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Resolution urging City Council to fund class size reduction

Passed unanimously May 9, 2019

Co-sponsored by: S. Tanikawa, E. Goldberg, J. Ishmon, E. Hellstrom, R. Broshi

Whereas in the landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, the state's highest court concluded that smaller classes were necessary for NYC students to receive their constitutional right to a sound basic education;

Whereas class sizes are even larger now, particularly in the early grades, than when the court issued that decision;

Whereas, since 2007, average NYC class sizes have increased sharply and are 13-30% bigger than in the rest of the state;

Whereas, the number of children in grades 1st through 3rd in classes of 30 or more has increased by nearly 3000% since 2007;

Whereas in District 2, the number of children in grades 1st through 3rd in classes of 30 or more has increased by more than 7000%;

Whereas more than 336,000 NYC students are in classes of 30 or more in all grades;

Whereas in District 2, more than 27,700 students are in classes of 30 or more in all grades;

Whereas smaller classes is the top priority of parents at 75% of District 2 schools when they are asked what changes they would like to see in their children's schools, often by very large margins, according to the DOE school surveys;

Whereas, according to a UFT teacher survey, 99% NYC teachers say that class size reduction would be an effective reform to improve NYC schools – far outstripping any other option;

Whereas rigorous research shows that smaller classes lead to significant improvements in student test scores, grades, engagement, school climate and graduation rates, and decreases in disciplinary referrals and teacher attrition;

Whereas economists have estimated that the benefits of smaller classes are about twice the costs, especially for low-income students and students of color, who make up most of the students in NYC public schools;

Whereas, since Mayor de Blasio took office, student achievement has been flat or declining, as measured on the NAEP exams, the most reliable national assessments, and the achievement gap has widened;

Whereas smaller classes will most likely lead to substantial cost savings in special education referrals and teacher training costs,

Whereas a letter sent by over 70 professors of education and psychology to Chancellor Fariña in 2014 emphasized that gains from PreK would likely be undermined without reductions in class size in grades K-3;

Whereas an addition of 2,000 new teachers would reduce class size in as many as 8,000 classrooms since adding a new teacher lowers class size for all other students in that grade;

Therefore be it resolved that Community Education Council District 2 urges the NYC Council to allocate \$200 million to lower class size (or approximately 2,000 new teachers), starting first in the early grades and in struggling schools, an amount that is less than one percent of the approximately \$27 billion dollars that will be spent by DOE next year;