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**Testimony of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at  
New York University**

before

**The New York City Council Committee on Education**

and

**The New York City Council Committee on Higher Education****June 25, 2019**

Good Morning Chairperson Treyger, Chairperson Barron, and all Council Members present. My name is Dr. Frank Pignatosi and I am Clinical Assistant Professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share my expertise on the topic of teacher training and preparation.

Well-prepared teachers, and importantly teachers of different backgrounds, are critical for student learning and academic achievement. However, there are increasing concerns about how well college and university teacher-education programs are preparing prospective educators for the challenges of today's classrooms in addition to what those teachers look like.

Our challenge is to rethink the model that sees the DOE and teacher education programs as partners who shuffle candidates to one another, from pre-service status to in-service status, much as divorced parents do with their children, each contributing to the education, but rarely doing it collaboratively in the same space. The onus of the partnership too often falls on the single candidate, who is left to negotiate and reconcile the input s/he receives from the two partners. Over the years, the teacher education programs at NYU have engaged in a variety of experiences building partnerships with schools and districts, focusing on clinically-rich models that emphasized the importance of teachers becoming active members of communities in and around the schools. Most recently, NYU has begun rethinking even further its approach to teacher preparation and building residency models in collaboration with school partners - districts and charter networks. Working with school partners across the country, it has built a secondary education residency program that admits candidates chosen by both NYU and its partner, that embeds the candidate in a school community beyond the content area of certification, and where NYU faculty and school-based faculty collaborate on the mentorship, focusing more on coaching strategies for both the candidate and the teacher mentor, than on evaluating the outcomes of the internship. In this model, everyone is a mentor and a mentee.

The focus should be on the quality of the pre-service internship more than on the quantity. The DOE does need more teachers certified in working with students with disabilities, but it also needs more general education and content-specific teachers to learn how to reach more students. Many of our programs graduate candidates eligible for dual certification and are

integrally intertwined with the field to address the concerns, but to best address the needs of students with disabilities we think that teachers must also be prepared to understand the issue of racial disproportionality from the referral point of view - who needs to be referred and who can benefit from excellent instruction to avoid referrals. One way to address this is actually through improving non-special education teachers' ability to reach more students. We have been experimenting with requiring all our non-dual majors to collaborate on lesson planning with their peers majoring in special education, and by engaging our special education faculty in working directly in schools with their learning specialists. We cannot afford to waste the expertise that schools and teacher education programs both bring to the table by letting it be shared only through the candidates. In addition, if we simply increase the amount of time pre-service candidates spend in schools, then we risk increasing the amount of time they spend focusing only on their content teaching, without really developing an understanding and a practice of the needs of student with disabilities.

Similarly, working with emergent bilinguals is as much about working with multilingual families. Often teachers, particularly general education teachers not specialized in language learning, are their first point of access and advocacy, especially in the case of newcomer students. A mathematics education pre-service teacher needs to understand multilingual communities and develop strategies just as much as a dedicated English as a New Language pre-service teacher. This cannot be achieved simply by adding more course work to teacher education program requirements nor by simply increasing the amount of time spent interning in schools. If that mathematics education pre-service teacher is assigned to a school that is struggling to address the needs of its emergent bilinguals, s/he risks increasing the amount of time spent NOT learning how to address those needs. In our new secondary residency program, NYU interns are required to learn about the community of their school, visit it, and develop collaborative projects with teachers and community members. Why not invite teacher education programs and school partners to collaborate in this effort, by spending time together in the school and its community, not by simply co-crafting new curriculum that is then handed off to educators?

Finally, while research validates that preparation programs with hands-on practice in a real classroom produce more effective teachers who stay in the profession longer and strengthen schools over time, this alone cannot address the gap between the identity of our NYC public school teachers and the identity of our NYC public school students. Last year, at least 45% of teacher candidates enrolled in New York University's Teacher Residency identified as people of color, making the teaching cohort two times as diverse as the current national teaching workforce. This year, the number is approaching 60%, and the NYC-based cohort is well over 90%. This, of course, has a lot to do with efforts to identify outside funding sources to facilitate the coverage of costs, but it also has a lot to do with collaborating with district and charter partners on sharing the overall costs. In addition, it means striving to identify the best candidates, based on more than their grades in past academic studies. We cannot lament the inequity of our school system, and then add new barriers to accessing the profession that rely heavily on academic scores from that very system. We cannot lament the struggle to attract teachers of color and to diversify the socio-economic backgrounds of our teachers, and then

add new requirements that make it difficult for candidates who do not have the economic resources to graduate from our programs to find income during their internship.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions the Committees may have. (Please contact Konstantine Tettonis, NYU Government Affairs, [kt1249@nyu.edu](mailto:kt1249@nyu.edu) with any additional questions that arise.)