

**The New York City Council
Committee on Education
Friday, February 28, 2020 10:00 A.M. City Hall, Committee Room
Oversight – Class Size Reduction**

Good morning my name is Naila Rosario, I parent of a High Schooler at Gaynor McCown High School in District 31 and a Middle Schooler at MS 839 in District 15.

Thank you, Education Chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. Today I would like to provide testimony on behalf of NYC KidsPAC, a parent-led political action committee focused on NYC Public Schools.

Both of my children have been in large classes since kindergarten. I am very concerned that my children have not been able to receive the attention and feedback needed from their teachers. This year, my daughter's class has 32 students. Her teacher often cannot respond to students' questions given the size of the class. My daughter is often frustrated by the inability to obtain help from her teachers.

Her school is located in a school district that has grown but schools have not been built at the same pace. According to advocacy groups like Class Size Matter, "Class sizes have increased sharply in all districts since 2008 and are 15-30% larger on average than in the rest of the state." My children and I are experiencing this firsthand in district 15.

After attending elementary and middle school in D15, my son is now in a school with an average number of 21. In District 31 in Staten Island, I can see the difference in the type of attention he now receives from his teachers. His test scores have increased, he has had better grades and overall I find him to be more engaged in school. Its unfortunate that more black and Latino children like him are not in school districts like District 31.

According to Chalkbeat.org, Since Mayor de Blasio took office, achievement levels have been flat or declining, as measured on the NAEP exams, the most reliable national assessments. And the gap in test scores between students of different economic and racial groups has widened.¹

Today I would like to join with Class Size Matter and urge the Mayor and the NYC council to allocate \$100 million to be specifically allocated towards hiring teachers to lower class size, starting first in the early grades and in struggling schools.

¹ <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2018/04/10/yet-again-new-york-city-shows-no-gains-on-a-national-reading-and-math-exam/>

That amount would pay for the salaries of about 1,000 new teachers, which could reduce class size in as many as 4,000 classrooms – as adding a new teacher at a grade level lowers class size for all the other students in that same grade in the school. These funds would represent less than one percent of the 27 billion dollars that the DOE is spending this year.

My children have spent more than 8 years in classes with excessive student-to-teacher ratio. They have been lucky to have wonderful teachers, but this ratio simply doesn't allow for the one-on-one attention that a classroom requires. We need to solve this problem now, not in five or ten years.

In my daughters school many teachers do not have their own classrooms, and must teach in the library or computer lab, rendering these rooms unusable by the rest of the school. This also makes it impossible for these teachers to use learning tools on which teachers with their own classroom space rely, such as charts and maps and displays of student work. The hallways are spilling over with students between classes, creating an unsafe environment. Classes are at maximum size or beyond, opening the school to potential union grievances.

According to Class Size Matters, In about half the school districts, there is space to lower class size now. In some overcrowded districts, Pre-K classes could be transferred into CBOs, many of which are under-enrolled. Kindergarten classes could be moved to half-empty DOE-operated Pre-K centers, where there is more space to reduce class size.

Overall, there does need to be an expedited and expanded capital plan. Another \$100 million in upfront costs amortized over time would fund more than 21,000 additional seats, given the current 50% state reimbursement for capital expenses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, please allocate \$100 million toward lowering class size for my children and many students like them that come home frustrated because they ask their teacher a question.