

Good morning. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Daniel Katz. I am a lifelong educator who has been teaching since I started my career as a high school ELA teacher in 1993. Currently, I am a teacher educator and Chair of the Department of Educational Studies at Seton Hall University. More importantly, I am the father of two children who attend a New York City public school, PS 334 in Manhattan. Additionally, I am a former member of the Community Education Council for District 3. It is my pleasure to speak today in support of class size reductions as one of the most robust ways to support our city's students.

Although I have agreed to speak as an academic in the field of education, I'd like to begin by relating two very different experiences that I have witnessed as both a parent and as a CEC3 member. As I mentioned, my children attend PS 334 in Manhattan which is one of the schools in the city that is fortunate enough to have the capacity to engage in aggressive fund raising. We can rightly question why it is that parental resources have such an impact on students' educational opportunities in a city with so much wealth, but we can also look at how raised funds are used. In the case of PS 334, those funds contribute to teaching assistants in the early grade classrooms. As a result, during their crucial early education years, my children enjoyed classroom conditions that all children in our city deserve.

This stands in stark contrast to situations I witnessed as a member of CEC3. At PS 208 in Harlem, we heard pleas from families about a situation where an entire grade enrolled just fewer than 40 students who were all crammed into a single classroom. Parents were pleading for an answer and explaining how detrimental the situation was for their children. Our superintendent repeatedly said the situation was the result of the principal's budgeting choices and could not explain how district administration could allow it to persist. What was left unacknowledged was the cold calculation that it was "better" to harm an entire grade of children whose parents did not have deep fund raising potential than it was to pay to staff two classrooms that would have been well below the maximum class cap but still large enough to be viable classrooms.

This is a situation that plays out daily in the lives of our children. In the few schools that can use copious fund raising to supplement their budgets, young

children enjoy smaller effective class sizes while many, many, other schools' students and teachers struggle with class sizes that impede effective classroom communities and that hinder instruction and services.

Research studies over time are clear on the matter: class size reduction is an effective way to improve school outcomes. It increases student learning. It decreases disciplinary referrals. It increases teacher retention. As a school improvement strategy, it is highly popular with both teachers and parents in surveys. In September 2014, 73 education scholars submitted a letter to the DOE urging action to reduce class sizes as part of any school improvement plan and warning that failure to do so could undermine other efforts.

And yet, class sizes in New York City remain stubbornly high. We exceed class size averages for the state in every grade level. All grade levels have increased average class size since 2007, and a quarter of our students are in classes that exceed 30 students. It is very probable that laudable efforts to reform our schools were hindered by class sizes that made proper support for students and teachers much more difficult than was necessary.

You have an opportunity to act in support of the reform that was passed over in 2014. A relatively small commitment in funding would leave room for other innovations while adding enough new teachers to reduce class sizes in 1000s of classrooms. It is up to you to think comprehensively. Thank you for your attention.