Good Afternoon Chairwoman Barron, Chairwoman Mealy, Chairwoman Cumbo, Chairwoman Gibson and fellow Council Members, my name is Zoe Ragouzeos and I am the Assistant Vice President for Student Mental Health and Director of Counseling and Wellness Services at New York University (NYU). I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today to share some of the recent changes NYU has implemented to better address incidents of sexual misconduct, relationship violence and stalking on our campus.

NYU is committed to fostering a community in which sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking are not tolerated and a community in which reporting and investigations are guided by fairness and respect for all individuals. To further reduce incidents and enhance our response to incidents of sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking on campus, and to bring the University into line with new federal mandates, NYU has developed a new policy. This policy applies to all students, faculty, administrators and staff and I have enclosed a copy in my testimony for your review.

The new policy streamlines procedures at NYU in order to improve the way the University responds to reports of sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking. We have also expanded support services and enhanced our educational and training initiatives. Among the most noteworthy changes that result from the new policy are:

• A clearer definition of “consent”;
• Clear processes for how to proceed when those involved are students, employees, or third-parties (such as vendors);
• Greater clarity on the expanded range of activities prohibited under the policy, including relationship violence and stalking;
• Streamlining of processes, with all University investigations overseen by the University’s Office of Equal Opportunity, and all adjudications against students conducted by specially-trained personnel selected by the University’s Office of Community Standards;
• The establishment of a new Center for Sexual Misconduct Support Services to provide a complainant with a single, confidential, supportive point-of-contact that connects him or her to an array of services;
• The establishment of dedicated confidential counseling services for respondents, offering support and referrals;
• Greater clarity on the available protections for the complainant and the respondent, including the immediate measures that need be taken to address safety and psychological well-being;
• The establishment of Support Facilitators to provide guidance and assistance to both the complainant and respondent during the investigation and adjudication procedures, and

• The expansion of prevention training and education for the entire NYU community, (including students, faculty, and administrators such as public safety officers, residence life staff, athletics staff, and many others) and new mandatory programs for all NYU students beginning in the 2015 spring semester.

These revisions are in addition to the services NYU has historically been providing which includes 24/7/365 confidential emergency response and support services, incorporating medical and mental health intervention as well as services relating to legal, judicial, academic, and housing assistance.

NYU’s new policy was just the first step in reducing acts of sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking on campus. NYU will continue education and training efforts for our community which will include:

• A New Dedicated Website – Sexual Respect – that highlights key aspects of the policy, procedures, and resources.

• Bystander Intervention Training that provides students with the tools to intervene when they encounter other members of the NYU community potentially in harm’s way.

• Mandatory Online Training Program for undergraduates that will begin in the spring semester focusing on education and prevention.

• Expanding and enhancing training and education programs for graduate students, faculty, and staff.

• Senate Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Sexual Misconduct within the University Senate that will provide advice and input on our policies, procedures, training, and preventive measures.

• A Student Working Group Will Collaborate with Staff to Create a Student-Centered Communications Campaign that will collaborate on a peer-to-peer communications campaign focusing on sexual respect and campus culture.

• Implementing a Campus Climate Survey in 2016 to better understand the extent of sexual misconduct at NYU.

With the implementation of our new policies, procedures, support services, and training and education programs, NYU is committed to being at the forefront in reducing acts of sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking, and in responding to any reported act of prohibited conduct. We look forward to working with our community this year to assess progress and to continue to develop policies and practices that increase the safety of all members of our community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I welcome any questions you have.