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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Testimony for the Committee on Education
April 19, 2017**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Dromm, and the Committee on Education for holding this very important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

I will focus my comments on one of the bills being considered today, Intro 1028, which would create a sexual education task force, bringing together New York City (NYC) public school staff, the staff from the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene and sexual health education experts to review the current sexual health education curriculum and its implementation in NYC public schools, and make recommendations for improvement.

As a city that has the responsibility of educating over 1 million students we also have a responsibility to build and implement curriculum that is culturally responsive, and represents our students' social, cultural and sexual identities.

New York City public school students are required to take a health class, where students learn about healthy relationships, intimate partner violence, consent, and how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. It is of utmost importance that we are providing that same education and affirmation to our LGBTQ students- and that the sex education curriculum includes positive examples of LGBTQ relationships.

We know currently the sex education curriculum in NYC public schools largely leaves out our LGBTQ students. A recent survey of NYC public school students by youth at the New York Civil Liberties Union found that just 36% of students had learned about LGBTQ issues and relationships in their sexual education classes, and half of students surveyed said their primary source of information about sex was their friends.

According to a 2014 report by the Urban Institute on LGBTQ teen relationships, 42.8 percent of LGBTQ youth reported dating violence in their relationships. Further, 23.2 percent of respondents reported sexual victimization in their relationships. Even more alarming, transgender youth reported the highest rates of dating violence, with 88.9 percent reporting physical dating violence.

This is unacceptable. Our students must have access to inclusive and comprehensive sex education- it is a matter of both their physical and emotional safety.

I fully support Intro 1028, and look forward to its implementation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I look forward to working with you all.