quite frankly as an example there

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 was a time in this State and other States where
3 people could sit for the Bar exam and be a lawyer
4 and just take the test. That doesn't happen
5 anymore you have to go and sit and test and
6 learn, so the same thing goes for this.

7 In terms of technology, I think that
8 technology, all of you talked about technology
9 and I think it is very important. There is an
10 organization out of Scranton, Pennsylvania which
11 is called Penn Foster. They are known for two
12 things, one is online high school degrees that we
13 don't really use because we have a bona fide GED
14 program where we come from. But they also have
15 over 100 job training programs that we actually
16 use hands-on within our facility. So I would
17 just offer that for those are unaware of it.
18 Hopefully we might even have somebody within New
19 York State, I am not aware of it, I am aware of
20 Penn Foster.

21 Then finally you made some very good
22 suggestions, so in my view your suggestions, the
23 SED would have elastic power to implement many of
24 them. If they chose not to that is where

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 legislation could come in and I just wanted to
3 offer to all of you that I would be very
4 interested in being helpful in carrying
5 legislation based on your suggestions.

6 For Dan White from Monroe County, my
7 mother is a Rochestarian so I am very familiar
8 with where you are from and I think at the end of
9 your testimony, your written testimony, the last
10 paragraph, it says "At the end of the day if we
11 can take a step back and look", to me we looked
12 to get back to the basics and so I would agree
13 with that. Also I agree with your suggestion
14 that we need to do this in a comprehensive way.
15 I also agree that Dr. Steiner and Deputy King are
16 listening and quite frankly you are only new once
17 and they are new now and this is the time to
18 really begin to hammer these points that you have
19 made today.

20 Finally I just wanted to comment on Cami
21 Anderson, you gave an outstanding presentation
22 and I talk about the simple point of entry. I
23 think that is important that it be done in a very
24 professional comprehensive way. You also talked

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 about some GED reforms and in terms of not
3 quickly just going the GED route, finding out
4 from the student what their past is, one way to
5 do that is through a TABE process and so the
6 number one objective I think you have hit it is
7 to see if the student has a potential to get back
8 in and get a high school degree. That would be
9 the way to do it.

10 The Stacy Watson I talk about from
11 Buffalo who is the executive director of the GED
12 center, she spends a great deal of time, each and
13 every week, at the local Buffalo high schools
14 tutoring and convincing those who have the
15 credits to stay in high school and to get your
16 degree. I think that is a very important point.

17 You also just touched on military, just
18 as a comment and I wanted to let all the people
19 know here, if you don't know this, there are
20 students who spend four years in high school and
21 they earn an IEP diploma and in my view it gets
22 them nothing, nothing. They can't go to
23 community college; they can't even join the
24 service. We had a young man who spent four years

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 at a suburban high school, earned his IEP, had to
3 come to the GED center to get his GED to go to
4 service, armed services. I mean we have multiple
5 things and I am an eternal optimist like you are,
6 but we have a lot of things that are broke that
7 we have to fix.

8 Finally you talked about pass rate and I
9 heard exactly what you said about it but I just
10 want to make this clear and if SED has a
11 different number. Throughout this State the
12 average passing student, actual passing of a GED
13 at the centers across the State, their numbers
14 not mine, 325, 345 per year at these GED centers.

15 Now I will tell you that is not
16 impressive and that is the reason why the
17 percentage is so low. Again the South Buffalo
18 Education Center, God bless you, the South
19 Buffalo Education Center has had over 500 people
20 in less than seven years which is a rate of about
21 50 per year. There is no reason why we can't
22 have 50 per year or more. Three to five is
23 disgraceful and with all of your work and all of
24 your attention to it I think we will be able to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 do a better job, so thank you for all your
3 service.

4 MS. NOLAN: Anybody else a question, yes
5 Carmen?

6 MS. ARROYO: What, I said before that I
7 came here to learn and I am learning something
8 that got me very upset and it is the fact that
9 the only center that the Bronx has in East - - .
10 I don't know how - - about it, but I am upset and
11 I am going to follow this up.

12 I don't appreciate, I don't appreciate
13 what is happening in my neighborhood and we have
14 a lot of problems and most of the problems that
15 we have are those young mothers that need help to
16 enter college, that the facility where they can
17 have help is in East - -, from the South Bronx,
18 from 138th Street to the East - -, there are hours
19 of travel and that is a lot.

20 MS. NOLAN: - - .

21 MS. ARROYO: Let me finish please
22 because I am speaking from the - - community that
23 I represent and you don't live there. Let me
24 tell you something else, we have to work together

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to make sure that we open one center in - -
3 Community College and another one in Bronx
4 Community College. I cannot advocate for the
5 rest of my colleagues but that is my strong
6 statement and I am going to follow this up.
7 Thank you and don't ask me for money until I see
8 that facilities are developed in the neighborhood
9 that I represent.

10 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, you will get us a
11 list, we will see where everything is and we will
12 go from there.

13 MS. ANDERSON: I just wanted to make
14 sure to clarify that we actually do have a number
15 of programs, so we will make sure that you get,
16 not only that list, but we have in addition to
17 adult education courses, we do have services for
18 pregnant and parenting teens, we have a bunch of,
19 I just want to make sure for the record-

20 MS. NOLAN: I look at the DOE website
21 all the time and I haven't found this that easy
22 to find. I mean I even looked at it last night
23 before the hearing so maybe, is there a list, you
24 are going to get us a list, how many sites to you

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 have in the Bronx for example, do you know off
3 the top of your head?

4 MS. FRIEDMAN: I don't know how many
5 sites that we have, roughly about 175 classes
6 throughout all areas of the Bronx.

7 MS. NOLAN: Okay.

8 MS. FRIEDMAN: That's only for the over
9 21s.

10 MS. ANDERSON: For under 21s we actually
11 serve, we have about 25 GED preparation programs
12 plus we have services for pregnant and parenting
13 teens. We will get you a list and we would
14 appreciate your feedback. I am going to go back,
15 I go on the website, like, everyday, but we need
16 to make-

17 MS. NOLAN: Well I am a technophobe so I
18 may not be the right-

19 MS. ANDERSON: We need to make sure it
20 is accessible.

21 MS. NOLAN: Maybe my son, my 12-year-old
22 son can probably find it like that. Yes Michael
23 go ahead, yes.

24 MR. BENJAMIN: Good afternoon. Laurie

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Bargstedt?

3 MS. BARGSTEDT: Yes that's correct.

4 MR. BENJAMIN: I want to apologize for
5 speaking during your testimony but I read it all.
6 I am from the City so I am not that familiar with
7 the BOCES, I was just trying to get a
8 clarification. Ms. Bargstedt I want to I guess
9 congratulate you on your ability to have a pass
10 of 100% for persons who are incarcerated. For
11 some of us in the city it is kind of scandalous I
12 would think for persons from New York City who
13 are incarcerated that earned their GED through
14 prison have a greater chance of being successful
15 in that fashion. But it is an important thing
16 that does occur. You talked about offering
17 priority seating as a way of I guess sort of
18 ensuring that the persons who take the exam will
19 be successful and will be able to move on. You
20 also go on to talk about that you feel that a
21 high score in OPT, my apologies, I am sorry, do
22 you feel that a high score in OPT will discourage
23 rather than encourage persons to enroll in a GED
24 program?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. BARGSTEDT: Well I think for all of
3 our students whether they are enrolled in high
4 school courses or GED courses need to have high
5 expectations of what is expected for them in
6 academic performance because that is what will be
7 expected of them in the workforce. I think the
8 two different levels of OPT testing are geared
9 for two different kinds of students. Those
10 students have the goal to be successful in
11 college need to have well developed skills. That
12 benchmark was set working with a team from my
13 community college who shared with me that far too
14 many high school graduates come to them unable to
15 be successful. So with that information we
16 worked with those staff members to see what kind
17 of skills do they need to be successful in their
18 first year to encourage their persistence through
19 graduation, so when they enroll in that program
20 they are enrolling knowing that they are coming
21 into a program with a higher standard.

22 I don't think that discourages them, no.

23 MR. WHITE: Not necessarily, I probably
24 would advocate for a score of around 2450 but you

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 are really splitting hairs at that point. It
3 will decrease some access to the examination to
4 be frank with you. It does do that, we do see
5 students who may not meet that level but go in
6 and sit the exam and they actually do pass it.
7 Now that percentage of passing is lower. One of
8 the points is it probably depended upon your
9 location, while we service a number of English
10 language learners as well and I think that is
11 where the single point of access becomes very,
12 very important. We can get that student in and
13 we can work with them as to what their needs are.
14 Maybe they need to enter one of our other adult
15 literacy programs before hand. Getting the
16 student in the door I think is the first part. I
17 think once you get them in programming then I
18 think, no I don't think it is a discouragement at
19 that point.

20 MR. BENJAMIN: The other question I
21 have, again the possible barrier to enrolment and
22 participation would be charging a fee, whether
23 it's \$30 or \$100, I would be concerned about
24 charging a fee for admission taking the GED. I

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 understand the need to have the money because of
3 the proposed budget cuts but what are your
4 thoughts. Do you think, would you agree with me
5 that it could somewhat be a barrier to
6 participation?

7 MS. BARGSTEDT: I agree it will limit
8 access for many students; however, that is why I
9 provide the considerations for those students who
10 do, do what is necessary to prepare. Once they
11 can demonstrate that readiness then we consider
12 waiving those fees.

13 I can tell you in my 20 years of doing
14 this I have a student who has taken the test 14
15 times, 14 times. There is no reason why I should
16 keep her away from that because she meets the
17 eligibility according to New York State. However
18 it bothers me as a local taxpayer that my dollars
19 should support someone who is not preparing to
20 come in and take a test that is provided for
21 free. So as a taxpayer we are providing that to
22 her but she is not doing anything to make that
23 personal investment to step into that test
24 prepared.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. NOLAN: It must be terrible though.
3 One of the deficiencies in our hearing today is
4 we really weren't able to get any students and I,
5 you know, we will as we go forward, I want people
6 to understand this is a first step - - things but
7 it hurts me, it had to hurt that person, you
8 know, to fail a test is a terrible thing and for
9 an adult it is very, it is bad enough for a
10 child, but I mean at least a child gets some
11 support in school to maybe go forward. I hate to
12 even hear that, it hurts me. It is a complicated
13 question, you know, when do you-

14 MS. BARGSTEDT: You are absolutely
15 correct, it is complicated.

16 MR. BENJAMIN: Earlier one - - person
17 testified, David Jones from - - talked about the
18 economic impact on a person of color and the need
19 for GED attainment, the thought still does occur
20 to me that if we are going to focus our funding
21 and our efforts on students who are more likely
22 to succeed or benefit aren't we in a sense
23 performing some sort of educational triage?

24 MS. BARGSTEDT: I am not sure I

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 understand what you are asking?

3 MR. BENJAMIN: Given the need, there are
4 people who don't have their high school diploma
5 and given the changes in the workforce in New
6 York and the United States and given the funding
7 cuts if we are going to only talk about focusing
8 our remaining resources on those persons who are
9 most likely to benefit or to be successful in
10 taking and sitting for the exam are we in a
11 sense, you know, not treating the entirety of the
12 problem?

13 MS. BARGSTEDT: I am sorry if I didn't
14 make it clear when I talk about focusing on
15 students who are ready, please understand we have
16 a vast number of students throughout our state
17 who are not at that level to be considered for
18 GED readiness, individuals who read at the 1st,
19 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th grade level. I dearly still want
20 to continue providing education for those
21 learners, opportunities for those learners, so
22 they can show educational gain, so then can go
23 through that gate toward GED attainment and other
24 opportunities, please understand that. I don't

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 want to diminish their access to services to help
3 them.

4 MS. ANDERSON: Just quickly, I mean I
5 would imagine this is true for all of us, but we
6 all run GED preparation programs and GED testing
7 services so if we are able to deliver the testing
8 more efficiently, just speaking from our
9 perspective then we can redeploy resources to
10 continue to improve our preparation programs. So
11 that instead of giving, you know, 100 tests,
12 knowing that only 17 of those folks are going to
13 pass, we can redistribute those resources to meet
14 students where they are, retain them better and
15 help them ultimately get over the goal line.
16 Actually it is about serving more students better
17 as opposed to continuing to spin our wheels
18 frankly at the testing piece when we all know the
19 real key to cracking this code is getting much
20 better and really, really good at the preparation
21 piece which includes literacy intervention and
22 meeting folks where they are. That will
23 actually, you know, help us do that, if we are
24 able to, you know, redeploy our resources and

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 make our testing engine more efficient.

3 MR. WHITE: If I could jump in on that
4 too, Assemblyman Schroeder I would gather that
5 one of the reasons that that center in Buffalo is
6 so successful, I am familiar with it, is because
7 of the type of services and the access you
8 provide.

9 I would make the statement I think we
10 are doing, we are performing educational triage
11 now. The fact of the matter is when you look at
12 the support for the educational piece of these
13 programs it is virtually non-existent from the
14 State. Part of it is access, part of it is
15 greater training on behalf of teachers, part of
16 it is highly qualified staff and some of it is
17 simple things like we need to rent additional
18 space to put it in places where students can
19 access it. That all costs money to a certain
20 extent, so it is access, it's quality, then I
21 think we have a much better shot of having higher
22 qualified candidates.

23 MR. BENJAMIN: One last question Ms.
24 Anderson, we know that the City of New York is

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 instituting budget cuts as well, how will the
3 cuts in the Department of Education affect what
4 you do in District 79?

5 MS. ANDERSON: I think it is still
6 rolling out right now. I will say that all of us
7 are committed to doing more for less, we don't
8 have a choice and the GED testing example is a
9 perfect one. If we are able to, you know,
10 continue to get better at what we do, we
11 certainly believe that we can get better even in
12 the face of the budget crisis.

13 Specifically I mean none, frankly none
14 of us know just yet how exactly it is going to
15 shape out but we have in the past three years,
16 just to use an example of our GED reforms, we
17 employed about a third fewer individuals in the
18 GED Plus part of our organization while we
19 doubled our outcomes and that was just, you know,
20 the difference between running 175 sites in a
21 manner that we thought was fine, but not
22 necessarily the highest quality that we would
23 like; concentrating those resources and doing a
24 better job of referring students and in three

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 years with a third fewer people we have doubled
3 our outcomes. I think we can, not I think, we
4 must continue to do more for less and with smart
5 public policy such as some of the things we are
6 discussing today, like requiring the OPT etc you
7 all can help us do that.

8 MS. NOLAN: Yeah, go ahead, sure.

9 MR. O'DONNELL: Ms. Anderson you started
10 your introduction by saying that you work at
11 Rikers Island, so do you work with the people at
12 Island Academy?

13 MS. ANDERSON: Yes they are part of our
14 portfolio so we have in addition to our big GED
15 program portfolio, we run the programs for
16 students under 21, the involuntary, compulsory
17 programs on Rikers Island and the voluntary
18 programs for adults on Rikers.

19 MR. O'DONNELL: So I want to just state
20 for the record that I don't know what the
21 chemical equations for photosynthesis is because
22 I just read a GED test but I have gotten that one
23 wrong, okay. I think I got it wrong in the
24 Biology Regents in 1976, so maybe I never knew

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 it, so I didn't actually unlearn that.

3 You said in your testimony if I heard
4 you correctly and I don't want to put words into
5 your mouth that GEDs and high school diplomas are
6 not equal, so I took that to mean that high
7 school diplomas are better in your opinion, is
8 that correct?

9 MS. ANDERSON: The research is pretty
10 undeniable on this in terms of long-term earning
11 potential and as a pathway to college. What you
12 also heard me say just be clear because I want to
13 make sure I am not misunderstood, that I believe
14 the GED can become and should be a pathway-

15 MR. O'DONNELL: No I understand that.

16 MS. ANDERSON: But in terms of research,
17 yes those who obtain a high school diploma
18 graduate from college at much higher rates and
19 over time their earnings potential and access to
20 job market is much, is greatly enhanced.

21 MR. O'DONNELL: Okay and so you said if
22 I understood you correctly, that if somebody
23 comes into one of these centers and they have
24 high school credits and they are still within the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 age parameters that you try to put them back into
3 the high school environment rather than send them
4 to GED, is that correct?

5 MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

6 MR. O'DONNELL: So I am sort of
7 experiencing a little cognitive dissidence here
8 because last year we took the show on the road
9 and went to hearings in all five boroughs in New
10 York City and what we learned there was that
11 there was a mass push to release people, high
12 school students from being on the rolls in high
13 school as a mechanism to raise graduation rates,
14 so what I essentially hear you saying is those
15 people who last year, the city purged from their
16 roles as students because they didn't want to
17 have accurate graduation rates out in the press,
18 are now coming back into you and now you are
19 sending them back into the high schools?

20 MS. ANDERSON: No, so first I think I
21 would take, I would take some exception to the
22 process by why you are able to discharge a young
23 person from a high school is actually pretty
24 extensive and has a lot of checks and balances in

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 place. Now I will submit to you that as a city
3 we, as a district, as a deal, not just District
4 79 we have gotten better and better at holding
5 high schools accountable for that. You can't
6 simply, you can't simply purge a young person
7 from your high school rolls, so that is one point
8 I would like to make. There are steps you have
9 to take per federal law and local enforcement
10 around when a young person actually is considered
11 a "drop-out." By the way this is something that
12 we should, I mean statewide too, what is the
13 definition of an out of school youth and so to be
14 honest New York City is in fact far more rigorous
15 in what it requires to take a young person off
16 a high school cohort than lots of places in the
17 State and the country, so I just want to make
18 that point.

19 Having said that I don't necessarily,
20 you know, in general I-

21 MR. O'DONNELL: I understand that you
22 disagree with the premise of my question and
23 maybe someday you get to come and elect an
24 official and you get to take your show on the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 road and travel around to five boroughs, I don't
3 wish that upon you but if that were to be the
4 case and you would hear information from people
5 other than within the confines of - - and DOE who
6 gave extensive testimony about the ways in which
7 this was done. I don't want to debate you about
8 that but what I am mostly trying to understand is
9 that your wing of DOE is taking the position, if
10 I understand it correctly that the mechanism to
11 deal with people who do not have high school
12 diplomas but are still under 21 is, the better
13 path is to bring them back into the high school
14 environment and not try to get them to GED.

15 MS. ANDERSON: So let me just clarify,
16 thank you for giving me a chance to clarify. We
17 actually do have field-based offices where we
18 meet young people where they are. So we do have
19 a lot of folks who have, have had challenges with
20 their home school, so I definitely want to make
21 sure, I hear you on that point loud and clear and
22 we, our office sees about 10,000 under 21s and a
23 lot of them have had challenging stories to tell.
24 So I didn't mean to imply that I thought the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 broad point wasn't well taken.

3 When we meet them we don't, we
4 absolutely do not, so I want to make sure I am
5 clear here, we do not say "Hey, high school is
6 better; get back to your home school where you
7 already experienced failure", that is not our
8 premise. What we do is we actually go through an
9 extensive case discussion where we talk to that
10 young, we go into their records, we see how many
11 credits they have, we see which high school they
12 were in and we talk to them about their goals.

13 So let me just give you an example
14 because I was in a referral center last week. I
15 actually do get - - as much as I can to make sure
16 that we are, you know, putting in place policies
17 that make sense.

18 We had a young person who experienced
19 problems at their home school but desperately
20 wanted to go back, in that instance, and they had
21 a certain number of credits and there was a lot
22 of issues there, in that instance we did help get
23 that young person back to their home school
24 because that is what they wanted. They expressed

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to us, first they come in saying that we want a
3 GED but after a long conversation it turns out
4 that they needed advocacy at the home school and
5 we provided that, the actual guidance counselor
6 when to the home school. That said, behind that
7 young person in line was someone who was 18 years
8 old who hadn't necessarily had a good experience
9 in their high school, had no credits, and for
10 that young person we enrolled them immediately in
11 our GED program.

12 Yet a third example would be a young
13 person who was at a home school, had a bad
14 experience either because of their own doing,
15 right because some of these young people, the
16 high school didn't serve them well, some of them
17 young people it is because they made that choice
18 to walk out the door and they wanted to get back
19 to high school but they didn't know how. For
20 that young person we didn't necessarily send them
21 back to their home school, we helped them to find
22 one of our transfer high schools which are the
23 second chance high schools, brand new location,
24 different field and they have actually been

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 wildly, the transfer schools have been wildly
3 successful in helping to graduate over age under-
4 credited youth.

5 So I just want to be clear, we do look
6 for high schools as an option but we are very
7 much listening to the students and their families
8 about not only where they are but where they want
9 to go and we tailor our approach to where we want
10 to place them according to the feedback they are
11 giving us.

12 MR. O'DONNELL: I just want to be clear
13 with you as well. I was not meaning to be
14 critical. If I intend to be critical I come
15 directly at you and say exactly what I think. I
16 am just trying to elicit some information about
17 that.

18 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah fair enough.

19 MR. O'DONNELL: I have Westside High
20 School in my district, Westside High School is
21 one of those schools I am familiar with it, I go
22 to it, I interact with the students in it. They
23 come to my office so I am aware of that is. What
24 I am trying to do is put that in a somewhat

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 larger context for you which is we go through
3 this whole question about testing and not testing
4 and testing to the test, we go through the whole
5 thing about letter grades, the best schools in my
6 district gets an F, the worst schools get an A,
7 you know, and then we have all of these different
8 numbers and because I live in the shadow of
9 Colombia University, the manipulation of
10 statistics is part of my local culture. Okay, so
11 manipulation of statistics is easy to do. What I
12 heard you say took my breath away because as much
13 as you may not believe what I said at the
14 beginning, that was in fact information presented
15 all across the five boroughs about the mechanisms
16 that were being used to manipulate the statistics
17 to make the graduation rates different than what
18 they actually are. I agree with you, that I
19 think that it is probably better to put most,
20 many of those students back into high school and
21 I support that decision and I don't want you to
22 take my questioning as suggesting I don't want
23 you to do that. I do want you to do that.
24 Although I am concerned about the information

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that we learned in the hearing that you were not
3 - - and did not know about what was being done to
4 some of those high school students at the altar
5 of a different call. So thank you very much.

6 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah and thank you, I
7 mean I appreciate the question because if I
8 wasn't clear and hopefully my clarification
9 helped.

10 MR. O'DONNELL: You did a lovely job. I
11 give you an A; tell that to Dr. Klein, she got an
12 A.

13 MR. ANDERSON: We do want to make sure
14 that those home schools where we do need to push
15 back, though I just want to make sure, those home
16 schools that need us to push back, that is part
17 of the mission of those referral centers for the
18 very reason that you stated. So hopefully my
19 response clarified that. Thank you.

20 MS. NOLAN: Carmen has a final question;
21 we want to go to our advocates.

22 MS. ARROYO: Let me add something to his
23 point. What I have found and it is very simple,
24 a year ago there was a proposition to close one

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 high school in my district, Alfred E. Smith, I
3 visited the center, one of my sons is a graduate
4 from Alfred E. Smith and I was very concerned
5 what was going on. The disparity between parents
6 and students and the faculty was that there were
7 people in the faculty telling the students, "You
8 better take a GED than finish here." Well who is
9 doing the misunderstanding and discouraging in
10 the students, the faculty, the people that we
11 pay, taxpayers, to educate our children are the
12 ones that are inflicting in the mind of the
13 students that taking a GED test, they are better
14 than what is happening in that school. Why this
15 is happening, I don't want to say this in public
16 because I found out and I was very angry about
17 it. But I did my leader job, to make sure that
18 some of that people should be out of the system.
19 We don't need them in the system. We need
20 educators in our system.

21 MS. ANDERSON: I agree with you 100%.

22 MS. NOLAN: Thank you all very much, we
23 hope this is the beginning of a dialogue and we
24 really appreciate you coming to Albany, traveling

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 from Monroe. I always think of Montgomery, - - a
3 colleague - -, I always hear about it. I really
4 appreciate everyone being here, thank you. We
5 are going to keep going. It is nice that some
6 people clap. I just want to make sure Kim
7 Brizzell did not come, right, the Albany BOCES,
8 oh, alright come down and then Robert Zweig?

9 MS. ANDERSON: Oh he was; Lianne was
10 actually Robert Zweig. We were together.

11 MS. NOLAN: Okay fine. Thank you, let's
12 try, we will have the Albany BOCES come down, but
13 we are going to move on. So Elyse Barbell from
14 the Literacy Assistance Center and Sierra
15 Stoneman-Bell from the Neighborhood Family
16 Services Coalition, Linda Avitabile from
17 Highbridge Community Life Center and Leslee
18 Oppenheim from the City University of New York.
19 Then I want Julie Quinton from Make the Road and
20 Bruce Carmel from Turning Point, Christina Curran
21 from Fifth Avenue to kind of be in the front so
22 that we can get you. Then we have a few other
23 people from various groups. We want to make sure
24 everybody gets on, we are going to be here for

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 everybody.

3 Our Albany lady, just sit there, we are
4 sorry, you should have just come down, I
5 apologize, we called your name a couple of times,
6 so just hang out. We will do the four of you and
7 then we will ask some questions.

8 MS. ELYSE BARBELL, LITERACY ASSISTANCE
9 CENTER, NEW YORK CITY: Hi, okay, well we will
10 try to be brief. Elyse Barbell, I am from the
11 Literacy Assistance Center in New York City and
12 actually our panel is a good news panel today.
13 So we are actually going to, we are here to tell
14 you about things that we are already doing.

15 MS. NOLAN: I just wonder do all of you
16 have written testimony.

17 MS. BARBELL: Yes we put it in.

18 MS. NOLAN: Okay great.

19 MS. BARBELL: We are, all the things
20 that are happening in New York City in spite of
21 the cuts, because of the cuts, around the cuts,
22 but we have a lot of action going on so that is
23 part of what we wanted to share with you.

24 I also just wanted to take one minute to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 remind you that in the adult education system,
3 statewide, there is 154,000 people registered,
4 taking all kinds of different classes and
5 actually all of them get the TABE test, you will
6 be happy to know.

7 So in New York there are about 75, in
8 New York City there are about 75,000 enrolled and
9 I wanted to tell Ms. Arroyo that there are
10 actually adult learner centers in the City
11 University of New York in both the colleges that
12 she mentioned and that New York City is a multi-
13 provider system. So we have 40,000 in the
14 Department of Education which is the largest
15 provider in the country but we also have
16 represented here today the City University of New
17 York, several community-based organizations,
18 advocacy organizations and libraries that also
19 provide service.

20 I am actually here just to do my small
21 part to tell you something that you have already
22 heard a little bit about today and that is one of
23 the reforms we are doing to try to clear up some
24 of the chaos in GED testing in New York City. So

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 you have already heard all the problems, so I am
3 just going to cut right to the solution and that
4 is to tell you about the GED testing initiative
5 which is a community collaborative in three
6 parts.

7 I say community collaborative because
8 the Literacy Assistance Center as a result of the
9 reports you heard about today and in partnership
10 with Jacqueline Cook took a look at all of the
11 issues that were going on and partnered with the
12 Department of Education.

13 They put some money on the table,
14 brought good ideas, brought a lot of influence to
15 the table and we were able to reach out to our
16 community and say we need help that this state
17 education monetarily cannot provide us.

18 We went to Christine Quinton who is the
19 speaker of the City Council and we were able
20 through her advocacy as well as members of the
21 education committee on the City council to get
22 onto the speakers list and getting onto the
23 speakers list was really instrumental in getting
24 our initiative moving. Once the speaker came on

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 board, the New York Community Trust brought
3 private dollars to the table and then we have
4 other partners coming on board as well. We have
5 potentially the Department of Youth and Community
6 Development, the Small Business Services but it
7 is a whole community collection of funds to help
8 solve the problem, so that is important.

9 The initiative has three parts, the
10 first part is, you heard about briefly earlier,
11 is an OPT pilot, how are we going to get the
12 public to take the Official Practice Test, how
13 much does it cost, how much time does it take,
14 how can we educate them on the benefits of taking
15 the practice test before they go and what process
16 is necessary to make recommendations to the State
17 Education Department about putting some
18 regulations in place towards the OPT.

19 You have heard today there is different
20 opinions about whether or not it is a good idea,
21 we want to study it first and make some
22 recommendations, so that is part one.

23 Part two of our initiative is; you are
24 going to hear in more detail from my partner

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Sierra is to build an information campaign.
3 People don't know what the GED is, your questions
4 today were wonderful and part of Sierra's job
5 that she is going to tell you about is to build
6 an information campaign that leads to a
7 legislative platform so that we have a system and
8 a systematic ask that is built on consensus and
9 that is built on good policy.

10 The third part is really very exciting
11 to us and that is the GED Compass. There we are
12 building a website that will be primarily
13 directed towards the City that is going to have
14 some very key features.

15 First of all it is going to tell you
16 what a GED is, it is going to tell you a GED
17 question of the day, which I think you are going
18 to get from one of our panel members. It is
19 going to give you all the information you need to
20 know about taking the GED. It is going to
21 encourage you to take an Official Practice Test
22 and in fact there will be a whole education
23 module about the practice test and information on
24 where you can get a practice test.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 So once you get through all the
3 information we have an adult education program
4 locator which means that you can by borough, by
5 zip code, by subway stop and by desired
6 educational level, so you can look for ESL, you
7 can look for basic ed., you can look for GED and
8 you will find a list of programs in your
9 neighborhood and what features they offer. So if
10 you need childcare, if you need a night class, if
11 you need vocational training as well, you will be
12 able to find out if they have them.

13 Finally you heard about the chaos in
14 trying to get one of these precious GED seats, if
15 we have any left, it is going to be a seat
16 reservation system. That is just like you go on
17 an airplane or you go to the movies, you can draw
18 from a central pool of test sites and actually
19 make a reservation for a GED test and sort of get
20 a confirmation.

21 So the website is terrifically
22 important, the other important component of the
23 website is going to be education modules and
24 those will be modules for test takers, for

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 practitioners and for people who administer the
3 GED test.

4 So we are pretty excited and we are
5 moving all that along and really these GED, these
6 cuts to GED testing centers, really undermine our
7 whole initiative because if there is no more GED
8 test seats anywhere, the need for all of this is
9 going to diminish and it is going to be a domino
10 effect that is really going to have some
11 catastrophic impact which my colleagues will
12 review. Take it away.

13 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, I just wonder can
14 you just tell us who the Literacy Assistance
15 Center is.

16 MS. BARBELL: Yes I would be happy to.
17 The Literacy Assistance Center is a
18 community-based organization. We are in
19 partnership with the State Education Department
20 in that we run the Assist system which collects
21 all of the data for all of the literacy programs
22 statewide. We also partner with the State
23 Education Department as we hold the contract for
24 the New York State reign, so we do all the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 professional development for the Adult Education
3 system. We also run health literacy, family
4 literacy and financial literacy programs. We do
5 certificate programs for emerging leaders and for
6 teaching English to speakers of other languages.
7 We run about-

8 MS. NOLAN: Maybe you can send us a
9 little bit more about, you know, we have a lot of
10 advocates here today and it is important for us
11 to know a little bit about your organization, an
12 annual report or some kind of a document that
13 gives us a better idea of the scope. You know
14 some are big, some are smaller and, you know, it
15 is important for us to know who is actually
16 talking to us.

17 MS. BARBELL: That's great.

18 MS. NOLAN: I also find with education
19 almost everybody has the word like family,
20 literacy or active in the title, you know, so a
21 lot of people start to sound the same after a
22 while and we want to be able to distinguish just
23 who you are compared to some of the other groups.

24 MS. BARBELL: Well I appreciate that,

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 thank you.

3 MS. NOLAN: You serve primarily the city
4 then, right, so do you have a counterpart in
5 other parts of the city?

6 MS. BARBELL: We do serve primarily the
7 city in terms of our reign work, but the Assist
8 contract is statewide also the work we do in
9 health literacy is in partnership with the
10 Harvard School of Public Health and that is
11 statewide. We have a number of initiatives that
12 we do that are both statewide and national.

13 MS. NOLAN: Right so it would be
14 important for us to get a better idea then, thank
15 you. Go ahead I didn't mean to interrupt.

16 MS. SIERRA STONEMAN-BELL, CO-DIRECTOR,
17 THE NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY SERVICES COALITION: Good
18 afternoon I am Sierra Stoneman-Bell, co-director
19 of The Neighborhood Family Services Coalition.
20 We coordinate the Campaign for Tomorrow's
21 Workforce along with the United Neighborhood
22 Houses and Community Services Society. Today I
23 am testifying on behalf of the New York City
24 Campaign to save GED testing regarding the need

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to sustain state investment in GED testing.

3 The Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce is
4 spearheading the New York City campaign to save
5 GED testing, really to send a clear message to
6 state leaders that funding for the GED test, for
7 GED testing should be fully restored.

8 This New York City campaign is a
9 cross-sector alliance and non-profit agencies and
10 advocacy networks representing more than 100
11 organizations engaged in adult and higher
12 education, employment and community development.

13 I would like to thank the members of
14 this committee and your leadership Chair Nolan
15 for holding this important hearing and for the
16 opportunity to testify today.

17 Our coalition is in the process of
18 putting together a set of comprehensive
19 recommendations for improving GED testing and
20 preparation in connection with the work that
21 Elyse spoke about. But today I am really going
22 to focus my testimony on the proposed cuts to GED
23 testing sites and the impact on New York City.

24 So the New York State Education

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Department's proposal to cut \$1.15 million in
3 state funding for GED testing and eliminate all
4 contracts that support GED test sites is a
5 damaging plan that could not come at a worse
6 time.

7 Echoing what you have heard from earlier
8 speakers, New York needs a robust and rational
9 GED preparation and testing system now more than
10 ever. We have 2.8 million adults in New York
11 State including 1.3 million in New York City who
12 do not have a high school diploma or GED and this
13 group suffers from an unemployment rate of 16%
14 which is far higher than for the general
15 population.

16 We know that the GED test is a key
17 gateway to post secondary education, training and
18 employment as well as higher earnings so a strong
19 GED system is crucial for New York's human
20 capital development and our economic recovery.

21 At the same time as Jacqueline Cook and
22 Elyse also spoke about there is real improvement
23 to the GED system that is just getting underway
24 with growing support. The New York City GED

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 testing initiative is developing these new tools
3 to ensure that GED test takers know where to
4 enroll in preparation programs, that they are
5 prepared to take the exam and that they are
6 assured a testing seat. There is really a
7 growing recognition of the need for these
8 improvements and mounting support from all levels
9 for these improvements.

10 This progress is very much welcome but
11 it really relies on existing infrastructure as a
12 base to build on.

13 The proposed cuts to funding that, as
14 you have heard today already that it is already
15 inadequate, these proposed cuts at GED testing
16 sites will have a devastating impact particularly
17 in New York City, while the State reimbursement
18 of \$20 per test taker only partially offsets the
19 full cost of administering the tests, this
20 funding provides core support for GED testing
21 sites and provides the basis for leveraging other
22 operating funds.

23 The proposed cuts will result in a
24 drastic reduction of GED testing capacity in New

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 York City threatening more than 30,000 test
3 seats. Students enrolled in GED preparation
4 programs that are not linked to test centers will
5 have limited access to GED testing and members of
6 the general public will have virtually no access
7 to testing.

8 This means that far fewer New Yorkers
9 will take and pass the GED exam and New Yorkers
10 who are blocked out of GED testing will be
11 delayed or derailed from a path to post secondary
12 education and career advancement.

13 Especially wasteful is that these cuts
14 will really send us backwards and undermine the
15 unprecedented reforms that are underway to
16 improve the system.

17 Finally, the long-term economic harm to
18 the City and State from cutting GED testing will
19 far outweigh the short-term budget savings and
20 businesses will suffer from a hiring pool that
21 lacks basic skills and New York's tax revenue
22 will suffer from a smaller workforce and tax
23 base.

24 The New York City Campaign to save GED

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 testing urges SED, the State Legislature and the
3 Governor to restore the \$1.15 million in funding
4 to GED test sites as a part of the 2010/2011 New
5 York State adoptive budget and as an interim step
6 for the period of time until that budget is
7 adopted SED should honor and fund the existing
8 GED testing site contracts in New York City to
9 ensure that operations remain on track through
10 December 31st when contracts are scheduled to end.
11 We estimate that this interim step would require
12 a commitment of approximately \$350,000.
13 Obviously we support the full restoration.

14 We look forward to working with members
15 of this committee to sustain the existing
16 infrastructure and really keep making
17 improvements.

18 MS. NOLAN: In Neighborhood Family
19 Services Coalition, is also a non-profit?

20 MS. STONEMAN-BELL: Yes Neighborhood
21 Family Services Coalition is a coalition of
22 community-based organizations and advocacy groups
23 but it is focused on advocating for best practice
24 policy mostly for youth services and then we

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 coordinate several other advocacy campaigns
3 including the Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce
4 which focuses on disconnected youth and then that
5 is how our connection to GED issues come into
6 play.

7 MS. NOLAN: Thank you.

8 MS. STONEMAN-BELL: Thank you.

9 MS. NOLAN: Good.

10 MS. LINDA AVITABILE, DIRECTOR OF
11 EDUCATION AND TRAINING, HIGHBRIDGE COMMUNITY LIFE
12 CENTER, BRONX: Hi I am Linda Avitabile; I am
13 from Highbridge Community Life Center in the
14 Bronx. We are actually in Ms. Arroyo's district
15 and as part of New York City I think it is a
16 little bit different than upstate in that the
17 adult education system is a sort of collaboration
18 between libraries, CUNY, Department of Ed. and
19 community-based organizations.

20 We are a community-based organization.
21 NYSED had talked about issuing report cards, we
22 have been in the top quartile for educational
23 gain, helping people obtain jobs, retain their
24 jobs, get their GEDs and move on to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 post-secondary and college in every single year
3 that the report card has been issued.

4 We are also a GED test site. When
5 people ask why we became a GED test site, one
6 through the RFP process, I have two words; we did
7 it in self-defense. Even in good economic times
8 we could not get our students tested in a timely
9 way without taking them by van all over the city
10 and having my GED teachers dropping off coffee
11 and doughnuts at every test site coordinator that
12 was within reach.

13 I had wanted to talk about a couple of
14 my students because I think that they are good
15 examples both of how powerful the GED can be and
16 also about how fragile the system can be.

17 In the interest, Andre to me is a good
18 example of how the GED is effective really as a
19 gatekeeper. He lives in the Highbridge
20 neighborhood, his parents emigrated here from
21 Saint Lucia, he attended Art and Design but he
22 dropped out. He wanted to pursue a career in
23 graphics. He entered our pre-GED classes then
24 moved on to GED and he earned his GED in this

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 December, in 2009.

3 Now this process was fairly seamless
4 because we were a test site, so he could take the
5 OPT, the Official Practice Test. Once he passed
6 it he could be scheduled for the next GED. When
7 we got those results he was ready before that,
8 meeting with the college counselor who helped him
9 apply for New York College of Technology and he
10 got his acceptance letter in April for the
11 September class for Graphics Management.

12 Now the thing is, in our neighborhood we
13 see people with tons of road blocks everyday in
14 terms of money, in terms of housing, in terms of
15 food. The GED shouldn't be a roadblock.

16 Another student Daisy, she is a single
17 parent with two children, she had difficulty in
18 school. She has ADH, ADD and ADHD. She wanted
19 to enter the health field as a certified nurse
20 aide so she could work in a hospital or a nursing
21 home. She doesn't have any credentials, she
22 didn't have any training, she was reading below
23 the cut-off for any training. She enrolled
24 actually in a State legislative funded ALE

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 program, Adult Literacy Education Initiative to
3 improve her reading skills. This class led
4 directly to, we have nurse aide training, to
5 nurse aide training. She became certified in
6 April, she just got a job actually yesterday,
7 which I thought was wonderful timing.

8 The thing is success kind of makes
9 people think about what they want to do next at
10 least that is what we see a lot. We see people
11 who come in and they have sort of more vague
12 goals and then once they succeed they believe
13 they can succeed.

14 What she said, and I really don't think
15 I could put it better, is her low self-esteem
16 about her education vanished when she graduated.
17 So she now wants to get her GED because she wants
18 to move on to be a patient care technician and
19 then go to college for a nursing degree.

20 However what this shows to me is that
21 cuts to GED limits access to people like her
22 because if programs can only afford to test their
23 own students what about people like her who have
24 the bad luck to go to a program that is not part

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 of a test site.

3 ALE is scheduled for a 32% cut in the
4 Governor's budget, what happens to people like
5 Daisy who get stopped before they get started
6 because there isn't that pre-GED class that will
7 help them get into the training they need.

8 We give the OPT to everybody, walk-ins
9 or not because we find that it does two things.
10 As people have said, people come in and do not
11 have a basic understanding of what the test is.
12 They don't know how many sections it is, they
13 don't know the requirements for passing, so it is
14 important that they get this information It is
15 important that people who pass can be scheduled
16 for the next test, so they are not waiting three
17 and six months to take a test.

18 We also find it is important for people
19 who fail because we can talk about why they
20 failed and it even informs how we set up our
21 classes. Like people fail math, I mean, like
22 crazy, I mean that is the single hardest topic
23 for people to pass. So we said "Okay", we set up
24 a special class for people who fail math but who

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 have passing scores in the other four areas so
3 that hopefully we will help them with what they
4 need. We wouldn't get that knowledge without
5 giving the OPT on a regular basis.

6 We have seen since news has started to
7 be released that there may not be GED testing or
8 it is going to be dropped, the number of calls
9 and applications and everything we get has
10 increased by about four times. People calling
11 are discouraged by the idea that there is going
12 to be fewer GED tests and they are not just
13 discouraged from taking the test, they are
14 discouraged from studying.

15 Our GED administrator said the most
16 common comment she gets about going to class is
17 "Why bother to study for a test that is not even
18 going to be given?"

19 So I wanted to close with something
20 Daisy had said when she talked about her future
21 plans, that now she wants to get a GED and go on
22 to college, she said that "Now from having been
23 successful she believes as long as she is willing
24 to work hard she will get the help she needs to

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 succeed."

3 I think that these cuts should be
4 restored so that we can meet that obligation.
5 Thank you.

6 MS. NOLAN: Thank you. Oh yes Carmen.

7 MS. ARROYO: Thank you for helping me to
8 describe by district, God bless you.

9 MS. NOLAN: I am so happy that you are
10 here, yes, go ahead, thank you.

11 MS. LESLEE OPPENHEIM, UNIVERSITY
12 DIRECTOR OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PROGRAM, CITY
13 UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK: Thank you very much, I am
14 Leslee Oppenheim, I am the University Director of
15 Language and Literacy Programs at the City
16 University of New York.

17 I won't mention the points that have
18 been mentioned already but instead address a few
19 that I think haven't come up yet.

20 As we meet this afternoon somewhere on
21 one of the campuses of the City University of New
22 York students are sitting in classes learning
23 things like Aviation, Management or Environmental
24 Technology or maybe paralegal studies and many of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 these students have entered the University with
3 GED diplomas.

4 The students in these classes are
5 working to complete credit certificates, two year
6 associates degrees and eventually for some of
7 course, bachelor's degrees. Maybe you didn't
8 know that about 4,000 members of CUNY's freshman
9 class each year come not with a traditional high
10 school diploma but rather with a GED diploma.

11 They are out of school youth and adults
12 returning, often after many years of under-
13 employment in the workforce who are seeking
14 access to training and further education so they
15 can improve their employment possibilities. But
16 of course you need to get a GED first.

17 We have to help this population of out
18 of school youth and adults to prepare for success
19 on the GED exam, they deserve to be taught by
20 expert teachers who use researched-based
21 instructional practices that have been
22 demonstrated to be effective.

23 This we do at the City University of New
24 York on 14 campuses, about 14,000 students a year

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 funded through a combination of Federal, State
3 and local sources.

4 Also I will address Assemblywoman
5 Arroyo, we have very vigorous classes at Bronx
6 Community College and - - Community College that
7 provide basic literacy, GED preparation, English
8 as a second language for the host of students
9 that you represent in your district. We are
10 proud to do so.

11 Of course after we prepare students to
12 take the GED the very least we can do is arrange
13 for them to have a seat at an official GED test
14 so they can sit and take the exam. I actually am
15 convinced that New York State will not allow such
16 a basic opportunity as taking the GED test to
17 simply disappear.

18 By not providing reimbursements to test
19 sites such that students can be tested on the GED
20 we risk sending the message that out of school
21 youth and adults are not entitled to get the GED
22 diploma needed to access further education and
23 enter a workforce better prepared to improve
24 their economic situation and contribute to the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 overall economy.

3 All of us working with GED students
4 honor their intention and their capacities to
5 prepare themselves for a better future. At the
6 same time we also understand the challenges that
7 they face as high school drop-outs. For those
8 GED diploma holders who are entering the Aviation
9 management or the Paralegal studies classes that
10 I mentioned earlier we know that if they come
11 with a GED diploma they may need extra help in
12 college level reading and writing and
13 mathematics, if they are actually going to
14 succeed in college. Entering is one thing,
15 succeeding is another. We also know that they
16 will need advice and assistance in understanding
17 their career options and help perhaps in
18 balancing work and study because in fact they are
19 working and they are heads of families.

20 We can begin in our GED preparation
21 programs to develop this college readiness. A
22 GED program whether it is in a community-based
23 organization like Linda's or at the Department of
24 Education or at the City University of New York

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 can serve its college-bound students best by
3 ensuring that they get a rigorous program of
4 instruction.

5 Such programs that prepare college-bound
6 students not only for success on the GED but also
7 with a foundation of general background knowledge
8 necessary for success in college are attempting
9 to do two important things at once.

10 Strengthening the skills of GED students who plan
11 to enter college requires real teaching, not just
12 test preparation. It requires trained teachers
13 who are supported in their instruction with
14 professional development and it all happens best
15 in programs that can afford to offer students
16 enough hours of instruction to fill in their
17 educational gaps and be able to pass an
18 increasingly difficult GED exam.

19 Now my guess is that none of you up
20 there have taken the GED exam and maybe you
21 haven't seen it and perhaps want to know the
22 kinds of questions that are typically asked.

23 You have attached to your testimony
24 samples, just take a quick look at the back page

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 of the one that says "How close are you to the
3 GED", if you wouldn't mind. I am going to read
4 out loud, this will go quickly. Question number
5 four in math, "A painter mixes gallons of paint
6 in a large cylindrical bucket so that there will
7 be no difference in color among individual
8 gallons. If one gallon of paint has a volume of
9 approximately 4,000 centimeters what is the
10 maximum number of whole gallons of paint that can
11 be poured into the bucket?"

12 Well you can work on this when you have
13 a free moment and the answer is on the back page
14 here to be discussed. Now some may find the
15 questions that are listed here and there is one
16 in social studies and there is one in writing and
17 so on, some may find them relatively easy, myself
18 I am not so sure about that. It seems to me that
19 anyone who is deemed ready to attempt this test
20 merits at least a seat at a GED test site and the
21 chance to demonstrate his or her skills on this
22 test.

23 I have only one more comment to make and
24 that is that yes you need a rigorous GED program

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 if you are going to help students enter college
3 with the skills they need to succeed. Our
4 experience at the City University of New York is
5 that it isn't sufficient. We need to think about
6 and CUNY in fact has responded with an
7 intervention designed to help GED graduates with
8 the additional reading and writing and math that
9 they need to achieve the success that they hope
10 for in College.

11 That's it, I could go on but no.

12 MS. NOLAN: Thank you very much. I
13 really appreciate it. I want to ask if our
14 colleague from the Albany BOCES has an additional
15 testimony. So what we will do is maybe you can
16 submit something. I felt bad that we missed your
17 panel, I apologize for that, you came in a little
18 late.

19 Okay to this group I want to say first
20 of all thank you, especially the practical real
21 world experience and the advocacy. I do want to
22 ask one question about the test itself. We so
23 often have in elementary and secondary
24 educational issues talk about test bias and if

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 there are cultural barriers that may contribute
3 to children not doing as well and, you know,
4 there is a huge testing industry out there that
5 in my time as the Chair I am only beginning to
6 understand how complicated and how big it is. I
7 am curious especially since the company or the
8 non-profit that has developed this test since the
9 1940s, I guess you could say has a monopoly on
10 it, right, after all these years, you know, how
11 do you feel about the test itself, not just the
12 preparation, especially as educators and
13 advocates yourself. Should somebody, you know,
14 there isn't just an SAT, I think there are other
15 tests now that some people use or in graduate
16 school there is two various measures, there is
17 competing groups, I am just curious how you feel
18 about the test itself. Is it culturally fair, is
19 it sensitive to the various experiences, any
20 comments on that. I should have asked our
21 colleagues from BOCES and the City and I will at
22 some other time. I am just curious whether our
23 colleague from CUNY might want to comment on
24 that.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. OPPENHEIM: I think it is a terrific
3 test. It has been designed for adult learners,
4 many of whom come from very diverse backgrounds.
5 I haven't examined each and every question. I
6 couldn't say that there is or there isn't bias
7 but it is a thoughtfully produced test
8 particularly the mathematics portion of it,
9 forget the example that I read, it is about
10 problem solving and that is very important.

11 MS. NOLAN: We have looked at the test,
12 I thought it was kind of a practically oriented
13 test myself but of course I don't have any
14 special expertise. So by and large the ACE test
15 for GED is accepted nationally as a practical and
16 competent, it is widely, there is no one at CUNY
17 saying it is not the right test or we should...?

18 MS. OPPENHEIM: You know they have been
19 around as you point out for many, many years, I
20 think that they have done a good job.

21 MS. NOLAN: It is actually remarkable
22 though because the Government you know, very
23 rarely has unanimity on anything and I am really
24 quite surprised, I didn't know myself that it was

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 a single company and that they have been around
3 since the war, you know, I mean since right after
4 the Second World War. So it is interesting to me
5 that there hasn't been, so often, you know, there
6 is a controversy. So it is interesting because
7 there is going to be a new test. I was a little
8 unclear about that. Is it the same test for
9 several years or wouldn't that encourage...?

10 MS. BARBELL: They reinvest regularly in
11 the test. As Jacqueline said it is normed on 60%
12 of high school students across the country can
13 pass it which means 40% will fail it. So it
14 gives you a good idea, so as the standards in
15 high school have been rising, the ACE has been
16 really looking into making sure that the test
17 stays on par. One of the things we want the
18 website to do is to teach employers that if
19 somebody has a GED it means they have done some
20 work and that they are equivalent or on par with
21 a student with a high school diploma.

22 So I think ACE has done a fairly good
23 job at reinvesting and in fact they were just
24 about to issue a brand new test and they

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 postponed it all the way to 2012 because they
3 felt like the issuing of the new test didn't meet
4 technology standards, didn't meet the rising test
5 standards.

6 MS. NOLAN: Is the test itself for a
7 certain number of years, is the same test or are
8 there various?

9 [Crosstalk]

10 MALE VOICE: Multiple versions

11 MS. NOLAN: So there are no cheating
12 issues.

13 MS. BARBELL: No it is not sold on the
14 Internet or anything, you can't...

15 MS. NOLAN: I am amazed it is not
16 though, honestly I have to say I am amazed it is
17 not sold on the Internet.

18 MS. AVITABILE: Well they really
19 control, I mean, control it. They really control
20 it very strictly. Like you have to, if you have
21 tested previously you have to produce that piece
22 of paper and you can't be re-tested on a prior
23 version. Then you can't even be re-tested
24 sitting next to someone with the prior version.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 You have to do like a whole seating chart so that
3 nobody is sitting next to a version they aren't
4 taking or a version they have taken and it has
5 got to be kept in like a locked area and then you
6 have got to stay with it until it gets shipped,
7 there is really a lot of security with it.

8 MR. O'DONNELLL: Well as I said before I
9 got photosynthesis wrong in 1976 and I got it
10 wrong here today, so I imagine that if you don't
11 know the information you don't know the
12 information.

13 MS. NOLAN: Anybody any questions? I
14 actually, yes, maybe you will stay a minute, we
15 are done I think but we have somebody come take a
16 picture I know, so Ms. Arroyo you are a
17 constituent I want to make sure she gets a
18 picture with you. We really want to appreciate
19 both as practitioners and as advocates that you
20 came and made the trip to Albany. We didn't hold
21 this hearing in the winter though so I have to,
22 people should be happy about that.

23 MS. STONEMAN-BELL: We would have come
24 anyway even if it was snowing.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, thank you. Julie
3 Quinton from Make the Road and Bruce Carmel and I
4 want to thank our Albany BOCES as well.
5 Christina Curran, thank you. I think what I
6 would like to do is also have the Queen's
7 Educational Opportunity Center and the GED
8 Hotline, that's a Khayriyyah Ali and Martin
9 Danenberg and then I don't want our school
10 administrators to feel neglected but we will do
11 you at the end since this is a little bit
12 different. I don't know if we have anybody from
13 any of the other like NISSET or any of the other
14 groups but we can do them with the school
15 administrators. That would be nice, where did
16 she go that lady? Oh there she is. Ms.
17 Avitabile we want to take your picture, okay,
18 thank you, practical. Please go ahead, thank
19 you.

20 MR. BRUCE CARMEL, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
21 DIRECTOR, TURNING POINT: Hi I am Bruce Carmel, I
22 am Deputy Executive Director of Turning Point.

23 MS. NOLAN: And just I want to ask
24 everyone to explain what their group is, okay?

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. CARMEL: We are a community-based
3 organization in South Brooklyn. We provide a
4 range of services like housing, healthcare,
5 substance abuse treatment and education programs.
6 I also live in Assemblymember O'Donnell's
7 district and you have met with us about adult
8 literacy, Leslie Robins and I met with you a year
9 ago or so. It is nice to see you again.

10 MR. O'DONNELL: My constituents are the
11 best I won't fight with Ms. Arroyo about that but
12 they are active, they are vocal, they are
13 opinionated and you have six of them in the room,
14 you have seven opinions and that's what I love
15 about them.

16 MR. CARMEL: A lot of great things were
17 said, so I am going to try not to repeat things
18 but, you know, really the reason that we are here
19 is, you know, we want to inform you and have a
20 conversation with you about adult literacy and
21 GED testing but, you know, we are currently in a
22 real crisis with the impending cuts.

23 A couple of people mentioned the ALE
24 cut, the Adult Literacy Education cut which would

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 be hugely devastating especially to a lot of
3 community-based organizations. We, Chris, Julie
4 and I represent community-based organizations who
5 provide services to some of the most underserved
6 areas. You know, in New York City we have a
7 range of different providers, we have the City
8 University of New York, Department of Education
9 and some people aren't going to enter into a big
10 institution, they are not going to walk into City
11 College. I love City College, you know, I am not
12 criticizing them but we play different roles.

13 So we are community-based organizations
14 and one of the things at community-based
15 organizations I think is we are a very good
16 return on your investment. The little bit of
17 money that we get from the State Education
18 Department, it is not that much, it is not
19 sufficient to provide the services that our
20 students need but we leverage that funding to
21 attract private funding, to attract discretionary
22 funding from our Assembly members and State
23 Senators so we can provide the services that we
24 need.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Really, I know at Turning Point for
3 every dollar that is lost, because State
4 Education Department provides the core services
5 that there is two or three other dollars that are
6 lost as well because if we don't have the core
7 then we can't have the other services that are
8 around it. So, you know, really I want to
9 implore you to, I know Assembly member Nolan has
10 fought for a long time for adult literacy. I met
11 you back when I worked at the Queens library
12 which has a literacy zone by the way, one of the
13 two literacy zones in New York City is in Long
14 Island city, in your district. The other one is
15 in Sunset Park at Turning Point.

16 So you know to restore the funding, we
17 provide, just some of the services that Turning
18 Point provides is we work a lot with youth, young
19 people who really want to have a second chance.
20 I talked to a young person last night, about,
21 students are concerned about the funding and he
22 said, "You know what, we had our chance, they
23 don't want to give us another chance because we
24 screwed up" and I said to him, you know, that,

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 "We at Turning Point are committed to giving you
3 a second chance, you know, maybe you screwed up,
4 maybe the system failed you too." So, you know,
5 without this money we can't do it.

6 MS. NOLAN: Thank you.

7 MS. CHRISTINA CURRAN, DIRECTOR OF ADULT
8 EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY, FIFTH AVENUE
9 COMMITTEE, BROOKLYN: Hi, I am Chris Curran, the
10 Director of Adult Education and Family Literacy
11 at the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn.

12 Fifth Avenue Committee is a
13 not-for-profit community development organization
14 whose mission is to advance economic and social
15 justice in Brooklyn. We have 25 classes in South
16 Brooklyn in English, Adult Basic Ed. and GED prep
17 classes. We serve over 500 students.

18 These students along with the 200
19 students on our wait-list want to advance their
20 employment opportunities, show their children
21 that education is a valuable asset and move on to
22 a college or training program.

23 The proposed \$2 million cut to ALE
24 translates in a reduction of five classes at the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Fifth Avenue Committee and if you multiply that
3 across the 50 programs in CBOs, libraries and
4 campuses thousands of New York State residents
5 will be cut from existing Adult Ed. programs.
6 This translates into lost job opportunities, no
7 chance at college or at training programs and
8 parents without the skills to help their children
9 with homework and eventually in reduced income
10 tax revenues for New York State.

11 Secondly the \$1.15 million cut to GED
12 testing sites is a terrific loss. Right now six
13 times a year we send our students over to Bruce's
14 organization, Turning Point to take the test.
15 This is the best opportunity our students have
16 had in years to have reliable, scheduled test
17 dates, before we sent them all over the city.

18 Turning Point is reimbursed \$20 per
19 student, that doesn't begin to cover the cost for
20 providing a test at the test site.

21 Cuts to the test sites will result in
22 long waits for test slots, that is a tremendous
23 strain on our GED students and the agencies that
24 refer them.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 Finally when we talked to our GED
3 students and asked them "What is the biggest
4 barrier?" 80% tell us that time is their enemy.
5 They work, they have children, families that need
6 caring for, they cannot wait for a class for two
7 years or a test date for six months. They need
8 the GED and they need it yesterday. Contrast
9 that against their math and reading grade scores
10 and you have a recipe for failure.

11 However once they get into a GED program
12 there is a teacher who understands their
13 situation, pays attention to their needs and
14 knows what they are capable of beyond their
15 pre-test score. The students get to work, they
16 study what they need for two to three months,
17 they take a practice test, they pass, they get a
18 test date a month away, they stay in class, they
19 take the exam and they pass.

20 Some don't pass, they miss the math or
21 the essay by five points, so they focus on that
22 for another six weeks or two months. They get a
23 test date, they go back to Turning Point, this
24 time they pass. In six months they have

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 accomplished the GED and now they can get a
3 better job, they can get into a training program,
4 they can help their kids with their math homework
5 and they can start the college application
6 process. They had a moment of time and they did
7 it, bring on the next new student.

8 Cuts to the testing site and this won't
9 happen, they will enroll in a class, they will
10 get to work on their materials, the test date
11 that should be a month away is now six months
12 away, family issues come up, they lose their
13 childcare, seasonal work is available, their boss
14 wants them to change their shift, they can't keep
15 going to class for months. The momentum is lost
16 and time wins.

17 This is a window of time for our
18 population. The GED is important to them but so
19 is everything else in their life. We need to
20 capitalize on the moment. They can do the class
21 now, they have a test date in sight, they need to
22 take the test by Christmas to enroll in a
23 training program that starts January 15th, they
24 need to take the test by June so when the kids

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 are home they can't go back to school, their
3 childcare is gone, they can't wait.

4 It is in our interest as a State not to
5 wait either, the budget crisis, the economic
6 environment, the unemployment rate in our State
7 these are all reasons not to cut adult education.
8 Thank you.

9 MS. NOLAN: Thank you.

10 MS. JULIE QUINTON, DIRECTOR OF ADULT
11 LITERACY, MAKE THE ROAD, NEW YORK: Hi
12 everybody, thanks for hanging in, I have a bag of
13 pretzels in my backpack if anyone is losing it.
14 I am Julie Quinton, I am really grateful to be
15 here. It has been an honor. I work for an
16 organization called Make the Road, New York and
17 we are the largest community-based immigrant
18 rights organization in the city and we work in
19 Brooklyn and in Port Richmond, Staten Island and
20 also in Queens on the Elmhurst, Jackson Heights
21 border.

22 I just want to shine a little light on
23 an aspect of the GED sector that hasn't been
24 discussed much today and that is the native

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 language GEDs.

3 Just because we have had the good
4 fortune in our community-based setting in Queens
5 to open a couple of classes and it has been a
6 really wonderful thing and I just wanted to tell
7 you a little bit about some of our students and
8 kind of educate you a teeny bit about that sector
9 and just ask you in the larger context of all the
10 advocacy work that we are counting on you to do
11 to also educate yourself about native language
12 GED and the particular resource that it can be
13 for such a large portion of the city.

14 Linda did a great job of describing some
15 of her students; three of ours have had really
16 successful experiences. Mauricio Rocha is a
17 typical example, he is in his early twenties. He
18 came to the States from Colombia a couple of
19 years ago. He was a voracious student of English
20 and he recently passed his GED in Spanish. He
21 came, you know, to the table with a diploma, a
22 high school equivalent from Colombia but really
23 wanted to move the process quickly. He enrolled
24 in CUNY and he is going to be getting an HVAC

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 certificate.

3 So he is kind of a classic case of
4 someone who is going into training using the GED
5 and at a much faster rate than he would have if
6 he were going the English GED route.

7 You know I had a paragraph that I
8 skipped but in tough budget times and kind of in
9 a country where English only is kind of the
10 fall-back plan a lot of people are wondering why
11 we would even consider thinking about supporting
12 programs that do testing in languages other than
13 English and I just want you to know that it
14 really supports a sector of the immigrant
15 population that are ready to go and want to hit
16 the ground running and want to use it to access
17 employment to get into jobs. Whereas the
18 gentleman from Community Services Society said
19 earlier, you know, it is now a prerequisite or
20 into training programs where it is now a
21 prerequisite or into CUNY.

22 Gratefully Leslee and everyone at CUNY
23 is providing intensive English study as well as
24 all kinds of bridge programs so that if there are

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 programs at the community-based level that we are
3 not able to provide or kinds of bridge classes
4 they can get that at CUNY and be extremely
5 successful.

6 So Mauricio, Berenice and Jose, they all
7 had examples of that and I think because time is
8 running out I think I want to skip to the
9 advocacy message and I want to just ask you guys
10 to understand that, you know, in our program
11 which is young and vibrant and really successful,
12 the people who could apply for spots and got them
13 were successful. They had a great
14 community-based prep program, they took the OPT,
15 now we have folks, we have 12 to 14 because we
16 don't run a testing site in our own organization
17 like Linda and Bruce, we have 12 to 14 who called
18 Queens College where we have been getting great
19 placements, called a CUNY spot in Queens and they
20 are blocked out because they were hit by a
21 tornado of applicants who are just trying to get
22 in under the wire before the spots go away.

23 So we have people ready to go and like
24 Chris said the clock is ticking and we are really

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 afraid they are going to lose motivation and, you
3 know, lose some of that momentum.

4 So again like all my colleagues who have
5 spoken before it seems like a drop in the bucket,
6 it is huge, I mean it is huge for all of us. We
7 are really looking to you, we are looking to you
8 to restore that test money and we are also
9 looking to you to restore the ALE funding because
10 that is funding these GED prep programs for all
11 of us. It is also funding ESOL programs that are
12 fantastic complements for native language GED
13 students.

14 We are looking to you for moving forward
15 to invest in native language GED. There haven't
16 been a lot of, because it is not funded federally
17 it is not a big part of the State Ed. portfolio
18 and it is not really on State Ed's radar because
19 it hasn't been, you know it hasn't been something
20 that people are getting a lot of funding for from
21 State Ed. We are asking them to change their
22 data collection system so we can start to look at
23 the rates of native language GED and see what
24 sector of New Yorkers are being helped by this

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 and how it is a piece of the larger adult
3 literacy set of services that are really meeting
4 people's needs.

5 Thanks again for convening and being
6 here today and for being out there in the halls
7 and busting some butt to keep this money for us.
8 Thank you.

9 MS. NOLAN: Go ahead.

10 MS. KHAYRIYYAH ALI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
11 STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK QUEENS EDUCATIONAL
12 OPPORTUNITY CENTER: Good afternoon my name is
13 Khayriyyah Ali and I serve as the Executive
14 Director of the State University of New York
15 Queens Educational Opportunity Center. We are
16 administered by your college; our entity within
17 SUNY is a university center for academic
18 workforce development.

19 I want to thank the Assembly Standing
20 Committee on Education for the opportunity to
21 provide testimony regarding the administration of
22 the General Education Development Test in New
23 York State.

24 I am here today representing 10

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 educational opportunity centers and two career
3 counseling and outreach centers of the State
4 University of New York that deliver educational
5 programs and services throughout New York from
6 the shores of Long Island to Buffalo and the US
7 border with Canada.

8 For decades the EOCs have delivered
9 programs in which to prepare eligible community
10 residents for the GED exam. Most offer public
11 access opportunities to take the General
12 Educational Development examination.

13 Today I will address the demand for GED
14 testing, use of the GED Official Practice Test
15 within Educational Opportunity Centers and share
16 with you some aspects of the GED assessment
17 project, also known as the GAP that has been
18 offered by the Queens Educational Opportunity
19 Center for more than 10 years to inform community
20 residents about the rigors of the GED examination
21 and expose them to the Official Practice Test.

22 In addition to preparing students for
23 the GED exam EOCs cooperate with local GED
24 preparation programs that refer candidates to sit

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 for the exam offered at these centers. For many
3 years the EOC has provided resources to ensure
4 accessibility to the exam. Some continue to do
5 so without the benefit of outside funding. Among
6 the EOCs that offer the exam the Queens EOC where
7 I serve as the Executive Director is the largest
8 GED exam testing site within New York City and
9 New York State.

10 In New York City EOCs in the Bronx,
11 Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens test more than
12 8,000 examinees annually. In western New York,
13 EOCs in Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester test up
14 to 1,400 examinees yearly while the West Chester
15 EOC tests nearly 800 a year.

16 The vast majority of candidates taking
17 the exam are not EOC students however they are
18 individuals who are of great need to obtain this
19 credential that has the potential to positively
20 influence and impact their futures, position them
21 for college enrolment and improve their
22 employability.

23 Each EOC has faced and met challenges
24 involved in the administration of the GED exam

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 yet they have contributed to the improved
3 accessibility for prep program students and
4 community residents alike and reduced waiting
5 times for GED exam appointments while continuing
6 to responsibly comply with all regulations and
7 requirements in order to offer the exam as
8 stipulated by the State Education Department.

9 Future administration of the GED exam at
10 EOCs that have extended themselves to serve large
11 numbers of candidates to provide public access
12 will be severely impacted by the elimination of
13 the \$20 reimbursement fee per examinee.

14 More than 30 GED preparation programs
15 throughout New York City that refer candidates to
16 take the English exam at the Queens EOC and 27
17 that refer Spanish speaking candidates for the
18 Spanish GED exam are scrambling for seats to test
19 current prep program students between now and
20 June 30th.

21 The unexpected circumstance of a budget
22 reduction affecting the State's GED testing
23 program has subsequently imposed immediate
24 limitations for some test sites in prompting

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 cancellations of exam just as most prep programs
3 are concluding.

4 State Education Department funded GED
5 testing sites and EOCs will severely reduce GED
6 exam availability after June 30th. In Queens for
7 example approximately 175 to 200 GED exam
8 applications arrive per week from residents in
9 New York City, Nassau and Suffolk counties via
10 postal mail.

11 Residents from as far away as East
12 Hampton, Staten Island and parts of West Chester
13 county travel to Jamaica in Queens to take the
14 exam given the frequency at which tests are or
15 rather I should say were offered.

16 Due to other anticipated budgetary
17 reductions that may impact the Queens EOC the
18 offering of GED exams are projected to be limited
19 to being held once per month for only 60
20 examinees per seat, an 84% decrease from former
21 scheduling.

22 For some perspective the Queens EOC
23 typically tests almost 4,000 candidates yearly
24 with weekly scheduled GED exams and one monthly

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 GED exam in Spanish. Given the enormous impacts
3 described we are advocating that funds be
4 restored to the GED testing program budget to
5 provide continued reimbursement funding to
6 contract the GED test sites in New York State.

7 Use of the Official GED Practice Test
8 sometimes referred to as a predictor test or an
9 OPT allows perspective GED candidates to gain
10 exposure to the format and delivery of an actual
11 GED exam. The OPT is comparable to one half of a
12 GED test in the number of questions and time
13 allocated, subject areas and scoring
14 configurations. All the EOCs that offer GED
15 preparation programs use the OPT as part of the
16 preparation process for GED program students.

17 All EOCs that serve as GED test sites
18 incorporate some use of the GED practice test in
19 allocating seats or prioritizing appointment
20 dates for perspective GED examinees. The OPT is
21 used as you have heard in some States as a
22 requirement prior to taking the actual GED exam
23 and can have an impact on pass rates. At the
24 same time it also limits opportunity and access

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to who takes the exam in those states.

3 GED exam candidates are comprised of the
4 following cohorts. Candidates that take the exam
5 after having taken the OPT, candidates that
6 access the GED exam directly by applying for a
7 GED exam appointment by mail, many having not
8 taken the OPT. Candidates whose exam
9 applications are forwarded by GED prep programs
10 with completed New York State High School
11 Equivalency preparation program, GED test
12 authorization forms, also known as TAF forms with
13 included OPT scores. The majority of community
14 residents not enrolled in high school equivalency
15 preparation programs generally do not have access
16 or opportunity to take an OPT. As such their
17 understanding of what level of academic
18 difficulty they will encounter during the exam is
19 quite limited. When they take the actual exam
20 and the reality of not being adequately prepared
21 results in less than an acceptable outcome, when
22 they fail the exam a devastating and demoralizing
23 effect occurs by way of discouraging some
24 candidates from reattempting to take and pass the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 GED exam.

3 Since 2000 the Queens EOC has provided
4 monthly access to GED Official Practice Test to
5 community residents as an opportunity to become
6 exposed to the complexities of the GED exam. The
7 importance of initiating this effort was realized
8 after undertaking a simple survey of GED
9 examinees between April 1999 and June 2000 when
10 the inquiry about their experience, preparation
11 and knowledge about the GED exam was of
12 particular concern. A review of the responses
13 from 543 examinees clearly conveyed what was most
14 needed by prospective GED examinees was
15 information about the exam so that informed
16 decisions might be made as to how to prepare for
17 it.

18 75% of the respondents answered that if
19 they failed the exam they would just wait the 60
20 days required before they could take the exam
21 again without any clear indication that they
22 would seek to remediate areas that had been
23 failed.

24 The GED assessment project also known as

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 the GAP helps participants to learn how the GED
3 exam is structured and scored. In the course of
4 providing an informative and engaging workshop
5 that includes test taking techniques and
6 strategies after which the OPT is delivered in a
7 simulated GED exam format. Participation
8 requires a simple walk-in sign up process to
9 obtain an admissions card for a Saturday date
10 from the hours of 10.00am to 6.00pm.

11 Generally more than 200 people per month
12 sign up to participate in the GAP and close to
13 6,000 have attended since March 2002. GED
14 preparation instructions include eating
15 breakfast, getting a good night's sleep the night
16 before and trying to arrive without emotional,
17 mental or the usual stress that might accompany a
18 test.

19 The GAP objective by design is to
20 provide exposure to the level of commitment and
21 preparedness required as well as providing a
22 positive learning experience that will enable a
23 good assessment of one's skills as potentially
24 applicable to the GED exam.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 As a "triage" model or approach the GAP
3 has the unique ability of distinguishing by
4 achieved scores the degree of readiness or
5 priority one possesses in relationship to the
6 assessment of skills required to perform
7 adequately on the GED exam.

8 The GAP provides one of three important
9 measurable results for its participants. Number
10 one, score a GED subject content areas in the
11 range of between 2250 and 2400 with an average of
12 450 preferable 450 in each subject area, if
13 achieved it will result in the participants being
14 offered a seat to take the exam as soon as
15 possible if all other exam eligibility
16 requirements are met.

17 Number two, scored GED subject content
18 areas in which weak or deficit areas requiring
19 further study are identified as OPT scores below
20 410 where an EOC can provide and recommend
21 intensive study and tutoring perhaps best
22 provided in a structured classroom setting.

23 Three, the identification of math as a
24 specifically weak area which is often times

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 coupled with writing about which the
3 recommendations very often just requiring
4 individual study with the GED book and or
5 computer aided instruction or to pursue tutoring
6 sessions in these skill areas.

7 GED examinees nationally as reported
8 failure scores indicate are struggling to
9 demonstrate adequate knowledge in these two
10 primary areas in order to pass the GED exam.

11 Participants are informed of an
12 additional benefit of the GAP on the day of the
13 OPT that being the provision of an immediate seat
14 to those demonstrating high skills that are
15 associated with potential readiness to take and
16 pass the exam.

17 As recently as this past Saturday, May
18 15th out of 281 community residents that had
19 signed up since the prior GAP held on April 17th
20 118 individuals showed up to participate in the
21 month's GAP session. Of this number several were
22 scheduled for the June GAP after determining that
23 they were not physically prepared to take any
24 kind of test due to lack of sleep, forgotten

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 glasses etc as examples.

3 Others were found to have taken recent
4 GED exams within the last year, about which the
5 GED exam score sheet could serve as an assessment
6 in itself to identify weak or deficit areas.
7 These individuals were advised to return to the
8 EOC to explore how they could remediate those
9 weak areas to improve their GED score prior to
10 applying for a re-test appointment.

11 The GAP project offers advisement to GED
12 exam test takers and those with multiple failed
13 test scores to assist their identification of
14 reasonable strategies and actions to take prior
15 to take a second or third test in the same year.

16 Using a "Triage" model or approach again
17 of reviewing outcomes on the OPT so as to provide
18 feedback to GAP participants, of the 92
19 participants that remained to take the OPT after
20 the GAP workshop 13% or 14% were found to have
21 scored a level that demonstrated readiness to
22 take and potentially pass the GED exam. 19% or
23 20% were weak in either math and/or the writing
24 sections and they will be offered tutorial

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 support available at the EOC or if eligible for
3 TANF certification at one of SUNY's Advanced
4 Technology, Training and Information Networking
5 Labs or receive advice about recommended GED
6 textbooks and study skills strategy to support
7 disciplined self-study efforts.

8 Finally 60% or 65% of the participants
9 whose OPT scores were quite low were recommended
10 to participate in an EOC GED preparation program
11 if eligible or referred to a GED or literacy
12 program in the borough or their community.

13 GAP participants are informed of the OPT
14 outcome either by telephone on the following
15 Monday evening if high scores in all subject
16 areas are achieved or by selecting to attend a
17 GAP results session held thrice monthly during a
18 morning, evening or at the next GAP Saturday
19 session.

20 A review of the required minimum passing
21 scores to earn a GED, the participants OPT score
22 and the conversion of scores to expose areas of
23 strength and weak areas occurs in a 45 minute
24 workshop. The exchange of feedback helps

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 participants to identify personal strategies to
3 be individually undertaken, to remediate academic
4 weaknesses and creates opportunities to inform
5 them about preparation resources within the EOC
6 and in the community.

7 Without the GAP project many individuals
8 would have no concept of the exam or knowledge of
9 their readiness or lack of such to sit for the
10 GED exam. Those who prove to be under prepared
11 become convinced of the benefits of study in
12 order to prepare for an examination that they do
13 not needlessly want to fail.

14 While awaiting an exam appointment,
15 participants are capable of using their time
16 wisely in structured preparatory activities at
17 the EOC or in efforts accomplished at home and
18 monitored by staff at the EOC until such time as
19 a GED re-test date is established.

20 In 2007 the United States Department of
21 Education release of data set information
22 obtained in a 2003 nationally representative
23 study of sample of 19,528 adult respondents from
24 the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 authors of the release compared the economic and
3 non-economic outcomes of three groups of adults
4 with no post secondary education, adults with
5 less than or some high school, adults with GED
6 high school equivalency credentials and adults
7 who are traditional high school graduates. The
8 economic benefits of possessing a GED or high
9 school credential are clear to us all yet the
10 non-economic benefits are crucially as important.

11 The study found the following major
12 differences between adults with a GED credential
13 and the other two adult groups. One, that the
14 GED credential recipients show a higher level of
15 political and social participation than adults
16 with less than a high school education but
17 generally lag behind adults with a high school
18 diploma.

19 Two, GED credential recipients are more
20 involved in family literacy activities than
21 adults with less than a high school education and
22 live in a family literacy environment comparable
23 to high school graduates.

24 Three, GED credential recipients

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 reported being in excellent or very good health
3 more than adults with less than a high school
4 education but less than adults with a high school
5 diploma.

6 Four, GED credential recipients are
7 likely to have health insurance as adults with
8 less than a high school education but lag behind
9 traditional high school graduates particularly in
10 having employer provided insurance.

11 Number five, GED credential recipients
12 obtain information on public events as well as
13 health issues more often than adults with less
14 than a high school education and as often as
15 adults with a high school education or diploma
16 through every source surveyed.

17 These tangible and intangible indices
18 provide adequate rationale to equate the GED
19 credential worth the expense involved to assist
20 those in need of it to obtain it, if not for the
21 greater costs that loom for those without it and
22 the subsequent impact on family and community
23 life in a variety of areas with much higher cost
24 factors.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 In closing, the GAP increases awareness
3 about the GED exam, it helps prospective GED
4 examinees to understand the necessary breadth and
5 scope of one's preparation in order to perform
6 successfully upon taking it. The GED truly
7 counts towards one's future achievement both
8 access to the exam and passage are critical to
9 paths that lead to sustained fulltime employment
10 and/or future participation in training or higher
11 educational opportunities.

12 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, thank you very
13 much. I know we have one more person; I just
14 want to interrupt for a moment. I want to
15 acknowledge because they have been here the whole
16 time, representatives from the New York City
17 Council. I appreciate that very much and I want
18 to say how much I appreciate in having the,
19 hearing the efforts of speaker Quinn and other
20 leaders in the Council to really push this
21 forward at the local level. So thank you very
22 much, I appreciate that and I know we have Mr.
23 Danenberg. I just want to also say, pronounce
24 your name for me so I say it properly.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. ALI: K-H-A-Y-R-I-Y-Y-A-H.

3 MS. NOLAN: Khayriyyah, Ali, like that?

4 MS. ALI: Yes.

5 MS. NOLAN: Okay thank you very much and
6 I should give regards I am sure to Assemblywoman
7 Cook who as you know has been in full support of
8 this and thinking of her in your testimony today.

9 MS. ALI: Certainly thank you.

10 MS. NOLAN: Go ahead sir, thank you.

11 MR. MARTIN DANENBERG, GED HOTLINE: Well
12 my name is Martin Danenberg.

13 MS. NOLAN: I know they have to go I
14 just wanted to make sure we gave them that shout.

15 MR. DANENBERG: Known as - - and I have
16 published over 450 articles about the GED. I am
17 glad there are still some people-

18 MS. NOLAN: Say your name again.

19 MR. DANENBERG: Martin Danenberg.

20 MS. NOLAN: Wait, wait and I just also
21 wanted to say we do have a number of people still
22 here and in reference to the young person from
23 Make the Road, I have some bagels outside there
24 on a small table so if someone is starving they

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 can get something quickly. We try to think of
3 everything at a New York State Assembly hearing
4 and then if my two colleagues here from Queens
5 could wait a minute we do want to take a little
6 picture also and I want to thank the Assembly for
7 that and also my colleagues who were here really
8 for a large portion of the hearing and the
9 wonderful staff of the Assembly Education
10 Committee who worked so hard. I want to have, we
11 are going to have Mr. Danenberg and then we have
12 someone from the School Administrators I think is
13 here, is still here, James Viola, okay great
14 thank you. Then I want to just check because we
15 are starting to wrap up, is there anyone else who
16 intends to give testimony today that maybe we
17 have not acknowledged or represented. I know
18 there are still representatives from the State
19 Education Department I appreciate that very much
20 as well. So now, then I have a question for the
21 panel too but go ahead.

22 MR. DANENBERG: Feel free to ask any
23 questions you want.

24 MR. NOLAN: Say the name of the group

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that you are with again Mr. Danenberg.

3 MR. DANENBERG: I am the GED Hotline.

4 When I retired I started helping the Office of
5 Governor Bush in Florida, they had raised the
6 lark on the GED from 40 to 45 on every single
7 part of the test. Thousands of people failed the
8 test in Florida needlessly because of the actions
9 of the government and they justified it by saying
10 they were going to give a high school diploma
11 which really wasn't a high school diploma and
12 everybody knew it.

13 So in 2002 when the new test came out I
14 was able to convince to accept the same minimum
15 scores as every single state except New Jersey at
16 that time. So they accepted 410 as the minimum
17 passing mark but they still failed thousands of
18 their own people over a three-year period and it
19 was horrible.

20 Then I contacted Eliot Spitzel when he
21 was Governor in his first week of office. He
22 went into committees and when the federal funds
23 couldn't be used for GED testing anymore he
24 quickly had \$2.1 million transferred into the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 budget in New York State to keep the \$3.9 million
3 that we were discussing here.

4 As I said feel free to ask any questions
5 but you know basically I am going to speed things
6 up but I am also going to read from notes.

7 A couple of years ago there was a young
8 woman, 26, jobless, parentless, homeless, she
9 lost her baby, her brother got his GED in Rikers.
10 She had been in four GED programs of New York
11 City and nobody sent her to take the test. I
12 spoke with her on the phone on a Thursday night
13 at 10 o'clock. About nine days later she took
14 the test at the United House of Prayer, she
15 passed and she got over 2900 on the GED, okay.

16 Now there is a very important point, the
17 statistics that you have heard about the number,
18 the percentage of people, the high percentage who
19 pass because of preparation and the low that fail
20 or have a low percentage because of
21 non-preparation, what about all those students
22 that got 2500 or more up to 3,900 and something
23 on the GED. They get added in to the side of GED
24 preparation. I would love to see ACE, the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 American Council of Education have a new
3 statistic, take out all those students that the
4 preparation really didn't benefit the individuals
5 who knew all their stuff well in advance, put
6 them into the other group for the first time and
7 you will see the gap between the percentage who
8 pass because of preparation and who pass because
9 of not having preparation will be greatly
10 reduced. That is because the preparation really
11 isn't that great to begin with anyway and we have
12 heard that over and over, you know, today.

13 Here are some more things; New York
14 State hardly helps the Hispanic and African
15 American community. The legislature has voted
16 mostly for status quo instead of great
17 improvement of the workforce. The Regents have
18 been ineffective concerning the GED issue for
19 decades and the Mayor and all the Mayors across
20 the State of New York have not learned that you
21 have to mobilize the youth who turn to heroin and
22 other drugs, gangs, violence and crime. We need
23 them to get their GED.

24 Conservatives and Liberals have failed

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 in helping us out of this kind of situation for
3 years and that is how you end up with people
4 going to prison.

5 First of all El Quijote del GED is here
6 telling your State that every center in the State
7 should be forced, I mean required of course to
8 give the GED in the three official languages
9 which are English, Spanish and French.

10 Taxpayers' rights have been violated all over the
11 State, you will see a great reduction in crime
12 and welfare when you double the GED testing
13 centers across the State and the City and you
14 have to provide access to the test in three
15 languages.

16 You will also see much lower percentages
17 of black and Hispanic unemployment in ten years
18 from now when the economy goes south again.
19 Every ESL administrator in the State must tell
20 Hispanics whose dominant language is Spanish that
21 you have, if you have no diploma to get into
22 Spanish GED while you study English. Those
23 people can acquire the GED in Spanish and learn
24 English in the same six-month period and please

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 keep Hispanics with the diploma from their
3 country away from Spanish GED, it does no good
4 for them, they should get a translation of their
5 - - into English which is acceptable for
6 employment and if they need a GED for college
7 they need the English GED instead of the - -
8 exam. So the latter, the Spanish GED is just a
9 duplication for them, it does nothing for them.

10 Some important changes needed for the
11 future are a three credit course at the City and
12 State Universities to teach GED teachers and
13 potential GED teachers how to teach GED. GED
14 teachers must have better strategies to help the
15 students in the last weeks before taking the GED
16 test.

17 Candidates outside the test preparation
18 programs can benefit from the same important
19 information in writing. We want all candidates
20 to be well schooled and not well fooled. Many
21 people are struggling to take the test on their
22 own and just do not know how to obtain the 410 on
23 each part of the test and the overall score of
24 2,250. They get confused, they take the test,

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 they don't satisfy things, they take not enough
3 parts and then they have to repeat the test
4 again. This is ridiculous.

5 Many years ago a student almost hung
6 himself in a GED classroom in New York City. The
7 teacher left the noose up overnight after doing a
8 lesson on perspective in Art and that kind of
9 lesson is not appropriate for GED instruction and
10 there are thousands of lessons being used that
11 are not. Asking true and false questions for
12 example, was one that I observed in my final year
13 of instruction in New York City. You see there
14 are no true and false questions on the GED, there
15 are multiple choice.

16 New York State must not require every
17 candidate to take the practice test before he or
18 she can sit for the real test and they have to
19 eliminate the higher passing test score needed to
20 take the real GED, for example 2,400 or more when
21 passing the GED actually takes 2,250. Now among
22 the 1.6 million, some people have said 1.3,
23 without a diploma we have over 300,000 people who
24 possibly or probably can pass the GED without

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 preparation and the practice test. No person
3 should be held back in New York State.

4 Let's go now to, New York State must not
5 require every candidate, oh, it seems like I have
6 put the same paragraph twice.

7 MS. NOLAN: It's alright, are you a
8 retired teacher, is that what you said at the
9 beginning?

10 MR. DANENBERG: Yes I was a GED teacher
11 in offsite working with Robert Zweig and then I
12 worked at - - . Okay so let me get to the last
13 part. The New York Times mentioned the great
14 State of Iowa, a State where 2,000 out of 6,000
15 people do not finish the GED to be calculated
16 into the statistics that you have heard. 2,000
17 out of 6,000, that means they have a passing rate
18 of closer to 66% than 99%, right?

19 A much better State to use as an example
20 is the great State of Alaska which mobilizes 5.1%
21 of its population towards the GED a year and Iowa
22 mobilizes 2.1%. Now the completion rate for each
23 is 3.6% for Alaska and 1.4% for Iowa. So Iowa
24 really is mediocre compared to Alaska. Their

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 incompletion rate is approximately the same at
3 32%. So the New York Times was really foolish
4 for even mentioning the State of Iowa but they
5 have been reading about it in reports and hearing
6 about it, so that's how that came about.

7 MS. NOLAN: It is too bad we couldn't
8 get them to cover the hearing, to tell them, so
9 it is on the web now so you can.

10 MR. DANENBERG: Last year I was on my
11 way to New Jersey, I am a parent involvement
12 partner of someone on the Chancellor's Parent
13 Advisory Council in New York City, the recording
14 secretary and I called the John Gambling Show to
15 discuss the GED on the radio with Mayor
16 Bloomberg. Now I wanted to urge the Mayor to
17 begin a GED taskforce in the city, in New York
18 City, after thinking I would be allowed to speak
19 and they pretty much said I would be, a staff
20 member told me they decided to research the GED
21 instead and I would be contacted. I was never
22 contacted, that's how these things work.

23 When I asked Bill Thompson, campaigning
24 for Mayor to advocate for a GED taskforce that

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 affects these 1.6 million people and another
3 2 million of their loved ones in this city,
4 nothing happened.

5 But here is one of the key things that
6 you might be able to take back to people in
7 legislature. I told Malcolm Smith that by saving
8 a \$0.25 billion on the Rockefeller drug war
9 repeal we have the potential to put \$6 million of
10 that kind of money into GED testing to double
11 easily the number of diplomas in New York State.
12 I don't know what happened to the savings, what
13 happened to the idea.

14 Now I have asked the Whitehouse to
15 please take over the GED completely. Fund it to
16 the max, so that New York can mobilize two,
17 three, four times more people every year towards
18 the GED and to take all these regulations that
19 you hear about away from the State, away from the
20 City who have the same regulations and this will
21 really produce the America that we need.

22 We have 40 million adults in the United
23 States without a diploma, approximately 460,000 I
24 think got the GED in one year recently. We used

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 to have many more prior to 2002, we had as many
3 as 500,000 or more, some years we have had about
4 380,000 in year recently since 2002.

5 So the answer really is keep the GED
6 free for the whole country and double and triple
7 the number of diplomas all over the United
8 States, that's it.

9 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, thank you very
10 much. I just do want the panel to maybe think
11 about this question of the Official Practice
12 Test. I notice some of you, again like our
13 earlier panels think it should be given, you
14 obviously feel differently and we are going to be
15 struggling with how we do that. We don't want to
16 limit access in any way but we also don't want to
17 frustrate people. I can see where it might make
18 sense to have some, you know, requirement for OPT
19 but I actually also think we still have to have
20 some whether it is online or some, even if it is
21 just online, some ability for someone, as you
22 said maybe 75 years old and decide they want to
23 get their GED and they don't want to go for any
24 practice and they think they have knowledge. So

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 they might still be, I like to think using
3 technology there might be a way to continue to do
4 that and yet do what all of you have suggested
5 which is that really what are we doing if we are
6 frustrating people. It is a challenge for us. I
7 know we are going to be talking about it as a
8 committee and obviously we can't just, obviously
9 we would like to see more funding but I think we
10 are going to be also looking at how we can do
11 things smarter and more efficiently.

12 I want to thank our colleagues by the
13 way from Brooklyn, I will tell Jim Brannon, I
14 would imagine you are from that part and Joe
15 Millman, I can just tell from the names. So we
16 will be in touch with them, you know from the
17 neighborhoods right, that are mentioned. We will
18 be in touch. I don't know if Michael has a
19 question and then we have Mr. Viola who has been
20 very patient, you can come right down so we
21 don't.

22 MR. BENJAMIN: Just one brief question.
23 I have sat here, the concern about eliminating
24 the \$20 per entrant fee, how does that translate

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 into people being unable to get a seat to take
3 the exam beyond July 1st? I am not quite sure
4 because I have heard testimony that folks have
5 said, witnesses have said that some test takers
6 will book seats all across the city and then go
7 to one and then you have vacant seats everywhere
8 else. So I am curious how, what is the
9 contention that if you do have-

10 MR. CARMEL: Well I should mention that
11 we represent the New York Coalition for Adult
12 Literacy that is 43 organizations, City
13 University of New York, Department of Education
14 and libraries and community-based organizations
15 that would have been bad if we wouldn't have said
16 that.

17 If the \$20 reimbursement is not
18 reinstated then as people have said before my
19 understanding where GED test centers and talking
20 to other GED test centers is testing for the
21 general public will cease because like we are a
22 GED test center, we have to pay our examiners.
23 That is what pays for the examiners, the State's
24 pot of money do not pay for the examiners, the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 \$20 reimbursement pays for the examiners, so for
3 the public testing will cease. For our students
4 in our program that we prepare through ALE
5 funding, with ALE funding and WIA funding we will
6 find a way to test those students. Maybe it
7 would be more political for me to say that would
8 cease but it is not going to. We will find a
9 way. Other services will be cut. To do testing
10 for other programs like Chris's programs and
11 Julie's programs we will have to charge them
12 because again we wish we could do it for free,
13 now we do it for free because we get reimbursed
14 but we have to pay our examiners. So they will
15 have to cut their other services to find money to
16 pay us to do GED testing if the \$20 reimbursement
17 is not restored.

18 MR. BENJAMIN: I understand, Cathy did
19 explain it, Chairperson Nolan explained to me it
20 is mostly for those who walk-in. What if we went
21 to a grant, to a number of organizations for the
22 funding of a walk-in program?

23 MR. CARMEL: We would, and that is
24 actually in our testimony, we would prefer that.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 The vouchering \$20 per person is very cumbersome,
3 like somebody mentioned, Jacqueline mentioned I
4 think there is an incentive to sort of pack the
5 room with people who might not be ready. I mean
6 I don't think places do that but, you know, it is
7 not paying in the right way it is very cumbersome
8 if it was just a grant, do this amount of
9 testing, it would be better for everybody.

10 MR. BENJAMIN: Thank you.

11 MS. ALI: May I add to that response.
12 Currently in Queens, while a grant might be an
13 answer down the road somewhere, we are currently
14 in crisis. We have exhausted the allocated
15 number of seats that we have in terms of the
16 payment that would be reimbursed to us at an end
17 date that is June 30th.

18 As a very large testing center we have a
19 staff that is outside of my own staff. They are
20 hired specifically to be proctors. I do have
21 indeed examiners as part of my staff but in order
22 to have a test you have to be able to pay the
23 people who will come to work the test. So given
24 that we had exceeded already the number of seats

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 because we are a very busy test center we have
3 had to actually cancel tests because the funds
4 will cease as of June 30th.

5 Moving forward as well, without that
6 funding then we don't have the staff to pay to
7 keep up the number of seats we have had in the
8 past. We have to eliminate those and I have to
9 look internally within my own budget in terms of
10 what I can do. It is going to be very little
11 given my own budget cuts within our own
12 institution.

13 MR. BENJAMIN: Thank you, your colleague
14 is Stephen - - at the Bronx EOC - - district has
15 told me something similar so I am glad by asking
16 my simple question it will get further on the
17 record.

18 MS. ALI: Yes and we have conferred, he
19 has the same challenge that we have in Queens.

20 MS. NOLAN: I am very glad that you came
21 up. Also you mentioned Queen Makkada in your
22 written testimony, give her my regards, I know
23 her well.

24 MR. DANENBERG: Oh great, thank you.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MS. NOLAN: Thank you very much.

3 MR. DANENBERG: I just wanted to say,
4 even though I am a city boy I have been out in
5 Central Islip for 16 years and three years ago
6 the Brentwood Testing Center closed down because
7 the people actually wanted more money than they
8 were being paid and now we have a whole bunch of
9 killings by gang members, we have the FBI in our
10 community, almost 3,000 members of the community
11 have come forward in outrage over all this
12 violence and that is the potential that, you
13 know, you are facing all over the State of New
14 York, so, you know, let's keep this in mind and
15 not forget Brentwood.

16 MS. NOLAN: Alright thank you, thank you
17 very much. I don't want Mr. Viola to feel that
18 we have left him waiting and I thank you for
19 coming. Let him take the stand; he will be our
20 final witness as far as I know. Thank you all
21 very much I look forward to more dialogue, such a
22 polite group for clapping. My two colleagues
23 from Queens I just want to take a quick photo or
24 two, thank you, I appreciate that you are here.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 MR. BENJAMIN: You can start; state your
3 name and organization please.

4 MR. JAMES VIOLA, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
5 ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE: My name is James
6 Viola, I am from the School Administrators
7 Association of New York State. Would you like me
8 to begin? Good afternoon to Assemblywoman Nolan
9 and to you Assemblyman Benjamin. I represent
10 here today SAANYS an organization that has more
11 than 7,000 leaders that are high school
12 principals, deans of high schools, directors of
13 alternative education and other leaders directly
14 involved in general educational development
15 programs.

16 In reference to some of the points
17 raised by Assemblyman Schroeder earlier, I am
18 also the chairperson for the Governor's statewide
19 organizations group which includes Stacy Watson
20 as a member and Stacy you will recall is the
21 Executive Director of the South Buffalo Education
22 Center.

23 So even though Stacy is not a member of
24 SAANYS I will intersperse information regarding

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 that center in my testimony only to get it on the
3 record.

4 My testimony will have three parts to
5 it, first of all I want to address some of the
6 ramifications of discontinuing the \$20 contract
7 program. I want to share information relative to
8 improving success rates on the GEDs and I also
9 want to propose a recommendation that maybe
10 radical albeit appropriate in terms of the
11 overall insertion of GEDS and accountability
12 systems.

13 The discontinuation of the \$20 contract
14 will result in fewer administrations of the GED
15 test. Based on BOCES and school district
16 programs that I have contacted the
17 administrations will be cut by more than 50%.
18 The Broome-Tioga BOCES for example currently
19 administers 12 general administrations, 13 for
20 those needing accommodations. Next year it is
21 planned that 12 will be reduced to five and the
22 13 with accommodations will be reduced to three.

23 It should also be noted that that
24 program and most of the programs that I have

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 spoken with already are operating at a deficit.
3 Some programs like the Haverstraw Stony Point
4 program will be phased out entirely and
5 administrators in that program have indicated
6 that that is a high-need area, it will be a
7 hardship for some of the residents to have to
8 travel to the next closest area to take the GED
9 test.

10 One of the recommendations of SAANYS is
11 that consideration be given to revising section
12 317 so that a reasonable fee can be charged for
13 people to participate in the GED testing program.
14 To some degree this may create a burden or a
15 hardship for some people financially but two
16 positive results might be that it will ensure
17 that people who register for the test actually
18 show up to take the test and it will also act to
19 promote that people prepare to take the test and
20 are successful in it as well.

21 Some of the information shared so far in
22 terms of the success rates, 60% we fell is
23 somewhat too much broad strokes in terms of
24 orientation. We feel a lot more useful

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 information would be gotten by disaggregating
3 that information. State Education documents
4 indicate that the success rate is more like 70%
5 based on students who have participated in school
6 or BOCES preparation programs. However I have to
7 tell you, even that data is depressed compared to
8 some of the data that I have gotten.

9 So far in terms of SAANYS members the
10 lowest success rate for BOCES and school district
11 operated programs is 77%, the highest success
12 rate actually did come from the South Buffalo
13 Education Center where they have a 93% success
14 rate and to pick up on the point raised by
15 Assemblyman Schroeder-

16 MS. NOLAN: We will be sure to tell him
17 that, he had to leave to get the plane back to
18 Buffalo but he will be thrilled to hear that.

19 MR. VIOLA: And 573 graduates in
20 addition. The 60% success rate though isn't
21 totally a surprise for two reasons. One is the
22 cost consideration that currently there is no
23 charge to take the test, the other one though is
24 the opportunity to bank your scores. In other

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 words by taking the entire battery of GED tests,
3 three times your best math score is used, your
4 best social study score is used, so you have no
5 adverse consequences, your results can only be
6 improved from administration to administration.

7 The other thing in terms of the 60% is
8 not all that bad in terms of the result is you
9 have about 35,000 more people who have had an
10 opportunity to demonstrate the competencies and
11 knowledge that they have. You have 35,000 more
12 people that have a credential that will open the
13 doors to higher education and to employment.

14 In terms of other considerations raised
15 by the State Education Department, we support
16 putting in place for the Official Practice Test
17 at 2500. In fact the Syracuse City School
18 District currently requires that. The South
19 Buffalo Education Center under Stacy Watson
20 currently requires that as well. We support the
21 enhanced use of the literacy zones as was
22 presented by the State Education Department.

23 In fact as a measure to improve student
24 engagement we recommend that to the extent

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 practicable those literacy zones be embedded in
3 schools as a way to promote parent engagement.

4 We support also the development of a GED
5 curriculum where we would also point out that
6 many programs apparently are using a curriculum
7 developed by the Steck and Vaughan program that
8 currently is available.

9 We don't feel that the development of a
10 three hour course is that strategic. It may be
11 one way to go down the road but we feel what
12 would be more appropriate and more strategic is
13 high quality sustained professional development
14 and that professional development should include
15 the opportunity for peer-to-peer mentoring and
16 observation.

17 We are opposed to the establishment of a
18 GED certification in fact so too is Stacy Watson
19 opposed to it. It would have a number of
20 negative ramifications. First of all seen as
21 being an overreaction, it would result in more
22 difficulty in recruiting appropriate people to
23 operate the program. It would increase the cost
24 for operating the program as well.

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 We support the department establishing a
3 taskforce and to conferring with other States
4 like Delaware and Iowa to identify opportunities
5 for improvement.

6 In terms of a - - recommendation to
7 improve the entire system what we would recommend
8 is that New York State, the legislature, the
9 Governor's office, the State Education
10 Department, engage the US Department of Education
11 in terms of the accountability procedures to be
12 put in place under the ESEA.

13 We feel that these GED tests which
14 culminated in a high school equivalency diploma
15 that the HSE diploma should be calculated as some
16 measure of successful school completion in the
17 calculation of school accountability.

18 40% of students who graduate on a
19 national basis will not have the ability or
20 skills to pass the GEDs.

21 In 2011 the whole program will be
22 increased in rigor and to go further down the
23 road there are a lot of other very positive spin-
24 offs by including that in the calculation of

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 successful school completion such as it will
3 further improve school holding power. It will
4 student resiliency, it will promote student
5 participation and career and technical
6 educational programs. It will provide a viable
7 pathway to success especially for over aged
8 under-credited students.

9 It will also act as a real incentive for
10 high schools to engage students who have already
11 dropped out of school, to engage them to come
12 back to school and work toward a GED diploma.

13 As School Superintendent James Williams
14 told me not too long ago "It is not where you
15 are, it is where you wind up." He indicated that
16 one of the most successful attorneys in Buffalo
17 started with a high school equivalency diploma.

18 In the testimony that I have provided to
19 you, you will see that two governors started with
20 an HSE as did the Surgeon General as did people
21 like Bill Cosby and Dave Thomas who started the
22 Wendy's chain. If it is not going to be
23 calculated as a form of success for school
24 closure or completion then perhaps the high

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 school equivalency diploma should be called
3 something else. That is it for my testimony,
4 thank you.

5 MS. NOLAN: Thank you very much. I
6 would like some of our advocates who are still
7 here and I had forgotten to ask this so you can
8 send me a note, there has been some talk about
9 having the test rather than on one day, having it
10 spread out over several. So if you have opinions
11 on that and you may as well and would be happy to
12 share it with us, and you could answer it now or
13 get back to us and then also the issue of some
14 kind of certification for a teacher of GED. I
15 appreciate your feeling that there might be
16 multiple ways to proctor; both proctor the exam
17 and teach for the exam. But, you know, if people
18 want to weigh-in on that and then the issue that
19 came up before that if you are proctoring the
20 exam you can't teach the subject, do you guys
21 have an opinion on that and do we think that
22 barrier is still a reasonable one. You know, in
23 a day and age when maybe things are done a little
24 differently, I don't know, if you have an opinion

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 on any of those.

3 MR. VIOLA: For SAANYS we would not have
4 a problem with the person providing the
5 instruction proctoring the test.

6 MS. NOLAN: I suppose you could do it at
7 a different location too or something, you could
8 require people perhaps to, you know, there are
9 ways you might be able to institute some quality
10 controls without necessarily eliminating your
11 pool of applicants.

12 So, you know, for these kinds of
13 practical things I would look to our advocates,
14 feel free to send us a note with your thoughts
15 and, you know, I really want to thank everybody.
16 I want to make sure, is there anyone else who
17 would like to testify, we always try to have an
18 open-ended session at the end. Alright I want to
19 thank you. I really want to thank the school
20 administrators for always being there for us and
21 always with a qualified testimony with a
22 thoughtful testimony. I appreciate the
23 advocates, I appreciate SED, I see Mr. Rassini
24 [phonetic], I appreciate you being here for the

Committee on Education, 5-19-2010

2 hearing and I want to thank Assemblyman Benjamin
3 and Assemblyman O'Donnell, Assemblywoman Arroyo
4 and Assemblyman Schroeder for participating in
5 the hearing and thank again our wonderful staff
6 who worked so hard, both my own and the speakers
7 program and council staff and ways and means
8 staff who were in the audience for a good portion
9 of it. We want to thank them and thank you for
10 being here, Michael a final word or are we ready
11 to move on.

12 MR. BENJAMIN: I just want to thank you
13 for holding the hearing and for allowing me as a
14 non-committee member to sit here and ask
15 questions and to learn about the subject. I want
16 to thank all of our witnesses for providing
17 valuable testimony, thank you.

18 MS. NOLAN: Thank you, thank you very
19 much, this hearing is concluded, thank you.

20 (The public hearing concluded at 2.45
21 p.m.)

Committee on Governmental Employees, 3-3-2010

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Elaine Coady, do hereby certify that the foregoing typewritten transcription, consisting of pages number 1 to 276, inclusive, is a true record prepared by me and completed from materials provided to me.

Elaine Coady, Transcriptionist

29th May, 2010