

My name is William Cyrus Garrett, I am the Executive Director of New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI). I'd like to begin my remarks by thanking – Chairmen Eugene and Youth Service Committee Members – for the opportunity to testify before the Council this morning. I am here to update the Council on the progress my office has made in implementing YMI 2.0. I would like to provide the committee with a better understanding on how YMI has shaped its work—to meet the “opportunities for improvement” outlined in the Disparity report.

The Young Men's Initiative was established in 2011 with a specific goal of addressing disparities experienced by young men and boys of color ages 16-24. Pursuant to this goal, YMI intentionally engages with City partners to address how specific communities have their cultural, resource and developmental needs met – by City policies and programs. To deepen our impact, YMI has sharpened its focus and over the last two years – and has invested in the support and creation of data-informed strategies—aimed at addressing inequities in education, justice, employment and health. In addition to supporting several efforts throughout the City, YMI has also co-led and designed pilots to test out theories of change in teacher recruitment and retention, known as NYC Men Teach – and early childhood reading interventions, known as YMI's ReadMore Corps.

Since my appointment in 2014 – YMI has engaged in multiple efforts to inform our current Operational Plan. In January 2015, the Young Men's Initiative partnered with City agencies to conduct a “preliminary” policy review through the Executive Steering Committee (ESC). The Executive Steering Committee supported YMI as it transitioned from a city-wide focus to a neighborhood-based one. The ESC provided YMI with recommendations for an expanded policy and life course focused approach in the areas of Employment, Education, Justice and Health. In addition, the ESC strongly encouraged YMI to accept My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge launched by the White House in 2014.

In February 2015, YMI formally accepted the MBK Challenge by holding a Community Convening with City stakeholders – including high school-aged young men of color. The purpose of the convening was two-fold: it was an opportunity to be transparent about the Steering Committee findings and equity proposals we identified for improving services for young men of color – in our City. And secondly, it collected input from key stakeholders that ought to be part of deliberations concerning services, policies, and outcomes. Community input was captured in a qualitative report and ultimately led to the development of YMI's Action Plan.

The Young Men's Initiative used the convening to confirm that we had community support to tackle the following planks of the MBK challenge: *Ensuring all children read at grade level by 2<sup>nd</sup> grade program; Ensuring all youth graduate high school (College/Career Ready); Ensuring all youth complete post-secondary education or training; and Ensuring all youth remain safe from violent crime.*

Over the last year, YMI has worked to implement our Action Plan through a, "Race, Place, and Space" approach. As presented in our recently released Disparity Report – done in collaboration with the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI) – which assessed several education, health and justice indicators over the last ten years prior to the current administration—it is crucial that we acknowledge and address that while there have been overall improvements, youth of color still disproportionately bear the brunt of negative outcomes, with Black and Latino males faring at the bottom of the scale in most positive outcomes.

Our fact-gathering process also supported a placed-based strategy of intensifying and deepening supports in neighborhoods that have endured inequities—many intergenerational—despite City attempts to address these conditions.

It is important to note – that each neighborhood has its own set of challenges and opportunities – and much of our "place and space" discussions include how YMI can support government agencies to better serve communities in ways that are relevant to each neighborhood's needs. The aforementioned efforts—from the Executive Steering Committee, to the MBK Convening, to the review of existing data sets—helped shape the current milestones of what we refer to as YMI 2.0 (**Milestone 1**): Engaging cross sector partners to identify a shared vision (YMI believes in the power of collective action and responsibility, and has been a material partner in citywide efforts related to mentoring, equity and excellence, and preventative and restorative intervention practices. ) (**Milestone 2**): Release a baseline dashboard of milestones with disaggregated data that will mobilize collective action on behalf of investors and service providers (Earlier this year, YMI released our Disparity Report in an effort to provide a new baseline for understanding the barriers and challenges young men of color face in our system); (**Milestone 3**): Develop a data infrastructure to align existing government and community programming (An ongoing priority of YMI, we are strategizing with our City partners to develop data sharing agreements that better support the delivery of services and allocation of resources as a central part of the City's equity strategy); (**Milestone 4**): Develop shared accountability between City partners by identifying policy barriers through regular review and assessment of outcome indicators and disparity data.

(The positive interagency collaboration of the Executive Steering led to the development of YMI's Equity Committee to continue working together to identify service gaps; develop equitable strategies aimed at closing racial disparities in outcomes; and establish a shared understanding of the different agency equities involved in addressing each disparity we identified in the Disparity Report).

Building upon the earlier iteration of YMI, our team is packaging all of our efforts under a College to Career Readiness framework (CCR). Our current goal is not only to just focus on what is not working in the communities where our young people live, but to also improve the environments they engage in every day: the home, the school, and the actual streets they walk to get between the two. We believe that every young person is capable of learning and wants to learn, and starting in high school is too late. As a result, we have expanded our strategies beyond ages 16-24, and have adopted a life-span approach.

We developed ReadMore Corps to increase intensive tutoring for schools at the lowest performance percentile within our City. In FY16, YMI's support in 30 schools resulted in an additional 387 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders receiving literacy support. We are well underway to serve 707 students in FY17, and with anticipated private funding, could potentially be in an additional 45 schools by the end of this school year.

YMI is currently working with NYC Service and the Center for Youth Employment on a college & career mentoring strategy to support the career possibilities and imaginations of high schoolers, and over time, middle schoolers as well.

Through our Fatherhood Academy, YMI has helped establish borough leaders who help with outreach to young men throughout their communities and assist in connecting them to educational and social services throughout the City. In the area of family engagement, YMI, in collaboration with the Department of Education (DOE), has proposed a plan in the hopes of receiving State's My Brother's Keeper funding towards improving engagement with the parents and communities of our youth. In addition to ensuring quality delivery of existing services, the plan also aims to create safe and supportive spaces for families to communicate needs, address concerns, and be included in key decision-making strategies as it relates to the educational experiences of their children.

This is just a snapshot of some of the current efforts we are testing, and we hope that our efforts better inform our agency and community partners long-term equity strategies and goals.

YMI's goal is to set a new baseline of understanding for City policy makers, researchers, advocates, and community leaders in order to develop a roadmap for reducing disparate outcomes for young people of color in New York City. YMI will continually measure our city's progress from where we are today – to where we can be through continually eliminating policies and practices that have or can create barriers—instead of bridges—to equitable opportunities and access for all. I look forward to working with the committee to deepen and strengthen this work across New York City government. And, I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have to the best of my ability. Thank you.



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Mathieu Eugene, Chair  
Oversight – Young Men’s Initiative**

**Submitted by Andrea Bowen, Policy Analyst**

**September 21, 2016**

Thank you Chair Eugene and members of the Committee on Youth Services for convening this hearing, and the opportunity to testify. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is New York City’s federation of settlement houses and community centers that collectively benefit over half a million New Yorkers with services at over 600 sites throughout the city. UNH member agencies provide a broad range of services in a neighborhood-based, multi-generational setting, including early childhood education, after-school, workforce programs for youth and adults, adult literacy, homelessness prevention, and shelter and services for older adults.

**Background**

Mayor Bloomberg launched the Young Men’s Initiative in 2011 to reduce disparities among Black and Latino men and their peers in the realms of education, employment, health, and criminal justice system involvement. YMI invested in and expanded well-evidenced program models, while also developing new programs. UNH members, including BronxWorks, Union Settlement Association, CAMBA, and the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, were among the first community-based organizations (CBOs) to administer YMI programming and continue to do so today.

The complete list of YMI investments includes, but is not limited to:

- AIM: Advocate, Intervene, Mentor, featuring one-on-one mentoring for 13 to 18 year-old probationers. Youth and families are provided an advocate that connects the family system to education and other resources;
- Arches, which establishes mentorships and group interactions that reinforce pro-social behavior for young adults, aged 16 to 24, who are on probation;
- Cornerstone Mentoring, which allows for group mentorship among 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders who attend Cornerstone community centers in NYCHA facilities, and directs those youth to college and career exploration, community service, and leadership skills, among other goals;

- The Fatherhood Initiative, which serves noncustodial City resident fathers aged 18 and over with case management, parenting skills development, support group sessions, co-parenting activities (e.g., joint workshops with fathers and mothers), mentoring, referrals to employment programs, and other services;
- Jobs-Plus, which renders job and career training and placement, as well as educational services (e.g., vocational training and HSE diploma preparation) and case management to NYCHA residents (especially certain target populations, such as young men between 18 and 24);
- Teen ACTION (Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhoods), which offers service learning opportunities and a life-skills curriculum to 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders;
- The Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), which arranges employment training, education (e.g., financial literacy), internship placement, and follow-up services for 16 to 24 year-olds who are out of school and out of work (OSOW); and
- The Young Adult Literacy Program (YALP), which provides OSOW 16 to 24 year olds with supplementary education to provide the reading, writing, and math skills required for a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma, alongside case management, financial incentives, and internship opportunities.

Again, this is not a comprehensive list, but each of these programs is administered by UNH members, and speaks to the philosophy guiding YMI programming.

### **Strengths and Recommendations for Reform**

Strengths of YMI programs include:

- **Adaptability of city agencies in improving programs.** DYCD has adapted program design to improve YMI programs. For example, DYCD has amended program design of YAIP to accommodate provider feedback by eliminating regulations that blocked YAIP participants from engaging with other youth workforce programs. Similarly, providers for Cornerstone Mentoring and Teen ACTION commended DYCD for including program components (e.g., group camping for Cornerstone Mentoring, participation in the Step It Up competition for Teen ACTION) that make the experiences richer for youth.
- **City cultivation of employers for workforce programs.** While CBO providers cultivate worksites for workforce programs, the administration has linked large corporations (e.g., CVS) with workforce development programs. CBO providers appreciate City Hall's involvement, because CBOs sometimes lack the resources to build relationships with nationwide employers.

With these strengths in mind, UNH recommends key reforms to programs, both on an individual program-level and systemically.

- **Improve the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) by increasing flexibility in participant retention, outcome counting, and accommodation to employer need.** DYCD has already begun working with YAIP providers to reform the program along these lines. UNH recommends further collaboration between DYCD and providers on ensuring the following reforms are solidified.

- **Allow YAIP participants who leave the program due to trauma reenter the program.** YAIP exists for job-ready young adults (in other words, it is not for everyone), and not all participants who leave the program should be allowed back. However, youth often leave the program due to traumatic situations, and cannot reenter. UNH encourages DYCD to work with providers to ensure that youth who leave the program due to traumatic circumstances but want to continue YAIP be able to reenter the program. Documentation would likely be required, but traumatized youth should have more than one chance to utilize this highly-effective program. UNH commends DYCD for exploring options for youth to reenter YAIP programs.
- **Allow providers to receive credit when youth leave the program for positive career and educational developments that the provider helped bring about.** Youth participating in YAIP can find a full-time job or enter a higher level of education prior to completing the full number of hours for the program's 250 hour internship component. Often providers play an integral role in guiding youth toward these positive developments. The outcome-rewarding structure of YAIP should incentivize these positive outcomes by crediting employers with a successful completion of internship and succeeding retention outcomes. DYCD notes that it has implemented a reform recently to give providers credit for these kinds of outcomes.
- **Providers should be given greater flexibility to accommodate employers' needs with more creative utilization of participant internship hour maximums.** The schedule of the YAIP internship component is based on program needs, and not employer needs. Employers follow particular employee-hiring cycles (e.g., seasonal cycles), and YAIP as currently constructed—three cycles a year, with internships starting and ending within a 14-week period—is not particularly suited for those more natural employer cycles. In contrast, the Work Innovation and Opportunity Act Out of School Youth (WIOA OSY) program has a simple requirement that participants complete 150 hours, and the starting and ending dates of those 150 hours can be crafted to suit the employer's schedule. YAIP should similarly allow for greater adaptability to the employer's needs. Allowing such flexibility would enable YAIP providers to more effectively cultivate employers for that program.
- **Continue cultivating employers:** UNH applauds the City's efforts to grow the ranks of worksites and hopes to see these efforts continued and expanded.
- **Foster deeper engagement with mental health resources in AIM, Arches, and the Fatherhood Initiative.** AIM, Arches and the Fatherhood Initiative are all designed to provide referrals to social services, including mental health, but providers' experience is that deeper intervention is required. UNH urges the introduction of counseling services during intake, so that mental health provision is not merely something case managers for the programs can refer participants to, but is integrated into the program from the outset. Recognizing that participants in these programs struggle with issues of racism and stigma associated with receipt of mental health services, UNH also strongly recommends that participants in these programs receive mental health services that are relevant to the cultural context of program participants, and are thus culturally sensitive, strengths-based, and developmentally-informed.

- **Expand Jobs-Plus Beyond NYCHA residents.** Jobs-Plus is an effective program serving NYCHA residents. It should be extended to more low-income communities. Providers have been allowed in the past to allow some non-NYCHA residents to utilize the program (with “90/10” ratios, allowing 10% of participants to come from outside of NYCHA developments). UNH recommends wider participation in Jobs-Plus from low-income New Yorkers, including those who do not live in NYCHA developments.
- **Increase funding for Teen ACTION.** In the 2011 RFP, Teen ACTION was funded at \$67,500 per site. Last year (FY16), it was funded at \$10,000 per site. This year (FY17), it is funded at \$5,000 per site. This is a reduction in funding so substantial as to make some providers question why, at such a level, even contract the program at all? At the same time, providers spoke fondly of the program, and the sense of community it instilled in its participants. Teen ACTION deserves greater investment. UNH recommends funding Teen ACTION at at least \$10,000 per site.

It is worth noting that approximately 186,000 17 to 24 year olds in NYC are out of school and out of work. While the City has an achievable goal of providing 100,000 youth internships, mentorships, and summer jobs by 2020, demand for youth workforce employment programs among the most high-needs population is almost double the 2020 goal. Expansion of opportunities for the OSOW population, especially workforce opportunities, remains a vital need.

Thank you for your time, and if you have any questions, you can contact me at 212-967-0322 ext 324, or [abowen@unhny.org](mailto:abowen@unhny.org).



Councilmember Mathieu Eugene  
123 Linden Boulevard  
Brooklyn, NY 11226

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Dear Councilmember Eugene,

As a deeply engaged corporate citizen, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation is proud to support the work of New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI). As City, State and nation sees great improvement in communities, so too do we take notice of the inequities and disparities facing particular groups of people and particular geographies.

The Foundation has a long history of supporting work focused on improving the overall well being of boys and young men of color. Toward this goal, the Foundation has invested both time and resources in partnering with the YMI.

In its inception, YMI intended to serve young men of color, ages 16-24, by targeting its programs and efforts on improving employment opportunities and preparedness, and also on services for justice- involved individuals. The announcement of YMI 2.0 outlines a shift in the focus of the work to engage with young men of color along their lifespan. Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation has proudly supported NYC Men Teach with a gift to support the communications and outreach of this initiative.

Nicole Leach, a member of the Foundation staff, serves on the Advisory Board of the YMI. A native and lifelong New Yorker, she is very proud to serve on the YMI team – making data-driven decisions to best support young men of color across our city. YMI's directed work is focused on areas of high need where the projected return is high and life changing - areas where both Nicole personally, and the Foundation overall, care deeply.

We look forward to our continued partnership with the YMI and its positive impacts both on the lives of young men of color across NYC and for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alessandra DiGiusto', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Alessandra DiGiusto  
Head of Corporate Citizenship, North America

Councilmember Mathieu Eugene  
123 Linden Boulevard  
Brooklyn, New York 11226

Dear Councilmember Eugene:

I trust this letter finds you well. As a current Co-Chair for the Advisory Board of New York City's Young Men's Initiative, I am honored to support the work of YMI 2.0. As the Nation is taking notice of the disparities that our young men of color face, I am proud to serve on a team that makes data driven decisions to best support these young men our city. YMI's directed work is focused on areas of high need where the project return is high and life changing.

In the announcement of YMI 2.0 early last year, there was a shift in the focus of the work. In its inception, YMI was intended to serve young men ages 16-24, with an intentional focus on employment and criminal justice-involved individuals. I am excited to support YMI's decision and work to explore truly altering intervention points in the life span of a young adult of color. Literacy is a skill that truly impacts the trajectory of a young person's life. Intervening prior to a child entering the third grade alters the way they will experience school, as it is the point where a child shifts from learning to read to reading to learn.

As a media professional, I understand the importance of allowing communities a space to exercise their voice. YMI has been intentional about the inclusion of community voice while consulting data when launching any new program. This approach is sustainable and has the potential to lead to lasting change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sandra Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Sandra P. Thomas  
Co-Chair, NYC Young Men's Initiative

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**Big Brothers Big Sisters  
 of New York City**

THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

**Hector Batista**  
 Chief Executive Officer

Councilmember Mathieu Eugene  
 123 Linden Boulevard  
 Brooklyn, New York 11226

To Councilmember Eugene:

As a member of the advisory board of New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI), I support the work of YMI 2.0, a collaborative approach and place-based programmatic effort in the pursuit of improved quality of life for young men in New York City. YMI's work is focused on areas of high need where the projected impact is significant and life changing. As there continues to be national a conversation about the disparities facing young men of color, I support YMI's data-driven approach to address this problem.

The Young Men's Initiative, which launched in 2011, was designed to serve young men ages 16-24, with a focus on the needs of criminal justice involved individuals. As a leader in the nonprofit community and a resident of New York City, I understand the importance of supporting work that will directly impact our neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hector Batista  
 Chief Executive Officer, Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City

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WYNTON MARSALIS *Managing & Artistic Director*  
GREG SCHOLL *Executive Director*

September 20, 2016

Honorable Mathieu Eugene  
Council Member  
New York City Council  
123 Linden Blvd.  
Brooklyn, NY 11226

Dear Councilman Eugene,

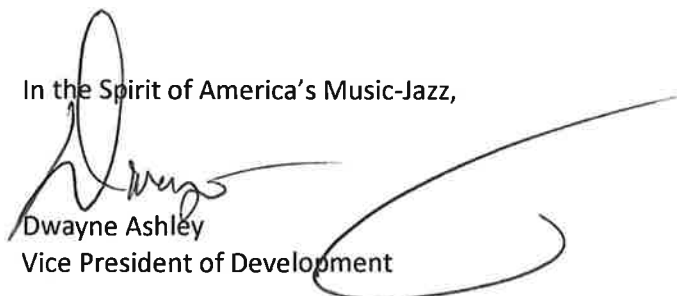
As a member of the advisory board of New York City's Young Men's Initiative and a part of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Senior Leadership Team, I am honored to support the work of YMI 2.0. As the nation is taking notice of the disparities that our young men of Color face in today's society, I am proud to serve on a team that makes data driven decisions to best support young men of color across our city. Now more than ever, it is important that YMI's directed work is and continues to focus on areas of high need where the projected outcomes can have the highest impact and is most needed for life changes.

In the announcement of YMI 2.0 early last year, there was a shift in the focus of the work. In its inception, YMI was intended to serve young men ages 16-24, with an intentional focus on employment and criminal justice involved individuals. I am excited to support YMI's decision and work to explore truly altering intervention points in the life span of a young adult of color.

As a seasoned development professional in our community, I know all too well the importance of supporting work that will have direct impact in our communities. YMI has been intentional about input from community stakeholders while consulting data when launching any new program. This approach is sustainable and has the potential to lead to lasting change.

The entire Advisory Board and community thanks you and the other Council Members for your continued support of our work.

In the Spirit of America's Music-Jazz,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dwayne Ashley".

Dwayne Ashley  
Vice President of Development

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: William C. Garrett

Address: 253 Broadway NY, NY 10007

I represent: NYC YMI

Address: 253 Broadway NY, NY 10007

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Carson Hicks

Address: 253 Broadway, 18th Fl.

I represent: NYC Center for Economic Opportunity

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/21/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Bowen

Address: 70 W 36th St NY NY 10018

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms