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Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on General Welfare

Re: Examining the Administration's Plans to Transition Kindergarten-Aged Children from ACS Centers to Public Schools

Advocates for Children of New York

March 5, 2009

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Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the implications of the administration's plan to transition kindergarten students from ACS centers to public schools. My name is Randi Levine, and I am an Equal Justice Works Fellow at Advocates for Children, where I focus on early childhood education. For more than 37 years, Advocates for Children has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. AFC has recently expanded our work in the area of early childhood education because we recognize that early childhood education is essential for school readiness and school success.

As the administration prepares to transition 3,300 low-income kindergarten-aged children from ACS centers to public schools, we urge the City Council to ensure that the administration plans for the transition adequately and executes the transition carefully and deliberately. According to the Department of Education's own data, the average class size for kindergarten increased from last year to this year. Currently, 75 schools have at least one kindergarten class with 26 or more students, and these kindergarten classes have as many as 36 students. Meanwhile, the DOE's data also show widespread overcrowding at schools. More than 250



elementary schools have exceeded 100% capacity. For the transition of kindergartners to be successful, we recommend that ACS and the DOE engage in thorough analysis and create a detailed plan demonstrating how they will incorporate new kindergarten students from specific neighborhoods into the public schools without increasing class size, exacerbating the problem of overcrowded schools, or forcing five-year-olds to travel a long distance to get to school. This plan should also address after-school care for these kindergartners to ensure that five-year-old children have somewhere to go after the school bell rings.

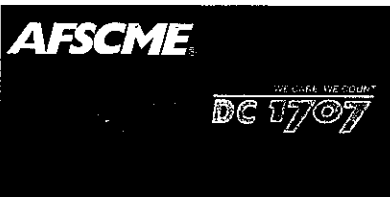
Furthermore, as kindergarten-aged children move from ACS programs to DOE schools, we strongly urge the City Council to work with the administration to convert the ACS kindergarten programs into programs for preschool-aged children. Rigorous long-term research demonstrates that programs for preschool-aged children do not merely serve as child care, but have a profound impact on children's education. Compared to children who participated in an early childhood program for low-income children, similar children left out of the program were 67 percent more likely to have been retained a grade in school and 85 percent more likely to have been placed in special education. Children who participated were 29% more likely to graduate from high school than similar children left out of the program. Studies have found that high quality programs for preschool-aged children save \$7-\$17 for every dollar invested.

We recognize that these are challenging economic times. However, there is significant new funding for early childhood education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and in President Obama's budget proposal. This funding can be



used to serve additional preschool-aged children at existing ACS centers. At this moment, when exiting kindergartners will leave empty classrooms at ACS centers, when federal funding for early childhood education is growing, when parents need full day programs for their young children so they can work, and when the long-term educational benefits of programs for preschool-aged children are substantial, it is vital that the city use the transition of kindergarten students as an opportunity to serve additional low-income preschool-aged children. We applaud the City Council's commitment to expanding early childhood education and look forward to working with you to continue enhancing these programs in New York City.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



READ INTO RECORD

WE CARE. WE COUNT.

Community and Social Agency Employees Union, District Council 1707, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

Testimony of Raglan George, Jr.

Executive Director of District Council 1707

And International Vice President AFSCME And

Mabel Everett

President of Day Care Employees Local 205

To The Committees on Education and General Welfare

March 5, 2009

**Oversight: Examining the Administration's Plans to
Transition Kindergarten-Aged Children from
ACS Centers to Public School**

It is perplexing to discover that ACS has a new day care plan to remove 5-year olds from public center-based day care. This will have horrific implications for the future of center-based public day care in New York City. New York's public day centers have been the standard for public day care across the nation.

This plan:

- will take 3,300 5-year old slots from day care centers which have been capably serving New Yorker City working families for more than a generation;
- will devastate scores of needed public center-based day care centers – that will not be able to pay rent and other expenses;
- will increase the city's privately contracted transportation costs (because the city's schools are overcrowded and children will need to be bused);
- will terminate the employment of hundreds of dedicated, professional, unionized and predominantly female day care workers.

And yet the city claims it is not in their interest to shut down or impair public center-based day care. It is not just a bad plan. It is a misguided plan.

Why the Bloomberg Administration is pushing to close down 5-year old classrooms in public day care and transfer them to the City's overcrowded schools with insufficient classroom space deserves real answers but the ACS is not truly forthcoming. These working families need year-round day care and the DYCD Out-Of-School Time program provides sporadic coverage at best. With the current OST funding, there will be inadequate space for children needing full-time care. And this program now is a walk-in program.

Page 2 Raglan George, Jr.

By bringing the city's action to light demonstrates that it has hatched another misguided plan not to enhance public day care but to destroy it. District Council 1707 has been demonstrating, protesting, rallying, using public prayer and even walking across the Brooklyn Bridge with thousands of supporters, yet the Bloomberg Administration remains both baffling and appalling about closing public day care centers.

When we have sought to discuss rational plans and changes given the current economic crisis, the city has repeatedly ignored the union and proceeded full steam ahead. The city appears to be uncomfortable with rational agreements. It is an intimidator that wants its way. The city is not listening to public advocates, parents, legislators, the union or anyone else.

ACS is obstinate and follows the beat of its own drummer, while the public cries for enhanced services. The city is sympathetic to Yankee and Mets tax breaks. The city may have lost the real direction of the neighborhoods affected and is providing murky leadership on public day care.

The city cannot save money by transferring these classrooms to the Board of Education. Our group teachers have the same degrees and certification as public school teachers and they earn less. Children of parents being denied space in city kindergarten classrooms will be eligible for ACS vouchers to pay for day care. Where is the rational plan?

Our classrooms have been retrofitted for these children and UPK children for years. Yet the city wants to ignore these spaces. And even if they did find empty classrooms, the real cost of retrofitting and renovating these spaces will range from \$100,000 to perhaps \$200,000 per classroom. Where are the savings?

And if the classrooms are not built because the money is not available, what happens with the slots of the children not being serviced because the Board of Education can not provide adequate services for these children?

The city deserves to give this committee, the whole City Council, parents and the public real answers not malarkey. The city must use the state's Child Care Block Grant and any other funding it obtains for public day care in a responsible manner. Please reject this latest ill-advised plan and stabilize centers, not forever threaten them. Thank you.



Child Care, Inc.

**Testimony Before New York City Council
Education and General Welfare Committees**

**Oversight: Examining the Administration's Plans to Transition Kindergarten-Aged
Children From ACS Centers to Public Schools**

March 5, 2009

**Presented by
Betty Holcomb, Policy Director
Child Care, Inc.**

Child Care, Inc. is a nonprofit child care resource and referral agency, which serves as a respected source of information for parents, providers and policymakers. We seek to promote policies that expand and improve early care and learning opportunities for children from birth through school-age, in New York City and New York State.

Councilmember de Blasio and Councilmember Jackson and members of the General Welfare and Education Committees, thank you for holding this hearing and raising concern about this important issue. We have **three main concerns** the implementation of this new policy:

1. The **immediate impact on children and families** in the coming year, and whether the city is providing adequate support to help them enroll both in kindergarten and find wraparound child care. **We are especially about the capacity of OST to meet the need for after-school services.**
2. The **long-term implications for the city's already fragile capacity to provide quality child care** to working families,
3. The **decision-making and planning process that informed this new policy direction.** We support the **expansion of quality early learning and care for all children, the city's ability to maximize all funding streams to expand those options** for children and families and **to preserve capacity across all settings, both public schools and community programs.** We believe the plan to use public education funding to support five-year-olds could be a good plan, but only when capacity and resources are better coordinated to meet the needs of families.

Opportunity To Age Down and Preserve Capacity

We do recognize that the city faces extraordinary economic challenges, with the Administration for Children's Services operating with a deficit for some years. **We also recognize and support a policy that seeks to make the most of public funding, in this case, by making use of education dollars to support five-year-olds.**

But we do not support the decision to close classrooms and lose capacity at ACS-supported centers. Instead, we believe the city should take advantage of all resources, **including the economic stimulus package – to keep these classrooms open for younger children.**

ACS set a strategic goal to “age down” its classrooms and serve younger children years ago. **It is time to make progress toward that strategic goal.** More than 40,000 families languish on the waiting list for care. Those with infants and toddlers face the worst crunch, with just one regulated slot available for every five in need of one. The 125 to 130 classrooms vacated by five-year-olds should be used to serve younger children.

New funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides temporary funding, which could create a bridge to better times. The Obama administration has made early childhood services a new priority, with increasing investments expected in the coming years. The city must use this opportunity to expand services for younger children at the ACS-supported centers.

Concern About Transition for Families and OST's Capacity

Even before the announcement of this transfer of five-year-olds to kindergarten, the city's Out of School Time services failed to meet the need for before- and after-school care for many families, especially those with younger elementary children. At best, the OST system is spotty, with great variation across neighborhoods, and it has never had much capacity for children in the early elementary grades. We urge the city to develop a comprehensive and effective transition plan to help parents find the options they need to cover before and after-school hours, as well as holidays and summer vacations. ACS-supported centers met those needs, and it is not clear to us that the city now has a comprehensive plan or adequate resources to filling the gap for five-year-olds, starting next year.

Impact on City's Long-Term Capacity to Provide Child Care

The current plan, which would leave up to 130 classrooms vacant, also has the potential to seriously destabilize the city's system of child care. Many centers already faced serious economic challenges, with their costs rising but no increase in public investments. The proposal to close classrooms serving five-year-olds adds new challenges for ACS-supported centers, especially when combined with other new city policy directions. Many centers that currently offer Pre-K services are slated to lose a substantial part of their child care funding. If they lose funding for both four- and five-year-olds, many will find it difficult to keep their doors open.

The City Council has long been a champion of child care and early childhood education, given the research that shows these services to be **the best two-generation anti-poverty**

strategy the city can adopt, by preparing children for success in school and making it possible for parents to work. We urge the city to preserve capacity in the ACS centers to continue to prepare children for school and support working parents in these tough economic times.

Better Planning to Make Most of Scarce Resources

Finally, we **urge the city to take a more coherent approach to planning and maximizing resources** for early childhood services. The decision to transition five-year-olds to kindergarten **needs to be considered in the context of all funding and resources, in the schools and at community sites.**

This policy has created a crisis in many neighborhoods, instead of an opportunity. A more comprehensive inventory of school-based and community-based resources could more efficiently meet the needs of parents, and make more effective use of the city's scarce resources. **The city needs to examine whether it makes more sense to offer full-day pre-k at community sites, to relieve crowding in the schools and preserve our existing capacity to serve young children.**

We are pleased that the Mayor's office has created an inter-agency task force on early childhood policy. Still, the city has yet to provide a plan that pools data from ACS, DOE and DYCD to present a coherent picture of how all funding streams and existing capacity can be harnessed to create high-quality early learning opportunities.

We already know of several troubling scenarios: In some neighborhoods, the kindergarten classes are already capped. In those cases, the five-year-olds are already bussed out of their neighborhoods for kindergarten. We do not have data on the seats for four- and five-year-olds at the schools and at ACS sites combined, so we don't know whether we might better use the vacated classrooms to serve these children.

The question is especially urgent at ACS sites with city-owned leases. **In those cases, the city will still be paying the rent on vacant classrooms already designed and equipped to meet the needs of young children.**

In many cases, the rooms left vacant are **in neighborhoods, like the Bronx, where the public schools are overcrowded.** It is even possible that some of the overcrowded elementary schools have Pre-K classrooms, serving four-year-olds. It might make sense to move full-day Pre-K in these neighborhoods to the vacated space in the ACS programs.

The bottom-line in some neighborhoods is already clear: Families will have to put their five-year-olds on buses to attend kindergarten in other neighborhoods, while the ACS classrooms remain vacant and the city continues to pay for the vacated space.

We urge the city to create a more coherent approach to early childhood services, linking community services to our public schools and making the most of capacity to serve young children in all settings. The current approach to planning, with data on four-and

five-year-olds siloed among city agencies, creates disruptions for families, wastes resources and fails to make the best use of existing capacity.

The State Regents have proposed that early childhood education start at birth, with full-day Pre-K for all three- and four-year-olds. The economic stimulus provides new resources to move closer to these goals, through the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Early Head Start, Head Start and Title 1 funding. It is time for the city to take a more coherent approach to early childhood policy and planning, and to expand services and supports for families.

The current plan to transition five-year-olds to kindergarten does not yet do that. But the city still has time to create a more coherent plan, one that preserves capacity in ACS centers by aging down the classrooms and makes the most of education and child care funding across all settings.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our concern about this critical issue.



Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell
Associate Executive Director for Policy and Public Affairs
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the
New York City Council
General Welfare Committee

March 5, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Public Affairs at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 65-year old, independent child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chair de Blasio and Chair Jackson and the members of the General Welfare and Education Committees for holding today's hearing to examine the Administration's plans to transition five year olds from ACS child care centers to Kindergarten in the Department of Education.

Thousands of low-income parents depend on the city's subsidized child care system so that they can work. While during this difficult economic time it is more important than ever that low-income working parents have safe, affordable child care, the City's child care system is struggling to remain stable.

As we unfortunately all know, New York City's child care system is facing tremendous fiscal challenges, including a \$62 million structural budget gap for this fiscal year, separate and apart from the cost to the city to implement 2007 Market Rate, let alone the impending 2009 Market Rate increases.

The structural deficit stems from decreases in federal and state support for subsidized child care in the face of annual increased costs. For several years now, ACS has stepped in to close structural gaps ranging in size from \$40 million to \$100 million, but this year due to agency budget reductions stemming from the economic downturn, ACS is unable to make up for the budget shortfall. To address the \$62 million deficit, ACS has proposed a plan to cost-allocate UPK differently, eliminate approximately 3200 5-year old slots (or 125 classrooms), and reduce capacity at centers that have experienced significant and persistent vacancies—all of which will reduce the system's capacity by almost 3500 slots and severely reduce funding to many child care centers.

ACS has planned to age down their system since the release of their 2005 Child Care Strategic Plan, and CCC has been supportive of this effort. CCC has long-appreciated the need for ACS to address the shortage of infant and toddler child care slots and the benefits of serving 5- year olds in DOE kindergarten classes as opposed to child care.

We do, however, have three major concerns with ACS's gap closing to transition 5-year olds to kindergarten, which we believe are critical to address:

- 1) Every child in an ACS center who is turning five years old needs to have access to kindergarten and OST slots in his/her neighborhood;
- 2) The child care centers that will have empty classrooms as a result of this transition need to remain viable and optimally have younger children served in those classrooms; and
- 3) As much of the city's child care capacity must be maintained as possible.

- r) Every child in an ACS center who is turning five years old needs to have access to kindergarten and OST slots in his/her neighborhood.

Regardless of the different administrative processes and procedures, at the end of the transition, every child in an ACS center who will be 5- years old in the next school year, must have a kindergarten slot, an OST slot and provision for safe passage if it is necessary. This must be done in a manner that ensures that parents with children new to kindergarten are not overly burdened with pick-ups and drop-offs, that non-ACS children still have kindergarten and OST slots, and that DOE's kindergarten classrooms are not over-crowded.

We understand that the kindergarten application process is ongoing and that the OST application timeline does not begin until July, but we feel that it is critical that hard-working, low-income parents are comfortable that their 5- year old children will still have care throughout the entire day come September. We are eager to work with ACS, DOE, DYCD, the City Council and other early care and education advocates to ensure this transition is as seamless as possible.

- 2) The child care centers that will have empty classrooms as a result of this transition need to remain viable and optimally have younger children served in those classrooms.

Currently, there are approximately 125 classrooms that are serving mostly 5-year old children throughout the city's subsidized child care system. ACS's Strategic Plan had envisioned aging down these classrooms when they transitioned 5-year olds to kindergarten. Unfortunately, ACS no longer has the resources to maintain these classrooms.

This means that a center that has been fully utilized and is of high quality could lose funding for a classroom if the children in the classroom now are predominantly 5-years old. Repercussions of failing to fund these classrooms include job loss for the teachers in the classrooms that will be empty, a permanent capacity reduction to the city's child care system, and the potential to destabilize a center so much that it goes out of business and is no longer able to serve the children in the other classrooms.

To support the centers and serve as many children as possible, CCC offers the following suggestions that we hope the Council and the Administration will take under consideration:

- a. When taking down the 125 5-year old classrooms from the system, close no more than one classroom at any one site.
- b. Use the money in the federal stimulus bill allocated for child care, which cannot supplant existing child care, to create a new temporary two-year

voucher to be used by children 0-4 in these classrooms. These new vouchers would not supplant existing child care and would enable a portion of the soon to be empty classrooms to still be filled with ACS-eligible children. This would only resolve the city's problem for two years, but would give the city time to try to find more child care resources, for the state and federal governments to potentially commit to more child care resources permanently, and for the centers and ACS to plan for other uses or payment options to ensure that classrooms can remain full.

- c. In school districts where the kindergarten classrooms are overcrowded and the DOE school also has a full day universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) classroom, move the UPK classroom to the CBO with the empty classroom so the school's freed up UPK classroom can serve 5-year olds in kindergarten. DOE would be responsible for contracting with the CBO to provide full day UPK. Either ACS or DYCD would need to provide child care or OST to extend the day for the 4-year olds who would be served in UPK in CBOs paid for by DOE. While on paper this may sound confusing, children and families would not be moving around; 4 year olds would receive UPK at the CBOs and 5 year olds would receive kindergarten at DOE schools.
- d. Consider other systemic needs for these classrooms/this space. In a soon-to-be released survey by CCC, we found that a barrier families face when receiving preventive services is the need to obtain child care while they are receiving their services, such as counseling or drug treatment. ACS should consider converting some of these empty classrooms into drop-off type child care centers where parents could leave their children while they were receiving services (this would be akin to the model in the Family Courts where parents can leave their children in court care while they are in court.) In addition, many child care centers are affiliated with larger agencies providing other services, such as foster care and preventive services. These programs are often looking for space for parent-child visits or family team conferences. Perhaps these classrooms would provide appropriate space for such activities.
- e. Convert the classrooms to private pay.

3) As much of the city's child care capacity must be maintained as possible.

The most troubling aspect of the plan for 5 year olds to transition to kindergarten and no longer be served in ACS child care centers, is the permanent loss of approximately 3500 subsidized child care slots. Reductions to New York City's child care capacity, particularly during this severe economic downturn, sends the wrong message from a city that has prided itself on trying to reduce poverty and support child well-being and educational achievement. It also runs counter to our need to keep thousands of working parents in the workforce (both child care providers and

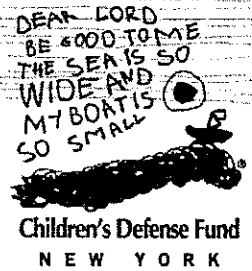
the parents who depend upon subsidized child care while they work). According to ACS's own Community Needs Assessment, only 27% of income eligible children are currently being served by ACS child care or Head Start programs because of the limited resources for child care.

I do not want to sound alarmist, but the city's subsidized child care system is in crisis. We need to try to stabilize and save as much of the system as possible, which will require additional federal, state and city support. The federal stimulus money provides us some short-term relief and gives us two years to figure out how we can support this system better so that the child care providers, the parents, and the children can count on the New York City's child care system to provide quality care while parents are working to support their families.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Written Testimony Submitted by the Children's Defense Fund – New York

READ INTO RECORD



New York City Council Education and General Welfare Committees Oversight: Examining the Administration's Plans to Transition Kindergarten-Age Children from ACS Centers to Public School March 5, 2009

Councilmember de Blasio, Councilmember Jackson and members of the General Welfare and Education Committees, thank you for holding this hearing and raising this important issue. I apologize for being unable to attend, but had a previously scheduled meeting out of town. This issue is extremely important to the Children's Defense Fund – New York (CDF-NY) and we will continue to fight to prevent any reductions in child care services.

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for 35 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. We champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education, and a moral and spiritual foundation. Supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations, CDF advocates nationwide on behalf of children to ensure children are always a priority.

Overview

New York City's child care system provides important early learning services for children while also providing their parents with a critical support so they can work. The city's current plans to eliminate \$62 million of the child care services will not only result in thousands fewer children receiving care in formal settings, but will also destabilize many centers that provide some of the only center-based child care in low-income communities. This action could also result in job loss for many child care employees, many of whom are already living close to the poverty level due to low wages in the child care industry. During a time of economic crisis, when our Mayor and government leaders all talk about the importance of working, providing supports to help people work and focusing on preparing our children for the workforce, we are moving toward the

dismantling of one of the most effective supports for working families, and important educational preparation programs for children.

CDF-NY is steadfast in its position that there cannot be a decrease in the capacity of the subsidized child care system in New York City. We recognize that there are serious budget issues and that our city, state and country are in the midst of a fiscal crisis. It is for this reason that it is essential to support our working families and prepare our children for the future. Now, more than ever, we must make sure that New York City families have the supports they need to seek and maintain stable employment.

CDF-NY urges New York City leaders to take the following actions:

- Use the federal stimulus child care money to maintain the funding currently used for five-year olds and use that funding to serve younger children in the child care system, while moving the five-year olds to the Department of Education.
- Develop a comprehensive and effective transition plan to help parents who currently have a four-year old in the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) system enroll their child in DOE kindergarten and Out-of-School-Time (OST) services.
- Work with advocates, business leaders and non-profit experts to develop a cost-effective model for providing subsidized child care that improves quality without decreasing quantity.

Systemic Challenges

While we acknowledge that there are problems with the city's subsidized child care system that must be addressed, destabilizing this system is not the way to fix it. We must hold all parties of the system accountable to eliminate inefficiencies and ensure that we are serving the maximum number of children possible in high-quality settings. The city often cites vacancies, empty classrooms and high overhead as reasons for eliminating slots. These are real challenges that can and must be addressed. CDF-NY has offered to work with the city to move toward creating a new model of providing subsidized child care that is cost-effective and meets the needs of children and families.

Market Rate

One of the main challenges currently facing the city is the lack of resolution of the 2007 market rate. Since the city failed to pay this when the rates were announced and the city and state did not agree on how this should be funded prior to the economic downturn, there is now an untenable situation that pits home-based providers against the rest of the system. The city maintains that in order to pay the market rate, services will be cut – meaning children will lose the critical child care services that their families rely on. Essentially, in order to pay the home-based providers the market rate, other parts of the system will lose funding. This is not acceptable and we hope that all parties will come together to find a resolution that gives providers the support they deserve without decreasing services for children. Going forward, the city and state must work together to address the market rate issue in a timely and equitable manner.

Transition of Five-Year Olds

With the market rate issue still outstanding, it is very difficult for ACS to deal with the existing \$62 million structural deficit and additional cuts to ACS's budget. By maximizing all funding streams the city can strive to maintain services during this time of economic crisis. The city's plan to use education funding for five-year olds is a good idea – in theory. The manner in which the city has moved forward and the lack of clarity and information available for families however, is quite troubling. Kindergarten registration was scheduled to end on March 2nd and was only extended due to the snow storm earlier this week. In some communities, parents found that registration closed early due to the overwhelming number of registrations. Parents with a four-year old currently in an ACS child care program, who had counted on that child remaining in the program for kindergarten, were only notified by ACS less than three weeks prior to the registration deadline.

The city must create a more detailed, thorough and transparent transition plan to ensure that all children currently enrolled in ACS child care who would have attended kindergarten in the child care program are transitioned smoothly. This must include an analysis of the capacity of local schools and the availability of OST services in the communities where the children live and will attend school. Parents need support and assistance with this transition since they did not have sufficient time to plan ahead. Relying on the child care programs – which are facing serious budget reductions – to help the parents with this transition cannot be the only plan. The City must find ways to speak with parents and to offer guidance regarding local schools to ensure that children do not have to travel long distances to attend Kindergarten.

The city must also make efforts to provide OST services for these children since their parents were relying on a full day of care. OST has historically underserved five-year olds and the availability of OST services that meet the needs of working parents has been problematic. The current situation represents an opportunity to better align OST programs with the needs of the communities.

Maintain Capacity and Use Funding for Younger Children

Despite these challenges with the transition, the ultimate goal of maximizing funding and paying for kindergarten with education funding is the right direction for New York City. However, the funding currently used to provide care for five-year olds must remain in the child care system.

First, this money can be used to provide child care to younger children. ACS' own needs assessment shows that only 27 percent of eligible children are receiving any early childhood education through the city's subsidized child care and Head Start systems. We know that there are thousands of children across our city who need subsidized child care, and this number is only growing as the economy continues to suffer. The DOE is funded to provide kindergarten to all five-year olds, while younger children do not have guaranteed access to educational programs. By using this funding for younger children, the city can increase availability of educational center-based services for two-, three- and four-year olds, while also helping support more working families. This is why the child care funding for five-year olds can and must be maintained and used to support early childhood programming for children four and younger.

Secondly, by keeping this funding in the system, child care programs can remain viable and continue to provide services in the communities with the most need. The ACS needs assessment also found that the majority of ACS-funded child care centers are located in communities with a high need for the service. If programs lose the funding they currently receive for five-year olds, many sites will need to lay off staff, reduce the quality of services, or close altogether. This not only has a negative economic impact on communities, it greatly reduces the options available to working parents and could result in more children being cared for in informal settings.

Stimulus Funding

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will provide New York State with approximately \$96.8 million over two years for child care. Some portion of these funds will be directed to New York City and should be used to prevent the elimination of child care services. The city should maintain the funding for the five-year old services, and effectively transition to using that funding for younger children in the child care system. Education funding should be used to provide kindergarten to the five-year olds.

In a perfect world, the money from the stimulus package would be used for expansion, quality enhancements and capacity-building. But we are not living in a perfect world. The economic downturn has hit our city hard and sadly supporting child care services does not appear to be a priority for this Administration. We recognize that difficult choices must be made and that funding is extremely limited. We hope that our Mayor and other government leaders will recognize the importance of providing accessible, high quality child care, especially as New York City's working families and children face these economically challenging times.

Thank you for holding this hearing and bringing attention to this important issue.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Marino Rojas at jrojas@cdfny.org.

NYC Administration for Children's Services Testimony

City Council Joint Hearing

General Welfare and Education Committees

March 5, 2009

Good afternoon Chair de Blasio, Chair Jackson and members of the General Welfare and Education Committees. I am Maria Benejan, Associate Commissioner for Program Development at the New York City Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) Division of Child Care and Head Start. With me today is Sara Vecchiotti, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Planning and Analysis in the Division of Child Care and Head Start. Also joining us is Elizabeth Sciabarra, Chief Executive of Student Enrollment at the Department of Education (DOE). We are here today to explain the work that ACS and DOE have underway to transition five year olds currently served by City-contracted child care centers into public school Kindergarten.

I will provide Children's Services' testimony about our work to prepare programs and parents for this transition, as well as the collaborative planning efforts with the Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). The DOE will provide an overview of DOE Kindergarten and the enrollment process for the school year beginning in September 2009.

Summary of Child Care Deficit

In November 2008, Children's Services announced the Kindergarten transition as part of a series of strategies to address the \$62 Million deficit in the City's subsidized child care system. As Commissioner Mattingly has explained at a number of hearings in the past year, this deficit is a result of the increased rise in costs of providing child care, including health insurance, liability insurance and facility management. While the City has increased its investment in the child care system in recent years, State and Federal funds have leveled off, leaving the City with an escalating gap in funding.

The deficit reduction strategies outlined by Commissioner Mattingly in November are necessary in order to sustain the center-based child care system. We are committed to ensuring that all children currently receiving services in the Children's Services subsidized child care system continue to be served by the City's Early Care and Education system.

Through these initiatives we are working to make our system more efficient and to make the most of the services provided in other departments in the City's Early Care and Education system. As a result, Children's Services will oversee a more sustainable system in which ACS is providing child care to as many of the City's most vulnerable families as possible within the limited financial resources that we have available.

Overview of Kindergarten Transition

One of the three initiatives is the transition of five year old children currently being served by the contracted child care system to public school kindergarten, which is the subject of today's hearing. This applies to children who will turn five by the end of the year. Beginning in September 2009, Children's Services will no longer provide funding for kindergarten in ACS-contracted child care centers. This allows us to avoid eliminating services to families who are currently receiving child care and who do not have alternatives available to them in other parts of the Early Care and Education system. It is also in line with the goals we set out for the City's Early Care and Education system in our strategic plan released in 2005.

Currently, there are approximately 7,200 children who occupy seats in our contracted centers who will be five years old by the end of this calendar year. A relatively small percentage of families who are served by the contracted child care system have chosen in the past for their five year old children to remain in child care. In fact, last year 62 percent of the children who turned five went to kindergarten in school settings, not centers, at their parents' choice. Based on this information, we expect that there would be

approximately 3,200 children who might have remained in the child care system in the fall, and who will now begin kindergarten in a school setting this coming September.

It is important to note that when this initiative was announced, we had planned for child care centers to end the provision of kindergarten services in July 2009. We have since worked with our partner agencies in the City to delay this implementation so that the transition will now occur in line with the new school year, in September.

This means that all parents who have children born in 2004 who are currently enrolled in a contracted child care center will need to enroll their child in kindergarten for the upcoming 2009-2010 school year. After-school services will be provided through the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Out of School Time (OST). Program and parents will need to enroll for these services in the summer.

The Kindergarten transition applies only to ACS' contracted child care centers. A total of 125 classrooms with the majority of the seats serving five year olds will no longer be funded by ACS. Mixed age classrooms – which in this initiative are classrooms that serve four and five year olds – with the majority of the seats serving younger children will continue to be funded. Some of the capacity in the mixed age classrooms that will remain will be available to age down to serve younger children. We estimate that this will lead to a reduction of approximately 2,500 seats in the center based system.

Collaborative Efforts to Prepare Parents and Programs

We understand that this is a major change for families as well as for programs. We know that child care is a critical support to parents, and we are proud of the quality care and assistance that our centers provide to children and their families. For these reasons, Children's Services has been working with our partners at DOE and DYCD since we announced this initiative to prepare for this adjustment and to communicate with parents and programs.

ACS, DOE and DYCD are members of the Early Care and Education Steering Committee, an internal inter-agency group that works to tackle the broader issues surrounding the delivery of services in the City's early care and education system. These meetings are held bi-weekly with representatives from the relevant City agencies, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development, and the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. Since the announcement of the strategies to address the City's child care budget deficit, discussions at these meetings have centered around preparing for the kindergarten transition as well as coordinated efforts to expand universal prekindergarten.

Children's Services has undertaken an extensive review of its enrollment to identify the makeup of five year old classrooms in contracted child care centers. ACS has shared this information with the DOE and DYCD to ensure that public school kindergartens and OST programs have the capacity to absorb the children who will be entering their systems in September.

In December, ACS, DOE and DYCD held informational forums with contracted child care programs at which the City agencies answered questions about the Kindergarten transition as well as the other initiatives to address the deficit. Children's Services has worked closely with the Department of Education to develop information for programs and parents on the process for kindergarten enrollment.

In February, Children's Services held meetings with child care center directors to inform them of the process for Kindergarten enrollment with the DOE. At these forums, programs were encouraged to hold staff meetings to explain the timeline and process, and parent meetings to explain the application process, and provide information on the documentation needed to enroll a child in kindergarten and a timeline of DOE's enrollment process. Programs have been asked to reach out to ACS when they find that parents have encountered difficulties, so that DOE's central enrollment office can address

them: Children's Services also sent a letter to parents in February informing them that kindergarten services would no longer be offered to five year olds in child care centers beginning in September and advising them of the steps they need to take to enroll their children in DOE kindergarten. Parents of children in Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs also received a letter from the DOE advising them of the Kindergarten enrollment period.

Moving forward, ACS is working with DYCD to send information to parents on the enrollment period for OST programs, which will be held in the summer. ACS also plans to send a letter to parents advising them of the second wave of the DOE kindergarten application period.

In March, Children's Services will hold forums for contracted child care programs to provide additional information on the changes in capacity that will result from the transition of kindergarten classrooms. In the coming weeks, programs will receive a revised contract for Fiscal Year 2010 that includes the estimated value of the Kindergarten reduction. At the end of this fiscal year, programs will receive a revised budget for FY 10 reflecting the actual capacity reduction.

This information will help agencies to understand the impact that these changes will have on their programs and begin planning for these adjustments. There are a number of options that programs have to help them adjust to this change in capacity, including recruiting families to pay for care privately, expanding UPK services, and consolidating classrooms. Children's Services will provide individualized support and technical assistance to programs that require help making these changes.

Conclusion

I hope that my testimony today has demonstrated ACS's commitment to making the changes necessary to avoid disruption of services to children and sustain the child care system. As I mentioned above, we are committed to ensuring that every child currently

receiving services in the Children's Services child care system has a seat available in the City's Early Care and Education system.

The fiscal climate presents challenges for all of us in the child care system, and in the City. We have been forced to make difficult decisions in an effort to maximize our limited resources and avoid eliminating services for our City's most vulnerable children. We will continue to work with our partner agencies in the City to support programs and parents as we make these changes.

I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to share this information today. I would now like to introduce Elizabeth Sciabarra who will provide testimony for the Department of Education.

Good afternoon. I am Mabel Everett, President of Local 205 of DC 1707, AFSCME.

I have just a few points to make.

- Local 205 members are certified teachers in the field of early childhood education.
- We have always provided kindergarten and pre-K education services in our child care centers, in addition to regular day care and Head Start
- That is what we call the “*full utilization*” of our wonderful child care centers
- ACS claims that our centers are “under-enrolled”. Meanwhile, our school system is overcrowded
- So *why is ACS transferring a valuable service* that we can provide to a system that is overcrowded?
- We can only conclude that, like Rush Limbaugh, ACS wants our centers to stay under-enrolled so they can close them down



The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA)

Ernest Logan, President

Testimony Presented to

The City Council Education Committee and General
Welfare Committee

Hearing on:

Examining the Administration's Plans to Transition Kindergarten-Aged
Children from ACS Centers to Public School

March 5, 2009

Good afternoon Chairman Jackson, Chairman de Blasio, and distinguished members of this joint committee. My name is Randi Herman and I am the First Vice President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of our members, the Principals, Assistant Principals, Supervisors, Education Administrators and Day Care Directors. I applaud you for highlighting the importance of planning for the smooth transition of our young students from ACS Day Care Centers to Public School.

Recently, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) made several announcements that will dramatically transform how thousands of children are educated and cared for while their parents work. The critical questions raised by these changes are many, and, unfortunately, the agencies involved have yet to adequately address them. Parents, families and children are anxious about the plan, and day care centers' staffs are worried about being able to keep their doors open. ACS is already implementing the changes, handing over the responsibility for some 3,500 children to the Department of Education. The DOE, to its credit, says that it was able to find 3,500 kindergarten seats in NYC public schools to accommodate the educational needs of these children; however, many critical questions remain unanswered. Before this plan is implemented, we must address the issues of school overcrowding, day care center stability, and above all, we must be sure that the plan will not have a negative impact on children and families.

On the surface, the shift in responsibility for kindergarteners from ACS to the DOE does not appear to raise any educational red flags. Generally, it is appropriate for five-year-olds to be educated in schools. However, when we consider particular cases and the specific reasons that families chose day care centers over the DOE schools, and the overall impact of this change on the families, the repercussions become much more significant.

It is important to realize that parents intentionally and purposefully chose to place their kindergarten eligible children in community based, city funded day care centers. Their reasons for making that choice stem directly from their desire to be gainfully employed. NYC public schools, as we know, have a defined school day that does not parallel a standard work day. Children of working parents need care before and after the regular school day. These hours – and a quality educational experience after 3 pm – are available at the city-funded day care centers. Often parents drop their children at day care centers for breakfast in the morning and pick them up after 5 in the evening. This allows parents, **who cannot afford private care**, to work full time without worrying about their children's wellbeing.

It is still not clear what will happen to children and families who are faced with such a shortened day. Before this plan is implemented, we must be sure that children are provided with a quality after-school program that includes licensed adult supervision and a strong

educational component. Commissioner Mattingly, in testimony before this Council, indicated that DYCD, which collaborates with the DOE to provide after-school care, would take care of the children after school. However, DYCD has not confirmed that it has the capacity to do so.

In the event that DYCD finds a way to provide this “out-of-school time,” at least three major concerns immediately come to mind: First, the after-school program may be in a different location from the child’s school and we do not know how a child will be transported from one location to another and how that transportation would be paid for. Second, a child may be moved from the neighborhood in which he or she lives, or his or her parents work. Third, and most important, untrained high school and college students often staff these DYCD after-school programs and cannot provide the same quality of care and early education that day care center teachers can.

It is important to consider that parents deliberately selected day care centers that are close to their homes or places of work for job-related and family-related reasons. We should be concerned that the proposed relocation of children will not only decrease parental choice, but could result in a child being placed in a school far from home or a parent’s workplace, causing parents to disrupt their work schedule while they drop their child off and pick their child up.

I have described how the proposed ACS changes may have a negative effect on the services that are provided to our children, but the changes could also have a disastrous effect on day care centers across the city.

During the past four years, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) has closed 17 city-funded day care centers, resulting in a loss of more than 1,000 seats that served lower income families and, particularly, single mothers. We all witnessed the hardships that these closings had on families and communities. Furthermore, history has shown us that once seats are eliminated, **it is virtually impossible to restore them.**

On Nov. 18, 2008, ACS announced that it had identified another 21 centers as under-enrolled and that each of those schools would soon lose funding for at least one class. Two days later, ACS announced that next September, all five-year-olds (approximately 3,500 children) scheduled to be enrolled in city-funded day care center kindergartens will, instead, attend New York City public schools, relieving ACS of budgetary responsibility for them.

When a center loses a class of kindergarteners, the center can only stay open by enrolling more children who are of a younger age. This is because many of the fixed costs of running a center remain the same, even though the center serves fewer children. There is a demand for more seats for younger children across our city. Forecasts by the NYC Department of City Planning show an increasing number of children from age 0-4. (The 0-4 male population is projected to increase from 269,302 in 2010 to 278,202 in 2020; the 0-4 female population from 258,052 in

2010 to 266,571 in 2020. *Briefing Booklet*, December 2006, NYC DCP.) However, ACS has proven time and time again, that they are not prepared to assist centers with enrollment outreach to ensure that seats are filled. When centers have been under enrolled in the past, ACS has moved to close them instead of reaching out to the community to fill the open seats. Let me be clear, CSA will not approve of a loss of seats in our city-funded day care centers. There is a proven need for more seats and the demand continues to grow each year. Every child has the right to a high quality early education.

CSA is offering the following compromise that allows for a shared responsibility for expenditure. The three main recommendations follow:

- Allow the DOE to operate classes for five-year-olds at city-funded day care centers where the children are already enrolled.
- Have the DOE bear the cost of the instructional program – the teachers and instructional supports – so that ACS would have no expense. The cost of running the facility is already covered no matter how many classes are contained in the building.
- After 3 pm, shift the responsibility for the children to the city-funded day care center when the DOE teacher leaves.

This compromise offers stability through continuity of placement for the children of working families, and benefits both ACS and DOE. Families could continue to use their trusted city-funded day care centers for kindergarten, allowing many parents and guardians to remain at their jobs and thus lessen the likelihood that they will move onto the unemployment and public assistance rolls. This compromise would truly support an already vulnerable population and help families maintain their dignity as well as maintain the advantages that come from genuine early childhood education.

Once again, I thank the City Council for addressing this important issue, and stress that we must work together, and remain vigilant to ensure that ACS does not implement changes that have negative effects on our children, parents, and communities.



District Council 1707
American Federation of State,
County and Municipal
Employees, AFL-CIO

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Testimony by Neal Tepel
Assistant to the Executive Director for District Council 1707
Before the City Council Committee on General Welfare

Oversight - Examining the Administration's Plans to
Transfer Kindergarten-Aged Children from ACS Centers to Public Schools

Good afternoon. My name is Neal Tepel. I'm Assistant to the Executive Director for District Council 1707, AFSCME. The Council represents 25,000 members in seven local unions working in social service programs including child care, health services and community programs. Local 205 represents 6,000 workers in public day care centers.

At a time when vulnerable New Yorkers are struggling to remain gainfully employed, or secure employment to support their families, New York City is reducing the capacity of its subsidized child care system – a system that provides vitally important child care services for tens of thousands of working families in New York City.

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) currently funds 300 child care centers serving 22,000 children ages 2 through 5. These centers provide a high-quality pre-school education and safe, affordable year-round child care to working parents in low-income communities.

ACS is proposing to fill the budget gap by stopping serving 5 year-olds in these centers, and downsizing their contract capacity by 3,300 slots. Displacing these young children from the ACS centers will result in thousands of additional 5 year-olds being forced to attend the already overcrowded public schools, with no assurance that there will be any child care available for their out-of-school hours.

ACS proposes to close the kindergarten classrooms altogether, not allowing the centers to use them for the thousands of income-eligible children in need of child care that are not being served. With the reduction of slots through consolidation and the elimination of the 3,300 kindergarten seats, many thousands of children ages 2 through 5 will no longer have an opportunity for an excellent pre-school education and quality all-day year-round child care.

During a time of economic crisis, we should be doing all that we can to keep people working, especially lower-wage workers who are usually more affected by downturns in the economy. Instead, New York City is eliminating early childhood care and education for thousands of young children, placing additional stress on parents in neighborhoods of need.

We urge you to call on ACS to keep its kindergarten classrooms open to ensure that all of the ACS center children turning five this year can get a good kindergarten education and the year-round child care that their parents need.





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ACS Plans to Close the Kindergarten Classrooms in its Child Care Centers, Cutting Off Child Care for 3,300 Children Turning Five This Year

At a time when vulnerable New Yorkers are struggling to remain gainfully employed, or secure employment to support their families, the Administration of Children's Services (ACS) has announced plans to close all of the kindergarten classrooms in its 300 public-funded child care centers, cutting off child care for 3,300 children of low-income working parents this next September.

In the 25 years since New York City's public schools converted from half-day to all-day kindergarten, many of the ACS centers have given up their kindergarten classes or converted them to mixed classes of 4's and 5's. But about half of the ACS child care centers are in neighborhoods with low-performing schools and over-crowded kindergartens, so there has been a compelling need for those centers to keep their kindergarten classrooms open.

The working parents in those communities have kept those kindergarten classrooms fully enrolled despite their having to pay up to 10 percent of their income in fees and despite the time-consuming hassles of dealing with ACS on eligibility. They have put great value on having their child get a good kindergarten education and year-round out-of-school-time care all in one place, in a class with 20 to 25 children and a teaching staff of three. And they value having their young 5-year-old spend another year in a supportive, nurturing early childhood setting before moving on to a big, impersonal, over-crowded elementary school.

Closing those kindergarten classrooms will leave parents of 3,300 five-year-olds struggling to find a place for their children in those already-overcrowded public school kindergartens for this next September. The Department of Education says it is committed to finding space for all of them, but to do so means that many of them will have to be bussed far out of their neighborhoods, far from their homes.

The parents of these five-year-olds are working parents that need year-round child care, and they are understandably outraged about losing their child care. There is no assurance that they can get their child into a school that has a year-round Out-of-School-Time program run by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). And even if it does have a DYCD OST program, there is no assurance that it will have room to take in all those new kindergarten children.

DYCD has not been given any additional funds to expand its OST programs to take in 3,300 more children than it is currently serving. ACS says that DYCD will give priority to enrolling the ACS children, but it made that promise four years ago when the City closed the ACS school-age child care programs, and at many of the schools, parents were simply told that their DYCD OST program was already full and had a waiting list.

ACS is vastly overstating how much it will save by closing the kindergarten classrooms. It is overlooking the fact that all of these children would be entitled to ACS voucher funding to pay for child care for their out-of-school hours. Children do not lose their eligibility for subsidized child care when they turn five.

Tell Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to keep our ACS kindergarten classrooms open to ensure that all of the ACS center children turning five this year can get a good kindergarten education and the year-round child care that their parents need.

Contact:

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**TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEES ON GENERAL WELFARE
AND EDUCATION
Examining the Administration's Plan to
Transfer Kindergarten Children from ACS to DOE**

MARCH 5, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Andrea Anthony and I am the Executive Director of the Day Care Council of New York, Inc. The Day Care Council of New York is the membership organization for more than 200 nonprofit organizations that sponsor approximately 330 publicly funded child care programs throughout the five boroughs. These private nonprofit organizations are under contract with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to provide daily education and care to infants/toddlers, and young children aged 2.6 to 5 years old. As of January 2009, there were 33,813 young children in center-based programs representing over 62 percent of this system.

I would like to thank the City Council's Chair of the General Welfare Committee, Bill deBlasio, and the Chair of the Education Committee, Robert Jackson and the Committee members for holding this public hearing on the transfer of kindergarten services from the Administration for Children's Services to the Department of Education (DOE).

From its beginnings in 1941, the child care system was formed as a partnership between the city and nonprofit organizations with the intent of helping families who need a safe, educational setting for their children while they are working. We are at a critical juncture in the 58 year old history of the publicly funded child care system. The key word here is "change." But the driving force behind the desire to change the system is solely economic. The Bloomberg Administration's fixation with addressing budget deficits is destroying essential services in the publicly funded child care system. In fact, every Mayoral proposal in recent years, including the eliminating of after school services, the refusal to negotiate for an equitable and fair labor contract for workers, and now the elimination of kindergarten services, has emanated from an objective to save money without any regard to the impact on working families, their children and the dedicated workers in this system. Combined we are talking about the lives of more than 54,000 families and 6,000 workers. The direct impact of policy decisions driven by budget deficits is weakening, beyond repair in some cases, the fragile safety net it took years for us to create.

The proposed changes bring about concern on many different levels. Our biggest concern is the loss of capacity throughout the entire publicly funded child care system. This proposed cut will reduce the capacity of the system by approximately 3,300 slots. It is inconceivable that the ACS would make such a move when thousands of children are not being served. This is also a time where families are under financial distress and child care becomes the only safety net to support low-income families.

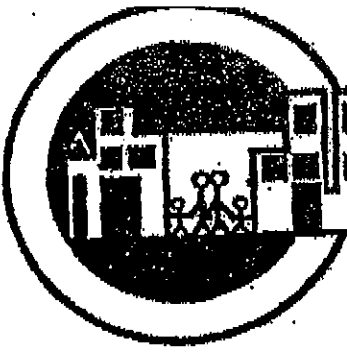
Long term, we understand that transferring five year old children to the Department of Education maybe a better use of resources, but at this time, the safety net designed to support young children, i.e., DOE, ACS, and Department of Youth and Community Development is not equipped to successfully make this transition. Appropriate planning has not been done to assess the impact on families. This transition cannot effectively be done without sufficient preparation for the programs affected and without the financial support to change the capacity to serve younger children. We strongly oppose the current proposal to completely eliminate much needed child care slots in the system. We encourage the Bloomberg Administration to work closely with the City Council to ensure that Federal Stimulus funding designated for child care be used for expansion or conversion of classrooms to meet the growing demands for infant/toddler care. Eliminating kindergarten slots in the publicly funded system does not mean a need does not exist for other age groups. It also does not mean that parents lose their eligibility for child care because the Administration elects to discontinue these services.

Currently, within our membership there are approximately 131 child care programs that serve kindergarten children. These numbers change from year to year. However, given this number of active programs and ACS' admission that more than 3,000 slots will be eliminated, it clearly demonstrates that the programs are addressing a vital need in their community. In late January, we surveyed our membership on the kindergarten proposal and found some disturbing concerns. Of the centers responding, the directors reported that their parents had limited options in their neighborhood to transfer their children; that an OST program did not exist near by; and most importantly, the parents were outraged that the Administration was continuing its attack on the publicly funded child care system. We have attached two letters from a director and a parent that clearly highlights their frustration and fear over what is to come.

We also found that enrollment trends vary from community to community. We found that some of our member agencies have voluntarily chosen to age down because they saw a decline in kindergarten enrollment. They were responding to the needs of the community they serve. As previously stated, we understand that the publicly funded child care system will need to change to respond to the needs of communities; however, as policy makers does it all hinge on how money can be slowly siphoned off the system without any regard to impact on families and their children? There are a number of questions that are being ignored as ACS moves forward on eliminating kindergarten services, such as, what is going to happen to those children that cannot enroll at their local public school? What happens if an OST program does not exist in their area? How are parents going to pay for their child to get from school to an after school provider in the middle of the work day? Who is going to pay for a chaperone?

We urge the City Council to intervene and stop the termination of kindergarten services. If this is not possible, we urge that child care programs be permit to maintain the slots and use the opportunity to "age down" by enrolling more 2, 3 and 4 year old children. Now is not the time to reduce capacity in the publicly funded system. We have the federal stimulus funding which should be used to support programs enhance their services for low income families. Let's work together to continue offering high quality educational services for our youngest citizens and give them a fresh start.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this issue.



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January 28, 2009

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You asked the question, "What has been the reaction of your parents since the kindergarten classes are being closed?"

The parents here at E.P. Rivers Day Care Center are angry, outraged, upset and in disbelief. For some, it brought back memory of when the School Age programs were also closed at the Day Cares. All of my parents are presently having trouble registering their children at other schools, because there are no intake applications. Some schools have even outright refused to see the parents because that is not their zoned school. This problem is also occurring in the other boroughs of NY as some parents have also tried there to no avail.

I met with parents informing them of this situation and suggesting for them to call the Borough President Office, Senators Office and even the Congress Representatives. I also told my parents to save some of their vacation time for the first week of September, 09 when the school re-opens after the summer vacation.

This situation not only affects the parents and the children, but the entire E.P. Rivers Day Care Center as a whole including the staff. I have six class room's, I am budgeted for 120 children. Our target is 132 which we are currently at. Of this target capacity 50 of these children are September '09 kindergarteners. This would make us have 2 three's, 2 four's and 2 five year old groups which all would be kindergarteners.

As for the staff here at Ezekiel P. Rivers Jr. Learning Center we are all stressed but, we are keeping the faith and hoping that this situation will come to a halt and that all the centers will be able to keep their 2009 kindergarten children.

With that being said my parents are very, very angry, their angry with the City, ACS, and the Mayor's office. Angry with everyone involved with the child care agency and this particular decision.

HELEN OWEN CAREY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
PARK SLOPE NORTH CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC.
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What is your reaction to finding out that the kindergarten classroom here is scheduled to close in September?

My name is Carmella Londono I am the parent of Angelina Clark. I am in total shock that the Kindergarten program is scheduled to close. My daughter loves her school and enjoys going to Helen Owen Carey everyday. She loves her teachers and friends. Helen Owen Carey is a wonderful program, the quality of care is amazing and I would hate for the program to close its Kindergarten program. I actually attended the Helen Owen Carey ~~Program~~ Kindergarten program myself 18 years ago and I am thankful that I attended such a wonderful program this is the reason why I looked forward to my daughter being able to attend as well. I really hope that a change can be made because Helen Owen Carey has helped my child in many ways and I would love for the Kindergarten program to please stay.

Thank's
 Carmella Londono



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
On Oversight of Administration Plans for Transitioning Kindergarten Aged
Children from ACS Centers to Public Schools**

March 5, 2009

Good afternoon. Thank you Chair de Blasio and members of the Committee on General Welfare for holding this hearing and for your interest in the opportunities for full-day care available for Kindergarten aged children. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) where I serve as a Policy Analyst. The 36 settlement houses and community centers, who are members of UNH, provide early childhood education and youth activities to thousands of children and youth throughout New York City.

ACS has for several years carried a structural deficit. This year it is \$62 million. In order to close this gap, the City should be supporting ACS child care programs and not expect that this hole be filled entirely through cuts to children's services.

The ACS plan for addressing this current deficit includes:

- The elimination of classrooms for kindergarten aged children in community based organization child care programs.
- Capacity reduction at several centers with vacant seats.
- A financing formula that ultimately reduces funds to child care programs which provide Universal Pre-Kindergarten with a full day of child care.
- Further reductions in slots proposed in the next fiscal year.

These cuts will lead to a child care system that serves fewer children and decreases funds for early childhood education providers at a time when there continue to be eligible families in need of quality child care. These cuts challenge the work that ACS has begun through Project Full Enrollment to expand access to child care by ensuring the every slot child care slot is used.

Many of our member agencies have aged down kindergarten aged classrooms in recent years to meet the increasing need for quality child care for children between zero and four years of age and we recognize that over the long term, funding for programs serving kindergarten aged children may be provided through a different city agency than ACS.

However, the current plan to close classrooms presents two major problems:

- It does not allow centers to age down their classrooms to meet the needs of zero to four year olds. The slots that are eliminated because of this cut will not be replaced and the overall capacity of the City's child care system as well as the capacity of several centers will be decreased.
- It does not present a clear plan for the next class of five year old children to receive full day care.

One of the main reasons that parents of kindergarten aged children put their children in ACS funded child care instead of kindergarten is the full day of care available through ACS funded child care. It is especially important during this recession when low-income parents are struggling to stay employed that quality full day care remain accessible to their children. Yet, there remain many areas of concern with the city's plan to transition nearly 3,300 children from ACS funded care to a combination of Kindergarten and Out Of School Time (OST) programs.

While New York City's five year old children have a legal right to kindergarten, parents may find it difficult to find a slot for their children that can be combined with an OST program to provide full day care. Children are not guaranteed slots in OST, even if they are eligible, and slots for OST have been reduced in the FY 2009 budget, reduced in the November budget modification and face another proposal for reduction in the Mayor's preliminary FY 2010 budget. With these reductions, the City nonetheless expects that OST providers will be able to absorb many of the 3,300 children who will be losing full day care.

Also, as OST enrollment will likely not start until the summer, parents will not know until very close to the beginning of the school year whether or where their children are enrolled. Parents need to know how their children will get from kindergarten in a public school to an OST program which may be held at a different site. Five year old children should not be expected to travel without adult supervision. This is not a problem for parents of children who are in ACS funded full day care but needs to be addressed for children who will be in both Kindergarten and OST.

New York City must fulfill its obligation to the youngest New Yorkers to meet their needs and the needs of their families for care that enables parents to continue working and education that gives every child the chance to succeed in school and beyond. To do this we need to expand the options available to parents. Tragically, the City is losing capacity and will in the future serve fewer children than it is able to serve now. We strongly urge the City to work with providers to ensure that both kindergarten aged children and younger children have the care and education that they deserve.

UNH Members: CAMBA-Center for Family Life in Sunset Park - Chinese American Planning Council - Citizens Advice Bureau - Claremont Neighborhood Centers - Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation - East Side House Settlement - Educational Alliance - Goddard Riverside Community Center - Grand Street Settlement - Greenwich House - Hamilton-Madison House - Hartley House - Henry Street Settlement - Hudson Guild - Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House - Kingsbridge Heights Community Center - Lenox Hill Neighborhood House - Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center - Moshulu Montefiore Community Center - Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation - Project Hospitality - Queens Community House - Riverdale Neighborhood House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-YWHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center - St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Third Street Music School Settlement - Union Settlement Association - United Community Centers - University Settlement Society

READ INTO RECORD



United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

March 4, 2009

Council Member Bill de Blasio, Chair
General Welfare Committee
Council Member Robert Jackson, Chair
Education Committee
New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Sirs:

As the United Federation of Teachers Vice President for Elementary Schools, I am writing to you to support DC 1707/Local 205 in its opposition to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) proposal to close kindergarten classrooms in city-run day care centers.

Teachers know how crucial it is for children to develop a solid educational foundation and a love of learning at an early age. The ACS proposal would eliminate educational services for thousands of those children. As a result, many parents would have to scramble to place their children in public schools that are already overcrowded or bus them to programs out of their neighborhood. Working parents unable to find places for their children might have to quit their jobs to stay at home and care for them, and that is the worst thing that could happen to families already struggling to cope with the current economic downturn.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose the ACS proposal. As President Obama noted recently in his address to Congress, education is key to America's long-term economic growth. New York City children deserve the best educational opportunities we can offer as opposed to a short-sighted retreat from our obligations. I'm sure you will keep the children uppermost in your thoughts as you review the ACS proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Alford, Vice President
United Federation of Teachers



Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Testimony of Elizabeth Sciabarra, Chief Executive for Student
Enrollment

City Council Education and General Welfare Committees

ACS Kindergarten Transition

March 5, 2009

Good afternoon Chair Jackson, Chair DeBlasio, and members of the Education and General Welfare Committees. As Maria said, my name is Elizabeth Sciabarra, Chief Executive for Student Enrollment at the New York City Department of Education. I am joined by my colleagues from DOE, Recy Dunn, Executive Director for Early Childhood Education, and Marty Barr, Executive Director for Elementary School Enrollment. We are here to explain and discuss the Department's Kindergarten enrollment process as we prepare for school opening in September.

In November 2008, the DOE sent a memorandum to all public elementary schools providing guidance on how children should be admitted to Kindergarten for September 2009. There are several key elements of Kindergarten enrollment which I will describe to you.

All children seeking general education Kindergarten placement must apply directly to the schools that interest the families the most. This goes for children attending a Universal pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program in a public school, children currently enrolled in UPK programs managed by community-based organizations under contract with the DOE, children currently enrolled in private pre-Kindergarten and nursery school programs, and children not currently enrolled in any educational programs. Children need to apply to Kindergarten even if they are currently enrolled in a pre-Kindergarten in an elementary school they most want to attend next year.

There is a standard calendar and timeline for applying and being assigned to Kindergarten. The application period began on January 12 and was scheduled to end on March 2; the deadline was extended to March 6 due to the City's snow day on Monday, March 2. The Office of Student Enrollment sent two mailings to inform parents about the need to apply for Kindergarten. One mailing was sent to all pre-Kindergarten students enrolled in DOE UPK programs, including 22,000 in public schools and 33,000 in CBOs; the second mailing was sent to the 13,000 4 year olds in the "Turning 5" process for students who have special education Individualized Education Plans, or IEPs. In addition to the mailings, we sent out a press release on January 12 and we posted information about the Kindergarten enrollment process on the main page of the DOE Web site.

Once the application period has closed, schools will make assignments for next year's Kindergarten classes based on the projected number of seats and in accordance with the priorities that were established. The precise order of priorities for a zoned school is:

- Zoned students with siblings in the school
- Zoned students without siblings in the school
- Other district students with siblings in the school
- Other non-district students with siblings in the school
- Other district students without siblings in the school

- Other non-district students without siblings in the school

Kindergarten admissions is a school-based process. However, there are a few exceptions. For districts one and three, the Office of Student Enrollment administers the Kindergarten processes. Placements for Kindergarten Gifted and Talented programs are also administered centrally. In addition, there are a few individual schools for which there is a centrally managed process, such as the Petrides School on Staten Island.

Once schools have made the assignments according to the established priorities, schools will maintain wait lists of those students who do not receive a placement. The waitlists will remain in effect through the opening of the school year. Children who apply after March 6 will be added to those wait lists. Because families may apply to multiple schools in this process, we have informed schools to expect that some offers will be declined, and that additional openings will occur through the opening of the new school year as families move or children are offered placements at other schools, for example, in gifted and talented programs. Schools will then work off their waitlists to fill vacancies.

In schools where waitlists are not necessary because the number of applicants did not exceed the number of seats, students will be automatically admitted.

So what does this mean?

Since Kindergarten admissions processes are school-based, there is no central database of Kindergarten applicants, and no count of unduplicated students. Families may apply to all schools in which they are interested, and to all programs for which their children are eligible. Because we do not maintain central databases for Kindergarten admissions processes, we cannot determine the number of children who have applied for Kindergarten.

In recent history, there have been approximately 3,200 ACS four year old students remaining in ACS five year old programs.,

So, until the Kindergarten assignments have been completed, we will not know the full impact or specifically where the impact will be. We are operating and planning with the expectation that these families are engaged in our regular Kindergarten admissions process.

How will this be addressed going forward?

Schools have until mid-April to notify families of children with placement offers, determine which families are accepting placement, and pre-register students with assignments. It will not be until early May that schools will be able to offer assignments and pre-register additional students from their wait lists to fill vacant seats created by initial declinations.

In late May, the DOE will canvas elementary schools to establish the following:

- The number of kindergarten seats filled, in relation to the school's projected enrollment for the 2009-2010 school year
- The number of assigned seats filled by zoned students (where appropriate)
- The number of zoned students remaining on each school's waiting list (where appropriate)

These figures will permit an assessment of whether there appears to be an overall increase in kindergarten enrollment, and if so, how such an increase may affect individual schools and communities. By comparing school pre-registration rosters with the listing of ACS 4 year olds that will no longer have a center based kindergarten as of the 2009-10 school year, the DOE will be able to determine the extent to which these children have been placed.

The DOE will then adjust the plan, as necessary, to address enrollment increases above the initial projections. It's worth noting that over the last few years, Kindergarten enrollment has remained flat with a slightly downward trend. Every child is guaranteed a Kindergarten seat. We are confident in our ability to accommodate all incoming Kindergarten students and they will all be placed. As Maria mentioned, we have been working closely with our colleagues at ACS, DYCD, and the Mayor's office. We also look forward to working with you to ensure that all children are served.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and we are happy to answer any questions.

**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: March 5, 2009

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Sciabarra

Address: Dept of Education - 52 Chambers St
10007

I represent: Dept of Education

Address: same as above

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Name: AUDREY B. EARLE

Address: 4035 WHITE PLAINS ROAD BX

I represent: NO. 84 ACADY CHURCH DEV. CORP. 10466

Address: 4035 WHITE PLAINS RD

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Name: PAMELA C. GLENNAN

Address: 646 E. 219th ST, #1, BX, NY

I represent: WILLIAMSBURG NAH 4010467

Address: 680 E. 219th ST, BX, NY 10467

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Name: RECY DUNN

Address: 52 Chambers Street, 100

I represent: NYC Department of Ed

Address: above

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Name: MARTY BARR

Address: 52 Chambers Street, 100

I represent: NYC Dept of Education

Address: above

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Name: DR Karen S Daughtry

Address: 333 Second St. Bklyn

I represent: Abnzo-A. Daughtry Memorial

Address: DCC - same address as above

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Name: MARIE PAOUL

Address: 29-49 611more ST BROoklyn

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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Name: Doreen Davis Lewis

Address: 100 Dorcas Pl. #15E Bx 10475

I represent: North Brax Notional Council of Negr

Address: 4035 White Plains Rd Bx 1046

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Date: 3/5/09

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Name: Marie Paoul

Address: 29-49 611more ST Brooklyn

I represent: Abnzo-A. Daughtry Memorial

Address: DCC - same address as above

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Name: D. Sara Vecchiotto
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I represent: ACS
Address: sra.vecchiotto@dfa.state.ny.us

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Date: 3/5/09

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Name: Celeste Brackley
Address: 43-01 115 Ave

I represent: Teacher / Day Care
Address: 8547 E 14th St

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Name: Stephan Geidel
Address: 15 Bleecker St
I represent: CITIZENS' Committee for Children
Address: _____

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Date: _____

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☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

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Name: MICHELE RIOS JENKINS
Address: _____

I represent: TAMARA NACE DAY CARE CENTER, INC
Address: 189-26 Linden Blvd, ST. ALBANS, NY 11412

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