



TESTIMONY

Before the Council of the City of New York

Committee on Children and Youth

Hearing on

Int. No. 76

Structure and Responsibilities of the Youth Board

Presented by

Assistant Commissioner Andrew Miller

January 30, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of Children and Youth Committee. I am Andrew Miller, Assistant Commissioner for External Relations. I am joined by Sara Marks, Senior Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. We are pleased to be here to discuss the New York City Youth Board.

The New York City Youth Board advises DYCD on the development of youth programs. The board is comprised of leaders from business, academia, government, foundations, and the non-profit sector. There are currently 28 seats, and half of those are appointed upon recommendation of the City Council.

As the youth bureau for New York City, DYCD is eligible to receive state funding from the Office of Children and Family Services. Currently, we receive funding that supports afterschool programs, runaway and homeless youth residential programs, and youth sports. State law requires that all county youth bureaus maintain a citizen youth board. New York City chose to permanently establish the Youth Board within the City Charter to serve as a forum for representatives of disciplines directly concerned with the welfare of youth. A well-functioning Youth Board is critical to the agency's ability to maintain its funding sources.

As mandated by law, the full Youth Board convenes for meetings four times a year. A typical quarterly meeting includes a report from DYCD's commissioner or representatives about major agency initiatives, policy and budget updates, and other changes since the previous meeting.

Additionally, DYCD staff provide in-depth presentations about agency programs. In 2025, those topics included presentations on runaway and homeless youth, mental health, workforce development, and afterschool programs. At each meeting, the Board engages in robust discussions and provides valuable suggestions and support to DYCD.

Board members also form working groups to look more deeply into relevant topics. In the past, working groups have included Workforce Development and provider relationships.

Youth representation on the Board is important, and currently there are three young people who actively participate in Youth Board meetings. In addition, the Youth Board includes members who have spent their careers in youth development, and members with diverse backgrounds from the private sector. Members have provided valuable support to young people through their service on the Youth Board, often offering opportunities for young participants in our workforce programs, tours of workplaces and career panels, and spaces for special events. Board members have also promoted DYCD programs through social media, offered feedback on DYCD concept papers, and served as judges for special events.

Int. No. 76 aims to restructure the composition of the board by decreasing the number of members to 18 while increasing the proportion that the City Council may appoint. It also implements term limits and adds geographic requirements. This bill will also mandate two new annual reports, one from the board and one from DYCD. We have been discussing the bill with Committee staff and will be recommending amendments to satisfy the intent of the law while preserving DYCD's ability to continue to have a well-functioning Youth Board. Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today. We are pleased to answer your questions.

Testimony for New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth

Althea Stevens, Chairperson

Friday, January 30, 2026 – 1:00 PM

by Paula Magnus

Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Stevens and Members of the Committee on Children and Youth,

My name is Paula Magnus, and I serve as Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

I was scheduled to testify virtually; however, due to technical challenges on my end, my raised hand was not visible. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony and will ensure that all is in order going forward so that the Committee may hear directly from Northside.

Northside Center strongly supports legislation that empowers the voices of children and youth. For more than 80 years, Northside has served New York City's most vulnerable children and families. Today, we reach more than 5,500 children annually across Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn through our After School and Summer programs; comprehensive mental health and behavioral health clinics, including Clinics in Schools; and our early childhood services, including Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Therapeutic Early Childhood Center.

Chairperson Stevens, we are deeply appreciative of your steadfast commitment to children and youth. We were honored to host your visit at one of the KIPP schools in the Bronx, where Northside provides clinical services to students and their families. Your leadership and continued focus on youth well-being is evident and impactful.

The proposed legislation will allow for a streamlined board structure while requiring that three board members be between the ages of 16 and 24. This intentional inclusion will ensure that young people are meaningfully represented in decision-making processes. Their lived experiences provide

essential insight into what support is most effective and how best to reach their peers. These changes will strengthen the board's ability to amplify youth voices and implement impactful, responsive solutions.

Additionally, transparency for families during an ACS investigation is critical. Families must be informed of their rights and options for legal support at the outset of the process. Protecting the safety and well-being of children while supporting families through clear communication must remain a top priority.

As you noted during the hearing, continuing to involve students and ensure they are heard is essential. Northside's youth empowerment program would welcome the opportunity to connect with you regarding ways our young people can participate when youth voices are needed.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Northside stands ready to collaborate with the City Council and our partners to strengthen the infrastructure that supports New York City's children, youth, and families. We are available to answer any questions and look forward to continuing to support this important work.

Respectfully,

Paula Magnus
Deputy Director

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TESTIMONY

Hearing on T2026-0160, a Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to the structure and responsibilities of the youth board

New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Althea V. Stevens, Chair

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

January 30, 2026

Prepared by:

Lisa Freeman – Attorney-in-Charge, Juvenile Rights Practice, Special Litigation and Law Reform Unit (“SLLRU”)

Anna Blondell – Staff Attorney, Juvenile Rights Practice, SLLRU

Introduction

The Legal Aid Society (“LAS”) welcomes this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth regarding a proposal to amend the New York City Charter in relation to the structure and responsibilities of the youth board.

We thank Althea Stevens, Chair of the Committee on Children and Youth, for offering the opportunity to highlight some of these critical issues.

The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Courts in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children’s rights and welfare, typically representing more than 25,000 children each year. The Legal Aid Society represents the majority of children and youth placed in foster care through New York City’s Family Courts. The Legal Aid Society’s Criminal Defense Practice (“CDP”) represents the majority of individuals prosecuted in New York City’s criminal courts. CDP’s Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Unit (AID) provides representation for adolescents, age 13-18, who are prosecuted as adults. The Legal Aid Society has dedicated teams of lawyers, social workers, paralegals and investigators devoted to serving the unique needs of children and youth removed from their homes and placed in the custody of the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), whether due to family regulation system intervention or as a result of juvenile delinquency or adult criminal system involvement. Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and City and State agencies.

In addition to its individual representation, The Legal Aid Society also seeks to create broader, more powerful systemic change through its law reform representation. These efforts have benefited some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have had a state-wide and national impact. Our experiences engaging in courtroom and other advocacy on behalf of our clients as well as through coalition building with other stakeholders inform our testimony.

We offer some proposed changes to the proposal to amend the Youth Board to enhance its effectiveness and ensure the work of the Board is ethically grounded in the real experience of young people who have first-hand experience in the systems that affect them.

The Youth Board should be required to include youth and to include youth who have experience with the services provided by the relevant agencies.

The proposed bill language would amend the composition and duties of the youth board of the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). The proposal would reduce the youth board to consist of only 18 members, rather than 28, at least 3 of whom must be between 16-24 years of age “to the extent practicable.” We propose amending the proposed revisions to require at least 3-6 members are youth and to include an additional requirement that these members have lived experience with the services provided by DYCD.

The recommendations of the Youth Board would be greatly enhanced by ensuring that youth serve on the board and by centering the expertise, perspectives and experiences of the people who DYCD programs engage. Requiring that young people with lived experience serve on the Youth Board is essential to ensuring that it provides meaningful, representative, and actionable guidance rather than symbolic participation. Youth boards with only one or two youth members risk tokenism and place an undue representational burden on individual participants. In contrast, requiring at least 3 youth members would allow for diversity of perspectives and experiences, while also creating conditions for collective deliberation and shared leadership. We advise that the Youth Board incorporate prior research by Casey Family Programs around general principles for authentic engagement of individuals with lived experience on the Youth Board.¹

Individuals with lived experience participating in the Youth Board should be fairly compensated for their participation, in keeping with current best practices.

Equitable compensation is a cornerstone of treating people with lived experience as subject-matter experts and a prerequisite for ethical engagement. We recommend modifying section 734(e) of the City Charter to require fair compensation for people with lived experience who serve on the Youth Board.

Community members and people with lived experience are often called on to “volunteer” their time, experience, and perspectives. However, individuals with lived experience, especially young people just starting out in life, should not be asked to choose between having a meaningful voice (and thereby power) within a system that has deeply affected them and being fairly compensated for their time. Casey Family Programs, the nation’s largest operating foundation focused on improving and safely reducing the foster care system in the United States, advises that involving young people with lived experience is paramount, and that they should be compensated comparably to other subject-matter experts.² Think of Us, a nationally recognized research and design lab that focuses on the area of child welfare, explicitly advises compensating participants

¹ Casey Family Programs, What are the four pillars of authentic engagement with communities and individuals with lived experience through co-design? (October 19, 2022), <https://www.casey.org/chibydesign-four-pillars/>.

² Casey Family Programs, How can people with lived experience be most effectively involved in systems change? (2021), https://www.casey.org/media/23.07-QFF-RFF-Engaging-lived-experts_fnl.pdf.

“fairly, generously, and quickly,” sending stipends as fast as possible, and allowing an option of cash payments over gift cards because some participants rely on payment for basic needs.³ “Flexibility and accessibility are essential” as not everyone will have a traditional bank account and may have individualized needs.⁴ As a practical matter, offering equitable compensation will make it easier to recruit and to meet the benchmarks in the legislation. Young people cannot be expected to engage without the necessary tools and support they need to be equal partners in the work.

As outlined here, best practices establish compensation not as an optional incentive, but as an ethical and practical requirement for inclusive, effective youth engagement.

Conclusion

Thank you for holding this hearing and working to make the Youth Board more inclusive, effective, and robust. We look forward to continuing to work with the City Council to improve Youth Board engagement and are happy to answer any questions you have.

Contact:

Lisa Freeman

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³ Think of Us Action Points, <https://www.thinkofus.org/action-points/action-center-lived-experience>.

⁴ Next 100, Youth Action Board Manual: How to Incorporate Impacted Youth into Your Organization (May 12, 2025) <https://thenext100.org/youth-action-board-manual-how-to-incorporate-impacted-youth-into-your-organization/>.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 76 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrew Miller

Address: 2 Lafayette St

I represent: Assistant Commissioner, External Relations

Address: DYCD

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sara Marks

Address: 2 Lafayette St

I represent: Senior Director, Intergovernmental Affairs

Address: DYCD

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 01/30/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Noshua Mosby

Address: _____

I represent: GirlVow, Inc.

Address: 509 Willis Ave, Bronx, NY 10455

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