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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
February 12, 2017 PUBLIC MEETING

MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT GALE A. BREWER

Good evening. I am Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President. I am here tonight to oppose the closing of the High School for Health Careers and Sciences at the George Washington Educational Campus. As the Chancellor has often remarked, we should look at significant school utilization changes on a case by case scenario and in the case of Health Careers and Sciences, the numbers do not show that performance is as poor as some may have indicated.

Over the last few years, High School for Health Careers and Sciences has improved in several key indicators of school quality. Thanks to the DOE's support and the efforts of the school's community, Health Careers and Sciences is now a much loved community school that is trending upward in its graduation rate and college readiness data.

Since Health Careers and Sciences became a Renewal School, graduation rates have increased by 13%. The school had a graduation rate of 49% for the 2012-13 school year, but now stands at 62%. Additionally, the 6-year graduation rate of 78.5% is higher than comparison schools, which have a 71% 6-year graduation rate, and higher than other Renewal Schools, which have a 66.3% 6-year graduation rate.

Likewise, the data on college readiness also suggests that Health Careers and Sciences is improving. The college readiness rate more than doubled last year, moving from 8% to 21%. This college readiness rate is comparable to other Renewal Schools which have a college readiness rate of 22.7%. Furthermore, on the college readiness index, Health Careers and Sciences moved from just 1% to 14%, which surpasses the 12% citywide average for students in the lowest third. Moreover, the school's metric score of 4.36 for college persistence outperforms the borough average of 3.33, the city average of 3.29, and the Renewal School average of 2.73.

As a part of its rationale for the propose closure, the DOE's Educational Impact Statement on Health Careers and Sciences cites declining enrollment data, noting that student enrollment declined by 29% in the last 6 years. However, this decline is not a performance indicator attributable to students. Plus, enrollment is down less at this school than all other Renewal Schools. The DOE should also consider that District 6 enrollment is down 11% for the same timeframe. I believe that a district-wide decrease suggests a need for systemic reevaluation of enrollment processes and not a need to close an improving school.



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If the school were closed, it would be best for students to avoid displacement and attend schools on the same campus. However, the data from the co-located schools suggests that closure would not necessarily improve outcomes for Health Careers and Sciences' students. Health Careers has the second highest graduation rate on the campus and is a mere 4% lower in college readiness than the proposed alternative. Hence, this closure would not necessarily provide a better path. It could very well do more harm to the students and families that the DOE believes are underserved at their current school.

Of course, I recognize that High School for Health Careers and Sciences is not performing at the highest level. So, I ask that the DOE allot the time necessary for continued improvement at this school. I ask that the DOE continue to provide supports and resources to Health Careers and Sciences so that it can keep up its trend toward improvement. I urge the Department of Education to stop the current process of hearings to close Health Careers and Sciences. Thank you.