

**Testimony of NYC Schools Chancellor David Banks  
On the FY2023 Preliminary Budget  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education**

**March 21, 2022**

**Introduction**

Good morning Chair Joseph and all the Members of the New York City Council Education Committee here today. My name is David Banks and I am the Chancellor of NYC Public Schools. I am pleased to join you today along with First Deputy Chancellor Dan Weisberg, Chief Financial Officer Lindsey Oates, Chief School Operations Officer Kevin Moran, Executive Director of Family and Community Empowerment Dr. Cristina Melendez, and Senior Advisor and Executive Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Mark Treyger. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for NYC Public Schools.

**The Importance of Council Partnership**

I want to express my gratitude to this Committee for the partnership we have already created during our first three months in office. We are so appreciative that we get to work with Education Committee members who have demonstrated how dedicated you are to our city's children, and that almost all of you have taken the time to meet with myself and members of my team at least once during these first few months. I also want to especially thank Chair Joseph for her partnership and maintaining regular communication with me and my leadership team. The goal is for us to be true partners in this work.

The City Council has enabled us to provide **100 percent Fair Student Funding** to all schools for the first time ever this year. This is an incredible investment in our students, and it would not be a reality without the advocacy of so many –especially the City Council. We are pleased to see that the Governor's and state legislature's budgets propose to continue the phase-in of State Aid needed for us to maintain 100 percent FSF.

The Council was also instrumental in securing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act that is helping our school communities rebound from all the disruptions caused by the pandemic. That includes providing the resources to ensure that every school from every Zip Code receives funding to hire a full-time social worker.

With direct funding from the Council we are expanding language access, mental health supports, LGBTQ supports and curriculum, and community access to school playgrounds.

**Vision for NYC Public Schools**

Now, we will undertake a transformation of our schools to rebuild trust with our families. Regrettably, 120,000 of our students and their families have left our schools over the past five years. For our schools to

deliver on their original promise of serving as the engine of the American Dream, we will need to do things very differently in ways that build trust one big step at a time. Our schools need to connect our students to the real world and what matters to them. We want each and every one of our students to graduate with a pathway to a rewarding career, long-term economic security, and equipped to be a positive force for change.

This vision for our schools entails four pillars to make it a reality:

1. Reimagining the student experience. This means both redesigning the school experience so that it's relevant to our students and excites them, and that students leave our schools with the skills and knowledge that makes them attractive to employers and gives them a head start on a pathway to economic prosperity. This begins with our youngest learners, providing literacy and language supports from the start and it will continue through the end of our students' academic careers by creating new and deeper partnerships in the private, governmental, and non-profit sectors in order to ensure that every student leaves our system not only with a diploma but a pathway to a good job and career.
2. Scaling, sustaining, and restoring what works. This entails identifying the amazing practices throughout our system and sharing them so that they become models that other schools can emulate. We want to build a culture that incentivizes schools to share their best practices. That's why we will continue to build on the excellent Showcase Schools and Learning Partners ideas so that we can shine a light on the innovative and transformational work that's happening in every borough.
3. Prioritizing wellness and its link to student success. That includes safe schools, access to green spaces, high-quality nutrition, and comprehensive whole-child support for a broad range of each student's needs. Students who feel healthy, safe, well-nourished and intellectually stimulated are best able to concentrate and engage with their academic work. We will be building on successful initiatives to support the social and emotional needs of our students, collaborating with CBO partners, and extending learning beyond just the four walls of the classroom. We are expanding PSAL so that every student will have access to programming and fostering recovery through the arts by taking full advantage of the rich, cultural environment of this City.
4. Engaging families to be our true partners, which in and of itself is a powerful pathway to rebuilding trust. In fact, it is the biggest complaint that I have heard since I started as Chancellor—parents have felt unheard and disrespected—and that must change. We will be making sure that we are in close communication with our families, surfacing their expertise to enable all of us to more effectively educate and support our children. Research shows that of all the factors that determine positive student outcomes, family engagement is at the top of the list. This work has already begun through significant engagement around our recently announced Summer Rising program, which is going to provide holistic, educational experiences to a record number of students across the city. But engaging families is not stopping there, and this work is going to continue in earnest with the major decisions of this department going forward. Our families are essential to this work and our efforts will reflect this.

In addition, I recently announced steps for reorganizing our central offices to make sure we are using taxpayer dollars productively while ensuring that all of us are working in service of schools and the people

working directly with our students and families. That includes eliminating the executive superintendent position, because it adds a level of bureaucracy without adding enough value to schools and students. And we have asked each superintendent to reapply for their job, so we can assess whether they are the best individuals to support innovative schools and school leaders, as well as our new commitments related to long-term economic security. The community will be involved in the selection of its superintendents.

In partnership with you and our other stakeholders, this is the work we need to do in order to give the students of this city the educational experience they truly deserve.

### **Mayor's Budget**

Let me turn now to the details of the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.

The FY 2023 Preliminary Budget totals approximately \$37.2 billion, including \$30.7 billion in operating resources and another \$6.5 billion of education-related pension and debt service funds. Our funding is a combination of City, State, and Federal resources, with City tax levy money making up the largest share at 54 percent, State funds 35 percent, and Federal dollars 11 percent.

Acknowledging the realities of declining enrollment and short-term stimulus funding, the Mayor's budget does two things: first, it cuts central resources by approximately \$60 million, which is a little under 10 percent, in order to meet the citywide PEG target. Secondly, it adjusts school budgets to be in line with current enrollment predictions and trends. That was not done in the past couple of years in order to provide schools with stability during the pandemic. During that time, many schools experienced big changes in their enrollment that were not reflected in their school budgets.

We don't expect schools to make these shifts right away. The Department of Education will again use stimulus funding to help schools facing pandemic-related enrollment fluctuations to restore a percentage of the impact of enrollment losses over the next two years. Specifically, \$160 million and \$80 million in stimulus funding will be allocated to schools to buffer those impacts in school years 2022-23 and 2023-24, respectively.

Perhaps most importantly, the actions I have described will allow us to meet the Mayor's commitment to fiscal responsibility while continuing to provide schools with 100 percent of their Fair Student Funding. It is imperative that we continue to meet that benchmark for all of our schools. We want to thank the Council for your continued advocacy on this topic in recent years and assure you that it remains a high priority.

This being a preliminary budget hearing, I want to express to you all that we understand and appreciate the vital role that the Council plays in working with the Mayor, DOE, and the various stakeholders in shaping the final budget in the coming months. Together, we will create a budget that advances the needs and priorities of our students and families. Thank you and we are here to answer your questions.



Testimony of the New York City School Construction Authority  
on the Proposed FY 2022 Preliminary Capital Budget

Before the New York City Council Committee on Education

March 21, 2022

Nina Kubota, President and CEO, New York City School Construction Authority

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee. My name is Nina Kubota and I am the President and CEO of New York City School Construction Authority (SCA). I am joined by my colleague Cora Liu, Vice President of Capital Plan Management for the SCA as well as First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg from the New York City Department of Education (DOE). We are pleased to be here today to discuss the February 2022 Proposed Amendment to the current FY2020–2024 Five-Year Capital Plan.

I, or my members of my team, have met with many of you and we look forward to building upon our shared commitment to build modern and safe facilities for our public school students to learn and grow. The City Council, the SCA, and the DOE have a long history of a strong partnership and we have always been grateful of the generous funding Council Members have provided to our schools through Reso A funding. We have been successful, in large part due, to our ongoing collaboration and pragmatic approach to providing our students with the spaces and tools they need to succeed and we look forward to continuing and growing our partnership.

CAPITAL PLAN OVERVIEW

Before I get in to the specifics of what is contained in the February 2022 Amendment, I want to briefly talk about our Five-Year Capital Plan, its structure, and our process.

The SCA operates on a fixed five-year capital plan as set forth in our enabling legislation. Our Plan is broken out into three major categories: Capacity, the creation of new seats, Capital Investment, improvements to our existing buildings, and Mandated Programs which are projects that are required by code or local law.

Capacity projects are created in order to address seat need that has been identified through our demographic projections or in an effort to target overcrowding in specific schools located in districts that otherwise have no funded seat need. Additionally, capacity projects are also created with a focus to replace buildings due to a terminating lease or that otherwise might need to be replaced. Lastly, there has been a capacity program recently created and then increased to address the capacity needs of a school in order to remove transportable classroom units, also known as TCUs.





For our roughly 1,500 existing buildings, a capital project is created and funded in a few ways. A Capital Improvement Project (CIP) is created predominately as a result of our annual Building Condition Assessment Survey (BCAS) process. The SCA sends teams of architects and engineers to survey every school building yearly. They do an extensive review of each component of the building and rate them on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most critical. This data directly informs which projects are created and makes up a bulk of the CIP work that we undertake. In addition to our BCAS process, we work closely with our partners at the Division of School Facilities in the DOE and if it is determined that needed work is beyond maintenance, it may be referred to us for a larger scale capital project.

Another major component of the Capital Investment Program is the funding dedicated to school enhancement projects. This funding focuses largely on interior spaces of the building and provides upgrades to bathrooms, science labs, gymnasiums, and auditoriums to name a few. It also allows for the conversion of spaces in a school building to better meet the needs of students and staff.

Beyond our steadfast focus to keep our buildings water tight and in a state of good repair, city-wide initiatives such as the recent Air Conditioning program and Physical Education for All as well as funding from elected officials are the two other main avenues that a project could be funded through the five-year capital plan.

As I mentioned, we plan and budget in five-year cycles with yearly amendments. The process starts in November with the publication of our proposed amendment. We then engage with each Community Education Council to discuss the amendment and to solicit feedback and input on the Plan from CEC members, as well as other stakeholders including council members, other elected officials, and community groups. Public feedback is an important component of our annual capital planning process. After this collaborative process, we release an updated amendment in February. This February Amendment, which is what we are discussing today, then goes to the Panel for Educational Policy for a vote and adoption in the spring. The proposed amendment then comes before the City Council to be voted on and adopted as part of the budget process in June.

### FY 2020-2024 CAPITAL PLAN

The February 2022 Proposed Amendment to the FY 2020-2024 Plan totals \$20.6 billion and is the largest capital plan in history. The funding breaks down as follows: The Capacity Program, totaling \$9.84 billion; the Capital Investment category, with \$7.26 billion; and finally our Mandated Programs at \$3.51 billion.

Here are a few highlights of our February 2022 Proposed Amendment to the Capital Plan:

- \$8.44 billion for over 60,000 seats in fulfillment of the City's commitment to reduce overcrowding as well as advance equity;
- \$1.40 billion in support of Early Learn, 3-K and Pre-K for All Initiatives; and
- \$194 million for electrical work to support air conditioning in all classrooms



## Capacity Program

Our seat need is determined through supply and demand analysis. On the demand side, the total projected enrollment includes two components: demographic projections and projected housing development. Our demographic consultant, who has been working with us for over a decade, takes in to account birth rates, past enrollment and population shifts. We then work with other City agencies to collect comprehensive permit and planning data on future housing development and rezoning citywide. On the supply side, we use our Blue Book as the basis to determine number of seats available in our portfolio and add on new school buildings in the our pipeline. We then compare the demand and supply and identify areas where there is a gap. Working with our partners at the DOE, we overlay this with impacts from ongoing portfolio changes. At the end of this process, we produce our recommendation for seat need. This is repeated annually so that we can closely monitor the trend and identify any shift that might trigger a change in seat need.

Over the past several years, we have seen a decline in both public school enrollment and the city's birth rate which has led to a decreased need for new capacity. This pattern, combined with persistent overcrowding in certain sub-districts, required a shift in funding to meet capacity needs in targeted areas of the city. In order to respond to the changing needs of our city, we have strategically shifted funding from the New Capacity Program to other capacity programs such as Facility Replacements, Class Size Reduction, and Capacity to Support the Removal of TCUs. By reallocating this funding across all capacity programs, we will be able to advance equity across school districts.

We remain committed and are well on our way to identifying locations for all new seats funded in this Plan through the New Capacity program. Of these 45,883 seats, there are 23,990 seats already in progress and another roughly 7,000 currently in the pipeline. That means we are nearly two-thirds of the way toward identifying these needed seats.

Last year, we received over \$800 million to support the Early Education Initiatives which sought to expand 3-K citywide as well as upgrade certain Early Learn centers as part of the ACS transfer of a number of sites into the DOE's portfolio.

This September, we will be opening one of the largest new Pre-K centers located at 47-01 111<sup>th</sup> Street in Corona, Queens. This exciting project has been a partnership with The Hall of Science, the City Council, other local elected officials and the community. Additionally, we are scheduled to open over 2,900 3-K seats at 23 sites across all five boroughs this fall.

In addition, we are opening 11 new schools this September totaling 5,706 seats citywide. One of the 11 schools that we are proudest of is a 456 seat D75 school located on the Petrides campus in Staten Island. This state of the art facility will provide specialized educational spaces and resources for students with severe disabilities and physical needs. This building is part of our continued commitment to providing the D75 community with the facilities necessary to advance



learning and educational opportunities. Our Capital Plan recognizes a need of over 3,000 dedicated D75 seats and we are working steadfast to fulfill that commitment.

This year, we were happy to have broken ground on the largest project in our history: a much-needed 3,066 seat high school on Northern Boulevard in Queens. Last month, we were joined by Council Member Stevens and Chancellor Banks and at his first groundbreaking event at Edward L. Grant in the Bronx that was promised in partnership with the Council as part of the Jerome Avenue Rezoning. We also broke ground last week with Council Member Ariola on PS 47Q, in Broad Channel, replacing a building that was devastated by Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

### Capital Investment

While creating seats is a vital part of what we do, we cannot forget that 200 of our buildings are over 100 years old and the majority of our buildings are over 50 years old. The Plan directs a total of \$7.26 billion for capital investments. The Capital Investment portion of the Plan includes two main categories:

- \$3.27 billion for the Capital Improvement Program, which includes building upgrades and necessary capital repairs such as roof and façade work, structural repairs, and safeguarding our buildings against water infiltration; and
- \$2.81 billion for School Enhancement Projects, which funds the realignment of existing facilities to better suit instructional needs, along with bathroom upgrades, science labs, accessibility, and other necessary improvements.

Every year, we make progress on removing TCUs. This Plan dedicates \$352 million for the ongoing removal of these units with dedicated Capacity funding allocated to construct the needed seats to allow for the removal of the TCUs. To date, we have removed 266 of the original 354 TCUs. Of the 88 remaining TCUs, we have plans in process to remove another 45 and we are developing plans to remove the last 43.

Other highlights in our capital investment category include:

- \$200.3 million for safety and security;
- \$142.1 million for specialty room upgrades;
- \$100 million for athletic field upgrades; and
- \$61.5 million for bathroom upgrades.

### Technology

The Proposed February Amendment allocates \$1.02 billion for technology which includes funding for Emergency Remote Learning student devices, increasing bandwidth in school buildings, and creating a disaster recovery data center.

Since the start of the pandemic, ensuring that all students have access to remote learning devices has been a priority. The DOE has purchased over 500,000 LTE-enabled iPads. Prioritizing equity, the DOE started distributing centrally-purchased, internet-enabled devices to our most



underserved students. The DOE continues to fill device requests as they are received from schools to ensure families have what they need to participate in remote learning.

We are grateful for the Council's longstanding and continuous investment in technology for our schools.

### Accessibility

The Amendment continues to recognize the importance of ensuring access for all students and has emphasized accessibility as a major priority. As a direct result of support from the Council and our community partners, the February Amendment continues to include \$750 million towards the critically important work of making our school buildings more accessible.

We greatly appreciate the Council's support in this area. In recognition of this critical work, the DOE has established an Office of Accessibility Planning within DOE's Division of Space Management and School Facilities. Working together, DOE and SCA have planned and approved 57 new accessibility projects in our historically underserved districts. We are committed to making a third of the buildings in every district fully accessible and at least half of elementary school buildings fully or partially accessible.

### Mandated Programs

The Mandated Programs category, with \$3.51 billion allocated, includes approximately \$650 million for boiler conversions in buildings currently using Number 4 oil. The remaining funds are assigned to cover other required costs, including code and local law compliance, the SCA's wrap-up insurance, and completion of projects from the prior Plan.

### Continuing Our Commitment to MWLBE Firms

Many factors contribute to the successes we have experienced in implementing our capital plans, but one of our strongest core values is our commitment to our MWLBE contractors. The SCA is continually developing a larger and more diverse group of contractors who can bid on our work and complete large and complicated jobs.

We have been incredibly successful in increasing the participation of minority-owned businesses. In this Plan so far, the SCA has obligated over \$919 million in prime contractor obligations and \$810 million in sub-contractor awards to MWLBE firms. In this fiscal year alone, to date the SCA has obligated roughly \$135 million to MWLBE firms in prime contract awards, of which approximately \$32 million were in our Mentor Program.

Our Mentor Program seeks to cultivate smaller, MWLBE firms by providing them with the skills and experience needed to develop and grow within the construction industry and to establish long-term business relationships with the SCA. We currently have 150 firms in our mentor program and roughly 85% of those firms have won contracts. We intend to award over \$100 million in our Mentor Program to small contractors by the end of the fiscal year.



While we are incredibly proud of our accomplishments, we continue to identify more ways to build on these successes. As a way to further support and develop our mentor firms, our maximum contract value that they are able to bid on will be increased to \$3 million in July.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I can't overstate the importance of the partnership between the City Council, the SCA, and the DOE. This partnership is vital to the successful implementation of our Capital Plan which seeks to provide the state of the art educational facilities that our students need to succeed. I thank you for allowing me to testify before you today and I, along with my colleagues at the Department of Education, will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Jumaane D. Williams**

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**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION –  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING  
MARCH 21, 2022**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Rita Joseph for her continued advocacy and dedication as a former Public School Teacher. I would also like to thank members of the Committee on Education for holding this preliminary budget hearing.

Due to the pandemic and the unprecedented challenges, many students faced a greater negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing, especially those students that are part of marginalized communities. It is important that they have access to the needed resources to feel safe and supported at school. We hope that the Department of Education (“DOE”) is given enough funding to ensure that every school has at least one mental health worker. Along with this, there needs to be an expansion of school-based mental health clinics and school programs for students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities. The DOE should also continue to allocate \$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum in fifty high-need schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn for direct services. Lastly, the city should allocate \$12 million to hire 100 community coordinators and 150 shelter-based community coordinators. They will be focusing on strengthening outreach to students who are disconnected from school or are homeless.

Another area we need to address is our students who are English Language Learners (“ELL”). Many of these students are not provided the educational and mental health resources that help them stay on track. Even before the pandemic, ELL were falling behind in school and this has been exacerbated. They deserve access to teachers who can give them specialized support to ensure a smooth transition. Currently, there are only five ELL transfer schools in New York City: four in Manhattan and one in the Bronx.<sup>1</sup> There needs to be an expansion of transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island. This will make it more convenient for students in other boroughs. There should be a \$80 million investment that goes towards after-school, Saturday, and summer programs and tutoring for ELL and ELL with disabilities. This investment should also include literacy support and professional training for school staff on ELL

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/city-hall/story/2020/02/18/immigrant-advocates-press-city-schools-to-fund-program-for-newly-arrived-students-1262072>





PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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instruction and family outreach. The remaining \$20 million should be grants that are given to community-based organizations to provide additional academic programming for ELL.

I would like to highlight a point made during a Preliminary Budget Hearing for the Committee on Finance that took place earlier this month. We were told that the Department of Correction (“DOC”) is exempted from the Program to Eliminate the Gap. According to the administration, the DOC is short staffed and is getting more money to address these labor shortages. The issue here is that public schools are also facing a teacher shortage but nothing is being done about it. Why is that? Why is the DOE exempt from getting more funding for teachers? On top of this, the Mayor proposed a hiring freeze of over 3,600 vacant positions at the DOE. We recognize the need to ensure that existing funding is used to produce exponentially better results than in the past, but cannot understand why we would defund the DOE and exempt other agencies like the DOC. Additionally, the administration has left funding aside to hire another 1,000 school safety agents. The overall message that this sends to students, teachers, and advocates is that the administration will be prioritizing money to continue unchanged, current law enforcement infrastructure that, in the name of safety, has all too often stigmatized the experiences of students of color.

According to a report done by the NYC Independent Budget Office, there has been an enrollment decline in traditional public schools.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge influence on whether or not parents would enroll their children, especially among specific demographic groups and grades. In this case, why doesn’t the administration decrease class sizes and hire more teachers to tackle this issue. The DOE must allocate more funding to reduce class sizes as it allows for more personal attention for each student and will prevent the spread of COVID-19. Further, this will allow for a more accurate measure of funding on a per-student basis. In order to see real improvements in schools, we must incorporate more access to mental health services, more specialized curriculum and teachers for ELL, and less policing.

Lastly, just this past Friday, my office and I published a new white paper called “Reinvest in Education,” which further details the various ways our city’s budget can make sustained, crucial, and foundational investments into our schools, workforce, communities, and most of all our over 1.1 million students by truly centering equity. In order to have a quality education and learning environment, there needs to be equity funding for DOE and various programs mentioned today. I look forward to working together to ensure that DOE is given enough funding.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup><https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/unpacking-the-enrollment-declines-how-did-the-pandemic-impact-the-retention-of-new-york-%20city-public-school-students-march-2022.html>



**TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
BY MICHAEL MULGREW  
PRESIDENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**REGARDING THE NYC FY23 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND  
THE PRELIMINARY CAPITAL COMMITMENT PLAN FOR FY23-26**

**MARCH 21, 2022**

My name is Michael Mulgrew and I serve as the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank Chair Rita Joseph and all the members of the New York City Council's Committee on Education for holding today's oversight hearing on the preliminary budget for fiscal year 2023 and the preliminary capital commitment plan for fiscal years 2023-2026. I would also like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan for their leadership during this year's budget process.

**Reaction to FY23 Preliminary Education Budget**

I want to start by saying that I applaud the collective work we did as a city and state in 2020 and 2021. Because of our efforts, our school district was authorized to use \$7.3 billion in federal stimulus funding to help us navigate the COVID-19 pandemic through September 2024, and our state government has maintained its commitment to fully funding foundation aid. With this funding in place, we have kept our school buildings safe, and our school doors open even through the most recent spread of the Omicron variant.

However, I fear that our city is squandering a generational opportunity to permanently strengthen our schools. With billions of federal funding on the table, the FY23 preliminary

budget released last month focuses on teacher workforce reductions and cuts to school budgets. There is no mention of lowering class sizes; adding critical staff including social workers, counselors, and school psychologists; advancing an agenda for career and technical education or building on professional development for educators as we continue to face the challenges of remote instruction.

Our analysis of data released by the Independent Budget Office shows that the Department of Education (DOE) has not spent about \$5 billion of the over-\$7 billion in allocated federal stimulus money.

Our students are academically behind, and our school communities need mental-health support, including our educators. And rather than focus on meeting the need with federal stimulus funds and new state funding, we have been presented a budget that includes \$557 million in cuts to our public schools. While we appreciate the reductions made at Tweed, this is not the time to enact freezes and workforce reductions in schools.

We are extremely disappointed to see that the charter school sector is one of only two areas--the other being student transportation -- to receive a boost in city funding. In fact, while the administration proposes cuts to our public schools, the charter-school sector would see a \$281-million increase in city funding.

### **Cap Classroom Capacity**

Life-altering events like the COVID-19 pandemic should be seen as learning opportunities. During this public health emergency, we have learned that reducing class sizes not only offers an academic benefit to our students, but also provides a healthier and safer learning environment. We realized the benefits of social distancing and proper ventilation in our classrooms.

Just as when we last changed the city administrative code during a tuberculosis outbreak in the 1930s, we should make similar changes based on the health and safety lessons learned during this pandemic. In 2021, we worked with our partners at the City Council on Intro. 2374-2021 to cap classroom capacity by amending the health section of the administrative code.

While the bill did not pass before the end of the 2021 legislative calendar, the introduction had 40 co-sponsors. Our hope is that we can work with this new City Council to move the proposal forward this legislative year.

## Fund UFT Programs

We are proud to say that UFT programs are among the best vehicles city government can use to ensure that the funding allocated makes it straight to the classroom and has a direct impact on students and educators. This year we submitted discretionary-funding applications for six (6) programs we ask the City Council to support.

1. United Community Schools (UCS), Inc. – Our teacher-inspired nonprofit has developed a community-school model proven to transform public schools and the communities they serve. The model is anchored by a community school director placed in each school who is responsible for assessing the needs of students and families in the school community, then leveraging outside relationships to bring in the resources to meet the needs. We find that every \$1 invested in a community school director yields \$6 in resources for the school. During the 2020-2021 school year our 28 UCS schools in New York City collectively fed more than 6,000 families, coordinated over 10,500 health-clinic visits, and supported more than 20,000 students and families. This year we are requesting that the City Council provide UCS a \$5-million grant so we can continue to intensify academic programming, make more tutors available, expand access to school-based health centers, connect more students to mental-health and behavioral-health resources, and provide more social-emotional learning and culturally responsive sustained education professional development for teachers.
2. UFT Teacher Center – For more than 40 years, the UFT Teacher Center has been a guiding light for NYC educators, particularly during the pandemic. Whether it was professional development on remote instruction or providing technological support, UFT Teacher Center stepped up and filled in the gaps. During the 2021-2022 school year, we expanded our reach to include 118 sites across the five boroughs, and during the 2020-2021 school year, we supported 281,000 educators, principals, and parents over the course of 126,000 hours of professional development. This year we are asking for a \$10-million grant from the Council to sustain current programming and expand. We want to add 10-15 new sites and develop new ways for teachers to help students catch up after the challenges of the pandemic. Those funds would also allow us to evolve our partnerships with Google and expand our work with Apple, support paraprofessionals in addressing the needs of our students with disabilities and English-language learners, and increase culturally responsive and sustaining-education course offerings.
3. Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC) – Our PLC program is one of our most effective tools for bringing equity to NYC education and helping teachers, students, and parents

cope with — and heal from — trauma. The UFT and DOE created the PLC program in 2012 to help educators improve school culture by moving away from punitive disciplinary systems that relied heavily on suspensions. Over the past decade, reliance on suspensions in 40 PLC schools declined by 46%, while staff and student surveys gauging a more-than 50-percent increase in a positive school climate. During the pandemic, PLC expanded its offerings for schools to create healing-centered classrooms. We need to bring its expert services to as many schools as possible. We are requesting that the Council provide PLC a \$3-million grant to sustain our existing programming in schools.

4. Dial-a-Teacher – Dial-A-Teacher began in January 1980 as a pilot program in 17 schools in eight districts. Over the years, our homework helpline has expanded to help students citywide from all grades, across various disciplines and in many languages. Dial-A-Teacher is now operating Monday through Thursday from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., in nine languages including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. Last year, the program received more than 40,000 calls. If Dial-A-Teacher’s operating technology were upgraded, it could help even more students in the virtual-education arena, where so many of our students are now learning. Dial-A-Teacher is respectfully requesting \$265,000. The funds would be used to: 1) further develop an online presence by creating an electronic application that meets the technology students are using today; 2) procure digital curricula for multiple subject areas — curricula the DOE has identified as aligning with the new standards; 3) perform technology maintenance and upgrades for the program via a hybrid-remote/physical-presence model; and 4) promote the program in the communities we serve.
5. BRAVE Hotline – The UFT entered into an agreement with the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA), now known as VIBRANT, on October 3, 2011, to launch an anti-bullying campaign in New York City public schools. Since then, the UFT and MHA have been at the forefront of bringing awareness to the problem of bullying and creating resources that include a BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education) hotline that students, their families, and educators can call, as well as ways to chat or text for help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With your continued support, we can make a lasting impact on the lives and health of students across New York City. We respectfully ask you to support this program with \$300,000 in this fiscal year, so we can continue to provide the services that are a lifeline for our students and a place our educators can turn to for resources.

6. Member Assistance Program (MAP) – In 2009, the UFT started a Member Assistance Program (MAP) to fill a void for its members and their families. The UFT crafted and funded the program to address a full range of mental-health and well-being issues confronting its nearly 200,000 members and their families. When COVID-19 hit, members’ outreach to MAP increased many times over. We went from serving 4,500 members in 2018 to 32,000 members in 2021. The program, many of our members told us, enabled them to remain in the field of education by helping them cope with and adapt to the stresses caused by the pandemic. During this time, we provided services that allowed members to stay connected, express their grief and recognize their fears and stressors. It offered them healthier coping tools to navigate the COVID upheaval and recover. Until now, the UFT has fully funded its MAP program. With your support, we can make a lasting impact on the lives and health of educators and students throughout NYC. We are asking that the Council consider allocating MAP a \$1,780,000 grant to support our program maintenance and expansion.

### **Support Citywide Programs**

I would also like to take the time to advocate for two citywide programs that are vital for our students and educators. We need to baseline Teacher’s Choice, and I also ask the Council to support Broadway Bridges.

1. Teacher’s Choice – The Teacher’s Choice program is crucial to our educators. It’s a key initiative to ensure our teachers are reimbursed for the school supplies and materials they purchase for their classrooms and for many of their students in need. After baselining the program for three years in the FY20 adopted budget, it was completely cut from the FY21 adopted budget, but then restored again in FY22 at \$20M. We appreciate the administration included funding for Teacher’s Choice at \$20M for FY23 and ask that you maintain it and once again baseline the program in the budget.
2. Broadway Bridges – Broadway Bridges aims to ensure that every student in a New York City public high school can see a Broadway show before graduation. Through Broadway Bridges, The Broadway League subsidizes \$20 tickets to weekday matinee and evening performances by paying half of the ticket price as well as the \$3.00-\$3.50 in fees associated with each ticket purchase. This enables The Broadway League to offer schools \$10 tickets. The initiative improves the arts experience of students who have not had the opportunity to attend live theater, and it enhances the experiences of students who are already engaged with the performing arts through their schools. We ask that you support this important initiative in the FY23 Council budget.



## **Capital Commitment Plan FY23-26**

As previously mentioned, it is important to take lessons from the pandemic and prioritize reducing class sizes, not just as an academic benefit to students but because it is a healthy and safe decision. We look forward to continuing our conversation with the Council on legislation to amend the city administrative code.

As members of the Carbon Free and Healthy School campaign, we believe it is time to invest in the infrastructure of our NYC schools. Most of our school buildings need basic repairs and upgrades – from antiquated heating and air-conditioning systems, to deteriorating rooftops, to outdated electrical grids.

By investing in school infrastructure, we can create tens of thousands of good union jobs while making schools healthier and safer, taking on climate change, and saving \$250 million per year in energy costs. We want to prioritize historically under-resourced communities of color, where students face the most-acute educational and environmental challenges.

The idea is to create 60,000 union jobs to conduct deep retrofits and install solar power and battery storage to meet the energy needs of all NYC public schools. With energy-efficiency retrofits and renewable power, we can save more than 75,000 tons of carbon emissions every year--the equivalent of planting 400,000 trees or taking 161,000 cars off the road.

Our campaign analysis shows that the DOE spends approximately \$275 million per year on energy. A 50-percent improvement in efficiency will save approximately \$137 million annually. This is funding that can be reinvested in schools.

We are also members of the Lunch for Learning coalition, which successfully secured Universal Free School Lunch for NYC public school students in 2017. We support the coalition's request that the DOE transform every high school and middle school by fully scaling the Office of Food and Nutrition Services' student-friendly cafeteria redesign model (Cafeteria Enhancement Experience).

The welcoming environment and the food-court-style serving line provide more daily menu options and faster service, and the presentation dramatically increases the appeal of the food. High schools with redesigned cafeterias experienced a 35-percent increase in student participation in school meals.

This model is highly cost-effective and time efficient. Each cafeteria redesign costs only \$500,000 and can be completed in one weekend. Approximately 80 of the 575 DOE middle and high school cafeterias either have the redesign model or currently have funds dedicated for the work. An investment of \$250 million in capital funds over 5 years is needed to transform all middle and high-school cafeterias.

### **Closing Thoughts**

We have a real opportunity to bring transformational change to our school district. With access to federal stimulus funding and new state funding, we can permanently deepen our academic support for students and address the mental-health needs of all school communities. We can also accelerate progress to make our schools carbon-free and healthy. Our members are always ready to be of service and provide the best they can to all students.

I want to thank you again for today's hearing. We look forward to our continued engagement throughout this budget process.

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**Mark D. Levine, Borough President**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT HEARING  
MARCH 21, 2022  
MARK D. LEVINE – MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

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**Monday March 21, 2022**

**Mark D. Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Testimony Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

Good morning, Chair Joseph and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Mark Levine, and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 23 (FY23) for the New York City Department of Education (DOE).

I recognize the difficult task we face this budget cycle, and I applaud the current administration's efforts to maintain the social and emotional learning infrastructure, Summer Rising programming, and Universal 3K programming. That said, I am concerned by the budget cuts proposed in the preliminary budget. The city's executive budget should reverse these cuts, and prioritize providing universal after-school programming, supporting social workers in schools, and expanding language access services for English language learners and their families.

**Provide Universal After-School Programming:**

The City needs universal after-school programming. After-school programs play a critical role in students' social and emotional development, make educational opportunities more equitable, and help keep kids out of the criminal justice system. They provide a safe, structured space for self-expression, an opportunity to engage with peers, and a chance to develop strong relationships with mentors. They also strongly complement the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) that has been incorporated into classrooms during the pandemic. However, not all New York City students have equitable access to these critical programs.

Prior to the pandemic, during the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 880 out of 1,800 New York City schools offered a free afterschool program. The standard of making a program available to any student who wants to participate in one needs to be extended to elementary and high school students. Unless all students have equitable access to free, quality after-school programming, the recent historic investments

to address the mental health crisis among students will fail to realize their full potential. As such, the FY23 budget should allocate funding to expand free after-school programming to all public schools throughout the city.

### **Support Social Workers in Schools:**

Simply hiring social workers is not enough to make New York City's schools safe and healing environments. The City and DOE must be extremely intentional with how practitioners are resourced and incorporated into schools. To this end, the FY23 budget should include funding to ensure all social workers employed by the DOE have the resources and training needed to fully support students. This might include building opportunities to attend professional development programs or educational workshops into their fringe benefits.

Relatedly, the FY23 budget should provide sufficient funding so the DOE does not need to substitute social workers in lieu of other types of specialists. A school recently informed my team that upon receiving funds to hire a social worker, they lost the budget line for their Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist (SAPIS). These practitioners have fundamentally different roles within schools, and this kind of trade-off is not one that prioritizes the well-being of students.

Finally, the FY23 budget should baseline funding so Health + Hospitals can hire and place full-time nurses at every school. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, Health + Hospitals helped provide an additional 400 full-time nurses so all schools would be staffed, but this must be a permanent allocation.

### **Expand Language Access Services for English Language Learners:**

The DOE does not currently have the infrastructure or resources needed to adequately serve English language learners (ELLs) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents. This is particularly alarming as there are approximately 147,287 ELLs enrolled in the City's public schools, and many have fallen far behind in the classroom during the pandemic.

To help these students catch-up, the FY23 budget should include funding so the DOE can provide all ELL students and their families with high-quality interpretation and translation services. School staff must also receive training so that they are aware that they are legally obligated to provide these services to ELL students and LEP parents. Lastly, more bilingual educators should be hired to support bilingual students with special educational needs.

In closing, I look forward to working with Chair Joseph, Mayor Adams and the DOE to help build an equitable education system that fully meets the socio-emotional and educational needs of all students. The FY23 budget is an opportune moment to provide the investments needed to make this a reality.



**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education  
Budget Hearing, FY 2023  
March 21, 2022**

**Introduction and Thanks:**

My name is Linda Rosenthal, and I am the Director of Early Childhood Educational Services at the Volunteers of America-Greater New York Bronx Early Learning Center. I would like to thank Chair Joseph and the members of this Committee for the opportunity to submit the following testimony.

**About Us:**

VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York by 2050 through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 11,000 adults and children annually through 66 programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester County. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio of award-winning permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties—with more in the pipeline.

**Testimony:**

The Bronx Early Learning Center is a preschool special education (4410) program which is approved by the New York State Education Department, and under contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide multidisciplinary evaluations, special education services and related services, such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy and counseling.

The 4410 preschool special education programs are publicly funded programs, with tuition rates established by the New York State Education Department. We are not private schools, where parents pay tuition for their children's services. We serve New York City students, for whom the NYC DOE is unable to provide services, whether it be because of the significant challenges our students present with, lack of space, or the lack of expertise in working with our students.

All students, whether in special education classes or general education classes, are entitled to a certified teacher. At the present time, the teachers in 4410 programs receive salaries that are between \$30,000-\$36,000 less per year than teachers in public schools. When the City agreed to increase the salaries of 3-K and Pre-K general education teachers at community-based organizations two years ago, the 4410 preschool special education teachers were not included.

Today, 4410 programs such as ours are experiencing teacher shortages because sadly our teachers are leaving us for higher paying positions in the early childhood community. As our teachers continue to be recruited by the public schools, charter schools and community-based organizations with 3-K and Pre-K contracts with the NYC DOE, we are unable to serve preschool students with disabilities who are awaiting placement. At our 4410 program, there are three closed classrooms this school year because we have been unable to hire certified teaching staff.

Please ensure that the budget for fiscal year 2023 includes \$30 million to increase the salaries of preschool special education teachers serving New York City's children. Thank you.

*Respectfully submitted by:*

Volunteers of America - Greater New York  
135 West 50th Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10020



**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Education Committee  
92nd Street Y  
March 21, 2022**

Thank you to the New York City Council and this Committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of arts education. **My name is Elizabeth Costa, and I am the Vice President of Government and Community Relations at the 92nd Street Y, a nonprofit cultural and community center located in Manhattan.**

The 92nd Street Y serves thousands of NYC public school students and teachers through our Center for Arts Learning & Leadership (CALL). CALL connects students with artists of the highest caliber through school-based instruction and live and virtual events at 92Y.

Over the past two years, 92Y quickly adapted and pivoted successfully to online community engagement and events. Through virtual and hybrid platforms – and this year through a return to some in-person programming – our **Young Leaders Series** and **CASA programs** are connecting students in and out of the classroom to both one another and the arts.

As we start to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and students continue to traverse this brave new world, **my request is for your continued strong support for arts education.** We have not only fortified but also expanded our youth programming, through the **Young Leaders Series, reaching 33+ schools citywide this year, and CASA programs at 10 schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.**

Additionally, **two workforce readiness programs--Teen Producers, a two-year paid internship at 92Y, and Teen Gems, for teens to learn jewelry-making skills in our Jewelry Center--** provide a pipeline for underserved youth to creative industries. Our new **LessLonely Project** destigmatizes and combats loneliness through content created by Gen Z and shared through the hashtag #LessLonely.

**Young Leaders Series**

Students in grades 2-12 learn about literature, music, dance, and current events through in-class workshops led by 92Y teaching artists, curriculum created by 92Y, and presentations by leading figures, such as US Poet Laureate **Joy Harjo**, 2021 MacArthur Fellow **Hanif Abdurraqib**, and world-renowned dance ensemble **Jazz as Movement**.

*“As we navigate the budget struggles, we are still trying to provide students with engaging, real-world opportunities. Our students had such a wonderful experience [with the Young Leaders Series] last year, and I look forward to building on our school's partnership with 92Y.”*

Sandra Begley, Classroom ELA Teacher at Bronx Arena High School

Students and teachers alike are exposed to a diverse array of artists and activists eager to engage in dialogue surrounding their real-life experiences and journeys in the arts, providing invaluable insight for students. Through personal interactions with professional writers and artists, students become more attracted to the possibilities of art-based learning, finding joy and creative freedom in the various art forms they may not have connected to previously.

By interacting with artists who possess a powerful sense of self and who utilize their work to tell their own narratives, students are encouraged to develop their own voices and take pleasure in their imaginative work, believing that their personal stories are worth telling.

*"I always thought I hated poems, I actually love poems now."*  
-Max R., student participant in the Hanif Abdurraqib YLS Event

As part of an effort to promote equitable representation and foster the growth of young artists, 92Y is bringing BIPOC students and artists together through YLS, cultivating an environment for students to discuss the vital importance of different perspectives, and how those perspectives create and inform art.

The series promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity towards the needs of, and differences between, people of diverse backgrounds both around the world and in their own neighborhoods, forging togetherness, and a strong classroom community.

*"Thank you for this--it was tremendous, and specifically for my kids, most of whom are POC, it was great to talk about and watch the videos (as we did in class) and discuss that aspect of what it took for him to make it that far. It was terrific." -- Classroom Teacher*

#### **CASA**

92Y partners with 10 schools through the Council's CASA initiative, creating a diverse range of arts programs tailored to the individual needs of each school. This year's programs include a **hip hop dance residency, instrumental arts instruction, visual arts, circus arts, and more.**

Each program is designed for students to gain hands-on experience in various crafts through thought-provoking curricula, in-person workshops (or virtual depending on the school's needs) and culminating in live performances or exhibits by the students. The CASA initiative allows 92Y to build on our partnerships with each school, deepening relationships by extending our programming and thus extending the positive social, emotional, intellectual, and creative impact these classes have on the students.

**By June, we will reach 6,000+ students at 38+ schools across five boroughs. Many students are from longtime partner schools with Title 1 status.**

We thank you for the support you have already provided, and we urge you to continue to support NYC's students by providing access to vital arts education programming in FY23.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Costa

Vice President, Government and Community Relations



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

## Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education

### Re: FY 23 Preliminary Budget - Education

March 21, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York. For 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of New York City parents and students navigate the education system. We focus on students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students who are homeless or in foster care, students with mental health needs, and students with involvement in the juvenile or criminal legal systems.

New York City is continuing to grapple with the unprecedented educational disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we have an influx of federal and state education funding that should be used to increase support for students and render unnecessary any cuts to funding that supports the City's students and schools. We recommend that the City reject proposed cuts to education, including the DOE hiring freeze that is already harming the students with the greatest needs. Instead, the City should:

1. Launch an intensive reading intervention program to provide one-on-one or small group support to students who need more help learning to read (\$125M)
2. Strengthen support for English Language Learners
  - a. Replicate successful models for English Language Learners (ELLs) by establishing programs at existing NYC DOE transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx to increase those schools' capacity to serve recently arrived, immigrant ELLs ages 16-21 (\$2.1M)
  - b. Establish the position of English Language Learner (ELL) Instructional Specialist at schools with a high number of underperforming ELLs to ensure they receive appropriate academic instruction and support (\$12M)
3. Establish and fund a central system for DOE Immigrant Family Communications that takes into account families' varying levels of literacy and access to digital media (\$6M)

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4. Provide salary parity to teachers and staff at community-based preschool special education programs to help address the shortage of classes (\$30M)
5. Guarantee bus service for students in foster care to increase school stability (\$5M)
6. Add 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to help students who are homeless get to school every day and receive needed educational support (\$12M)
7. Fund a comprehensive integrated system of behavioral and mental health supports for students
  - a. Baseline funding for the Mental Health Continuum, a model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics (\$5M)
  - b. Expand the number of school-based mental health clinics
  - c. Fund the city-wide expansion and implementation of school-wide Restorative Justice Practices (\$118M)
  - d. Fund the expansion of inclusive school programs for students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities

Each of these priorities is described below.

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## Reject harmful cuts, including the DOE hiring freeze that is already negatively impacting students with the greatest needs

We are extremely concerned about the DOE's across-the-board hiring freeze, which has already put important initiatives on hold and decreased support for students and families, especially those from historically marginalized communities. To give just a couple of examples:

- In fall 2021, after years of advocacy, the DOE finally committed to hiring the first-ever team to focus on the educational needs of students in foster care—a group of students whose needs have long been overlooked and who have the lowest graduation rate of any student group (43%). The team was set to have 7 staff members focused on students in foster care and 4 staff members who would help support students in foster care and students who are homeless. However, due to the hiring freeze, all of these positions are on hold, meaning that there are still *no* staff at the DOE dedicated to meeting the needs of students in care, and that schools, foster care agencies, and parents still have nowhere to turn when they have questions or need guidance specific to this population.
- The DOE committed to having 18 regional staff members dedicated to ensuring that the 100,000 NYC students who experience homelessness each year can access the supports and services they need to be successful in school. From helping with enrollment and busing, to navigating the special education system, to securing needed after-school services, the regional managers are the go-to contact for families experiencing homelessness, as well as shelters and schools. And yet, 5 of the 18 positions are currently open and cannot be filled under the hiring freeze. Meanwhile, more than half of students living in shelter are chronically absent.

The hiring freeze is even impacting programs that are being underwritten with federal COVID-19 relief funding—such as initiatives to strengthen preschool special education—even though keeping these positions vacant will not save the City any money.

More broadly, when across-the-board hiring freezes and layoffs have been imposed in the past, we've seen the impact on the students we serve—it's taken longer for immigrant students to get a school placement, for students with disabilities to get a bus route, and for parents to get help addressing the roadblocks they encounter with their children's schools.

Refusing to fill vacancies when staff members happen to leave, no matter their specific role or job responsibilities, is not a strategy for identifying efficiencies within the DOE; it is merely a way to save money. At a time when the DOE has received an influx of federal and state funding, such blunt force cuts are particularly hard to defend. The City should not balance the budget on the backs of the students with the greatest needs.

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## Launch an intensive reading intervention program to provide one-on-one or small group support to students who need more help learning to read (\$125M)

One of the most fundamental responsibilities of schools is to teach children how to read. Yet far too many NYC students struggle to become skilled readers: less than half of all students in grades 3–8, and only 36% of Black and Hispanic students and 16% of students with disabilities, are reading proficiently, according to the 2019 state exams.

Each year, we hear from hundreds of families whose children are struggling with reading and cannot get help within their public schools. Often, even when families reach AFC, we need to take legal action to help them obtain intensive private tutoring so their children can learn to read, because there are no evidence-based intervention programs available for them in the public system.

We have been very pleased to hear Chancellor Banks discuss the need to fundamentally change the way NYC schools teach children how to read. We strongly believe that all schools should use curriculum and practices that are both culturally responsive and grounded in the science of reading. As the City works to revamp core instruction, it also needs to have effective intervention available for students—regardless of grade level—who need additional support with reading *right now*.

We recommend that the City make evidence-based reading intervention available to students who need it by hiring and training a new corps of itinerant tutors as well as by leveraging current staff and pre-service teachers. Such intervention needs to be “high-dosage,” provided one-on-one or in small groups multiple times per week, and needs to be available to students regardless of the staff who happen to work in their particular school. Intervention should be available during the school year and over the summer, building on promising pilots such as the DOE’s partnership with CUNY pre-service teachers to provide Reading Rescue, an early literacy intervention.

The City has allocated \$250 million in federal American Rescue Plan funding for “academic recovery and student supports” for Fiscal Year 2023. We recommend using a portion of this funding for an intensive evidence-based reading intervention program, rather than distributing this funding to schools to use at their discretion—an approach that continues to leave too many students unable to read.

**The City should invest \$125 million in FY 23 to provide one-on-one or small group evidence-based reading intervention to students who need this support to become skilled readers.**



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## Strengthen support for English Language Learners (ELLs)

### ***Replicate successful models for English Language Learners by establishing programs at existing NYC DOE transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx to increase those schools' capacity to serve recently arrived, immigrant ELLs ages 16-21 (\$2.1M)***

English Language Learners (ELLs) who arrived in the U.S. as teenagers have some of the greatest needs of any of the City's student populations. In addition to having to learn a new language and meet graduation requirements before they turn 21, many of these students also have gaps in their education and require specialized academic support to access the curriculum; are juggling jobs and family obligations in addition to their schoolwork; and have complex social-emotional needs in part due to traumatic migration experiences.

- In 2020, nearly one in four ELLs dropped out of high school—the highest dropout rate of any student group.
- In 2020, only 46% of ELLs graduated from high school in four years.
- New York City is home to nearly 4,000 high school-age immigrant youth who do not have a high school diploma but are not enrolled in school.

Unfortunately, there are few DOE schools able to provide the support recently arrived, older immigrant ELLs need to be successful. We receive case referrals every year of immigrant students who are turned away at Family Welcome Centers and told to enroll in High School Equivalency (HSE) programs instead of four-year high schools or transfer schools. We also receive referrals of school-age immigrant youth who did not enroll in school at all because of the lack of available programs that can support their unique needs.

The DOE's "ELL transfer schools" provide a supportive learning environment for older immigrant students, including intensive English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, bilingual social workers, and partnerships with community-based organizations to help address immigration, housing, and other needs. However, there are only five such schools, four of which are located in Manhattan, making it difficult for students in other boroughs to attend.

The City has more than 40 non-ELL transfer schools, which are located across the five boroughs and serve over-age and under-credited youth, but they do not offer the intensive ENL classes and robust social-emotional supports that recently arrived immigrant students typically need.

To curb the ELL dropout crisis and put immigrant youth on the path to success, the City needs to provide high-quality school options for newly arrived, immigrant ELLs, ages 16–21, in their home neighborhoods, learning from what has been effective in the ELL transfer schools.

The City should allocate \$2.1M in FY 23, increasing to \$3.1M in FY 24, to launch programs to support ELLs, ages 16–21, at existing transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. This funding would enable four schools in FY 23—increasing to six schools in FY 24—to hire ENL teachers and bilingual social workers, offer culturally responsive wrap-around supports and services, and provide professional development so that all educators are prepared to support newcomer immigrant youth.

***Establish the Position of English Language Learner (ELL) Instructional Specialist at NYC DOE schools with a high number of underperforming ELLs to ensure they receive appropriate academic instruction and support (\$12M)***

The nearly 139,000 ELLs in New York City public schools make up a significant portion of the total student population and require targeted language and academic instruction to meet their unique needs. Unfortunately, the City's ELLs continue to perform well below standards in reading and math, with only 9% of ELLs proficient in reading and 19% of ELLs proficient in math in 2019. Too often in our work, we encounter long-term ELLs who reach high school without having reached a sixth-grade reading level. Still, data show that ELLs have the potential to outperform their peers when offered appropriate academic support. This support must start from the time they enroll in school and continue through graduation.

We therefore urge the City to invest \$12M to pilot a program for 120 schools with underperforming ELLs to hire an ELL Instructional Specialist. The ELL Instructional Specialist, a pedagogue who reports to the school principal, would be responsible for ensuring that all ELLs (including long-term ELLs and ELLs with disabilities) at their school are receiving grade-level instruction in core subjects, developing age-appropriate literacy, receiving additional academic support where needed, and on track to pass to the next grade. With this funding, the ELL Instructional Specialists would also receive professional development and tools from the Division of Multilingual Learners.

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**Establish a central system for DOE Immigrant Family Communications that takes into account families' varying levels of literacy and access to digital media (\$6M)**

Over 40% of New York City public school families speak a language other than English at home, and some have low or no literacy in their language. Additionally, many families have limited access to digital media such as email and the web and instead rely on phone calls, physical letters on paper, and in-person communication to understand what is happening with their child's education. With most of NYC DOE's family-facing communication currently happening via the DOE website or email, many immigrant families are left in the dark and without access to information. Without accessible information, parents cannot participate in their children's education.

In collaboration with the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative, we submitted to the City in 2020 a set of recommendations for improving immigrant family communications. These recommendations include multi-pronged approaches for communicating with families such as collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations, using local ethnic media such as TV and radio, making personal phone calls to vulnerable families, and sending paper notices to families' homes. Although we were pleased to learn that NYC DOE began implementing some of our recommendations, we know that these efforts require funding.

We were encouraged that the City invested \$4M this school year for immigrant family communications and outreach. However, this funding will expire in June 2022 and will be limited in reach. Unfortunately, the FY 23 preliminary budget does not include funding to extend this initiative.

**We urge the City to invest \$6M in FY 23 and baseline this funding to establish a permanent, central system of immigrant family communications and to continue funding this effort every year going forward.**

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## Provide salary parity to teachers and staff at community-based preschool special education programs to help address the shortage of classes (\$30M)

We have been deeply concerned about the number of preschoolers who have had to wait for the DOE to provide them with the preschool special education classes to which they are entitled—even as the City has expanded 3-K and Pre-K for All. A “regional need” memo posted by the DOE in November 2021 shows that even at a time when preschool special education referrals are low and overall pre-K enrollment is down, New York City will need more than 900 additional preschool special class seats this spring in order to fulfill its legal obligation to provide a preschool special class seat for every child whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) requires one.

We strongly support the contract enhancement the City is launching in FY 23 to bring preschool special education classes run by community-based organizations (CBOs) into the 3-K and Pre-K for All system; the City plans to address the shortage of preschool special education classes by having CBOs apply to open 800 new seats through the contract enhancement. However, CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs.

Preschool special education programs are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining teachers, who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs in the City and can earn higher compensation working 10-month jobs in district schools. Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs. While the City has said that it “hopes” to use the preschool special education contract enhancement to “create a pathway to higher salaries,” the City has not yet committed to higher salaries for teachers and staff—and additional funding needs to be allocated to provide them with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts. If CBOs cannot recruit and retain teachers for their current classes, they will be unable to launch the new classes that the City anticipates opening to address the shortage that has left children going without the classes they need.

**The FY 23 budget should add and baseline \$30 million for the City to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that the City can open classes to provide a preschool special education class for every child who needs one.**

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## Guarantee bus service for students in foster care to increase school stability (\$5M)

More than 7,000 children are in foster care in New York City. Students in foster care are disproportionately Black and come from NYC's poorest communities. When students are removed from their homes and families and placed into foster care, school is often the only source of stability in their lives.

Recognizing the importance of school stability, federal and state law require school districts to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their school of origin, unless it is in their best interest to transfer to a new school. However, the DOE currently does not guarantee bus service or comparable transportation to students in foster care. The DOE only provides bus service to students in foster care who require special education transportation and those who can easily be added to existing routes.

As a result, students who cannot travel on their own may be forced to transfer schools. Having to transfer schools mid-year means that students must adjust to unfamiliar peers, teachers, routines, and curriculum, while experiencing the trauma of being separated from their parents, and often from their siblings and communities as well. Research shows that students who change schools frequently have lower test scores, earn fewer credits, are more likely to be retained, and are less likely to complete high school than students whose school placements are stable.

Even students in foster care who are ultimately deemed eligible for bus service are often left waiting for a month or more to get a determination. In the meantime, to protect the right that students in care have to remain in their schools, agency staff may be forced to spend hours each day escorting children to school instead of working to safely reunify families. Similarly, foster parents, who often have competing childcare or work responsibilities, are left getting the child to school on their own, which can result in children needing to switch foster homes or make it difficult to place children in homes in the first place.

No student in foster care should be forced to change schools or homes due to lack of transportation. The DOE already guarantees yellow bus service to the thousands of kindergarten through sixth grade students living in shelter. The DOE should extend this guarantee to include the relatively small number of students in foster care as well. **The FY 23 budget should include and baseline \$5 million to guarantee bus service or a comparable mode of door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to stay in their original schools.**

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## Add 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to help students who are homeless get to school every day and receive needed educational support (\$12M)

During the last school year, more than 101,000 city students experienced homelessness. Around 28,000 of these students spent time in shelters. Students living in shelter—94% of whom are Black or Latinx—face significant barriers to educational success. For example:

- During the two years leading up to the pandemic, 60% of students living in shelter were chronically absent—missing at least one out of every ten school days, and students living in shelter continue to have the lowest attendance rate of any student group.
- In 2020, only 52% of students in shelter graduated high school in four years, 27 percentage points lower than the citywide average graduation rate.

Currently, there are not enough staff working **in shelters** who have the skills and knowledge necessary to help families navigate the school system, address barriers to attendance, and resolve educational problems: just 117 shelter-based DOE Family Assistants are tasked with supporting the roughly 28,000 students who spend time in shelter each year. The number of Family Assistants has not grown over the past decade even though thousands more students spend time in the shelter system. As there are more than twice as many shelters as there are Family Assistants, these staff must divide their time among multiple shelter sites and are stretched very thin. The Family Assistant position is also very low paid (\$28,000 for 10 months), making it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff. Additionally, since Family Assistants do not work over the summer, there is limited support to help families get school placements and busing arranged for the start of the school year.

While there are 200 staff members working **in schools** with high numbers of students who are homeless focused on providing them with counseling and advocacy, three out of four students in shelter attend a school that does not have such a staff member. Furthermore, since students have the right to stay in their original schools when placed in shelter, students residing at any given shelter often attend many different schools.

The DOE should hire at least 150 Students in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators to work in shelters and focus on ensuring that students living in shelter attend school every day and receive the academic and social-emotional support they need for school success. Using a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach, these Community Coordinators should help students and families address barriers to education and navigate the school system, including enrollment, attendance, transportation, school applications, special education services, school suspensions, after-school and summer programs, and early childhood education.

The DOE recently received \$9 million in federal American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funding specifically to support students who are homeless. While we are pleased that the DOE has committed to hiring 50 Community Coordinators using this initial round of funds, more coordinators are needed. The DOE is poised to receive an additional \$24 million in ARP-HCY funding in the coming months, but has not yet decided how to spend this funding.

**The City should invest \$12M to hire an additional 100 DOE Community Coordinators, for a total of 150, to work in shelters to focus on meeting the educational needs of students who are homeless.**

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## Fund a comprehensive integrated system of behavioral and mental health supports for students

The past two years have presented unprecedented challenges that have uniquely impacted the mental health and wellbeing of our students. As highlighted in a recent U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, the pandemic has exacerbated youth mental health needs that existed before the pandemic and spurred a national youth mental health crisis. We have seen dramatically increased rates of psychological distress among children and youth. Many young people in our City experienced unimaginable trauma and loss and are struggling with the return to in-person learning this year. For students to thrive in school, they must feel safe and supported by their school communities, and our schools must be places that are healing-centered, where students and families experience physical, psychological, and emotional safety. Students are 21 times more likely to seek support for mental health issues at school than at a community-based clinic, if at all.

However, too often when students are struggling, they are met with exclusionary school discipline and policing practices that only further traumatize them and perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline, disproportionately harming Black and Brown students and students with disabilities. Each year, in New York City schools, tens of thousands of students are suspended, losing days, weeks, or months of instruction and thousands of students with unmet emotional needs are removed from class—including some handcuffed as young as 5 years old—by NYPD officers and taken away from school by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) when medically unnecessary.

Sadly, this year is proving to be no different. Compared to two school years ago at this time in mid-March, we have received a similar number of calls from families requesting assistance with school suspension matters. In December, we heard from a parent whose daughter had already been suspended from school 6 times for a total of twenty-five school days. Three months into the school year, her child had missed out on more than one third of the days of instruction. In February, a parent contacted us about her 6-year-old son with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) diagnosed with ADHD and Autism. The parent was called down to her son's school to pick him up early because he was having a really bad day. The school counselor advised her that if this happens again and she is unavailable to pick up her son, they will call EMS and police to de-escalate him. The parent told AFC: "I was extremely concerned with this comment because my son is a 6-year-old African-American male and I do not want him to have this type of dramatic and traumatizing experience." Subsequently, we were contacted about a 7-year-old girl with Autism whose school did call the police when they did not know how to de-escalate the child's behavior. The child was transported to the hospital by EMS without her parent and without even notifying the parent. We can and must do better for our young people.

Schools need key resources to transform school environments, address our students' mental health and behavioral needs, and help improve academic outcomes. Even with the hiring of 500 new school social workers, NYPD school safety agents outnumber DOE social workers by more than 1,000. In addition, while the City funded some mental health initiatives in schools over the last year, many of these programs do not address the immediate needs of school communities and are piecemeal. What New York City needs is a comprehensive system to ensure that students are receiving direct mental health services, schools are receiving support to effectively manage student behavior and mental health, and the DOE is coordinating within key parts of the agency and across other key agencies to provide this support. It is more urgent than ever that our City invest in practices that support young people and divest from practices that criminalize them. We urge the City to work towards creating a



comprehensive, integrated system of mental health and behavioral health supports for students by making the following investments:

***Baseline funding for the Mental Health Continuum, a model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics (\$5M)***

Last year, thanks to the City Council's efforts, the City allocated \$5 million for a promising model called the Mental Health Continuum, an integrated system of targeted and intensive supports for students with significant mental health needs. This model includes school partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics; NYC Well hotline expansion to advise school staff about students in crisis; mental health professionals who respond to students in crisis; increased clinic staffing; direct mental health services; School Based Mental Health Clinicians; whole-school training in Collaborative Problem Solving, an evidence-based, skill-building approach; and support for family and student engagement. Through a partnership between the Department of Education, Health + Hospitals, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, this model aims to meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in the schools and neighborhoods with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism. The City allocated only one-year funding for the Mental Health Continuum, so, unless extended, the funding will expire in June 2022. Unfortunately, the FY 23 preliminary budget does not include funding to extend this initiative. **To continue the model to be launched this school year in 50 high-needs schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn, the City must baseline \$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, with the following funding allocations:**

- FY 23 — DOE: \$889,459; H+H: \$3,638,068; DOHMH: \$472,473 (Total: \$5M).
- FY 24 (and beyond) — DOE: \$787,272; H+H: \$3,740,255; DOHMH: \$472,473 (Total: \$5M).

***Expand the number of school-based mental health clinics***

Given the current crisis in youth mental health, our students need timely, effective direct mental health services in school. School-Based Mental Health Clinics and school partnerships with community-based mental health clinics have proven to eliminate barriers that prevent young people and families from seeking mental health care by providing services on-site in schools. In addition to providing ongoing therapeutic services to students, school-based mental health clinicians and community providers work directly with school staff to coach them in strategies to support students in the classroom, prevent behavioral challenges, and better respond when behavioral issues arise. **Currently, there are only 280 schools with a School-Based Mental Health Clinic. We call on the City to increase the number of clinics in FY 23 so that as many students and schools as possible have access to this vital support.**

***Fund the city-wide expansion and implementation of school-wide Restorative Justice Practices***

To fulfill their commitment to students, the City must invest in the expansion and full implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices in all schools through a school-based restorative justice model. This evidence-based model includes hiring a restorative justice coordinator in each school; training all staff and interested members of school communities on restorative practices; providing young people with training and stipends to lead restorative practices in schools; and partnering with community-based organizations to support programs in schools. By building and healing relationships,

addressing the root causes of behavior, holding students accountable, and teaching positive behaviors, restorative practices have been proven to work in schools across New York City and around the country: their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. **The City should invest \$118 million to bring this model to 500 schools in FY 2023 with the ultimate goal of investing \$225 million for full implementation city-wide by FY 2028.**

***Fund the expansion of inclusive school programs for students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities***

Black students and economically disadvantaged students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities are disproportionately referred to District 75 schools that segregate students with disabilities instead of providing them with targeted supports in schools with peers who do not have disabilities. **The City should fund the expansion of the cost-effective evidence-based, whole-school inclusion model successfully piloted in P.S. 88, first in other schools in District 9 and then in other districts, to support students with emotional disabilities.** In the model, four students with emotional disabilities are placed in small Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes with two trained teachers, one of whom is a special educator, alongside students without IEPs. They receive frequent therapy from a trained clinical social worker using cognitive behavioral intervention strategies who also collaborates with teachers and parents to infuse trauma-informed practices across all settings. A university partner with knowledge of trauma-informed care and therapeutic practices, as well as evidence-based practices used in an inclusive program for students with autism, is necessary to collaborate with the DOE to expand the model by providing clinical training and onsite support to school staff.



**Testimony of Katherine Hoy, LMSW, to New York City Council Committee on  
Education Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget - Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Katherine Hoy, and I am the Director of Advocacy Services at AHRC New York City and a member of the ARISE Coalition. For 74 years, AHRC has supported people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their family members here in New York City. AHRC created some of the first education programs for students with disabilities—programs which became early models for DOE special education services. Today, our agency serves more than 15,000 New Yorkers with disabilities throughout the life course. The education advocacy program which I oversee provides direct services and guidance to hundreds of students with lifelong disabilities and their families each year.

**Our recommendation for the FY2023 budget is to include \$30M for Preschool Special Education Teachers and Staff at 4410s and CBOs on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts and to commit to salary parity now.**

My colleagues spoke in detail about the technical aspects of the proposed contract enhancement. I'd like to speak to you from the heart about the experiences of families and children I'm working with who are bearing the brunt of an inequitable system. The DOE is responsible for the evaluation and placement of preschool children with disabilities. When a child is placed, families have a right to expect high-quality instruction from highly trained teachers and staff such as speech and occupational therapists. Instead, due to extreme pay disparities and resulting high turnover, many children have no placement in an appropriate preschool program or are in class but waiting for their permanent teacher, classroom staff and related services to begin. Some children will wait indefinitely and many services—services to which students are entitled based on their IEP—will never occur or be made up.

The issue here is not how to serve students with disabilities, but how the system fails to provide an equitable start for children right from the beginning of their lives. Disability is a normal part of life. Yet parents of children with autism, cerebral palsy or down syndrome cannot count on the DOE to ensure that their child's teacher will be paid on par with educators and staff at programs serving typically developing children.

The Chancellor spoke earlier today about placing students – every student – on a pathway to employment and future success. That pathway starts in preschool.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to testify today. I'd also like to support testimony provided by my colleagues Chris Trieber at the Interagency Council, and Maggie Moroff, Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition, of which I am a proud member.



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March 21, 2022

Honorable Chair Joseph and Members of the Council:

My name is Steven Morales. I am the New York Policy Director at an organization called All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a nonprofit that trains, supports, and sustains over 400 home-based family child care (FCC) educators with capacity to serve over 5,000 young children in the Bronx and across NYC. Our programming enables providers to succeed as business owners and supports their practice as high-quality early childhood educators.

I'm here to talk about the importance of investing in early childhood education – specifically home-based family child care. Family child care providers, licensed to care for up to 16 children in their homes, are one of the most prevalent forms of child care in our City comprising nearly three-quarters of providers and 37 percent of the city's licensed child care capacity for children from birth to five. Family child care educators also care for the bulk of our City's youngest children during the most critical stage of their development – **58% of infants and toddlers in subsidized care in our City are cared for in family child care programs.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put in stark relief New York City's long-standing child care crisis. Across the City, parents are unable to return to work because they can't afford child care, and subsidies and vouchers are scarce and difficult to access. At the same time, child care programs are closing due to the high cost of providing quality care, delays in our subsidy system, and the low reimbursement rates they receive from our City agencies. In order for our City to recover from this pandemic and to support our children's future, the City Council must use this budget as an opportunity to build a child care system that works for all New Yorkers by **increasing access to care for families, increasing compensation for family child care educators and supporting quality.**

In our City, while some family child care educators are affiliated with NYC DOE contracted Family Child Care Networks, the vast majority are independent providers who are unable to access DOE support. We urge the Council to ensure that family child care educators have access to the resources they need whether or not they are affiliated with the DOE by making the following immediate investments:

- **Invest in compensation equity for all educators.** Sixty-five percent of child care providers across the state rely on public benefits due to low wages. Whether they are paid through the voucher system or through direct contracts, all early childhood educators in our City deserve equitable pay. Family child care educators, center-based providers, and early childhood teachers in the school system should all be paid based on



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comparable scales. The practice of paying family child care providers less for the same care must not continue. This budget must take steps to fix that longstanding inequity.

- **Prioritize provider pay and benefits** by increasing reimbursement rates for FCC providers and by developing a plan to include family child care in the City's pay parity efforts and agreements with center-based early childhood educators.
- Explore options for the City to pay providers' **health insurance and retirement premiums**. In addition to low wages, family child care educators rarely have access to affordable health insurance or retirement benefits. The City should invest in ensuring family child care educators have access to the benefits that many of us take for granted. These benefits should be available to all providers, whether or not they are affiliated with NYC DOE networks.
- **Ensure FCC providers have equal access to DOE funding.** DOE systems are not set up to meet the needs of family child care businesses - for example, fewer than 50 of the over 5,000 family child care providers in NYC are able to participate in Pre-K for All. This inequity has denied families access to the programs they need and has made it nearly impossible financially for providers to continue serving their communities. The DOE must ensure that FCC programs have equitable access to EarlyLearn, 3K, Pre-K and all other DOE funding opportunities.
- The city must also **ensure all family child care educators have access to robust professional learning opportunities, as well as business training and coaching** from staff who are knowledgeable about family child care business models. This training must be inclusive of all FCC educators, not just those in DOE Networks.
- **Reinvest in Family Child Care Provider Networks.** Family Child Care Networks are a research-based way to support quality, sustainability, and community among FCC educators. New York City's existing FCC Networks hold the potential to give educators what they need to thrive. Unfortunately, insufficient funding and a complex web of requirements has forced Networks and providers to spend more time on compliance than on the quality activities that we know work. The City should reinvest in the existing Network infrastructure and engage FCC educators, parents, and network staff to understand how to best support the city's 5,900 FCC programs.
- **Appoint a Family Child Care Advisory Committee.** The Council and Mayor should work together to appoint a diverse group of FCC providers and parent leaders to advise the City on a vision and strategy to increase support for family child care.

These investments are not only crucial to the short-term survival of the family child care sector, but will also help put New York City on a track toward an equitable recovery from the pandemic. Our budget must invest boldly to help make our City a place where every family who needs care can access it in the setting of their choice, every educator receives the wages they need to serve our children for the long term, and every child has the early childhood education they need to succeed.

Thank you.



**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
LAW CENTER  
RACIAL EQUITY IN  
EDUCATION LAW &  
POLICY CLINIC**

**Janel George**  
*Founder & Director*

**Nikola Nable-Juris**  
*Supervisor Attorney*

**New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Budget and Oversight Hearings on the  
Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023**

**Statement**

**Racial Equity in Education Law & Policy Clinic  
Georgetown University Law Center**

***On behalf of the***

**Alliance for Quality Education**

**March 24, 2022**

The Racial Equity in Education Law and Policy Clinic (the “REEL Policy Clinic”) of Georgetown University Law Center leverages legislative and policy interventions to help to remedy racial inequities in public education. The Clinic’s student attorneys engage in legislative lawyering on behalf of clients to help to advance clients’ goals, including working to dismantle long-standing educational inequities that negatively impact the educational outcomes of students of color. The REEL Policy Clinic submits this testimony on behalf of its client, the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), a coalition comprised of education organizations, parents, teachers, community members, advocates, and other education stakeholders who have championed funding adequacy and equity in New York state’s public schools for decades.

Founded in 2000 to advance the resource equity goals of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, AQE has tirelessly organized, educated, and advocated for educational justice, along with partners like Citizen Action of New York, Make the Road New York, New York Communities for Change, and the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice. As a result of AQE’s advocacy efforts, the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity* litigation culminated in the state’s highest court concluding that, under the state’s funding system, New York City’s schools were under-funded and deprived children of access to a “sound basic education” under the state constitution.<sup>[1]</sup> The court ordered the state legislature to overhaul the school funding system and directed New York City’s Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan for reforming and implementing initiatives needed to promote educational

equity for all students. As a result of this litigation, the Fair Student Funding (FSF) formula was developed with the goal of promoting funding equity in New York City's public schools. However, the promise of equitable funding for New York City's schools has remained elusive. Among the factors contributing to ongoing funding inequities in New York City's schools has been the failure to deliver upon promised funding to many districts and schools predominantly serving Black and brown students.<sup>[ii]</sup> The state failed to provide promised Foundation Aid to districts for over a decade. As a result of continued advocacy and pressure, the state is now entering the second of a three year phase-in to fully fund Foundation Aid. We recommend that, coupled with continued funding of Foundation Aid, the Council revisit the FSF formula to better promote funding equity within New York City's public schools.

The FSF formula was revisited by the FSF Task Force, but the Task Force's recommendations were never acted upon. The FSF Task Force was established pursuant to Local Law 17 of 2019 to evaluate the FSF and develop recommendations.<sup>[iii]</sup> Members of the FSF Task Force included parents, students, and community advocates (including a staff member of AQE). The FSF Task Force met for nine months (from May 2019 until January 2020). However, as an unfunded task force that lacked the resources, access to data, capacity, or research expertise necessary to provide evidence-based recommendations regarding adjustments to make to the formula better promote equity (e.g., how much weight should be allotted based on particular student characteristics), the Task Force's effect was limited. The FSF Task Force concluded its work in January of 2020; however, its report—and the recommendations included within it—was not publicly issued. The status quo of inequity continued to permeate New York City's school funding system.

Shortly after the FSF Task Force concluded its work, the United States was impacted by a global pandemic that further exposed the longstanding resource inequities among New York City's public schools. As two champions for fiscal equity in New York City's public schools, Michael Rebell and Robert Jackson noted in a 2020 opinion piece, "[t]he pandemic ... starkly exposed the terrible extent of social vulnerabilities and inequities New York has long ignored or thought too complex or politically risky to confront."<sup>[iv]</sup> Had New York City considered the FSF Task Force's recommendations to support historically marginalized and under-funded schools or acted to target funding to better address the needs of historically marginalized students, perhaps some of the impact of the pandemic could have been mitigated. The need to act to support under-funded districts and schools remains urgent and necessary.

Therefore, AQE urges the New York City Council to use its authority to create a commission of experts to revisit the FSF formula to analyze its effectiveness in promoting equity between schools and its current fiscal impact, examine current weighted funding for student populations and recommend specific new weights to better serve students, issue recommendations for updating and reforming the FSF formula, and collaborate with the Council and stakeholders to implement its recommendations.

***I. The New York City Council Should Establish an Expert Commission to Revisit the FSF Formula to Better Promote Resource Equity in New York City's Public Schools***

AQE urges the Council to use its authority to create and fund an expert commission to analyze the FSF formula and recommend appropriate revisions to ensure that it promotes resource equity—particularly among the districts and schools predominantly serving Black and brown students in New York City that have been historically deprived of equitable funding. The unfunded FSF Task Force created in 2019 did not have the support, capacity, or access to research necessary to develop evidence-based recommendations to improve the FSF formula. However, a funded commission comprised of experts, including school finance researchers who can craft evidence-based recommendations, is needed to update and improve the FSF. These experts may include, but are not limited to, individuals with following backgrounds:

- Parent leaders
- Students
- Teachers
- Principals (from elementary, middle, and high schools, and from both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools)
- Superintendents (Community District superintendents and high school superintendents)
- Budget liaisons (such as a Senior Grants Officer)
- Central Department of Education finance experts
- Education policy experts unaffiliated with the Department of Education
- Independent Budget Office analysts
- Advocates (from nonprofit and community organizations)

The process of identifying and selecting experts for this commission should involve input from community stakeholders, including advocates, parents/caregivers, educators, and students. In addition, experts should demonstrate not only substantive knowledge of New York City's FSF formula and school finance broadly, but also an understanding of New York City's historic funding inequities that have been disproportionately borne by students of color and students from low-income communities, as well as a commitment to ensuring equitable distribution of resources.

Ensuring that the FSF formula promotes both adequacy and equity within New York City's schools should be foremost among the commission's responsibilities. While the precise definitions of "adequacy" and "equity" have been debated, "adequacy" generally reflects what it costs to offer quality education that meets the standard outlined in the state constitution. For New York, that standard is a "sound basic education." An assessment of adequacy also takes into account regional cost variations, district size, population sparsity, and student needs, which may include poverty, special education status, English learner status, foster care involvement, or homelessness, among other considerations.<sup>[v]</sup>

In order to develop recommendations to better promote equity, evaluation of the current FSF formula's efficacy in promoting equity is necessary, including analyzing and evaluating it to determine its ability to:

- Promote equity among New York City schools through the distribution of funding in ways that ensure that high-need schools receive the funds they need to support students;
- Positively impact class sizes;

- Enable schools to provide needed services and supports for students with disabilities and English learners; and
- Ensure equitable distribution of teachers across schools.

For example, the current FSF distributes funding for teacher salaries based upon the city-wide average teacher salary, while charging schools the schoolwide average salary. Under this policy, schools with a large number of higher-salary teachers do not receive more funding than schools with lower-salary teachers. This policy penalizes schools that retain their teachers and has failed to incentivize high-need schools to hire more experienced teachers.

Along with analyzing the FSF formula's impact on distribution of educators, analysis of the formula's impact on class sizes can also provide more insight into how the current formula impacts class sizes. Some middle school classes have as many as 33 students for one teacher due to lack of funding to hire adequate numbers of teachers. Analysis of where the FSF formula can fund schools at targeted class size levels is warranted.

The commission can also analyze the fiscal and educational impact of:

- An alternative enrollment-based formula that funds the minimum staffing levels based on enrollment while continuing the need-based per pupil funding as additional allocations above the base funding;
- A formula based on the class size targets in the New York City Class Size Reduction Plan;<sup>[vi]</sup>
- An accountability mechanism to ensure that schools spend additional weighted student funding for the specific student populations for which the funds are intended.

Under the current FSF formula, principals have discretion to fund non-classroom staff, such as Assistant Principals and guidance counselors. However, additional funding provided to schools based upon student categories and characteristics (as described in more detail below) has proved insufficient to enable schools to hire additional staff beyond classroom teachers. Particularly since the pandemic, New York City schools have demonstrated needs for staff such as social workers, nurses, school counselors, and social and emotional learning specialists. The commission can evaluate the possibility of expanding the FSF base allocation to fund additional school staff positions, including counselors, social workers, restorative justice coordinators, high school librarians, and school nutritionists (in Title I schools located in neighborhoods designated as "food deserts"). In addition to analyzing the impact and effectiveness of the FSF formula in its current form, we urge reconsideration of the weights designated for additional funding based upon student characteristics as described in detail below.

## II. ***The Commission Should Analyze School Funding Weights Based Upon Student Needs to Better Ensure that Funding is Distributed Equitably***

An equitable FSF formula must be responsive to student needs and characteristics and include weighted funding designed to further the goal of providing a robust foundation of holistic, inclusive, whole-child centered learning environments that support the students for whom the weight/funding is intended to serve. New York City is the largest school district in the nation, educating over an estimated 1 million children, including almost one-quarter who identify as Black, over 40 percent who identify as Hispanic, and over 70 percent who are categorized as economically disadvantaged.<sup>[vii]</sup> New York City's students also include multilingual students, students experiencing homelessness,



students involved in the foster care system, and students in need of special education services, among others. Therefore, we encourage the commission to analyze the current weights for various student populations, including but not limited to: students from low-income communities, English Learners, multilingual students, students with disabilities, and students in need of academic intervention services.

It is also important to consider the revision, elimination, or addition of specific weights to better serve these students. For example, under the current FSF formula, a poverty weight is only included as a proxy for the need for academic intervention services for students who do not have test scores to use to determine the need for such services. Poverty can have a profound impact on students' educational outcomes. As one expert notes, "[t]he impact of poverty on children's ability to learn is profound and occurs at an early age."<sup>[viii]</sup> Therefore, it is worth considering the addition of a new and significant category for FSF to better support the over 70 percent of New York City's students living in poverty, at all ages and at all grades, and not only in K-2 as the current formula provides. The commission may engage in research and analysis to determine whether the needs of students impacted by poverty can best be addressed through additional weighted funding and/or whether funding should be dedicated to support schools that support large numbers of students impacted by poverty. Additional research and analysis are necessary to: (a) identify the most effective, holistic, inclusive, and intersectional whole child-centered supports and programming specifically tailored to address the impact of poverty on educational outcomes; (b) assess the cost of such supports and programs; and (c) ensure that sufficient funding is allotted to provide them. Interventions such as the holistic whole child-centered approaches that the Community Schools Initiative embraces can be expanded to support students impacted by poverty.<sup>[ix]</sup>

Additional categories for weighted students funding may include students living in temporary housing and students in foster care. According to one report, over 100,000 of New York City's students lived in unstable or temporary housing during the 2020-2021 school year.<sup>[x]</sup> Approximately 5,000 of New York City's students are in foster care and one report notes that only 42 percent of students in foster care graduated in 2020, the lowest of any student subgroup.<sup>[xi]</sup> The current FSF formula does not include any added weights for students in temporary housing or students in foster care. Given the disruption housing instability and foster care placements may pose for students and their educational outcomes, consideration of adding new weighted student funding categories for these students—and for other students whose circumstances or unique characteristics may require additional support that is not covered under current weighted funding— is warranted.

An example of funding category to consider eliminating is additional funding allotted for the city's specialized high schools (known as the "specialized academic weight"). The Department of Education has justified the additional funding for specialized high schools based upon the need to provide supplementary instruction and assessments. However, equity and excellence for all students requires that every public school, not just ten exclusionary high schools labeled as "academically challenging," offer students rigorous coursework, instruction, and supports like social and emotional programs. Instead of targeting funds to just a few exclusionary high schools, increased funding can be added to the grade weight for 9-12. This will help to ensure that every high school receives more resources needed to provide coursework like Advanced Placement courses and other challenging offerings.

For each weight allotted to certain student categories, the Council should work to ensure funding of programs and services that support whole-child learning via instruction, programming, and supports known to best serve the student population of each respective category. New York City's students

deserve supports that are appropriate to their needs and grounded in the most updated and relevant research.

Also, particular care should be taken to address the multiple needs of New York City's students. For example, an English learner may also have an Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP) and may be experiencing poverty and housing instability. It can be assumed that when children qualify for multiple categories of weighted funding, there is an increase in needs and costs. We encourage the commission to consider the need to create a category of weighted funding for students with multiple needs or develop an approach to weighing funding that accounts for the needs of students who may fall into multiple categories.

It is imperative to consider the intersectionality of student needs as a key objective when analyzing weight/funding needs and costs. Equity is advanced not only through the provision of needed funding, but also in the manner of its provision. Other approaches may include designating additional funding or school-specific funding weights for schools that have high concentrations of particular student populations (e.g., low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, students living in temporary housing or foster care, and students in need of academic interventions). High concentrations of students with needs place additional strains on schools beyond the sum total of funding weights assigned to students. Principals are often forced to make hard choices about which students' needs to meet and to what extent they can be met. Schools should be provided the resources they need to successfully support higher levels of need that are engendered by a large concentration of specific high-need student populations within a school community.

In addition, the process of analyzing what weights should be attributed to particular student categories must involve opportunities for outreach and incorporation of the input of teachers, administrators, students, and parents of students from specific student categories. Meeting students' needs in an inclusive manner that is cognizant of the intersectionality of students' identities and lives and that recognizes the value of diversity in all its forms is inherently valuable—not just for the students for whom weights may be targeted, but also their peers, their schools, and society.

Finally, accountability for spending of weighted student funding must be implemented. Any additional weighted funding allocated for particular student characteristics or categories should be used to support the specified student categories for which the funding is designated. The current FSF provides schools with discretion in the use of funding allocated through categorical weights and, as a result, funds intended to pay for programs that support designated student populations often do not. For example, reports indicate that thousands of New York City students do not receive their mandated special education services and thousands of English learners do not receive the funded instructional support needed to become English proficient.<sup>[xii]</sup> Diverting funding away from a program intended to serve a student in a specific student population undermines the value of equity. Accountability mechanisms can be developed to ensure that designated students receive funding intended to support their needs. For example, schools can publicly issue annual reports detailing funding received for student populations and the uses of such funds. Allocating funds to provide for those needs of each student and holding schools accountable to utilizing those funds appropriately is how we best promote funding policies that center equity.

Central to ensuring that equity is centered in the process of convening the commission, considering its findings, and implementing its recommendations, is ensuring ongoing transparency and opportunities for stakeholders, including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, advocates, and youth service providers, among others, to provide input. Information can be shared in a variety of forums, including parent/teacher meetings, town halls, or other regular convenings.

Information should be shared with stakeholders in culturally competent and accessible ways (including through multiple platforms and in multiple languages). Adequate time must be taken to connect with community stakeholders and incorporate their feedback throughout the process.

### **Conclusion**

The promise of resource equity without meaningful action to ensure that it is realized maintains a status quo that undermines the educational futures of too many of New York City's students—particularly Black and brown students who have been deprived of the necessary educational resources needed to succeed for far too long. The Council has the authority to make resource equity a reality. We urge the Council to assemble and fund a commission of school finance experts, selected with the input of education stakeholders, to analyze the efficacy of the FSF and consider revisions to improve it, such as recommending adjustments and increases to weighted student funding, to make good on the promise of funding equity for New York City's schools.

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[i] Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. v. State of New York, 8 N.Y.3d 14 (2006).

[ii] Among many reasons for failure to provide promised funding to schools, “the state never met its full obligation under the Foundation Aid formula. Some schools ended up receiving 100% or more of what they were owed, while most received less,” Zimmerman, A. (April 19, 2021). With \$600 million yearly boost, all NYC schools will get their full funding under city formula for the first time. NY Chalkbeat. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/4/19/22391728/fair-student-funding-nyc-school-budget>.

[iii] The bill created a Task Force, including Department of Education (DOE) personnel, at least one representative from a Community Education Council from each borough, a representative from a union representing teachers, a representative from a union representing principals, a parent of a currently enrolled student, and advocates who specialize in working with vulnerable student populations, to review and make recommendations relating to the formula used by DOE to determine school funding. The Task Force was required to submit and post a report with recommendations relating to the formula by September 30, 2019.

[iv] Jackson, R. and Rebell, R. (August 22, 2020). *Now more than ever, fair school funding*. New York Daily News. <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-now-more-than-ever-fair-school-funding-20200822-2gm6by4l4naflmwracj7bbgsza-story.html>.

[v] Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). *Investing for student success: Lessons from state school finance reforms*. Learning Policy Institute, at 4. [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Investing\\_Student\\_Success\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Investing_Student_Success_REPORT.pdf).

[vi] Amin, R. (July 29, 2021). 72 NYC schools are getting money to lower class sizes. Will it help students? NY Chalkbeat. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/7/29/22600530/72-nyc-schools-are-getting-money-to-lower-class-sizes-will-it-help-students>.

[vii] New York State Education Department, NYC Public Schools at a Glance 2019-20. <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?instid=7889678368>.

[viii] Cookson, P. (October 6, 2020). Blog: *A world of hardship: Deep poverty and the struggle for educational equity*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-deep-poverty-struggle-education-equity>.

[ix] There are currently 316 community schools operating in every district in New York City, funded through city, state, and federal dollars. New York City Department of Education. <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/programs/community-schools>.

[x] Advocates for Children of New York. (November 2021). *Student homelessness in New York City*. [https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/nyc\\_student\\_homelessness\\_20-21.pdf?pt=1](https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/nyc_student_homelessness_20-21.pdf?pt=1).

[xi] Amin, R. (June 1, 2021). *NYC students in foster care need dedicated office and guaranteed busing, advocates say*. New York Chalkbeat. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/6/1/22463940/nyc-students-in-foster-care-need-dedicated-office-and-guaranteed-busing-advocates-say>.

[xii] Harris, Elizabeth A. (November 1, 2017). *Thousands of city children not getting special education help*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/01/nyregion/special-education-nyc->

schools.html#:~:text=Tens%20of%20thousands%20of%20New,city%20is%20obligated%20to%20provide.;; New York State School Boards Association. *School districts struggle to find English language learner instructors*. NYSSBA Research. [https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba\\_pdf/Reports/el-teachers-shortage-05032019.pdf](https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/Reports/el-teachers-shortage-05032019.pdf).



## Testimony of the American Heart Association

Before the New York City Council Committee on Education

March 21, 2022

Greg Mihailovich, Community Advocacy Director  
American Heart Association, New York City

Thank you, Chair Joseph, and the members of the New York City Council Committees on Education. On behalf of the volunteers of the American Heart Association, we are grateful for the opportunity to present testimony related to key educational initiatives that our organization believes will motivate healthy behaviors in young New Yorkers.

As the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, of which approximately 80% of diagnoses are preventable<sup>1</sup>, the American Heart Association prioritizes many policies that promote child health. Despite this potential, heart diseases and stroke continue to be our city's leading causes of death and disability. With your continued help, however, we hope to change these statistics.

### CPR in Schools

Cardiac arrest – an electrical malfunction in the heart that causes an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) and disrupts the flow of blood to the brain, lungs, and other organs – is a leading cause of death. Each year, more than 350,000 EMS-assessed out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the United States. When a person has a cardiac arrest, survival depends on immediately receiving CPR from someone nearby. About 90 percent of people who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests die. CPR, especially if performed immediately, can double, or triple a person's chance of survival.

In 2003, the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation recommended that CPR training be incorporated into the standard school curriculum.<sup>2</sup> The long-term thinking of that recommendation is that children trained in CPR contribute significantly to the number of adults trained in CPR in the community. Increasing the number of people trained to perform CPR increases the likelihood that a victim of an out-of-hospital

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<sup>1</sup> "Preventable Deaths from Heart Disease & Stroke." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Sept. 2013, [www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/HeartDisease-Stroke/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/HeartDisease-Stroke/index.html).

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain DA, Hazinski MF. Education in resuscitation: an ILCOR symposium: Utstein Abbey: Stavanger, Norway: June 22–24, 2001. *Circulation*. 2003; 108:2575–2594

cardiac arrest promptly receives CPR. Studies show that any previous training in CPR was a strong predictor of whether bystanders acted to provide CPR to the victim.<sup>3</sup>

Since 2015, New York State requires that all students in senior high schools be provided instruction in hands only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED).<sup>4</sup> This graduation requirement was waived for graduates in the 2019-20 school year due to COVID-19 concerns.<sup>5</sup> Even prior to the pandemic, we had anecdotal evidence that some schools did not have the equipment or resources to provide proper training – stories about students watching a video and being marked as having received the training without even attempting a chest compression. If we want our students to be in a position to act if someone they love suffers a cardiac arrest, we need to provide their schools with the materials and equipment needed for effective CPR training.

We ask the NYC Council to dedicate funding to ensure NYC high school students receive proper CPR and AED training as part of their CPR in Schools graduation requirement.

### Water Access

Water plays an important role in maintaining a child's overall health. Drinking water supports children's muscles, joints, and tissues; improves their digestive system; and keeps their growing bodies hydrated.<sup>6</sup> Adequate water intake can positively impact children's cognitive performance, particularly short-term memory. Drinking water can also improve children's visual attention and fine motor skills.<sup>7</sup>

Generally, the NYC School Construction Authority design requirements for school water access are very good, requiring one drinking fountain for every 100 people, drinking stations in cafeterias and gymnasiums, and water bubblers inside of classrooms for grades 1-5. Additionally, since 2016, The DOE Office of Sustainability, DEP and the Mayor's Office of Sustainability Water Fountain Task Force have replaced older drinking fountains with water bottle refill stations in approximately 100 school buildings. The refill stations have electronic sensors that fill a bottle when it is detected beneath it, an ideal function for reusable water bottles and canteens. Many models also feature a counter for number of plastic bottles saved, reinforcing the importance of single use

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<sup>3</sup> Swor R, Khan I, Domeier R, Honeycutt L, Chu K, Compton S. CPR training and CPR performance: do CPR-trained bystanders perform CPR? Acad Emerg Med. 2006; 13:596-601

<sup>4</sup> New York State Education Department. 2022. 100.2 General School Requirements. [online] Available at: <<http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/1002-general-school-requirements#InstructionCertainSubjects>> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

<sup>5</sup> New York State Education Department. 2022. Section 100.2(c)(11) of Commissioner's Regulations Hands Only CPR requirement exemption for graduating seniors due to the COVID-19 Crisis. [online] Available at: <<http://www.nysed.gov/memo/curriculum-instruction/section-1002c11-commissioners-regulations-hands-only-cpr-requirement>> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Water & Nutrition. Updated October 2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/nutrition/index.html>. Accessed October 31, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Masento NA, Golightly M, Field DT, Butler LT, van Reekum CM. Effects of hydration status on cognitive performance and mood. Br J Nutr. 2014; 111(10):1841-52, doi: 10.1017/S0007114513004455.

plastic reduction. Funding for these refill stations is made possible by the Demand Response Program.<sup>8</sup> With aging school buildings – 200 buildings over 100 years old, and most buildings over 50 years old – we need to make sure that every student has modern drinking water systems in their schools.

We ask the NYC Council to dedicate additional funds to accelerate the upgrade of school drinking water systems to ensure that clean drinking water is accessible during the school day or extended hours while children are in programming in school buildings.

### Effective Physical Education

The American Heart Association applauds the significant efforts undertaken by New York City to improve physical education (PE) in our public schools. The investment in the PE Works and Universal PE programs, and expansion of the PE reporting law helped ensure more NYC public school students received the physical education they deserve. This is important because PE improves the entire school day. Physical activity improves learning. Students who are healthy and physically active are more likely to perform better in all their classes, resulting in higher grades and standardized test scores.<sup>9</sup> Even with the progress NYC has made, not all NYC public students are receiving effective physical education instruction.

We ask the NYC Council to establish funding for technical assistance, dedicated equipment, student instruction, and facilities improvement to enhance physical education programs in our highest-need schools so all our students receive the PE they need and deserve.

Thank you for everything you have done and will do to protect the lives of the people of New York City. The American Heart Association is a reliable and trusted source of information based in credible science, and we will continue to be your partner in ensuring the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

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<sup>8</sup> Demand response program. Demand Response Program - Department of Citywide Administrative Services. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dcas/agencies/demand-response.page>

<sup>9</sup> Physical Education. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/physical-education.htm>



[www.arisecoalition.org](http://www.arisecoalition.org)

**Testimony of The ARISE Coalition for New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget - Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget. Congratulations, Chair Joseph and all committee members here today on your seats on this tremendously important committee. I hope and expect that we will get to know each other well over the coming years, and I am pleased to be testifying before you today.

My name is Maggie Moroff. I am the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition, a group of nearly 50 organizational and over 70 individual members who have been working together since 2008 to push for systemic changes to improve access to quality programming, day-to-day experiences, and long-term outcomes for youth with disabilities and learning differences in New York City schools. You will be hearing from other ARISE members today as well.

I want to note that I am also the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York, but I come before you today on behalf of ARISE.

Let me begin by saying that the members of ARISE welcome Chancellor Banks' recent remarks about the importance of improving literacy in New York City schools. The failure to teach an unconscionable percentage of our students to read at grade level over the past years and to offer interventions as needed across all grades and communities is longstanding and must be addressed immediately. We have been speaking with the current administration about this and I am here today to emphasize how critical funding will be towards that goal.

There is no room for mistakes here. In addition to making certain that all schools use evidence-based, culturally responsive curricula for core instruction, NYC needs to provide evidence-based interventions to all youth who have not made adequate progress in reading through quality core instruction. The City needs to provide intervention going forward for children in their early



years who need additional help learning to read and, importantly, to those older students who have not yet mastered foundational skills – either because they received poor or inadequate instruction in the past or because they have learning disabilities and differences that have gone unaddressed or ill-addressed to date.

The DOE has allocated \$250 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding for “academic recovery and student supports” for Fiscal Year 2023 but has not yet shared specific information on how those funds will be used. We feel strongly that the DOE should invest \$125 million to provide one-on-one or small group intervention to students who need more help learning to read from staff who have training in approaches that work. Ensuring that all students have access to evidence-based reading intervention, regardless of the school they attend, is going to make the difference for NYC’s struggling readers.

I would also like to express our concern that the current DOE hiring freeze will almost certainly impact the more than 200,000 students with disabilities in NYC schools – students who, by nature of their disabilities, require additional supports. Current vacancies for staff working with and on behalf of students with disabilities should be filled. Similarly, hiring freezes should not extend to the City’s Universal Literacy Initiative, which provides literacy coaches to schools to provide critical support to K-2 staff in the teaching of core literacy skills.

Finally, I want to echo the call of others here today for salary parity for preschool special education teachers working at community-based organizations. The City has a significant shortage of preschool special education classes in large part because the community-based organizations the DOE relies on to run these classes do not have the money they need to recruit and retain special education teachers. NYC must commit to paying all preschool special education teachers what they can earn in DOE schools. Without increased salaries, too many preschool students with disabilities around the City will remain home without the programs that can make a huge difference in their development during some of their earliest years, in violation of their legal rights.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am available now and any time in the future to answer questions about ARISE and about our budget recommendations. I can be reached at [mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org).

# ARTHUR MILLER FOUNDATION

FOR THEATER EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## TESTIMONY TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

March 21, 2022

My name is Jaime Hastings: I'm the Executive Director of the Arthur Miller Foundation, a non-profit organization that honors the legacy of the American playwright, Arthur Miller, and *his* New York City public school education, by supporting theater teachers.

Theater education *is* social-emotional learning. Theater education fosters collaboration, empathy, and gives students a safe space to find their voice, while increasing student attendance and engagement.

78 NYC DOE theater teachers are part of the AMF Fellows Program, in partnership with Office of Arts and Special Projects. Over the course of 3 years, theater teachers receive over \$30,000 in dedicated support to build sustainable in-school theater programs through mentorship, cultural partner residencies, classroom materials, Broadway tickets for students, and ongoing professional development. The program reaches nearly 40,000 students across all 5 boroughs of NYC. Not only are we supporting in-school theater education programs and certified theater teachers, but we're investing in the NYC cultural economy through partnerships with 8 organizations and their teaching artists.

The most recent arts in schools report showed that only 21% of DOE schools has a certified theater teacher. **I am here to request that any budget cuts we face do not affect DOE theater teachers (approximately 200 of them) who are already severely underrepresented throughout NYC, when compared to other subject areas and arts disciplines.** We are grateful for the \$70 million historic investment in arts education, but that funding was a temporary, one-year increase. We need your help for arts education to have an equitable seat at the table. Please consider reinstating that funding for next school year.

As we look to the future together, we'll continue providing support for our DOE theater teachers and students. After all, that's what a community is for. But to do our part, we must ensure the Arts Office and arts education infrastructure are not lost and that the DOE is able to *continue* hiring certified arts teachers. Together we can foster the students of today to become the forward-thinking, creative problem-solvers of tomorrow. But we cannot lose the progress that's been made to this point when we still have such a long way to go. **Please help us ensure that theater education is prioritized and considered a right — not a privilege. Thank you.**



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**TESTIMONY BEFORE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT  
HEARINGS ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023**

**MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022**

PREPARED BY  
DAVID LUDWIG  
SENIOR DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ASPHALT GREEN

*Good afternoon Chair Joseph. My name is David Ludwig and I serve as Senior Director of Community Programs & Governmental Affairs for Asphalt Green. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee on Education on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Asphalt Green is a nonprofit organization committed to providing access to sports and fitness opportunities for all New Yorkers. As a nonprofit, we foster a love for physical activity in underserved areas. Our programs—including sports leagues, swim lessons, and active recess—help children develop physically, emotionally, and socially. We believe positive experiences in sports and fitness lead young people to develop skills and habits that will help them lead healthy, active lives as adults.

Asphalt Green manages a multi-million budget with over 500 employees across our two campuses. Our members help support our community programs, which allows us to provide free services and scholarships to New Yorkers in need. And, we have been fortunate to have a wonderful working relationship with NYC Parks & Recreation, with an original agreement dating back to 1989 and renewed in 2011.

Asphalt Green manages two campuses in Manhattan, which include world-class aquatics, sports, and fitness programs:

- Our flagship campus at East 90<sup>th</sup> Street features the historic George and Annette Murphy Center with an indoor soccer turf, theater, and fitness spaces; AquaCenter, which houses our Olympic-sized 50-meter pool and duplex fitness center, and a 90,000 square foot, state-of-the art, outdoor turf field



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- Since 2013 our second campus in Battery Park City opened with a 25-yard indoor lap pool, full-service fitness center, and a gymnasium equipped for basketball, volleyball, soccer, and more.

At our two campuses, Asphalt Green hosts summer day camps, swim camp, soccer camp, swim classes, diving, water polo, a range of indoor and outdoor sports (basketball, baseball, flag football, martial arts, soccer, tennis), fitness programming (spin, Pilates, yoga, stretching), and much more.

## OUR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Asphalt Green is committed to improving the health and fitness of all New Yorkers, regardless of age, ability, and economics. We operate a variety of programs that allow those who might not have such experiences to share in the joy and benefits of sports, aquatics, and fitness. We call these our Community Programs.

Our Community Programs help children develop positive attitudes toward being active through play and sports. We strive to instill healthy habits in each child. Our core community programs for kids are:

- **Waterproofing:** Asphalt Green's free swim instruction and water safety program for New York City public school students that teaches a survival skill while instilling a lifelong fitness habit. Since 1994, over 35,000 second-graders have learned to swim through Waterproofing. This program provides each participant with over 20 hours of group swim instruction on a weekly basis throughout the school year. Teachers report a correlation between Waterproofing and both better grades and behavior in the classroom. Children who participate in Waterproofing learn confidence and perseverance, and leave with an essential life skill.
- **Recess Enhancement Program (REP):** REP addresses barriers to physical activity by reclaiming the most underutilized part of the school day — recess! Asphalt Green partners with New York City public elementary schools to provide over 10,000 students physical activity programs during lunch and recess periods. Asphalt Green trains play coaches to get children physically active through over 150 organized games that decrease conflict and increase self-esteem, safety, and fun. Experts recommend that children should be physically active 60 minutes a day with 30 of those minutes occurring during school hours. REP helps children meet the daily youth physical activity guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Community Sports Leagues:** Asphalt Green provides approximately 500 middle school children from low-income neighborhoods access to organized sports like flag football, basketball, and soccer. In the past decade, over 20,000 kids from New York City schools have played in Asphalt Green's Community Sports Leagues. Asphalt Green partners with schools in



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low-income neighborhoods that have limited access to organized sports. We administer the league at a low cost to schools and provide participants with free uniforms, professional referees, equipment, and instructional clinics with our coaches. The Community Sports League curriculum mirrors that of our recreational and competitive teams. Community Sports Leagues teach lifelong lessons in leadership, self-esteem, teamwork, and confidence. Kids learn how to balance academics and athletics.

- **Scholarships:** This fiscal year, Asphalt Green provides \$430,000 in scholarships to our sports, aquatics, and camp programs. Our goal is to make our high-quality programs available to as many children as possible. Our scholarships include:
  - **Summer Day Camp scholarships:** for more than two decades Asphalt Green Summer Day Camp scholarships have brought children from all over New York City to our campus to play outside, make new friends and develop physical, emotional, and social skills that stay with them for a lifetime.
  - **Asphalt Green Soccer Club Scholarships:** provide opportunity to exceptional athletes of all backgrounds, we offer scholarships to Asphalt Green players with financial need. Recipients must be a current or newly selected member of an Asphalt Green team. Our Asphalt Green Scholarship has helped make our youth sports teams among the most diverse in the country.
  - **Swim Team Scholarships:** Asphalt Green Unified Aquatics (AGUA) Swim Team is one of the most diverse youth swim teams in the country. This is due in part to the Swim for the Future Scholarship, which gives children with financial need a chance to pursue the dream of competitive swimming.

Over the years, Swim for the Future Scholarship recipients have excelled in the swimming world at regional, national, and international competitions while breaking personal, team, and national age group records, with one swimmer medaling at the Tokyo Olympics.

- **Senior Fitness:** Asphalt Green provides opportunities for 100 seniors to get fit and active each year through free memberships at our Upper East Side and Battery Park City facilities.

**Since 2001, over 1850 scholarships worth close to \$5 million have been awarded through these initiatives.**



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555 East 90 <sup>th</sup> Street	212 North End Avenue
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	<a href="http://asphaltgreen.org">asphaltgreen.org</a>

## COVID-19 AND ASPHALT GREEN

The world needs sports and fitness now more than ever. The Aspen Institute recently released physical activity trends during the pandemic and found youth of all ages are half as active as they were prior to the pandemic.

COVID-19 has significantly changed the way we operate and forced us to think about ways to get essential physical activity in a socially distant world. Some ways we have pivoted include:

- We transformed our Recess Enhancement Program (REP) to create games that promote physical activity while social distancing. The resource has global impact and has been viewed in over 170 countries.
- Our competitive sports teams practiced on Zoom.
- We dedicated our social media channels to providing tips for adults and families to stay active, ran free group exercise classes on Instagram, and offered group exercise classes and personal training virtually.
- After about six months, we were able to meet in person again in small groups with social distancing and safety measures in place.

Physical activity is correlated with academic achievement, reduced stress and anxiety, and higher self-esteem. The shift to virtual learning left few opportunities during the school day for physical activity and social connections for kids. We are providing resources for educators and families during this challenging time.

## THE WORK AHEAD

As New York City emerges from the pandemic, Asphalt Green's vision is to rebuild our community impact to pre-pandemic levels, and beyond. As schools transition back to full in-person teaching, and COVID protocols allow for more direct service and in-person programming during and after school, Asphalt Green will be working with our community partners and the NYC Department of Education to further engage with schools and expand our work in the upcoming school years.

Asphalt Green is excited by the possibility of continuing to provide world-class athletic programming in schools across the entire city. We'll continue talking with our partners in the Adams administration, NYC Department of Education, principals and educators to determine how and where Asphalt Green can make the most impact in the neediest communities.

And we'll continue to work with the Council and individual Council Members to deepen our impact and expand our work across New York City.



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## FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET REQUESTS

During Fiscal Year 2022, Asphalt Green served over 17,000 New Yorkers across New York City at an approximate cost of \$1.2 million, including FY22 NYC Council allocations of support for \$82,500. For Fiscal Year 2023, Asphalt anticipates serving over 30,000 New Yorkers at an approximate cost of \$2 million and is requesting \$734,000 in various allocations from the NYC Council:

- **Delegation Expense requests - \$11,000**

Asphalt Green is requesting expense funding from each of the Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn and The Bronx borough delegations to continue our work, and to expand back to pre-pandemic engagement numbers in our Waterproofing, Recess Enhancement Program and after school athletic programs.

- **Speakers Initiative - \$200,000**

Asphalt Green has received a Speakers allocation annually to support our Community Programs department and the work they do across the City. Funding supports Asphalt Green staffing of our in-school Recess Enhancement Program (REP), our after school athletic programs, and our Waterproofing programs at pools across the City.

- **Physical Education & Fitness Initiative - \$250,000**

This initiative with the Department of Education and Department of Youth & Community Development helps to improve fitness levels and the overall health of students by providing physical activity and fitness programs. With Asphalt Green staff providing direct services in schools during the school day, this funding would help to bolster and enhance Asphalt Green's work with schools, as well as expand back to pre-pandemic levels of engagement.

- **Afterschool Enrichment Initiative - \$30,000**

This initiative with Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth & Community Development funds afterschool program providers that offer high-quality arts and athletic activities, as well as academic enrichment and support. Asphalt Green's staff are already providing after school programming and funding from this initiative would help to grow the work we're doing at locations across four boroughs.

- **Sports Training and Rolemodels for Success (STARS) - \$30,000**

This initiative with Department of Youth & Community Development provides afterschool programming that promotes physical activity, healthy living, and wellness for elementary, middle, and high school girls. Asphalt Green provides health and fitness training and sports programs for young girls and young women and can use the allocation to expand our offerings to a new, larger STARS audience.



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## CONCLUSION

*Asphalt Green looks forward to continuing our commitment to New York City's neighborhoods, youth, and seniors, and growing our relationship with NYC Department of Education and New York City Council. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about Asphalt Green's work.*



Thank you to the Education Committee Chair, Council Member Joseph, and as well as to all the Education Committee Members for holding a hearing on the preliminary budget for FY23. My name is Alex Lorditch and I am the Executive Operations Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC). As the nation's first and New York City's largest youth mentoring organization, BBBS of NYC stands with and advocates for all students across the five boroughs who deserve access to mentorship as a crucial support for their educational experiences.

The vision of BBBS of NYC is to ignite the biggest potential in our City's youth, and we achieve this by building and supporting mentoring relationships. We have seen firsthand the significant impact that a mentor can have in a young person's life and that mentorship can place a child on a trajectory towards personal and academic success. 97% of the Littles we served in FY21 were promoted to the next grade and 100% of high school seniors graduated from high school (compared to the NYC Department of Education's 2020 high school graduation rate of 78.8%). 90% of our graduating high school seniors were accepted into college (with 8.5% of remaining seniors planning to attend a vocational/trade school, join the military, or work). BBBS of NYC has also committed to supporting our Littles as they transition into college through our College & Career Success Program, and we have gradually increased the number of college students we support from 61 students (FY19) to 199 students (FY21), with 70% of those students attending public colleges and universities. This college mentorship is especially crucial as most of our College & Career Success Program students are first-generation college students (i.e., first in their family to attend college), and the six-year graduation rate for first-generation college students in the US is just 11% (compared to the six-year graduation rate for all college students in the US of 55%).

Whether a student participates in our program or not, there is no denying that mentorship is key to success in the classroom and in life. Mentors may come in the form of a teacher, a guidance counselor, or a coach on a school team. We have seen this to be even more true

as our NYC students have navigated the uncertainty and instability of school life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC has been successful in adjusting our operations throughout the pandemic to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of the youth and families we serve, especially at a time when schools and supplemental programs were not always able to meet these needs. Our Program Managers transitioned our social, cultural, academic and college/career-readiness wraparound activities to virtual platforms such as Zoom to continue providing social-emotional and academic supports to our matches. We also hosted virtual family support groups, mentor town halls, virtual match outings, and workshops on college-readiness, college transition, and career exploration.

This work would not have been possible without the generous support of the City Council and our stakeholders. As the City begins to enter this next stage of the pandemic, it is important that we emerge with supports firmly in place for youth that is encouraging to their academic development after two very difficult years. It is imperative that the New York City Council fully funds our organization and all other programs that provide these essential educational and academic-adjacent services to the youth in our City. Considering the disruption of the last two years, we must strongly invest in restoring support to our students to make sure that they are set up for academic success, which will only lead to more potential ignited.



## Testimony for City Council Hearing 3/21/2022

Good afternoon members of the Education Committee of the City Council. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

I am Lisa Gilday, Chief Operating Officer at Birch Family Services. We are a not-for-profit organization that has provided educational, residential, community and employment services for people with autism and other developmental disabilities for over 45 years. Our education services include Multi-Disciplinary Evaluations for children with delays, early childhood and school-age programs serving children with disabilities ages 3 through 21. The focus of my testimony today will be on preschool special education services and the need for the City Council to act now to provide for NY's most vulnerable public-school students.

Birch Family Services is a leading provider of special education preschool services in NYC, operating eight (8) New York State Education Department (NYSED) approved 4410 preschool programs in the boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. We provide educational and related services such as speech, PT, OT, and behavioral support to approximately 1,000 preschool students in the Least Restrictive setting appropriate for each child. Our class sizes range from 6 to 18 students offering a continuum for children thrive and have opportunities to be with typically developing children. It is important for Council Members to understand that our students are NYC public school students. Children are referred to us by the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) of the NYC Department of Education because neither the local school district nor District 75 have suitable placement options. Birch works in partnership with the SED and the DOE to ensure these students have an appropriate quality education placement. We are a not-for-profit and receive our tuition funding from SED and DOE. We accept the tuition rates promulgated by our funders. It is important to note that about 88% of special education preschool students in NYC receive their services through community based non-public programs operating 4410 special classes like Birch Family Services. Because of this, the City Council must act to ensure that our children have access to certified special education teachers, assistants, and related therapists.

For years, providers like Birch have been struggling to recruit and retain certified teachers, teacher assistants, and related service providers because of the lack of tuition increases to our schools in comparison to local school districts. Since 2012, our schools have received a 10%

tuition increase as compared to a 46% to local districts. The result is our inability to provide competitive salaries to our teachers in comparison to teachers in public school settings.

Furthermore, in 2019, the City Council heard the concerns about parity at CBOs and along with Mayor DeBlasio reached an agreement to raise the salaries of certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs. However, this agreement failed to include the teachers of 4410 preschool special education programs also in contract with the DOE. While there was an acknowledgement of the omission of 4410 programs, there is still no proposed resolution for these educators to achieve parity. In the past 3 years, the salary disparity has become even more significant. Today, the starting salary for a certified special education teacher with a master's degree and no experience at the DOE or CBOs included in the parity initiative is about \$68,500 for a 10-month calendar. The 4410 preschools like Birch are hiring at significantly lower rates – with starting salaries in the low to mid \$50s for a 12-month calendar. Can special education preschools offer its most complex students access to a quality education with a certified teacher with this salary disparity? Our programs are losing certified teachers and other staff to the DOE and CBOs because of the significant pay differential. We are experiencing a vacancy rate of close to 30% - almost double what it was in 2017.

I am concerned that the staffing crisis in our schools is creating a situation where preschool children with disabilities are being left at home without a program or it is taking too long for placement because there are no available seats in special education preschools, or a qualified staff person available to work with them. Students not receiving the services that they are mandated to receive through their Individualized Education Plan does not comply with the federal IDEA requirements of each child having a free and appropriate public education. The DOE projects that they may be short about 900 student placements this spring based on the existing portfolio of preschool special education classrooms. Although the City has released an RFP to CBOs to expand preschool special education class seats by 800 beginning in July with an offer of some type of contract enhancement to CBOs that run these classes, it has not committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement or for the existing 4410 special education teachers not included in the prior parity initiative.

To continue providing the current level of preschool services for children with disabilities and expand to meet the projected needs, the NY City must provide pay parity for 4410 preschool teachers and staff members that is equal to the DOE based on a 12-month calendar. Without increased salaries, programs such as ours will not be able to recruit or retain certified staff and students will not receive the education to which they, by law, are entitled.

***We are asking that you ensure that the FY 23 budget invests at least \$30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at 4410 CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that preschoolers with disabilities get a fair and appropriate education.***

Preliminary Budget Hearing - Committee on Education

March 21, 2022

Testimony of Kelly Moltzen, Program Manager

Bronx Health REACH / Institute for Family Health

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My name is Kelly Moltzen and I am the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program manager at Bronx Health REACH at the Institute for Family Health. Bronx Health REACH works to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the Bronx, particularly related to obesity, heart disease, and other diet-related diseases.

I would like to thank Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph and all the members of the City Council Education Committee for holding this preliminary budget hearing. Bronx Health REACH shares the City Council's interest in creating a future in which all our city's children are well nourished and healthy so that they can focus and achieve academic success in the classroom.

Food and nutrition education, and supporting schools in achieving their school wellness goals, are important steps in promoting the health and academic success of students. When students are more involved in learning about, growing, and selecting their food, they are more likely to eat it. We have seen students improve their eating habits when they are receiving nutrition education. Unfortunately, we have sometimes seen that when students receive insufficient nutrition education, they go back to their old eating habits of consuming junk foods when the nutrition education stops. It is therefore important that nutrition education be continuous and be integrated into various aspects of the schools' culture and curriculum. This is why it is important to provide flexible funding to support food and nutrition education during and after school, so schools can tailor their food and nutrition education programming to meet each school's needs.

The NYC Department of Education currently provides school wellness council grants to schools. Adjusting or replacing the existing grants program to allow for more flexible funding could help to ensure schools can tailor programming to their community needs. For example, schools could use funding to:

- Provide per session pay to teachers who provide after school programming for students and families. Bronx Health REACH has found it more likely that teachers will provide food and nutrition education when they are paid to do so.
- Support a paid Wellness Coordinator to help align food ed programming across grades, facilitate professional development, and help integrate wellness with sustainability and other academic subjects. Our experience supporting schools in setting up wellness councils is that it is often difficult for schools to coordinate when there is not an assigned person to organize the wellness councils who has the capacity to volunteer and add it to their already busy schedules.
- Partner with an external program to provide professional development, staffing, or other support to effectively integrate food and nutrition education into their curriculum and improve upon their Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs (CSPAP). Bronx Health REACH has partnered with

FoodCorps and other food-ed organizations to offer food and nutrition education, as we do not provide nutrition education as a direct service. Similarly, we partner with groups like Equity Design that provide schools with training and technical assistance to improve on physical education, physical activity before & after school, physical activity in the classroom, recess, and parent engagement. If schools had flexible funding to spend on food and nutrition education and CSPAP training and technical assistance, it would ensure the funding can be used to meet the specific needs of individual schools.

The Food-Ed Hub of the Tisch Center for Food, Education and Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University provides the Wellness Program Finder platform for schools to get connected to not only food and nutrition education opportunities, but also physical and mental health programs, that will suit their individual school's needs. Continuing to fund the Food-Ed Hub is therefore a critical pathway to ensuring schools can identify the opportunities that they can use to improve on their school wellness goals.

Next, we believe it is critical to hire additional School Food Managers. School Food Managers help schools improve meal quality and presentation, and better meals are the best way to increase meal participation. Funding for an additional 60 managers would enable the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) to: plan and review appealing menus, educate students on the importance of eating healthfully, provide professional development for food service staff, partner with school leadership to create positive meal experiences in the cafeteria, and increase participation in the school meals program. If OFNS is able to reduce the schools to school food managers ratio, then each School Food Manager would be able to dedicate more time to ensuring quality meals are prepared, and would be better able to engage the students through school Nutrition Committees and/or school wellness councils. If students are able to provide more feedback on the meals being prepared at their school, and this feedback is incorporated into the recipe and meal development, it will increase the likelihood of students consuming the foods. It is a waste of taxpayer money and a shame for food to go to waste when meals are not prepared to the students' liking and as a result, they throw out their food. It would be more effective to invest into more School Food Managers so each manager can dedicate sufficient time to attending to the meal preparation and student engagement needs at each school.

As a participant in the Food-Ed Coalition, Bronx Health REACH supports the Coalition's position that all New York City students deserve healthy, equitable, sustainable, and culturally responsive food access and education. In order to achieve this goal, we have to continue to support food and nutrition education coordination, flexible implementation, and adequate School Food Managers who can ensure meals provided to students are of good quality and connected to the education and engagement opportunities offered to students.

We are grateful to the City Council for its commitment to food and nutrition education and student wellness in New York City schools, and we look forward to working with you to continue growing healthy students and families. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Testimony of Kaveri Sengupta, Senior Policy Coordinator for Education  
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**

**Committee on Education Remote Hearing  
March 21, 2021 at 9:00AM**

Good afternoon. My name is Kaveri Sengupta, and I am the Senior Policy Coordinator for Education at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the Committee on Education for giving us this opportunity to testify.

Founded in 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization and leads the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services. The Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) population comprises nearly 18% of New York City. Many in our diverse communities face high levels of poverty, overcrowding, uninsurance, and linguistic isolation. Yet, the needs of the AAPI community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and uncounted. Our coalition is constantly fighting the harmful impacts of the model minority myth, which prevents our needs from being recognized and understood. Our communities, as well as the organizations that serve the community, too often lack the resources to provide critical services to the most marginalized AAPIs. Working with over 70 member and partner organizations across the City to identify and speak out on the many common challenges our community faces, CACF is building a community too powerful to ignore.

**AAPI students comprise 16.2% of the NYC student population, attend over 95% of our public schools, make up almost 1 in 4 English Language Learners, and over 15,000 have an IEP.** AAPI New Yorkers are the **fastest growing racial/ethnic group** in New York City, State, and the nation. In 2021, there were **over 9,000 reported incidents** of anti-Asian violence and a **361% increase** in Anti-Asian related hate crimes in NYC alone, with women twice as likely as men to be targeted. NYC has had the highest rate of incidents of all U.S. cities. The AAPI community has the **highest rate of poverty** of all racial groups in NYC. The number of low-income Asian Americans in and around NYC **rose by 15%** over the last decade. **46% of AAPIs across the City have limited English proficiency (LEP)**, meaning that they speak English less than very well. They also have the highest rate of linguistic isolation of any group, indicating that no one over the age of 14 in the household speaks English well or at all. Half of the most spoken non-English languages are AAPI languages.

A critical way that elected officials and DOE can address the rising levels of violence against Asian Americans and help to dismantle the model minority myth is by enacting policies and a budget that are truly supportive of our students. We denounce the cuts in funding to the New York City education system outlined in the Mayor's preliminary budget, and strongly believe that due to the need to address long term inequities exacerbated by the pandemic, our students and families need more investment than ever.



In the summer of 2021, CACF conducted a rapid needs assessment in collaboration with the NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health and the Chinese-American Planning Council over 1000 adults of Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, or Arab descent living in the metropolitan New York area to assess the current and ongoing needs of the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report highlights the disproportionate impact COVID-19 pandemic has had on the New York Asian American community that requires acknowledgement and equitable support and resources to support our communities in ongoing COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts. Our community-based organizations have had to pivot to provide basic needs and resources to our community members, including timely COVID-19 prevention and vaccination information in preferred languages, language/interpreter services to link communities to appropriate social services and public benefits, and food support to increase food security. These issues remain largely unaddressed by local, state, and national leaders in the COVID-19 emergency response efforts.

#### Education-Related Survey Results:

- 35% of Asian American adults overall and 38% of Latinx adults reported having a child or children in school or participating in remote learning.
  - The percent with children in school or participating in remote learning differed by Asian subgroup: Chinese 41%, Korean 39%, Japanese 15%, Bangladeshi 34%, and Nepali 36%.
- The top 5 challenges of remote learning reported for Asian Americans overall were: inability to concentrate because of family members present at home or lack of space to study (58%); lack of high-speed internet access (28%); teachers were not accommodating of student circumstances (20%); language barriers in understanding the materials (20%); and lack of technological equipment (15%).
  - The top concern for all Asian subgroups was the inability to concentrate because of family members present at home or lack of space to study: Chinese 61%, Korean 56%, Japanese 57%, Bangladeshi 48%, and Nepali 43%.

Both lack of bilingual school staff and lack of culturally responsive practices continue to yield barriers for AAPI ELLs in particular to fully participate in their school communities. Another CBO in our membership serves a public school in Chinatown with over 70% of Chinese immigrant families with limited English proficiency (about 280 families). Only one staff member at this school, the Parent Coordinator, knows Chinese. One of the CBO's afterschool students is new to the English language and his grandmother informed them that he was pushed many times by other students and got hurt. He was sent to the school nurse, but because none of the school teachers or staff can communicate with him in Chinese, he doesn't know who he can go seek help from if these incidents occur. Properly addressing the root causes of bullying and cultivating empathy and inclusion with explicit reference to AAPI experiences are critical to preventing these occurrences from escalating to begin with.





As has been well documented, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in reporting of anti-Asian sentiment and violence, and the impact has very much been felt by ELLs and their families. Similarly, the dearth of adults in the school building equipped to support students and families in their home language, even though their experiences very much impact their learning, result in compounded difficulties. Another afterschool ELL student at this CBO was a witness to an anti-Asian attack against her mother and was traumatized. This student's mother has not been willing to talk about it, even though the student really wants to and needs to talk about it with her mother. She has expressed worry and fear about not feeling safe living in her Chinatown/Lower East Side neighborhood.

AAPJ young people need investment in culturally responsive and language accessible education services, without which many immigrant students in particular can find themselves isolated and marginalized, facing continued barriers to navigating systems and accessing critical services that would put them on the path to becoming competent and responsible adults. These needs have only intensified as a result of the pandemic, which has further isolated so many of our AAPJ students, who have contended with an enormous disruption to their education, heightened mental health challenges, and ongoing fears regarding racism. They deserve a budget that prioritizes them. This means investing in them, by funding policies, programs, and investments we know provide them with comprehensive supports and opportunities.

**City Council must ensure sufficient funding and accountability in the FY23 budget for the DOE to invest in and sustain the following multipronged policies, which will support AAPJ students and families, especially those who struggle the most.**

- **Collect and make transparent disaggregated data by ethnic group to target services to long-underserved communities.** on enrollment (including G&T, screened/unscreened, and specialized schools), academic outcome, suspension and discipline, and IEP referral of AAPJs in all schools and districts by ethnicity, gender, home language, ELL status, ability, and socioeconomic status, and provide the ability to cross tabulate between fields. **Begin by updating enrollment forms to ask respondents about ethnicity in the upcoming school year.** Funding should be used to change internal data collection processes, engage stakeholders on how best to collect data, internally roll out and train staff on new data collection policies and procedures, and a public service announcement series and community engagement explaining changes in data being requested and why they will benefit families.
- **Thoughtfully engage stakeholders and community members and comprehensively roll out the Universal Mosaic Curriculum, as part of a holistic investment in culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE), as well as infusing curricular materials covering AAPJs.** Invest in all elements of CRSE, including infusing curricular materials about AAPJ history, culture, contributions, and connections with other communities of



color into existing curricula and providing educators with clear guidelines on where and how to incorporate so all students see these materials in their classrooms. We are concerned about reports indicating that Mosaic is behind schedule and lacks clear direction, and that plans for rollout are more limited in scope than originally planned. The notion that the final product will simply be a set of resources for schools to use at their preference is deeply concerning, because it suggests that many students will not see culturally responsive materials in their classrooms.

- **Hire more bilingual and culturally responsive/humble guidance counselors, social workers, and mental health staff.** This is necessary for AAPI students' holistic recovery from the pandemic. ELLs in particular should be able to access these services in their home languages. We need supportive adults in school buildings who can work with students who have experienced trauma and can ensure that our young people are seen and their fears and challenges are acknowledged.
- **Expand community schools into harder to reach AAPI communities, and develop partnerships with AAPI-led and serving CBOs beyond the current organizational partners (both within and outside of the community schools model), which are unable to cover all of the need.** Community schools with AAPI organizations can provide necessary services and ensure that our students are seen and heard.
- **Provide additional support for ELLs, such as ESL or bilingual teachers to work with students after school.** This is particularly critical for those who struggle with English language and reading comprehension, which are gaps that bleed into struggles with other subjects.
- **Address the under referral of AAPI students for special education services to ensure that needs are properly identified, met, and supported.**
- **Baseline a \$6 million investment in language access infrastructure** to support communications and outreach to immigrant and limited English proficient families.

Like all students, AAPI students need schools to invest in them as whole children, and their worries and struggles must be acknowledged in and out of the classroom, at all levels - from school-level staff to DOE leadership.

**CACF is also a steering committee member for New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools, a multiracial citywide education justice coalition aimed at centering racial equity in policy and budget decisions for public education.** We support the investments outlined in this [document](#).

**Finally, CACF leads the 18% and Growing Campaign,** a group of over 50 Asian led and serving organizations that work together to fight for a fair, inclusive, and equitable New York City budget that protects the most vulnerable Asian American Pacific Islander New Yorkers. We are grateful to last year's City Council for creating a new citywide initiative titled **AAPI Community Support**, which The AAPI Community Support Initiative is a citywide initiative that funds Asian American



and Pacific Islander (AAPI) serving community-based organizations (CBOs) providing community-informed social services and programming to address the severe rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it funds critical programming, including mental health support, youth programs, racial literacy, hate crimes intervention, gender-based violence intervention and prevention, and other culturally responsive services needed to build long-term care and healing for AAPI New Yorkers. The initiative builds capacity, amplifies existing community-based efforts, and supports CBOs in reaching underserved AAPI communities through the power of culturally responsive and language accessible programming. To sustain and expand on the incredibly rich, comprehensive, and transformative work made possible by , the **18% and Growing Campaign is asking for an enhancement of \$6 million for the AAPI Community Support Initiative** to support more than 50 AAPI -led and -serving CBOs in NYC.

As we continue to live in a world rife with the repercussions of COVID, in which existing disparities continue to grow, we must be sure to center all of our decisions on our most marginalized students and avoid neglecting those who may have previously been ignored. Our communities are consistently overlooked in the distribution of resources, which is harmful to us as well as other communities of color who are denied the same resources due to the perceived “success” of AAPIs. This pandemic has highlighted a myriad of holes in our City’s safety net systems, and the City’s response must address root problems in addition to immediate needs. Our community will continue to suffer every day we allow these flaws in the system to exist. As always, CACF will continue to be available as a resource and partner to address these concerns and look forward to working with you to better address our communities’ needs.

**CAMBA**  
**Testimony Before the New York City Council**  
**Committee on Education**  
**March 21, 2022**  
**Joanne M. Oplustil**

Council Member Joseph and Members of the Committee, my name is Joanne M. Oplustil and I am the President and CEO of CAMBA, Inc. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA is one of New York City's largest and most trusted community-based organizations and is unique among peer agencies in scale, quality, and responsiveness. Founded in 1977 as a merchants' block association, the agency has grown in direct response to the needs of the Brooklyn community and beyond. Today, CAMBA provides services to 70,000 individuals and families annually through an integrated set of six program areas: Economic Development, Education and Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing, and Legal Services.

For 16 years, CAMBA's Learning to Work (LTW) programs have helped to re-engage students who are overage and under-credited to graduate high school. Today, CAMBA's LTW Programs are offered at ten transfer high schools and two Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC). Transfer high schools are small, full-time high schools designed to motivate students who have fallen behind in credits. YABCs offer evening academic programs for high school students who cannot attend during the day. We provide a wide range of diverse programming, including academic and student support, career and educational development, college advising and preparation, work preparation, skills development, and paid internships with companies like Edible Arrangements, BRIC, Vibe Magazine, and more. Across this portfolio, we serve over 2,600 youth, and these programs also employ close to 100 dedicated professionals. Through our comprehensive continuum of care, CAMBA provides people with the tools and resources that they need to achieve their full potential, annually helping over 700 students who were at great risk of never graduating earn their high school diplomas. Further, through the Learning to Work Program's paid internships, our students have worked to earn approximately \$1 million annually.

Today, I would like to address the Committee regarding the importance of developing education and youth services budgets that will ensure a brighter future for all of New York City's children and families. First, I would like to begin by noting that we at CAMBA – and countless other New Yorkers – are deeply grateful to the City for its herculean efforts to maintain a functioning school system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing distance learning across the nation's largest school system is truly remarkable, as are the City's efforts to ensure that low-income students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch do not go hungry just because their school buildings are closed.

With that said, we must acknowledge that the devastation of the COVID-19 crisis has been borne disproportionately by the low-income communities of color that CAMBA serves. According to data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the COVID-19 hospitalization rate among Black New Yorkers has been more than twice that among Whites. Moreover, the disparity in death rates is almost just as high. Racial disparities in health outcomes in our City are the long-term result of structural racism. Many of the parents of the students we serve were laid off from closed businesses or unable to find work during the economic shutdown. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Black and Hispanic workers were more than twice as likely to earn poverty-level wages, and industries that rely on low-wage earners – such as retail, travel, leisure, and hospitality – were the most likely to be closing during the pandemic. Further, a study by the New York City Comptroller found that 75% of essential workers in the City are people of color who were disproportionately represented on the frontlines and, thus, at a higher risk of contracting the coronavirus.

For our students, one of the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis is the new reality of the communities where they live or go to school. They are the family members of those who are most likely to already have been impacted and who will continue to be impacted by COVID-19: essential workers, those who have lost their jobs, those who have contracted the coronavirus, or, tragically, those who have been hospitalized or even lost their lives to the pandemic.

At the same time as the coronavirus disproportionately impacted New Yorkers of color, the State asked its highest-poverty school districts to bear a far greater share of the burden of budget cuts made necessary by the economic shutdown. Indeed, districts like New York City took such a big cut in State education funding that it cancelled out the increase in federal stimulus funding. As noted by Chalkbeat, “high-poverty districts also got less than what they might have received had coronavirus not devastated the State’s economy, while more affluent districts are getting roughly the same.” This is consistent with the pattern we witnessed in school funding as cuts were made in the wake of the Great Recession.

Our Learning to Work Programs serve the most disadvantaged students in the City who are now more at risk than ever before. Even in normal times, these young people have a tenuous connection to the school system. Many struggle with challenges such as mental illness, substance use disorders, or involvement with the criminal justice system. CAMBA and other providers offer these students a lifeline of academic and supportive services that empower them to complete high school successfully and move on to post-secondary education and gainful employment. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, these programs are needed more than ever and funding needs to be maintained to keep them whole.

Across our portfolio, we employ the Primary Person Model that is a key element of Positive Youth Development practice. For example, in our Learning To Work Programs, each student has an Advocate Counselor, a caring adult who serves as their mentor and go-to person for addressing the obstacles to educational and personal success.

Our model is also trauma-informed and based on the recognition that students bring many life challenges with them when they come to school. These challenges have been greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, CAMBA's LTW Advocate Counselors helped young people and their families cope with the loss of family members. In one instance, we helped a student through the personal crisis of losing five family members. In addition to academic and attendance support, our counselors stepped up with far-reaching socio-emotional support and assistance through regular phone calls and virtual face-to-face meetings with the students and family members. There were no 'regular hours' in 2020, and our staff were there to take calls as early as 7am and through the late evening hours. The Washington Post reported that "Federal agencies and experts warn that a historic wave of mental-health problems is approaching: depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide." Before the pandemic, these problems were already facts of life for many of our students. Thus, our Advocate Counselors and Social Workers that we have in our programs are continuing to provide desperately needed mental health counseling sessions for our students, vital supports for fragile young people that should not become the victims of the budget ax.

As a Learning to Work services provider, CAMBA is glad to see that there were no cuts to the Learning to Work Program for FY23. While we are ecstatic over the Mayor's commitment towards the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and other work-based programs, we want to continue to push this administration and City government in the right direction. The City must continue to invest in programs like Learning to Work, which provide needed wrap-around services within a highly effective work-based learning model, and not penalize programs by reducing money in the educational budget because of low enrollment numbers. CAMBA and similarly situated community-based organizations are on the ground directly supporting communities still reeling from the pandemic. Low enrollment numbers in education programs serving high needs communities are a symptom of larger systemic issues exacerbated by the pandemic, and will only further hurt these communities we are all trying to help.

Further, current funding levels do not address our need to attract and retain talent to support our vital services. As a social service provider, our New York City contracts – including our Learning to Work contracts – do not provide our organization with the requisite funding to provide pay, benefits, and opportunities for career advancements commensurate to the importance of the services our staff provide. CAMBA stands with the #JustPay Campaign in implementing the changes to address inequitable pay among human services workers with emphasis on these core reforms:

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

Lastly, CAMBA, as a member of the Learning To Work Coalition, calls on the City to look into sustainable streams of funding for the Learning to Work program. As \$30.4 million (or more than 70%) of the \$42.1 million of LTW's entire budget is made up of federal stimulus dollars set to expire by 2025, it is vital for the City make a plan to continue to fully support the LTW program when the federal money expires. Otherwise, the City will be directly responsible for dismantling the whole system we have worked to create to support the over-age and under-credited students who desperately need our services.

Thank you for allowing us to testify. I hope that our testimony on these important issues regarding programs like Learning To Work proves helpful to you as you work to craft an education budget that will provide for the health, welfare, and well-being of all of New York City's students.

# CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022  
March 21, 2022  
Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Education

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Chairman Joseph and Members of the Council Committee on Education:

My name is David Freudenthal, and I am the Director of Government Relations at Carnegie Hall. Thanks for the opportunity to testify about the longstanding partnership between Carnegie Hall and the Department of Education in service to our city's schools.

Carnegie Hall's mission is to present extraordinary music and musicians on the three stages of this legendary hall, to bring the transformative power of music to the widest possible audience, to provide visionary education programs, and to foster the future of music through the cultivation of new works, artists, and audiences.

In 1960, the iconic building was saved from demolition by a citizen's campaign led by violinist Isaac Stern. An act of the New York State Legislature allowed the City of New York to purchase the building and establish the nonprofit, The Carnegie Hall Corporation, to operate the facility in service to all New Yorkers. Today, Carnegie Hall is a leader in creating far-reaching music education and social impact programs that inspire the next generation of music lovers, nurture musical talent, contribute to the evolution of music education, and explore how music can play a meaningful role in people's lives. Each year, these programs reach nearly 800,000 people in NYC, across the US and around the globe in schools, orchestras, arts organizations, homeless shelters, correctional facilities, refugee camps, hospitals, and more, supporting music learning at all levels.

Carnegie Hall is also a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a collective of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. In keeping with our public service mission, over the last two years we leaned in to support New Yorkers with high quality free digital programming, as well as to advocate for essential help from government to sustain our sector during the crisis. In the context of that advocacy, **Carnegie Hall endorses the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable's request to baseline at least \$100 per student in dedicated funding to support sustainable arts education for all.**

In addition to our advocacy on behalf of our city's students and teachers, I'm glad to share information about the Hall's direct service to New Yorkers, including constituents in each of your Council Districts: Carnegie Hall works closely with stakeholders throughout the education ecosystem—educators, parents, public officials, and young people—to ensure that our programs intentionally prioritize those who otherwise may not have access to these opportunities. I'm glad to share some examples:

- Regarded by DOE's Office of Arts and Special Projects as a lead partner in music education, Carnegie Hall's school programs have effectively delivered the agency's standards for music education, providing high quality, fundamental music instruction and best practices by amplifying and celebrating the cultural richness of our city for over a decade. Our learning and engagement programs inspire the next generation of music lovers in NYC's



K-12 classrooms and support local teachers in refining their skills. This year, the Hall supports school-based programs both in-person and remotely, including [Link Up](#) and [Musical Explorers](#) for elementary-age children, [Music Educators Workshop](#) for NYC teachers, and for middle and high school students through [Ensemble Connect](#).

- [Musical Explorers](#) connects students in grades K–2 to NYC’s rich and diverse musical community as they build fundamental music skills through listening, singing, and moving to songs from all over the world. Each season, students meet six NYC–based artists who each represent a different musical genre and cultural tradition. Teachers have access to a free curriculum, professional development, and a culminating interactive concert for their students. Musical Explorers will again partner with THIRTEEN/WNET for its third season of Camp TV this summer, which aims to recreate the day-camp experience from home broadcast on public television stations nationwide.
  - [Link Up](#)—Carnegie Hall’s longest running education program—introduces the orchestra to children in grades 3-5, inviting them to sing and play an instrument in the classroom and perform with a professional orchestra from their seats at a culminating concert at Carnegie Hall. Both programs continue to expand with digital platforms that provide teachers with free online resources, including lesson plans, artist-led videos, and virtual concert experiences.
  - [Music Educators Workshop](#) provides on average more than 100 NYC K–12 music teachers monthly professional development each year, in a vital space for teachers to recognize their shared experiences and receive support, community, and professional growth. Leading artists and educators join as faculty to lead curriculum tracks pertinent to this season’s theme for NYC teachers, “Moving Forward in Joy: Healing, Connection, and Creative Imagination in the Music Classroom.” The program leverages teachers as catalysts to enhance the quality of instruction for almost 30,000 NYC students each year.
  - [Ensemble Connect](#) is a program of Carnegie Hall and The Juilliard School in partnership with DOE. Ensemble Connect places extraordinary young classical musicians for a two-year fellowship in NYC public schools (15 this year). Fellows partner with DOE music teachers to bring insight, creativity, and artistry to classrooms; and create interactive performances in schools and at community sites.
- Carnegie Hall’s early childhood programs encourage connection, well-being, and creativity for families, most of whom are facing challenging personal circumstances. Workshops have been operating continuously throughout the pandemic via online sessions. The [Lullaby Project](#) pairs new and expectant parents and caregivers with professional artists to write and sing personal lullabies for their babies, supporting maternal health, aiding child development, and strengthening the bond between parent and child. Since the launch at Jacobi Medical Center in 2011, nearly 1,800 families have written original songs for their children through city agency partnerships including the NYC Departments of Education (DOE’s LYFE program), Correction (DOC), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Homeless Services (DHS), the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), Health + Hospitals (H+H), and the Housing Authority (NYCHA). [Big Note, Little Note](#), is a music class for NYC families that offers a range of experiences for families and caregivers to engage with their babies through musical play, singing, instrument exploration, and more. The program—in partnership with Harlem Children’s Zone—is centered around community, and supports family well-being, early childhood development, and parent-child connection.

As NYC navigates a full reopening, programs like these will be critical components of the city's strategy to meet people directly, effectively, and safely where they are. The Council's continued investment in these partnerships will be absolutely essential in the year ahead. We thank the Committee for their interest in these programs, and we encourage the Council to invest in these opportunities and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall's education and community programming partnerships in your district. Thank you for your support for and consideration of our requests, and thanks to our public partners, artists and arts organizations, teachers, stakeholders, and the talented young people involved in these programs for being a part of truly transformational changes.

### **Testimonial from School Programs Stakeholders:**

"Carnegie Hall is the future. These workshops are extremely mindful of human connection and how music can be a catalyst for this connection and bringing people, nations, worlds together. It's a truly beautiful, gratifying, humbling, inspiring and passionate connection. It gives so many tools for educators to bring positive changes to, not only their classroom, but to their connections, personal and professional and of their self-improvement every day. I believe every educator should be part of this incredible program. And I feel extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of it. Thank you!!"—Isabella Mendes, local Music Educators Workshop participant

"After watching Layths video, one of my students shared proudly with me that "he is a Muslim, too" Another one became interested in a violin because "it sounded beautiful" and some kids loved Bluegrass music and others fell in love with Chinese Traditional. We really opened up a varied musical world for them. Some of them were asking for more music from various cultures in various languages!" - Valeria Shkop, teacher at PS 193 (Musical Explorers)

"There is nothing that I can do to truly prepare my students for the adventure that they are about to begin. We learn the songs, we explore the activities, but it is not until they first step foot into the concert hall that they realize what a big deal this is. They have truly arrived at a musical, cultural landmark." - Ryan Mack, Teacher at P.S. 10K (Link Up)

"Carnegie Hall always helps me expand what I believe is possible in the music classroom." - Kim Walton, teacher at Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing and Visual Arts (Music Educators Workshop)

"When the pandemic first hit like most teachers I was at a loss on how to navigate through remote teaching and better yet what would work best for my students. I worked with my fellow, Nicolee Kuester, and we made a plan for students who had instruments versus those who did not. This was part of our foundation for the current school year. With the added resources that Deanna Kennett and the members of Ensemble Connect provided, Nicolee and I were able to solidify the students learning through the helpful videos of instruments, as well as their new form of interactive performances to help students engage in new ways. My students have especially loved the "Princess Bear Snake and Cowboy" performance as well as the one utilizing the concept of soundscapes. In a time when music is needed to help the students, Ensemble Connect was able to provide the students and teachers with various resources to not only help engage the students but also help drive their creativity." - Ensemble Connect Partner Teacher Laurél Hornick from Grover Cleveland High School

"I consider music to be the soundtrack of my life and was excited when the opportunity presented itself for me to introduce and bond with my son through music. In April 2021 while being on maternity leave, I enrolled in Big Note

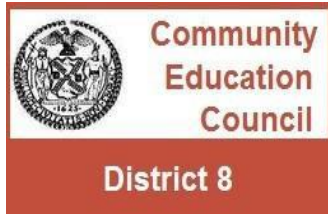
Little Note online music class with my 3-months-old son, Jacob. I looked forward to Wednesdays because it was something that helped with bonding and the development of my son. As a new mom, I realized that everything became a song. Even something as simple as changing a diaper. Jacob's face would light up with laughter when I sang or play music. He also had a favorite song from the class that I would sing to him. Lastly, I enjoyed fellowshiping with the other families. The weekly "music moments" were useful in furthering our connection with music outside the class. I really wish there was a Big Note Little Note Alumni music class as I think Jacob and I would love a continuation of such an amazing experience." - Stacyann Coley, Big Note, Little Note participant

**Testimony of Jolene Gunther-Doherty for New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget - Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you. My name is Jolene Gunther-Doherty, and I am the director of the GEC's 4410 preschool special education program that has served public school students for over 60 years. It is recommended that the FY 2023 budget include **\$30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations with salaries on par with their 12-month Department of Education counterparts.** Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted community based organizations, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs, who ***work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs.*** The City has not yet committed to salary parity for these educators, even as a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes has left preschoolers with disabilities without the support they need and have a legal right to receive. The City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing our 4410 teachers and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn much higher compensation. The City has a plan to offer a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs, but the City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it's hard to see how the City will be able to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide. Please ensure that the **FY 23 budget includes \$30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts** so that preschoolers with disabilities get the support they need!



**March 23, 2022**

### **Participatory Budgeting in Education Is a Necessity!**

Dear Chairwoman Joseph and Colleagues,

The Mayor's proposed budget is reactionary, regressive and punitive at best and unacceptable at worst. This is not the time for austerity. This is a time for all levels of government to find ways to invest in people. It is especially important for NYC to invest in the quality of lives of New Yorkers.

It is unacceptable that this preliminary budget has cut funding for education and health services, which are vital to quality of life. The elimination of \$ 200 million in direct funding to public schools, while increasing funding for charter schools by \$ 90 million and giving away millions in big, possibly unnecessary, irresponsible contracts without first engaging with the public and tax payers is atrocious, egregious and scandalous to say the least.

To make matters worse, the Department of Youth and Community Development, which is crucial for at-risk youth will suffer almost \$ 100 million in cuts. The Recovery Meals Program has been completely cut. The Capital Budgets for Housing and Parks have also been drastically cut by 93% and 43% respectively. The budget for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has been cut by over 35%. The Health and Hospitals Corporation has been cut by almost 64%. And the Department of Small Business Services has been cut by almost 70%. At the same time, the budget for the NYPD increased by 35% and the Department of Correction's budget increased by \$ 880 million. Atrocious. Egregious. Scandalous. Do we care about the quality of life for average citizens and those who need the safety net and government assistance?

At the District 8 Community Education Council and the NYC Coalition for Educating for Families Together, it is unconscionable to us that the education budget should be cut by so much and should continue to be decided in a way that is so opaque. In our humble opinion, the process of creating an effective education budget is a transparent one and begins with the assessment of the needs of schools on the ground – school by school, district by district, community by community with all the stakeholders at the table. It makes no sense to us that education stakeholders must struggle to understand the education budget after it has been proposed and can engage in hearings that feel superficial right before a budget is ratified. We believe that education stakeholders, especially parents, should be engaged much earlier in the process. Participatory budgeting needs to be a thing in NYC education.

We believe that parents need to have a voice on what the NYC Public Schools spend our taxpayer money and what cuts should be made to the budget at the point of planning on both the micro and macro levels. Why are we cutting our education budget, when our schools continue to complain about the need for basic repairs, broadband capacity, ventilation systems, air conditioning, and the need to modernize spaces like libraries and computer labs? This is unacceptable. Why are we cutting our education budget when our schools still need nurses, mental health experts, social workers, academic programs and extracurricular activities in abundance – to continue to recover from the pandemic and build a more equitable system of education? It is said that our budgets reflect our values. It is clear to parents at CEC 8 and NYC CEFT that the City doesn't truly value the education of our children. If it did, cuts would never happen to education budgets.

It is precisely these austerity practices that make it impossible for under-resourced schools that have overwhelming scarcity to make gains in any given area. CEC 8 and NYC CEFT find it difficult to say in what areas District 8 schools need more education funds, because we need more and more funds in every area. The reality is NYC schools and local (NYC) school districts should be funded according to need and not some arbitrary numbers based on some abstract formula that only those in government get to decide. Education stakeholders on the school community level know what their schools need. We should be consulted before cuts are made and a budget is decided.

For example, allocating X million dollars for SCA or cutting X million dollars from SCA, tells parents and school communities very little about how much will improve or deteriorate in their schools. In this example, it would have made sense if schools were asked to present a dollar amount for their needs and they were notified of whether or not that amount or a portion was approved. This would have allowed school communities to know whether they would be able to tackle Project A and/or Project B. The result is when school communities are not participants in the decision making of budgets, schools can go years, even decades without their needs ever being addressed. Cutting budgets without their input only exacerbate the situation, which always has a negative impact on the way education is delivered to our children and the way our children receive the education that is imparted to them.

Furthermore, once a budget is ratified, it needs to be shared with parents and education stakeholders in a way that makes sense to them – so they know what X amount of dollars in category X means for their school districts and their particular schools in that area. This means SLTs need to function properly in order for parents to have a real voice on how their school budgets are spent. How much did the school ask for in category X and how much will they be receiving? A system as such would allow the school community to hold the principal and the DOE accountable. Additionally, for CECs, budget presentations need to be made in a way that addresses district patterns and district needs so that CEC members can advocate properly for the needs of the districts. We urge the City Council to force the NYC Public Schools to work on strengthening PAs/PTAs and SLTs so parents can truly have that oversight.

In addition, this proposed budget is an absolute slap in the face of district school parents. It is unconscionable that charter schools will be getting a larger share of the money that was

designated for district schools because we are the only school district in which the state doesn't cover the cost of rent for charter schools. It is about time that the state legislature pass legislation to allow NYC to receive transitional aid payments. If that happens, NYC schools would qualify for supplemental charter tuition aid for the estimated amount of \$263 million dollars in transitional aid that would offset the additional \$ 90 million dollars that the charter schools are receiving at our expense. We urge the members of the NYC City Council to pressure the State Assembly, the State Senate and the Governor to pass such legislation.

In summation, it is clear to us at CEC 8 and NYC CEFT that participatory budgeting needs to be the name of the game when it comes to budgeting for education. There needs to be an engagement process through which education stakeholders, primarily school communities (staff and parents) are able to decide how to allocate the public education budget. The Mayor, the Chancellor and their teams of elites who are not on the ground cannot make these decisions alone. We hope that beyond ratifying a budget that you will move to make participatory budgeting the reality in education. We thank you for your time and consideration. Please stay safe!

Warmest regards,  
Farah Despeignes  
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SVA PA President  
D8 Presidents Council VP 2  
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If you would like to be included in the Community Education Council 8 Parent Outreach email list, please subscribe below!

<https://tinyurl.com/Community-Education-Council-8>

If you would like to be included in the Soundview Academy Parent Association Outreach email list, Please subscribe below!

<https://bit.ly/joinsvapa>

If you would like to be included in the Bronx/New York City for Educating Families Together Community Outreach email list, please subscribe below!

<https://tinyurl.com/join-bxnyceft>



Hello and Good Day. My name is Shirley Aubin, and I am the current Co-Chair of the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council, Co-President of the Queens Highs Presidents' Council, Lunch for Learning Parent Caucus, and parent and community educational advocate and leader.

To increase the participation of school meals which is universally free for all NYC DOE students. Studies show that schools meals are the most nutritious meals serves. We must remove the negative stigma that is associated with school meals. How? Enhance Cafeteria Redesign! The showcase presentation of how the nutritious food is display is key to get students wanting to eat what is being served. Variety and warm welcoming environment will encourage students to eat school meals and stay in the cafeteria. A picture is worth a thousand words! Innovative highly cost. effective model, developed by DOE, that modernizes and transforms the cafeteria experience for students—food court style design which is also known as “Cafeteria Enhancement Experience”. A picture is worth a thousand words!



Especially now during the pandemic, many families are going hungry and economically strapped. School meals are helping in serving hungry New Yorkers in their communities. Before and after the pandemic, school meals are universally free for NYC DOE students. This is a huge economic benefit whichever way you look at it. The food is tasty and



nutritious and there is several food options now. Keeping the parents and students from the corner store and saving money. The word that school lunch is free has not hit home for parents. Queen Collegiate (6-12 grade) is where my daughter attended her middle school grades and is one of the four high schools in the Jamaica Campus. They underwent an enhanced cafeteria redesign, and everyone loved it. Students' participation has increased and stayed in the cafeteria so they can socialize because the environment friendly and a café / booth style seating arrangement. School staff were also now visiting the cafeteria to get lunch because it was appealing and there were choices. Entering the cafeteria and looking at the redesign and the display of food, it gave me a vibrant vibe and a smile to my face. The social interaction was priceless. The cafeteria is definitely a place where social emotional wellness and growth occurs. Besides giving brain food that they need to be attentive and eager to learn.

Students who eat school lunch:

- Eat healthier than students who bring food from home, regardless of income.
- Perform better in Math and ELA test scores, equivalent to up to 10-weeks of learning.



The pandemic has opened more eyes to the social and economic disparities in our communities around the city. Besides eliminating the digital divide, parents are highly concerned on the social and emotional wellbeing of their students. The “Enhance Cafeteria Experience” helps address the economic and hunger concerns (school meals are free) and the Social Emotional Wellness of our students.

- The “Enhanced Cafeteria Experience has been successful:

- We see a 35% increase in lunch participation among the first set of high schools that got the redesign.
- If all high school received the enhancement, we project 30,000 more high school students would participate.
- More variety on a daily basis, with over 4xs more fruits and vegetables served than in a traditional cafeteria.
- Combat school food stigma and supporting a transition back to school—the redesigned cafeterias will give students sense of safety and security, as they have experienced major trauma.

You can help by providing an additional \$150 million for another 300 cafeterias over the next five years. We would like to see all the high schools in Queens, starting with Francis Lewis High School. Followed by the middle schools get the enhanced redesign cafeteria. Then eventually in all schools be upscaled. New look for a new image of school meals!

- Highly cost and time efficient:
  - The cost per school is \$500,000 and the construction is done over a weekend.
  - So far, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has redesigned 34 middle and high school cafeterias across this city.
  - We are asking that \$150 million be committed in the capital budget to scale the model up to ½ High schools and ½ middle schools over the next 5 years.
- Marketing / Communication:
  - Ongoing and responsive communication with students, parents, and the community.
  - Advertisement Budget to OFNS (Office of Food Nutrition Services) to sustain positive reinforcement and brand name / recognition.

Commercials that are catchy, makes you smile, dance, cool, modern, and leaving you with good vibes. A Few examples:

1. Grub Hub – makes take out cool, fun, there's variety. Diversified individuals enjoying food that wants to make you boogie. One of our personal favorites. We don't use Grub Hub, but I love that commercial and soon as I hear that music ... a smile appears and I'm shaking my body.
2. McDonald's slogan ... I'm loving it and golden arches.
3. School House Rock – The classic – How to make a Bill.

OFNS needs to have funds to create innovative, memorable, and positive feeling of wanting to eat school meals. Advertising the enhance cafeteria design and students are enjoying nutritious free school meals together is a win-win for all.



**New York City Council Committee on Education  
Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

**Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)**

Thank you to Hon. Chair Joseph and the Committee on Education for the opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Lennia Clark, and I am the Director of the Early Care and Education Institute (ECEI) for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 40-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

CHCF delivers wrap around, holistic services through and beyond our state and city contracted birth through school-age programs and services. We know that access to high quality, equitably resourced, and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning spaces is critical from birth, through school-age and post-secondary education; and that a child's development, academic growth, and long-term life outcomes are impacted by so many intersecting circumstances that go beyond what occurs in care and educational spaces.

Our ECEI team supports child care and early learning programs, and family access to child care (birth through school-age) in our work as a Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Agency<sup>1</sup> and as a Family Child Care Network under the Department of Education. Our Youth Development team delivers after school programming in partnership with three schools in the Bronx. Above and beyond the academic supports we offer in after school programs, we support mental health and social emotional development, student interest and career exploration, and connection to additional resources and opportunities beyond the school walls. Our Community Empowerment Department expands our general delivery of comprehensive supports in these direct program spaces/schools, and expands the reach of our agency services and supports beyond these physical spaces into the surrounding communities, addressing several issues, reflective of the needs of the families and communities (i.e. housing, immigration, food access, healthcare access, etc.).

### **School-Based Programming**

During a typical school year, we provide after school programming at three different schools in the Bronx, with a capacity to reach 550 students, and by extension their families: 250 students at PS 59 (about 56% of the K-5 school population); 140 elementary students and 100 middle school students at PS/MS 279 (roughly 27% of the school population); and 60 students at PS 226 (17% of the K-5

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<sup>1</sup> NYC Child Care Resource & Referral Consortium: <https://nyccrr.org/>





population). During summer of 2021, we extended our SONYC services at PS/MS 279 to offer Summer Rising programming for 75 middle school students.

We know the significant value-add of connecting community-based partners with schools to comprehensively meet the unique needs of students and their families. Strong, integrated CBO partnerships in schools bring in additional support staff from the community who can offer culturally and linguistically responsive, holistic support and resource access to meet family needs. CBO partners help to facilitate holistic and effective address of intersectional issues that students and families are facing, and we are well-positioned to connect families with resources and services, both within our respective agency and with other CBOs and agencies in the community and city that might function outside of educational spaces.

Therefore, we fight each year for increased investments in programs that build CBO relationships and partnerships with schools and that have demonstrable positive impacts on the communities served. While we continue to advocate for increased federal and state funding on a number of these program areas, it does not remove the City's responsibilities to expand upon the scope and reach of federal and state dollars, designing, equitably funding and resourcing, and administering truly accessible programs that center children and families, while uplifting their CBO partners.

We continue to support calls for NYC to expand its city-funded out of school time programs so that we can create universal access to high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive after school and summer programming<sup>2</sup>. We additionally recognize the Community School model as a means of investing in CBO partnerships with schools. Until June 30th of 2021, CHCF had worked for 6 years as the partnering CBO at the Bronx High School of Business on the Taft Campus, delivering culturally and linguistically responsive, holistic services to the student population and their families. A cost-cutting decision to consolidate services on multi-school campuses to one CBO with a smaller contract award amount, made it difficult for small- or mid-sized non-profits, like CHCF, to compete with larger non-profits with more fiscal capacity to carry the funding shortfall.

We still truly believe that the community schools strategy is the path forward to ensure students are not left behind in the current crisis; and we have long believed that every school should be a community school, even before the pandemic. The research is clear that students learn better when their physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults.<sup>3</sup> If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships, it will only be that much harder to focus on school. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community-based organizations in holistic and innovative ways and is a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in communities.

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<sup>2</sup> See CHCF Testimony Committee on Youth Services FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing, submitted to the public record on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Winthrop, R., Barton, A., & McGivney, E. (2018) Leapfrogging Inequality: Remaking Education to Help Young People Thrive. Brookings Institute. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from: <https://www.brookings.edu/book/leapfrogging-inequality-2/>





Through our Community School partnership, our entirely bi-lingual program staff were able to pivot and tailor culturally and linguistically responsive services to meet the needs of our students and families, addressing food and housing insecurities, mental health needs, and equitable access to resources (i.e. hot spots during remote learning). We also offered career exploration opportunities to our youth and saw clear evidence of the impact of youth employment programs like Work Learn Grow, Learning to Work, and Summer Youth Employment. As part of the Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), we call on the city to grow the country's largest community schools initiative, which is demonstrably working.<sup>4</sup>

The City is poised to expand the initiative from 267 to 406 schools using American Rescue Plan federal stimulus dollars. Still, NYC has yet to develop a permanent long term sustainable funding solution for our community schools, and while federal stimulus dollars will sustain them for now, until 2023 and then dropping off completely in 2025, the future of these neighborhood lifelines remains unclear. Joining the CCSE, we support smart and sustainable investments from the City in the community schools initiative to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of these crucial services. Consistent and sustainable funding are critical to building community trust and authentic school-community partnerships. The following are the CCSE's recommendations for community school investments:

- ✓ The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to secure the longevity of the community school initiative.
  - There is an estimated needed investment of a minimum of \$72M once federal stimulus runs out to help sustain the model.
- ✓ The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These remain barriers to consistently delivering services.
- ✓ Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of growing the system in order to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

The past two years, and the present efforts to address the traumas and academic impacts of the pandemic, have certainly underscored the tremendous value-add of school partnerships with CBOs. However, CBO partners have been facing long standing and exacerbated challenges from the city and state partner agencies who have relied upon our services over the years and in rapid response to the many challenges posed by the pandemic and school closures. Bureaucratic bottlenecks, issues with clear guidance and reimbursement, as well as longstanding city and state contracting practices that undermine the sustainability of CBO partners have stagnated our ability to deliver programs to capacity, holistically supporting our school communities in addressing the many challenges our students and families continue to face.

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<sup>4</sup> Johnston, W.R., Engberg, J., Oppen, I.M., Sontag-Padilla, L., & Xenakis, L. (2020) Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative | RAND. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR3245.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html)





CBO contracts at both the state and city-levels have historically been underfunded, not meeting the true cost of care. This places undue financial burden on CBO partners to cover the remaining costs that go into delivering programs that truly respond to the unique and intersecting needs of students, families, and communities. With significant delays in contract pay out, along with unclear or no guidance on allowable shifts in programming reflective of remote and hybrid learning in schools through the pandemic, CBOs already functioning on razor thin margins or in the red were faced with difficult decisions about staffing lay-offs, service reduction, and in many cases closure, ultimately harming our communities by disrupting the flow of services and minimizing resource access.

The nonprofit sector and CBO city partners are not a support of last resort. Community-based partners are essential to delivering citywide comprehensive, holistic, culturally responsive programming and services. Even beyond the fact that the city agencies do not have the capacity to do the work on their own, they should not do the work on their own through tremendously siloed agencies. CBO partners are embedded in and understand their communities, and are well-equipped to do this work, delivering intersectional supports and services above and beyond the limited scope of contracts from any one agency and their purview. As such, CBO partners should be proactively brought into planning and decision-making spaces as stakeholders, to offer insight and expertise on program design and effective delivery.

Contracting with CBOs should not be seen as a cost saving method, paying 85% of what it really costs to deliver these services. Underfunded contracts have always limited CBO ability to offer competitive salaries that reflect the true value of our program staff in parity with their city-employed counterparts. The high value of CBO staff is not lost on city agencies, as there are consistent reports from CBO partners of city agencies recruiting CBO staff, given their ability to offer stronger salary and benefit packages compared to what our contracts allow us to offer. We cannot be seen merely as a training pool for city-agency candidates. These practices contradict the often-spoken messages of valuing CBO partnership by city agency leaders; they undercut our financial stability, as well as our ability to recruit and invest in our staff, and our ability to consistently deliver services reflective of our communities' holistic and shifting needs.

CHCF calls on the city to improve its practices of partnership and contracting to ensure that the non-profit human services sector and their staff, who are so critical in the delivery of comprehensive, culturally and linguistically responsive services, are not only sustained, but able to thrive. We join our partners in the #JustPay Campaign in calling for the city to end the poverty-level wages that result from low contract reimbursement rates. Specifically, the city must:

- ✓ Establish, fund and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on human services contracts.
- ✓ Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- ✓ Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule government contracted human services workers comparable to salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.







CHCF continues to focus our advocacy on creating educational spaces that are culturally and linguistically responsive and that provide safe and supportive spaces for all students to thrive in. Even before the pandemic, students in temporary housing, students of color, immigrant students, students with disabilities, and Multi-Lingual Learners (MLL) students faced barriers in access to necessary supports and resources resulting in significant disparities in English and Math proficiency and 4-year graduation rates. With the pandemic, these student subgroups faced significant disruption to their education, with inadequate technology and internet connection and insufficient interventions and support to meet student needs.

NYC's immigrant youth are presently dropping out now at almost 5x the rate of their non-ELL peers. Of additional concern is the lack of access that older, recently arrived immigrant youth to education at all. A 2022 Migration Policy Institute analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau data found that nearly 4,000 immigrant youth, ages 14-21, are not enrolled in school and do not already have a high school diploma. Almost 90% of that number are aged 16-21 and have no time to lose, as they must learn English and meet their graduation requirements before they turn 21. This is a difficult task, but is possible with appropriate, effective and targeted supports.<sup>5 6 7 8</sup>

We join our partners in the NYC Education Collaborative in calling on the DOE to Pave a Path Forward for these vulnerable youth. Specifically, we call on the city to:

- ✓ Fund a \$2.1 million transfer school pilot program that improves access for recently arrived immigrant students aged 16-21 to supportive transfer schools outside of Manhattan.
  - Launch in SY 2022-2023 a 3-year, \$8.3 million grant-based pilot program to increase older, newly arrived immigrant youth's access to transfer schools located in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn.
  - Beyond funding the hiring of English as a New Language (ENL) teachers, the pilot allows each school to have a social worker trained to support immigrant families. The pilot also includes culturally responsive wrap-around support for students and robust professional development to prepare all educators in transfer schools to adequately support recently arrived ELLs.
  - This pilot program will lay out a roadmap that other schools can follow to improve their capacity to serve older, newly arrived immigrant youth.

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<sup>5</sup> Toure, M. (2020) Immigrant advocates press city schools to fund program for newly arrived students. Politico. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/city-hall/story/2020/02/18/immigrant-advocates-press-city-schools-to-fund-program-for-newly-arrived-students-1262072>

<sup>6</sup> Amin, R. (2020) Thousands of young NYC immigrants didn't enroll in school. Advocates want to fix that. Chalkbeat. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/2/19/21178621/thousands-of-young-nyc-immigrant-didn-t-enroll-in-school-advocates-want-to-fix-that> Ed Collab Paving the Path Forward one-pager

<sup>7</sup> (2022) Estimated # of newly arrived immigrant youth, ages 14-21, who are not enrolled in school and do not yet have a high school diploma. Advocates for Children. [Immigrant youth not enrolled in school 2-18-2022.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> (2022) The First Step: Paving the Path for Immigrant Students. New York Immigration Coalition Education Collaborative. [NYIC\\_FirstStep\\_EdPolicyEdCollab\\_03.08.22.pdf](#)





During the 2020-2021 academic year, more than 101,000 New York City students were identified as homeless. As uplifted in a November 2021 Memo of Recommendations released by Advocates for Children that 40 organizations, including CHCF, signed on to, students in temporary housing have faced tremendous barriers to academic success, even before the pandemic.<sup>9 10</sup> Students in temporary housing, 85% of whom are Black or Hispanic, continued to lag behind their permanently housed peers both in math and reading proficiency, as well as in graduation rates. These gaps in proficiency and graduation are a direct result of insufficient supports to responsively and holistically address their needs and mitigate the barriers they face in accessing learning.

We agree with our partners in advocacy that no child in New York City should be homeless. While the city works on addressing the affordable housing and homelessness crisis, we call on the city to immediately direct attention and resources to the education of students who are homeless and those who were formerly homeless (data has shown that even if students have transitioned out of temporary housing, there continues to be a gap in proficiency and a need for consistent, targeted support).<sup>11</sup> We join AFC's recommendations to:

- ✓ Launch a bold interagency initiative led by City Hall to tackle educational barriers for students who are homeless.
- ✓ Ensure every shelter has qualified and equipped staff to support students' educational needs starting by hiring 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators.
- ✓ Maintain and build upon recent initiatives, including:
  - Revamping and elevating the DOE's Students in Temporary Housing office, including approving 6 additional Students in Temporary Housing Regional Managers for a total of 18;
  - Hiring 100 school-based "Bridging the Gap" social workers and 100 school-based Students in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators;
  - Hiring shelter-based Client Care Coordinators;
  - Guaranteeing yellow bus service for K-6<sup>th</sup> grade students in shelter who need it to stay in their original schools;
  - Launching after-school reading clubs at certain shelters;
  - Initiating an interagency work group focused on increasing access to ECE and Pre-K for children in shelters and providing ECE and pre-K offers to age-eligible children living in shelters whether or not they applied; and

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<sup>9</sup> (2021) Recommendations from 40 Organizations for the Next Administration to Address the Educational Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness. Advocates for Children.

[https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/sth\\_recommendations\\_next\\_admin\\_11.2021.pdf?pt=1](https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/sth_recommendations_next_admin_11.2021.pdf?pt=1)

<sup>10</sup> AFC's Fiscal Year 2023 City Budget Priorities. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from:

<https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/node/1928>

<sup>11</sup> (2017) Improving opportunity and achievement for students experiencing homelessness. Education Trust New York Equity Coalition. [https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/ESSA-Homeless-Brief\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/ESSA-Homeless-Brief_DIGITAL.pdf)







- Ensuring all school-based staff charged with supporting students in temporary housing receive training on outreach, identification and support for students who are homeless.

We join the many advocates that presented testimony in finding a hiring freeze at this time to be grossly inappropriate. Our students have been navigating so many difficulties with accessing support for their learning over the past three academic years, including staffing shortages, lacking one-on-one support, and the challenges with remote learning; especially for students with special needs, student in temporary housing, and Multi-Lingual Learners. Now, more than ever, we need to be hiring teachers, guidance counselors, and social workers who reflect our students and are equipped to deliver culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining curriculum, academic support, and social-emotional support.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, as the pandemic has added layers of trauma to student and family life, students have been returning to schools with lacking capacity to deliver supportive and restorative practices that uplift students and avoid further removing them from their education. We additionally call on the City to grow its investments in and training of staff on restorative, trauma-informed interventions and practices. While in-school and out-of-school suspension data was thrown off kilter through remote learning, we anecdotally know that students continued to be removed from learning space through more informal discipline practices (i.e. zoom room timeouts/ isolation rooms); and that suspensions have been spiking on some parts of the city as students have resumed in-person learning. We all know the traumas that our students and families had to navigate over the past two years, with financial, housing, food, physical health, and mental health instability extremely exacerbated. We should not be receiving our children back into schools only to respond to their trauma with push out tactics. The city *must* invest in mental health supports rather than policing. School safety includes school climate and whether our students feel safe and supported by the adults in their schools.

### **Early Care and Education**

CHCF continues to support the early care and education sector through our state contracted work as part of the NYC Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Consortium. Through our work as a CCR&R, CHCF predominantly (but not exclusively) delivers supports to child care providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), overwhelmingly providers whose primary language is Spanish, across all five boroughs of New York City. Our bi-lingual provider supports span technical assistance with licensing and compliance (navigating DOHMH & OCFS), intensive coaching around mental health, medication administration training, healthy development, and literacy for infants and toddlers; as well as sustainable business model development and training. During the pandemic, the scope of our support services expanded to include distribution of cleaning supplies and PPE, as well as relief dollars through stabilization

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<sup>12</sup> (2017) See Our Truth. Education Trust New York. <https://seeourtruth-ny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/10/See-Our-Truth.pdf>





grants and connection to the essential worker child care scholarships distributed by the state from federal relief dollars.

Through our CCR&R work, we also support families in accessing child care that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule and particular child needs; and to support navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to afford child care. Parents/guardians can be connected to CHCF or any of the CCR&Rs through 311 if they are looking for care, birth through school age, and if they need support in determining potential eligibility for subsidy/vouchers and in navigating city agency systems.

We are excited that the call for Universal Child Care<sup>13</sup> is growing across New York State and City, among advocates, families, providers, and leaders. It is critical that the City immediately address the systemic flaws that will impede our ability to actualize a universal system in the long run, and that are having real time catastrophic impacts on our existing child care sector and families in need of consistent, quality, responsive care in order to fully re-enter the workforce.

While it is important that the federal and state governments make investments in child care, this does not remove the City's responsibilities in designing, equitably funding and resourcing, and administering responsive systems that truly center our families and uplift its partners and the workforce at the heart of this essential sector. Systems that uplift informed choice in modalities reflective of family and child need (center-based **as well as** family child care (FCC), and Legally Exempt); and ensure that every child – no matter which modality their family *chooses* to place them in for care and early learning, no matter any special needs, no matter their economic background, their location, or their immigration status – has access to equitably funded, resourced, and supported high-quality care.

Given the convoluted and intersecting systems and agencies that have a hand on NYC's child care sector (DOHMH, ACS, HRA, and DOE), it is important to uplift that there are concerning elements that each agency manages; as well as the harm in a perpetual lack of communication between agencies on matters and issues that intersect the varying purviews of each agency. Ultimately, existing system flaws *and* the lack of oversight spanning all of the agencies with a hand on this sector has been destabilizing the existing NYC child care sector, families in need of child care, and the well-being of our youngest New Yorkers for years – well before the pandemic exacerbated the many challenges faced by providers in sustaining and delivering these services, and by families in accessing them.

**Child care providers and staff have been grossly undercompensated and given little to no access to benefits.** As a result, we have lost numerous programs and providers and we are now at risk of creating and expanding child care deserts, which need not happen. Those who are drawn to this important work cannot afford to join or stay in the sector. We need to invest in the existing child care workforce, inclusive of all modalities, and establish compensation and benefits rates that demonstrate their value, which will ultimately draw more to this profession.

**Bureaucratic issues delaying enrollment have further stagnated families enrolling in care and fully returning to the workforce, and dollars flowing to existing child care programs.** This is occurring in ACS, HRA and DOE. Because child care programs have been underfunded for so long, these sources of funds

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<sup>13</sup> (2021) ESCCC Principles for Universal Child Care. Empire State Campaign for Child Care.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1taPCgZvykJRqUE3lw0Cv374XyaI6lk20gRRucf9BYzk/edit>





have become a lifeline for their program's survivability in many instances, further forcing existing programs to close and eliminating child care capacity, especially in low-income communities.

Inequities were established under the DOE-run Birth to Five system. The City system has created a tier of programs that are either affiliated or directly contracted with the Department of Education and are therefore offered supports and resources; and another tier that the DOE was either not able to extend contracts to or those that have chosen to stay independent of the DOE system. Ultimately, there are harms being imposed on both tiers of programs/providers and on parents in need of care that fits their family needs:

1. **Especially in licensed, home based child care programs, DOE contract limitations have restricted the children who can be enrolled in their programs.** In many cases these providers were given disproportionately 3K school day/year slots, which absolutely do not reflect family need and therefore keep these programs under enrolled and only in operation for part of the year, leading more well-established, quality programs to close their doors.
2. **The tiered system eliminates a free market** where providers who choose to remain independent are unable to accept and recruit subsidized children, which is particularly harmful in communities with high rates of poverty. Child care programs with established, high-quality programs and strong connections in communities are being forced to close, eliminating child care capacity in those neighborhoods.
3. **Parents are limited in their ability to identify and select the provider of choice,** restricting their options only to those under contract care that might not have the flexibility to meet their family needs (schedule, mixed-age children, language preferences, etc.); and options that are potentially skewed based on the outreach and enrollment support staff they are working with (i.e. parents might be pushed to a DOE-facility placement or a center over a home-based provider that can offer non-traditional hours of care, that they might have an established relationship with or that might be caring for their other children).
4. **This tiered system perpetuates inequity in resources and supports for programs that continue to serve children of color, immigrant children, and children in low-income families/communities.** The DOE does not have the capacity to offer care and early learning to every child who needs it, and ultimately families will continue to choose providers that meet their needs, regardless of affiliation with the DOE. Denying equitable resources to programs across the city's child care sector because they are unable or unwilling to affiliate, is denying equitable resources to children. This harms families who have the right to place their children in care that is culturally and linguistically responsive and reflective, as well as in programs that flexibly meet their family's scheduling needs. Funding, resources and quality supports must meet families and children where they are to ensure healthy development and school readiness.

Needless to say, we need to first take care of our existing systems to stabilize, invest in, and build upon the thousands of established, caring, experienced, and quality child care providers that have long-been effectively delivering these essential services; and who have stepped up to ensure continuous support for families and children throughout the pandemic when so many systems shut down or were disrupted. While we wish to build towards a universal child care system, we need investments that will immediately stabilize our existing child care workforce and capacity as opposed to tax breaks that will





take too long to have any impact and ultimately leave out a vital piece of the child care sector – home based child care. The city can do this by:

- ✓ Assessing effective use of funds going towards outreach and enrollment teams in the DOE (as well as ACS and HRA) around child care subsidy and voucher eligibility and enrollment; and to determine any additional allocations to fill gaps in personnel/supports that are resulting in delays of family access to case managers, delays in determining eligibility, and delays in enrolling families to care that meets their needs in a timely manner.

In particular, the city should consider how funds are being used to market and connect families to existing resources – particularly to culturally and linguistically responsive supports in successfully navigating access to care. How funds are being used to effectively train agency staff to fully inform families about child care options and programs that might be available to them that respond to their unique family dynamics and make appropriate referrals to additional supports in other agencies as necessary. The city should also assess where bottlenecks are occurring in quickly processing family paperwork so that they can be enrolled in programs and providers can immediately receive compensation, and determine the needed solutions/ investments to streamline the process.

- ✓ Fund presumptive eligibility, paying for 30-days (or to cover the length of time for determining eligibility) of care while eligibility is being determined – providers must be paid regardless of ultimate outcome of eligibility.
- ✓ The city must allocate dollars specifically focused on expanding child care access to vulnerable populations, namely families navigating temporary housing and/or domestic violence, as well as undocumented immigrant or mixed-status families who face barriers in accessing care outside of the universal, school day/year offered to 3- and 4-year-olds. Since extended day/year slots are mostly reliant on federal CCDBG dollars, it leaves out many families who are ineligible for services tied to federal subsidies. NYC must invest the necessary dollars to particularly ensure access to those families being held out because of systemic barriers or limitations in access to federally funded services.
- ✓ The city must determine ways to move towards equity in compensation for this workforce, beginning with paying rates for existing universal programs reflective of the true cost of delivering those services. Contracting with licensed, quality programs in residential settings should be a willful act, not a choice of last resort because DOE buildings do not have the capacity to care for all 3- and 4-year-olds, and certainly not infants and toddlers. Group Family and Family Day Care programs are an integral part of their communities, often with strong ties to the families served in their program, and most able to flex to the needs of parents and the hours of care required for infants and toddlers, as well as school-aged children who need care beyond the school day/year.

In willfully contracting these programs to deliver such important services for families and our littlest New Yorkers, this should not be seen as a means of saving money for the City. Contracted community-based partners should be equitably compensated to reflect the true cost of sustaining a thriving, high-quality program, including the provision of compensation and benefits packages in par with DOE employees of comparable expertise and credentials. This





includes specific attention to parity in funding and compensation for community-based providers who are delivering services to students with disabilities so that we can expand access for families.<sup>14</sup> Present practices of underfunding and undercompensating undermines the stability of our existing child care workforce as well as the continuity of caring relationships that are foundational in the growth of our littlest New Yorkers.

- ✓ For providers who choose to remain independent of direct contracting with the city/DOE, the city must establish equitable supports and resources. This is a matter of equity. Ultimately parents will continue to choose where they place their children for care and early learning, and will continue to choose programs in residential settings that meet their needs and those of their children, regardless of affiliation with the DOE. We must ensure that no matter where parents place their children, those programs are equitably resourced and supported to ensure high quality care.

Additionally, as an FCC Network under the DOE, Networks experience similar threats to financial stability, while facing the constant cost of running their high-quality, fully staffed networks. This was a decision that was made by the DOE during contracting prior to the pandemic, but advocates anticipated the destabilizing effect it could have for many of these organizations, especially when enrollment was centralized, and seat awards limited which children they could enroll. If the city wants to sustain high-quality networks that can hopefully grow in reach, they need to take care of their partners with the mindset of growth and ability to thrive. As previously stated, CBOs partners cannot afford to be funded an amount less than the true cost of service and operations. The city has often left its CBO partners who extend the reach of their social services in a constant state of financial vulnerability, even before the pandemic. Since the pandemic, thousands of nonprofits have had to close their doors and this ultimately harms the communities and families that they serve, as these CBOs often serve as the cultural and linguistically responsive bridge in access to city initiatives and services. These same communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and will require a lot of collective support to recover from the traumas of this crisis.

An additional city program that CHCF has continued to proudly participate in is City's First Readers. City's First Readers (CFR) is a collaboration of 17 community-based partners fostering the literacy development of NYC children, ages 0-5. The initiative provides research-driven programming to more than 1 million children, parents/caregivers, early childcare providers, and educators annually to ensure children enter school ready to read and achieve educational success.

Decades of research show that early literacy skills are key to building positive futures for children and breaking cycles of poverty. There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. 44.5% of them live in low-income households (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$25,750 for a family of four), and 76% of children under the age of five are children of color. It is estimated that 325,000 additional children have been pushed into COVID related poverty. Families with children five and under who lack resources for their basic needs including food and shelter also face barriers in access

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<sup>14</sup> AFC's Fiscal Year 2023 City Budget Priorities. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from: <https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/node/1928>





to key educational resources, such as books and toys, that support children's foundational learning at a time when 90% of children's brain development takes place.

There are proven and effective strategies that directly impact the early learning opportunity gaps that children living in systemic poverty experience and that protect them from the effects of trauma. These are the strategies that City's First Readers has *always* used to support children and their families. The core program elements include:

1. Delivering free, high quality, and culturally relevant early literacy programming;
2. Providing tools for parents to create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships;
3. Facilitating coaching and professional development that increases the capacity of child care educators, librarians, medical providers, and other literacy support staff; and
4. Leading a city-wide public education campaign that raises awareness of the importance of early literacy.

City's First Readers has served approximately 6 million children and families since the initiative began in FY15 and continued to achieve remarkable engagement in the face of the ongoing COVID pandemic. In FY21, CFR reached 800,000 families and many partners exceeded their FY20 engagement despite doing that work almost exclusively online. Furthermore, CFR distributed 380,000 books and books and early literacy kits to families across the city, this was a 41% increase over FY20.

### **In Conclusion**

We call on this Committee to continue supporting and growing the programs that we know work. With the anticipated long-term effects of the pandemic on social-emotional well-being and educational growth for our most vulnerable young children and school-aged learners, it is essential that programs like out-of-school-time programming, community schools, residential-based child care and education programs, and City's First Readers—as well as the culturally and linguistically responsive CBOs who implement and support them—are funded to thrive and grow in reach.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy for CHCF, at [ddemeuse@chcfinc.org](mailto:ddemeuse@chcfinc.org) or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 23 budget.







**Testimony of Dr. Brenda Triplett, Director of Educational Achievement and Partnership  
New York City Council Oversight Hearing on the FY23 Preliminary Budget  
Committees on Education and Finance  
Monday, March 21, 2022**

Thank you Chair Rita Joseph and the members of the Education committee for the opportunity to present testimony to you today about the impact and opportunities in the FY23 Preliminary Budget for current and former youth with a foster care background attending public schools in New York City.

My name is Dr. Brenda Triplett, the Director of Educational Achievement and Partnership in the Child Welfare and Family Services Division at Children's Aid, a multi-service human services organization with a mission to help nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families in poverty to succeed and thrive. With our 2,000 part-time and full-time staff, we employ a comprehensive and holistic strategy from cradle through college and career in every key setting – home, school, and community. We operate over 100 programs in 40 sites primarily clustered in four boroughs in the following targeted New York City neighborhoods – South Bronx, Washington Heights, Harlem, the northern shore of Staten Island, Bedford Stuyvesant/Williamsburg, and downtown Brooklyn.

Children's Aid is an agency with a strong city advocacy agenda. We are members of and support the platforms of the Campaign for Children, Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), Fair Futures, the Human Services Council, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

As a retired public school educator/administrator in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) with approximately 35 years of service and someone who also proudly served as a foster parent for several years, I bring a very unique perspective to the issues affecting children and youth with a foster care background attending public schools in New York City.

When I first started working at Children's Aid, I realized just how much I didn't know about youth in the foster care system despite having spent three decades in public education. The more I interacted with NYCDOE faculty and staff in my new role as an educational advocate, the more apparent it became that there is an overall lack of knowledge on the part of NYCDOE concerning the legal rights of youth in care, the rights of their biological parents, and importantly, the impact of trauma on their ability to succeed in school.

Although there are mandates including the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the recent iteration of the Elementary Secondary School Act, and the Chancellor's Regulations which clearly outline specific protections for youth in foster care, many school leaders are unaware of these regulations and therefore, cannot enforce them. Even more concerning is the disconnect between policy and the existing infrastructure within the schools to comply with the mandates and regulations. To make this work requires a herculean effort on the part of both – schools and child welfare agencies. The Fostering Connections Act actually **requires** that child welfare agencies and the NYCDOE work collaboratively to meet the needs of students. Having a NYCDOE team specifically focused on meeting these goals is critical.

As an educator, I always prided myself on being “woke” and culturally sensitive to the needs of all my students. I am ashamed to admit that like many other educators, I also believed that most children are removed from their parents due to abuse. I have come to learn differently. I believe when you know better you do better. The fact is that the majority of the children removed from homes are removed for reasons of neglect and we know that research supports a direct correlation between neglect and poverty. Hence there are more poor children of color in the foster care system in NYC. Importantly, the majority of the calls to child protective services originate in the schools. It is critical, then, that schools have access to reliable, accurate, timely and culturally sensitive guidance in order to make informed decisions concerning youth in foster care and their families.

In order for the NYCDOE to properly support the 6,000 children and youth with a foster care background attending public schools, I am urging the city to do the following:

- **Lift the hiring freeze at NYCDOE**, to allow the agency to hire the individuals needed to staff the NYCDOE Foster Care Team. How valuable would it also be, then, if part of the responsibility of the NYCDOE Foster Care Team was to provide guidance counselors and social workers with preventive resources to assist struggling families when they notice the smoke, instead of waiting to report the fires? This would help to actually reduce the number of youth in foster care across the city.





- **Guarantee bus service or comparable transportation to students in foster care.** We ask the City Council to ensure that the budget includes \$5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to the relatively small number of students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.

In closing, Children's Aid recognized early on that child welfare agencies cannot effectively advocate in isolation of schools. There are thousands of youth in care scattered among the 32 school districts across New York City. Over the last 4 years, Children's Aid has cultivated a partnership with the NYCDOE to train guidance counselors, and social workers on the policies and best practices previously discussed and most importantly, provide cultural sensitivity training to dispel myths about youth in care, their parents and foster parents. However, this should not be the job of child welfare agencies alone. We have neither the staff nor funding to provide this critical series of training at the level needed across the entire public school system. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that children with a foster care background excel academically. We can do this together and please consider Children's Aid as a thought partner in this effort.

If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact me at [bttriplett@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:bttriplett@childrensaidnyc.org).



**Submitted Testimony of Lena Bilik, Senior Policy Analyst at Children's Aid**  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing - City Council Education Committee**  
**March 21, 2022**

Thank you to Chair Rita Joseph and the members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY22-23 Preliminary Budget. And we thank the New York City Council for your leadership on issues that impact the youth and families of this city.

With a mission to help children living in poverty to succeed and thrive, Children's Aid provides comprehensive support to children, youth, and their families in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in New York City. Since our founding in 1853, Children's Aid has been anchored in the knowledge that poverty cannot be overcome with a single service delivered at a single point in time. We are a solutions-driven, multi-service agency employing a holistic strategy that serves children and their families at every stage of development, from cradle through college and career; and in every key setting — home, school, and community. Today our 2,000 full- and part-time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth, and their families through our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics. We work primarily in Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, the north shore of Staten Island, Bedford Stuyvesant/Williamsburg, and downtown Brooklyn. Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

**Community Schools**

For over 25 years, Children's Aid has operated community schools in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. We believe the community schools strategy effectively removes the barriers to learning that get in the way of youth success — both academically and socially—and we believe this strategy is more needed than ever right now. Community schools act as community hubs that offer holistic, integrated services that acknowledge the needs of the whole child. New York City community schools use the CBO-partner model, where nonprofits like Children's Aid partner with schools and work closely with their school partners and educators to offer integrated support that responds to the specific needs of the students and the entire school community. At our community schools, we work in complete partnership with the school community to integrate expanded learning



programs, comprehensive health services (physical, mental health, dental, and vision), and family engagement strategies into the school building.

We truly believe that the community schools strategy is the path forward to ensure students are not left behind by this crisis. But we have long believed that every school should be a community school, even before the pandemic. Students learn better when their physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, it will only be that much harder to focus on school. We also know that there are serious education inequities in NYC, like there are all over this country, because of past and present systemic racism that is responsible for racial and economic segregation and inequitable access to resources. Community schools are one strategy that can level the playing field and address barriers to learning. Community schools represent [a long-term education equity strategy](#) to sustainably invest in low-income communities and communities of color faced with the impact of multigenerational disinvestment.

Currently, Children's Aid partners with 20 community schools in New York City. Children's Aid community schools approach the work across four domains: academic, social-emotional, health and wellness, and family and home. These programs and services include afterschool programming, targeted academic interventions, attendance support, school-based health clinics with medical, dental, and vision services, mental health services and counseling, parent workshops, family events, and many other services. Key to the success of community schools is having a lead partner who coordinates the programs and strategy at the school level; advocates for the school's needs; brings in additional resources, programs, and services; conducts needs assessments and supports with data-driven decision making; and has a full-time presence in the school. Children's Aid provides every one of our schools with a full-time Community School Director to coordinate with school leadership and ensure resources, programming, and services are integrated, both during the school day and during extended learning time.

During the height of the pandemic's impact in the school year 2020-2021, Children's Aid (CA) was able to pivot to working with students and families with a combination of remote and in-person services. When schools were closed we offered virtual after-school programming, mental health services using tele-health technology, targeted academic supports and college/career coaching. When schools reopened for in-person learning, CA immediately stepped in to provide crucial mental health services



on an in-person basis for students attending classes on site; we also maintained remote mental health counseling as an option throughout the year because of the immense need. Additionally, we were able to provide in-person medical services at our six school-based health centers. Our students whose schools did not have a school-based health center received referrals for both in-person and tele-health services from our community-based health clinics and other providers in our network of local partners.

The impact of the pandemic continues to have a profound impact on the families in our community schools, which are located in some of the neighborhoods in New York City hit hardest by the pandemic and its associated economic downturn. Many of the assessments we conducted showed us that families have needed support with basic needs. As community schools, we were equipped to quickly respond. For example, food insecurity consistently emerged as one of the most pressing issues affecting families. To address this, community school staff partnered with CA's Go!Healthy program to mount multiple food access initiatives which distributed thousands of meals and grocery boxes throughout the year. We also continued to stock food pantries at multiple community school sites, while also opening a new food pantry in one of our South Bronx community schools. Additionally, with many caregivers experiencing unemployment, we were able to leverage funds to assist families in our community schools pay for food and essential supplies like diapers and formula, rental assistance, utility bills, mobile devices, and internet service. We also ramped up services geared toward parents and families, including virtual workshops on government benefits, workforce development, COVID-19 relief resources, social emotional skills, and employment assistance.

Children's Aid as a community school partner has been able to provide invaluable support to our schools with these responsive and holistic services that are more vital than ever, as the pandemic and ensuing economic crisis have exacerbated existing racial and socioeconomic inequity in the communities we work in. This was also the case in community schools all over New York City. The strategy is well equipped to empower schools across the city to create and offer a network of resources that youth and families can turn to when experiencing the relentless challenges that have permeated this crisis. The community schools strategy is designed to help address a multitude of these challenges – it is not *only* a mental health strategy, an academic strategy, or an equity strategy for education – it is *all* of those things and more, providing much needed support on everything from food insecurity to interrupted learning to the grief that comes with losing a loved one.

It's also important to note that NYC Community Schools are evidence-backed. In a groundbreaking [RAND report](#) published in January of 2020, New York City's community schools were found to have markedly positive impacts on students and communities, including a positive impact on student



attendance in all school levels and across all three years of the study, a reduction in disciplinary incidents for elementary and middle school students, and had a positive impact on math achievement and credit accumulation in the third and final year of the study.

### **Budget Recommendations**

The City is poised to expand the initiative from 267 to 416 schools using American Rescue Plan federal stimulus dollars. Still, NYC has yet to develop a permanent long-term sustainable funding solution for our community schools, and while federal stimulus dollars will sustain them for now until decreasing in FY25 and then dropping off completely in FY26, the future of these neighborhood lifelines remains unclear. (ARP funding must be spent by the end of FY25). We recommend planning now for smart and sustainable investments from the City in the community schools initiative to support the long-term existence of these crucial services. Consistent and sustainable funding are critical to building community trust and authentic school-community partnerships. The following are recommendations for the country's largest community schools initiative:

- The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to secure the longevity of the community school initiative. To fill in the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars:
  - A total investment of \$60.3M will be needed to baseline funding after American Rescue Plan funding drops off, at the end of FY25.<sup>1</sup>
    - The funding gap left by federal aid that will need to be filled for FY26 includes the following:
      - Community Schools Expansion: \$51.2M
      - Restoration of Community Schools Contracts: \$6M
      - Community Schools Sustainability: \$3.1M
  - Additionally, before that, in FY25, Community Schools will face a \$25.6M deficit that will need to be filled, as the community school expansion is only half-funded for that year.
- The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.
- Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of growing the system in order to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on information in FY2021's Adopted Budget.



### CBO partners

A crucial part of the NYC Community Schools initiative is the fact that it utilizes a CBO-partnership model, where CBOs partner with schools to leverage resources and bring in additional services and coordination into the school as a hub of services. The resources brought in by the partner become the resources of the school - whether it's more social workers, or a school-based health center, or an afterschool program, or a partnership with local business. When we as CBO partners are in a community school we are an integrated part of that school, working with principals, families, and all school leadership to ensure youth and families get what they need.

As embedded, crucial parts of schools and communities, CBO partners must also be treated like partners by the City. The City must take steps to contract us at the true cost of service, including funding for pay and benefits parity with DOE to attract, invest in, and retain our workforce.

It is especially important to ensure pay parity between human service workers and their City counterparts, as CBOs cannot provide wages to compete with agencies like the DOE, which incentivizes frontline staff to leave for these jobs after CBOs have already trained, cleared, and developed these workers. Recently, CBO partners have reported that their staff have directly received recruiting emails from the DOE encouraging them to apply for substitute teacher positions. This indicates that on some level, the City recognizes the need for these workers as well as the quality of their work. If the City can recognize that, then it is time for the City to end the practice of low contract reimbursement rates. CBO partners cannot compete with the DOE for staff when the City also sets reimbursement levels for programs we provide. Without higher wages, CBO programs can't be competitive.

### **Recommendations:**

Current New York City and State contracts have resulted in the essential human services workforce being some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. **We support our partners on the Human Services Council's #JustPay campaign in calling for an end to poverty-level wages driven by low contract reimbursement rates.** Specifically, the campaign is calling for the City to:

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.



- Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

### **Early Childhood Education**

New York City's recovery depends on a strong, stable system of high-quality early childhood education which nurtures and educates children and makes it possible for parents to go to work. Children's Aid provides early childhood education programs for 750 infants, toddlers and preschoolers across a total of 9 sites. Currently 90% of those children live in poverty. Four of our sites are co-located in NYCDOE public schools, and the remaining five sites are in community centers, two of which are New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) facilities. While we do have some direct-federal contracts, 40 percent of our programming is city-funded. Our services are delivered by a team of almost 250 professionals who respond to and support the various needs of children and their families both onsite and in the home. Our programs support parents even before birth to ensure that children receive the services they need to start life on the right track. Our early childhood programs enhance cognitive and reasoning ability, foster literacy skills, build self-esteem, and facilitate healthy social maturation. We offer Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-School programming. As a Steering Committee member of Campaign for Children, we support the following recommendations:

#### **Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce**

- Fund longevity increases for teachers in community based early childhood education programs
- Address salary disparities between directors and support staff and their counterparts in public schools
- Increase rates for child care for infants and toddlers
- Support career advancement for early childhood teachers, directors and staff

#### **Address Service Gaps**

- Ensure all neighborhoods have access to Extended Day and Extended Year programs
- Increase center-based capacity for child care for infants and toddlers

#### **Improve Enrollment Processes**

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- Suspend Department of Education's (DOE) Pay for Enrollment policy which penalizes providers financially for temporary fluctuations in enrollment
- Allow community based organizations with Department of Education contracts to directly enroll families
- Increase income eligibility for child care subsidies (currently at 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines) and reduce or eliminate burdensome paperwork requirements for families seeking child care

### **Commit to Working with CBOs in Planning Reforms to Early Childhood Education**

- Ensure that community based organizations have a voice in planning early childhood policies and procedures.

### **Students in Foster Care**

The City has long overlooked the educational needs of students in foster care. To address their needs, the City must lift the hiring freeze so the DOE can move forward with plans to hire a small team focused on students in foster care and include funding in the budget to guarantee transportation for students in foster care. We support the following recommendations alongside other partners in this work:

- **Lift the hiring freeze so the DOE can move forward with plans to hire a team focused on students in foster care.** Students in foster care, who are disproportionately Black and come from the City's poorest communities, are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma. Last year only 43% of students in foster care graduated from high school in four years – by far the lowest rate of any student group in the city, and almost 40 percentage points below the city average of 81%. Despite the obvious need, currently, there is not a single person at the DOE focused full time on meeting the needs of students in foster care. The result is that barriers to education for this population often remain unaddressed and opportunities for successful troubleshooting, interagency coordination, and policy change are wasted. This fall, the DOE finally announced that it would hire a small team of staff to focus on students in foster care. Due to the DOE's hiring freeze, however, none of the positions have been filled. Particularly at a time when the DOE is receiving increased state and federal funding, there is no reason to impose a hiring freeze on positions designed to support one of the most marginalized groups of students—leaving students in foster care with no DOE staff dedicated full time to meeting their unique needs.





- **Guarantee bus service or comparable transportation to students in foster care.** In addition, the DOE must ensure that every student in foster care can get to school. Federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools. However, the DOE has refused to guarantee bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students. As a result, students who cannot travel to school on their own have been forced to transfer schools, or even transfer foster homes, even though it is not in their best interest. We ask the City Council to ensure that the budget includes \$5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to the relatively small number of students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.

### **Closing**

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on these critical issues in the lives of children and families in New York City. Please feel free to contact Lena Bilik at [lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.

Caroline Scown

Good morning everyone. Thank you Chair Joseph and committee members. My name is Caroline Scown. I'm an Adult Literacy Instructor at the Chinese-American Planning Council and today I urge the City Council to fully fund Adult Literacy programs.

Adult Literacy equips immigrant New Yorkers with practical language skills to support their children's educations, search for jobs, pursue higher education, negotiate with landlords, apply for citizenship and speak up for their rights. One student, Ryan, recently finished our class and enrolled in a CUNY program. He is studying computer science and plans to pursue a career in computer engineering after graduation. He says he was empowered to apply because of the skills and confidence he found in our class.

Beyond language skills, Adult Literacy classes connect participants to information and wraparound services. We offer students access to workforce development programs, housing assistance, food assistance, childcare, and elderly services. Our classes reach New Yorkers who may be otherwise isolated by Covid-19 and fears of Anti-Asian violence. Students receive reliable information about Covid-19 testing, vaccines, and rental assistance programs. Many of my students are parents and they often trade information about how to apply for high schools, find doctors, and keep their kids safe.

Last year, CPC was one of the recipients of the Adult Literacy Pilot Project Initiative, which sought to show how students would benefit from fully funded programs. Even though only a fraction of the promised amount was received, this addition means we have been able to triple the outreach and wrap around services to our students, as well as modernize our digital infrastructure. Many of the students I teach have finally been able to attend our classes for the first time because remote classes let them learn while they care for children and other family members.

I call on the Mayor and the City Council to maintain the \$8 million in previously baselined funds and double the investment per student with an additional \$13.5 million. The City Council should extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to \$5 million to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources. Finally, the City Council should renew the \$4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding to continue to provide for program sustainability.

If we are serious about investing in communities, we need to invest in Adult Literacy. Thank you.



Testimony of Rebecca Charles  
Policy and Advocacy Associate  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Education  
Budget Hearing  
March 21st, 2022

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for New York City's children and their families.

We would like to thank Chair Joseph and the Committee on Education for hosting this budget hearing. As young people are recovering from the multiple effects of the pandemic, there has rarely been a more crucial time for increased investments in education.

The pandemic has underscored the vast disparities and inequities within our education system and the responsibility city leaders have to address these issues so that our children know that they are valued and prioritized by their city. Now is the time to make investments in our children's education and the workforce, services, resources, and opportunities that help students thrive.

**We were disappointed with and concerned by the Preliminary Budget's proposed cuts to The Department of Education**, which included a \$57 million decrease in Central Offices funding, and a \$375 million decrease in funding due to enrollment changes, resulting in a hiring freeze and cutting over 3,600 vacant positions. These cuts risk creating new barriers for schools to support students. We oppose these cuts, as they come at a time when schools need increased staffing and resources to fully meet the needs of the city's most vulnerable students. **The city's executive budget must restore these cuts, as well as increase investments in early childhood care and education, supports for students in temporary housing and immigrant students, mental health care, and youth programming.**

### **Achieve an Equitable Early Care and Education System**

Over the past eight years, New York City has made major strides in enhancing access to early care and education, but there is much work to be done by the new administration to ensure true universality in care from birth to five years old. Furthermore, city leaders must ensure that providers are paid a living wage and provided with the resources necessary to give high-quality care. **CCC, in partnership with the Campaign for Children, urges city leaders to take the following actions:**

- **Address gaps in service by ensuring extended day and extended year programs for all families and by increasing system capacity to serve infants and toddlers;**

- **Achieve comprehensive parity and address inequities in benefits and longevity between early childhood CBO staff and their 12-month DOE counterparts, specifically those left out of the initial city agreement to raise salaries: preschool special educators, center directors, and support staff.**
- **Invest in the child care workforce by increasing rates for reimbursement**
- **Improve enrollment processes by allowing CBOs to directly enroll families, reducing paperwork for families, increasing income eligibility for subsidies, and decoupling provider funding from enrollment numbers.**

As we emerge from the pandemic, it must be stressed that New York City's recovery depends on a strong, stable system of high-quality early childhood education which takes into account the needs of providers, children, and parents.

### **Prioritize the Needs of Students in Temporary Housing**

Students in foster care, who are disproportionately Black and from the City's poorest communities, are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma. Students in foster care were also particularly impacted by the closure of schools. In fact, last year, only 43% of students in foster care graduated from high school after four years – by far the lowest rate of any student group in the city, and almost 40 percentage points below the city average of 81%. Despite the obvious need, currently, there is not a single person at the DOE focused full time on meeting the needs of students in foster care. **CCC urges city leaders and the DOE to focus on students in foster care, specifically in regard to creating a specialized team to support these students and their families, as well as to ensure simple and accessible transportation.**

It is essential to lift the hiring freeze so that the DOE can implement, and fill positions of the small team focused on students in foster care that was announced last fall. It is evident there is severe need for devoted staff to help support coordination, policy development, transparency, and overall increased efficiency and support for students in foster care and their families. Furthermore, the DOE has received an increase in state and federal funding, meaning there is no reason to impose a hiring freeze on positions designed to support one of the most marginalized groups of students—leaving students in foster care with no DOE staff dedicated full time to meeting their unique needs. The Administration's desire to find cost-savings and efficiencies should not fall on the backs of students in foster care. **City leaders must ensure that the DOE can hire its first-ever team focused on students in foster care.**

**CCC also urges the city to create 150 Community Coordinator positions through the DOE.** Currently, the DOE has 117 Family Assistant positions, a number that has not increased in over a decade, though the number of students in the shelter system has increased by thousands. Furthermore, Family Assistants are paid very little and only work during the school year, making recruitment for the position difficult and leaving families with little to no support throughout the summer months. Family Assistants have an overwhelming workload and cannot possibly address every need of families in shelter on their own. The shelter-based Community Coordinators will help support families with school placements, busing, and accessing special education services. They will also help connect families to tutoring, counseling, and other supports. The DOE has

committed to hiring 50 Community Coordinators using designated funds from the American Rescue Plan. However, more coordinators are needed to ensure that every student living in shelter can access all supports needed to ensure a high-quality education.

**In addition to increased staffing, the city must also ensure that there is a yellow bus service for students in foster care.** While both federal and state law require the city to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can remain in their original schools, the DOE is not guaranteeing any form of transportation to these students at this time. This is causing several harmful impacts on students in foster care, such as needing to transfer schools or foster homes to be able to access an education. Being in foster care is disruptive enough for a young person, and the DOE must do everything in its power and capabilities to ensure that students in foster care are supported and, at the bare minimum, can get to school. During the 2019-20 school year, one in five NYC students had to change schools upon their initial placement in foster care. **We ask the city council to ensure that the budget includes \$5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation for students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.**

### **Ensure Educational Supports for Bilingual and Immigrant Students**

Even before COVID-19, the NYC public school system was ill-equipped to serve English language learners and immigrant families, and too many families were unable to access high-quality schooling and programs for their children. The pandemic only compounded these barriers. Immigrant-serving CBOs across the city were overwhelmed throughout the pandemic as they struggled to find enrollment and communications support for newcomer families, and far too many eligible students were unable to even enter the education system. Drops in enrollment reflect these serious issues but have led to Mayor Adams calling for cuts and hiring freezes to the DOE. The city must reject these proposals, so students do not have to pay the price for the pandemic.

New York City must finally address the barriers immigrants face and invest in the infrastructure needed to ensure high schools are fully accessible to immigrant families. **CCC joins the New York Immigration Coalition in calling on city leaders to invest \$2.1M in this year's budget and commitment to supporting a 3-year, \$8.3 million transfer school pilot to increase newly arrived, high-school-aged immigrants' access to programs that meet their needs.**

This pilot would infuse current transfer schools with best practices from ELL transfers schools and ensure that each transfer school has English as a New Language (ENL) teachers and social workers equipped to work with immigrant families. The pilot would also include culturally competent supports for students and professional development for all staff to meet the needs of newly arrived immigrant students.

New York City must address the devastating ELL dropout rate and the fact that thousands of newcomer immigrant youth don't have access to the public school system. For immigrant youth, a "return to normal" is unacceptable.

## **Support the Behavioral Health Needs of Students**

Schools play an essential role in meeting the behavioral health needs of children, yet New York City's approach to addressing the social-emotional needs of students in schools has often been fragmented and insufficient. Far too many students experiencing an emotional crisis are still sent to emergency rooms, subjected to police intervention, or punished with disciplinary practices such as suspension.

Schools need the resources and training necessary to support the mental health of all students, rather than relying on punitive and traumatizing responses to student behavior. CCC, in partnership with the Campaign for Effective Behavioral Supports in Schools (CEBSS), urges city leaders to prioritize the following recommendations to support students' behavioral health needs:

- **Follow recommendations made by the Healing-Centered Schools Task Force** to adopt trauma-responsive classroom practices, integrate mental health and wellness supports, implement restorative and supportive practices, family engagement, anti-racist and culturally-responsive curricula, adopt strengths-based learning, and offer opportunities for enrichment and creative expression;
- **Invest in students with significant mental health needs by baselining \$5 million in funding for the Mental Health Continuum in the FY23 Adopted Budget;**
- **Ensure behavioral health services at each public school are effectively communicated to families and communities by conducting multiple forms of outreach;**
- **Increase the number of and expand access to school-based mental health clinics and partnerships with community-based mental health providers** to ensure essential clinical supports to students, including diagnosis, and individual and family counseling;
- **Ensure social workers in schools have adequate clinical supervision to effectively serve students;**
- **Expand and fully complete implementation of restorative justice practices** to address the root causes of behavior, hold students accountable while keeping them in school learning, build and heal relationships, and teach positive behaviors;
- **Revamp and enhance supports for students with behavioral disabilities in Districts 75 (Specialized School District) and 79 (Alternative Schools District)** by providing staff with training on developing effective behavioral intervention plans and coaching to implement the plans and providing these students with individualized support and clinical mental health services.

## **Invest in Youth Services and Programming**

**CCC applauds Mayor Adams's major expansion proposals for summer youth workforce programming and Summer Rising.** Increasing slots for both SYEP and Summer Rising will bring the city closer to programs with universal access. That being said, we encourage city leaders to address the severe challenges providers faced last summer, increase investments into year-round youth programming, and pay CBO staff fair wages. CCC recommends the following:

- **Invest \$20 million to baseline funding for Work Learn Grow, SYEP's school-year counterpart, in the FY23 budget to further increase opportunities for young people and maintain relationships and employment;**
- **Further increase the cost-per-participant rates of COMPASS contracts to \$1,848 and SONYC contracts to \$1,410;**
- **Prioritize the backlog of background checks and develop a new simplified system that will quickly and effectively clear staff to work with youth;**
- **Invest in community schools by developing a long-term strategy that includes baselined funding so that community schools can continue offering a wide array of services to youth and families well after federal funding subsidies**

Youth programming can be a lifeline, as it provides needed enrichment, income, socialization, and health support. Ensuring that youth programming is funded, well-staffed, organized, coordinated, and safe is a necessity.

### **Conclusion**

It is time for New York City to reimagine its education system and fully prioritize the needs of all students, including those who are homeless, immigrants, bilingual speakers, and with special needs. It is also crucial that the city works toward an equitable educational continuum from birth to 18 that includes true universal child care and early education, and year-round, adequately funded youth programs. We must place equity, social-emotional skills, and mental health at the forefront of recovery. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Hi Everyone, My name is Muhammad, and I am a high school senior and a member of the YA-YA Network. Ms. Linda Lee, I am in your constituent and I am part of your district. As we all know, this year is very different from every other and many issues have arisen that need to be solved.

Did you know that every day at school I hear people saying that they talked to the new social worker? Every day I hear one of my peers say that they need to wait days in order to talk to the social worker. Students complain that we need social workers or school counselors earlier and they would have been more helpful to sustain our mental health. One social worker or school counselor for over 500 students is not enough. One social worker does not have the time or capability to meet the mental needs of 500 plus students. Also, more school safety agents do not make schools safer. Nor do more metal detectors make schools safer. My friend was telling me that he arrived early to school, but due to having to go through metal detectors, he was a period late to class. Metal detectors are annoying to students and harm the quality of education that students receive. Random metal detectors do not help protect students.

Now we need to get some things straight. During the height of the pandemic 1 in 4 school safety agents quit, but the violence in schools did not increase. This shows that more school safety agents do not correlate with increased safety for students and teachers. To improve the lives of students and teachers we need more mental health advisors that are there to listen to our needs and to have people that we can safely communicate with.

That's not all. There are still many issues that we are facing. We need school-based jobs that support students, contribute to the safety of our school communities, hire more Black and Brown community members and pay them well. Instead of more school safety agents, we need to hire more school-based Restorative Justice Coordinators until there is a Restorative Justice Coordinator in all public schools. Also, we need to hire more new social workers and school counselors. Funding for these positions needs to be to achieve at least a ratio of 1:150 across all schools. This way there are enough social workers to accommodate every student's needs. Also, we should not hire 1,363 new school cops to replace current vacancies. This funding must be redirected to fill supportive staff positions such as more social workers, school counselors, and restorative justice coordinators. We need a better school system where the students and teachers can feel safe and appreciated!



**Testimony of Quamid Francis****Executive Director, City Year New York****New York City Council Committee on Education****March 21, 2022, 9:00 AM (Virtual)*****Introduction***

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph, committee members, and advocates. My name is Quamid Francis, and I'm proud to serve as the Executive Director for City Year New York (CYNV). This education nonprofit helps advance educational equity, workforce training, and civic engagement by recruiting AmeriCorps members to serve full-time as student success coaches in our public city schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about CYNV's impact, challenges, and opportunities for students and young adults in NYC.

***Background***

For nearly 20 years, diverse and talented young adults have joined City Year New York, helping to build connections with communities and students, creating psychologically safe classroom spaces, engaging students in personally meaningful activities in which students have both "voice" and "choice," and helping students to build social and emotional competence. We have a strong and collaborative relationship with the NYC Department of Education to further advance and support the Community School strategy—which is one of equity, and that integrates well with CYNV's Whole School Whole Child (WSWC) model that directly addresses the impediments that impact a child's learning and development. Students have experienced heightened levels of stress and trauma because of the pandemic, which is a clear enough reason why we need to employ sustainable, holistic approaches to support their learning and development robustly.

***Impact***

Our corps members, who we train to become student success coaches, help foster that social-emotional learning environment to help improve student attendance, behavior inside and outside the classroom, and coursework. In my prior role as a Deputy Commissioner in NYC government as part of the Taskforce for Racial Inclusion and Equity, I understand many of the systemic challenges a number of our communities face. That is why we intentionally employ our WSWC model in communities that have experienced under-investment. Today we are proud to be the lead Community School provider at 12 schools in NYC, focusing mainly in the South Bronx, East New York, Brooklyn, East Harlem, and Western Queens. The impact of our work is clear: a 2020 Johns Hopkins University study found that the more time students spend with AmeriCorps student success coaches, the better students' outcomes, academically, socially, emotionally, and in terms of attendance. Previous studies show that schools that partner with City Year are two-to-three times more likely to improve in English Language Arts and mathematics than similar schools without City Year. CYNV is also a proud partner of the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, which works to sustain and support the Community School strategy to ensure competent and sustainable investments from the city in community schools.



## Recruiting Challenge

CYNY AmeriCorps student success coach alumni are tremendous assets to our city. These dynamic young leaders acquire valuable skills during their service that are in demand by employers and that help them identify future career pathways. Our student success coaches earn exclusive scholarships for college, graduate school, educational travel, and access to unique CYNY career pathway programs into some of the nation's leading private sector consulting firms. Some alumni become teachers themselves; many remain in NYC after their year of service and help to enrich our communities as professionals across a wide array of sectors. But today, we face a recruiting challenge and are asking for your help. Briefly, with a competitive labor market, we are experiencing a shortage of AmeriCorps member applications for FY23.

So, we are asking the City Council, parents, high school principals, guidance counselors, college, and university presidents to encourage young adults ages 17-25 to consider serving with City Year New York. [City Year alumni data](#) show that national service is a catalytic experience of personal growth, professional skill-building, and meaningful civic engagement for thousands of young adults each year. This talent shortage affects our students' access to learning opportunities, resources, and [relationships](#) they need to flourish. So, please join CYNY by helping to answer President Biden's call to step up and support students. This could also be an opportunity for partnership with the Summer Youth Employment Program—to sustain meaningful employment, which I'm happy to further discuss in another setting. I assure you, though, that the CYNY experience will not only change the lives of the students whom AmeriCorps members serve, but also their own, and will no doubt benefit our entire city.

## Conclusion

In closing, I want to call out a couple of other ways we can all work together in the near term:

- First, support the Community School strategy by developing a permanent, long-term sustainable funding solution to ensure our kids continue to receive the full suite of services currently offered through this equitable approach to learning and development—especially given that the federal funding that supports this work will sunset in FY26.
- Second, partner with CYNY: We are a data-driven organization constantly learning and innovating to serve our students and corps members better. We are eager to support and ready to partner with the Council and others testifying today.

There is a saying that "today's problems were the solutions of yesterday." Whatever actions the Council takes to ensure community schools are well-equipped, we urge you to reach a timely solution that tries the best it can to mitigate future problems.

With gratitude and in service, thank you.



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## Testimony before the City Council Education Committee concerning the Mayor's proposed budget cuts to education and the capital plan

March 20, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the City Council. My name is Leonie Haimson and I'm the Executive Director of Class Size Matters, a non-profit organization that provides information on the benefits of smaller classes to parents and voters nationwide, and advocates for class size reduction in NYC public schools.

Yesterday we released a new report, entitled ***"What has happened to class size this year and what will happen to class size if the Mayor's cuts are enacted?"***<sup>1</sup> The full report is attached to this testimony.

Our analysis reveals substantial decreases in average class size this year citywide due to enrollment decline, yet significant disparities remain across school districts and grade levels.

We explain how Mayor Adams' proposed budget cuts to schools will likely cause class sizes to sharply increase to earlier and unacceptably large levels, despite the strong consensus among parents and teachers that smaller classes are even more important than ever before to support students and enable them to recover from the myriad academic disruptions and emotional stress caused by the Covid pandemic. ***The most likely impact of these cuts would be the largest increase in NYC class sizes since the Great Recession.***

The report discusses how the School Construction Authority has now substantially lowered classroom capacity standards in their annual School Enrollment, Capacity, and Utilization report (known as the "Blue Book") to be aligned to the smaller classes in the city's original reduction plan approved by the state in 2007 – that is, 23 students per class in grades 4-8th and 25 students per class in high schools. The standards were already aligned to class sizes of 20 in grades K-3, which were also the goals in that original plan.

Yet at the same time, the SCA has inexplicably proposed to slash new capacity by \$1.5 billion or 19 percent, compared to the capital plan adopted last June. This would include cuts of more than 10,000 new school seats, with especially large reductions in both the Bronx and Queens of more than 6,000 school seats.

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<sup>1</sup> Posted at: <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.31/3zn.338.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Class-size-brief-3.20.22-final-final.pdf>

Despite their implied claim that sufficient seats will be funded to meet the need to eliminate overcrowding and reduce class sizes to adequate levels, as embodied in their revised classroom capacity formula, we have no confidence that this is true.

Our doubts are exacerbated by the fact that the NYC Department of Education and the SCA have failed to provide their methodology for projecting seat needs, as required by Local Law 167 passed by the Council in 2018, which required this transparency. Nor have they disaggregated their seat-need projections by grade level, i.e., the need for seats for 3K and PreK classes, vs K-5<sup>th</sup> grade classes vs 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> classes, as required by Local Law 167.

Neither the DOE nor the SCA has complied with Local Law 168 either, passed in 2018, that was supposed to create Task Force that would work together to analyze the suitability of city- and privately-owned empty lots for schools. This Task Force was supposed to release a report in July 2019, with results that would help counteract the delay often suffered by overcrowded communities in siting new schools.

In October 2019 we obtained a two-page report via a Freedom of Information request to the Council, that appears to have been written by the SCA, and which had input from several of the Task Force members according to their own statements, including the City Council appointee. This report contained a brief summary that ruled out hundreds for city-owned sites for unclear and apparently contradictory reasons. They have still not released any analysis of privately-owned sites.

Two weeks ago, along with the co-chairs of the Education Council Consortium Shino Tanikawa and NeQuan McLean, we sent a letter to the President of the SCA, Nina Kubota, asking what the revision of the Blue Book class size standards meant, and if this signified that all schools would have the space to lower class sizes to these levels by the end of the current five-year plan or by some future date. We also asked them when they would make the information required by Local Laws 167 and 168 available.

They sent a letter in reply on March 18, that was non-responsive to most of our questions. They claimed to have provided their methodology as well as most of the data already for their projections and added that they were now in the process of analyzing a list of privately-owned sites provided them by the Department of Finance. They gave no date by which this analysis would be complete, even though the legal deadline for this analysis was more than two years ago.

They also said that they had eliminated roughly 4,900 of the 22,065 privately-owned sites from a list provided by the Department of Finance (DOF), nearly a quarter of those listed, because they “*lack sufficient location information*,” though they did not explain why the DOF could not be asked to supply that information.<sup>2</sup> More discussion of all these issues, including links to all the relevant data and documents are in our report.

We urge the City Council to oppose the huge cuts to the seats proposed in the Capital plan, unless the SCA can clearly prove they are not needed to eliminate overcrowding and to lower class size to the

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<sup>2</sup> The letter we sent to the SCA President is here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h9XLpapFgQrMS\\_vmQDzptEI8HVSLo\\_zT/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h9XLpapFgQrMS_vmQDzptEI8HVSLo_zT/view?usp=sharing)

The SCA response, along with our comments is posted here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dVWmx\\_qi-8OD4AHBQwFZU\\_-mVUUiuvi/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dVWmx_qi-8OD4AHBQwFZU_-mVUUiuvi/view?usp=sharing)

levels outlined in the new Blue Book standards. To achieve this end, they should be required to provide their detailed methodology for projecting these needs, as well as all the underlying data.

We also urge the Council to resubmit and pass Int 2374-2021 in an amended form, by requiring the phase-in of classroom space requirements per student, to be accomplished over five years rather than three years, and differentiating the square footage by grade level, to be in alignment with the new class size capacity standards in the Blue Book. The original bill that contained uniform and stricter space requirements to be achieved in all grades over three years garnered the support of 41 out of 50 sitting Council Members last session, but never came to a vote.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you today.

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## **CLASS SIZE MATTERS BRIEF**

**March 2022**

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### **What has happened to class size this school year and what will happen to class size if the Mayor's cuts are enacted?**

The issue of excessive class size has long been a top concern of New York City public school teachers, parents, and advocates, and was one of the reasons the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, concluded in 2003 in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case that class sizes in New York City schools were too large to provide students with their right to a sound basic education.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, after that decision was issued, class sizes increased sharply rather than decreased and have remained for nearly twenty years at unacceptably high levels.

Given the need for improved safety protocols and disruptions in students' education during the pandemic, the concern about the need for smaller classes in the city's schools has only grown. Students require stronger support and enhanced feedback from their teachers to make up for the huge disruptions in their learning and engagement for the last two years.

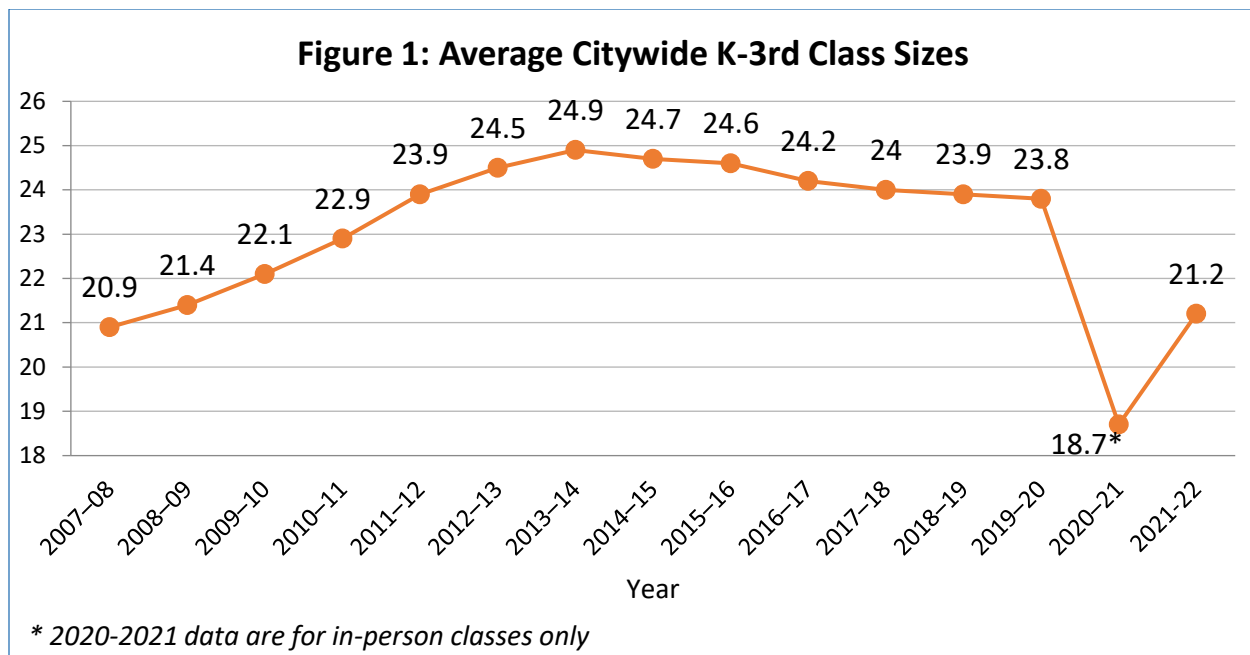
#### **Average class sizes have sharply dropped this year – but not uniformly**

Class sizes in New York City public schools rose sharply starting in 2007, especially in the early grades, as a result of city budget cuts and then the state failing in its commitment to fully fund the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision. Since then, class sizes have remained at high levels during the intervening years.

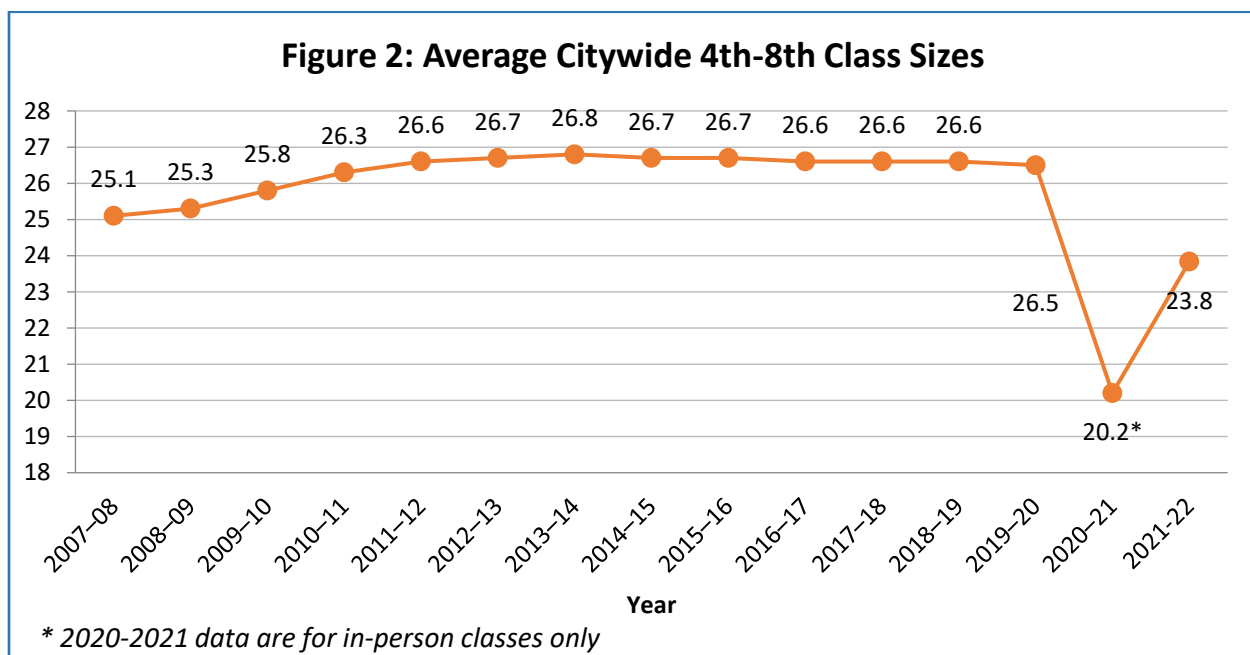
Yet as a result of the sharp decline in enrollment this fall, class sizes have substantially dropped at most schools. Figure 1 shows the citywide trend in average class sizes for kindergarten through third grade between 2007 and the fall of 2021 with data taken directly from the New York City Department of Education's annual class size reports.

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<sup>1</sup> New York, Court of Appeals. *Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc., et al. v. State of New York, et al. (CFE II)*, 100 N.Y.2d 893, 2003, pp. 911-912. Case Text, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/nyctap/l03\\_0084.htm?msclid=afe3852ca70311ec8608bd77359e0d54](https://www.law.cornell.edu/nyctap/l03_0084.htm?msclid=afe3852ca70311ec8608bd77359e0d54)

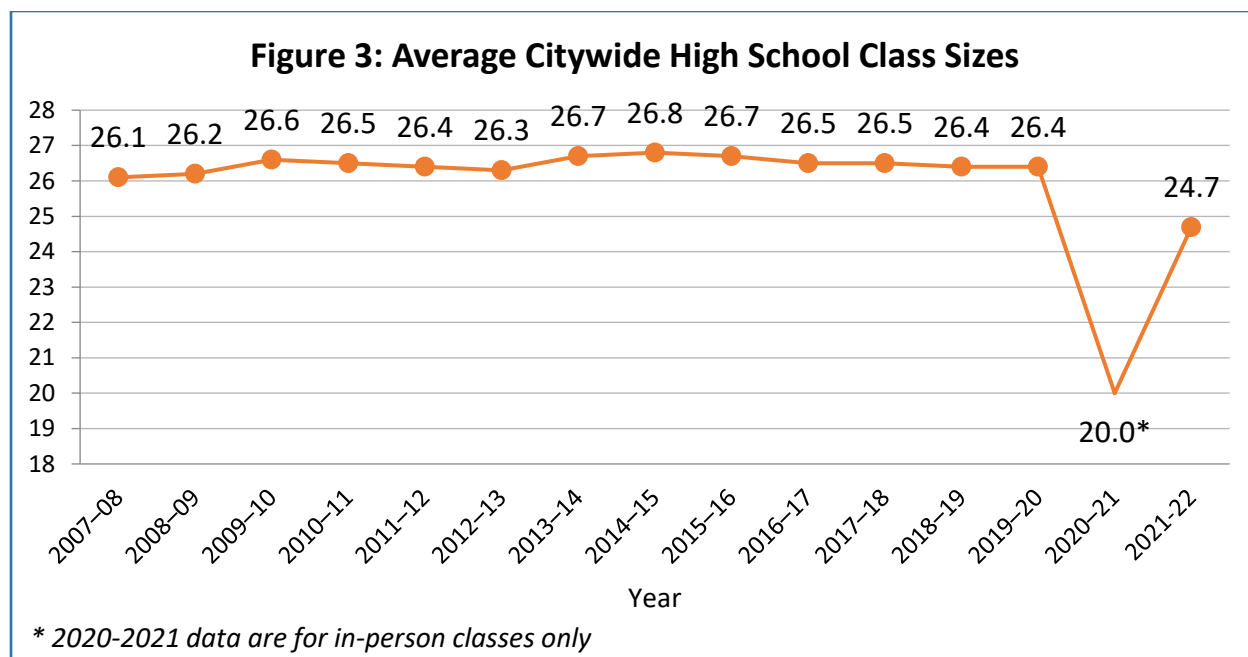


The average class sizes for fourth through eighth grade over that same period are displayed below in Figure 2, and those for high school classes are shown in Figure 3.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> In all cases, we used the class size data reported annually on November 15 that reflects class sizes as of the October 31 official register. All the class size data is linked to on the Infohub section of the DOE website entitled "Class Size Reports." November 2021, <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/class-size-reports>





Two points of clarification: first, the exceptionally small class sizes shown here for the 2020-2021 school year reflect the size of in-person classes only, since despite repeated promises, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) never reported on the class sizes for the 60 percent or more students engaged in remote or part-time blended learning classes.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, these class size data are the averages reported by DOE for general education, gifted/accelerated and inclusion classes only, as self-contained special education classes are categorized separately and capped by state law at far lower levels.

<sup>3</sup> Though the DOE promised several times to release class size data for the remote or blended learning classes, they never did. See the letter from Deputy Karin Goldmark to Council Member Mark Treyger, dated November 14, 2020, at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bT6d9v1YcGS4xIW0q9LwbjqVP7vCenAJ/view>. Also see page 31 of the transcript of the City Council budget hearings on May 19, 2021, where Chancellor Meisha Porter is quoted stating, “That data is being collected and we will work to make sure that we make it available to you.”; “Transcript of the Minutes of the Committee on Finance Jointly with the Committee on Education, Subcommittee on Capital Budget, Committee on Health, the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction and the Committee on Public Housing.” New York City Council, 19 May 2021, New York, pp. 31. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9617407&GUID=C6ABF1E5-C7EB-4001-B0FB-8FE90497412F> Additionally, see the DOE summary deck from November 2021: “during remote and blended learning, new guidance was given to schools to assign students to different official classes depending on their blended/remote cohorts. How schools implemented and documented this change varied, therefore 20-21 class size data may not reflect true class size.” New York City Department of Education. “New York City Class Size 2021-22 (Preliminary).” November 2021, <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2021-22-november-class-size-report---webdeck.pdf>

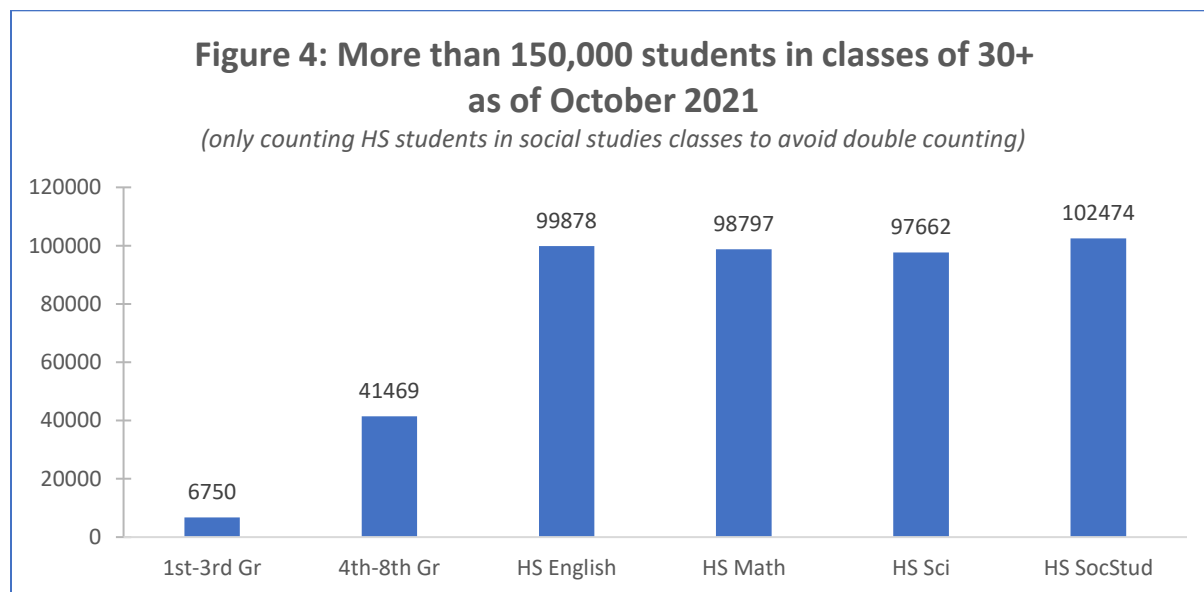


How do we know that the sharp drop in class size this year is due primarily to enrollment decline rather than additional teachers/classes over the number provided pre-pandemic in 2019-2020?

We calculated the number of classes per grade and found that there were 360 fewer general education, gifted and inclusion classes offered in grades K-8, and more than a five thousand fewer offered in high school compared to the fall of 2019.<sup>4</sup>

And though the average class size in high school has declined, the disparities in high school class sizes between schools has worsened. For example, 44,533 students (about 22 percent) were in high school English classes of more than 34 as of the end of October - in violation of the UFT high school class size contractual cap of 34 - compared to only 5,876 students in the fall of 2019 in classes this large. More than 25 percent of high school students were in social studies classes that violated the union contractual cap.

Indeed, according to our analysis, more than 150,000 students overall were in classes of thirty or more as of October 31 this year, as shown in Figure 4. (We only counted the students in high school social studies classes in this total in order to avoid double counting.)



We also found that in all grades, class sizes range widely across districts with class sizes especially large in a number of districts in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island and especially Queens.

As seen in Figure 5, the average class size in grades K-3 by district range from 17.4 students per class in District 4 to 23.3 students per class in District 24. The citywide class size average, highlighted in green, was 21.2 students as of October 2021.

<sup>4</sup> For high school classes, we calculated them from the citywide distributional class size files, as the data was missing for in the usual file showing citywide averages for the fall of 2021.

**Figure 5: Average Class Sizes by NYC School District, Grades K-3rd  
as of October 2021**

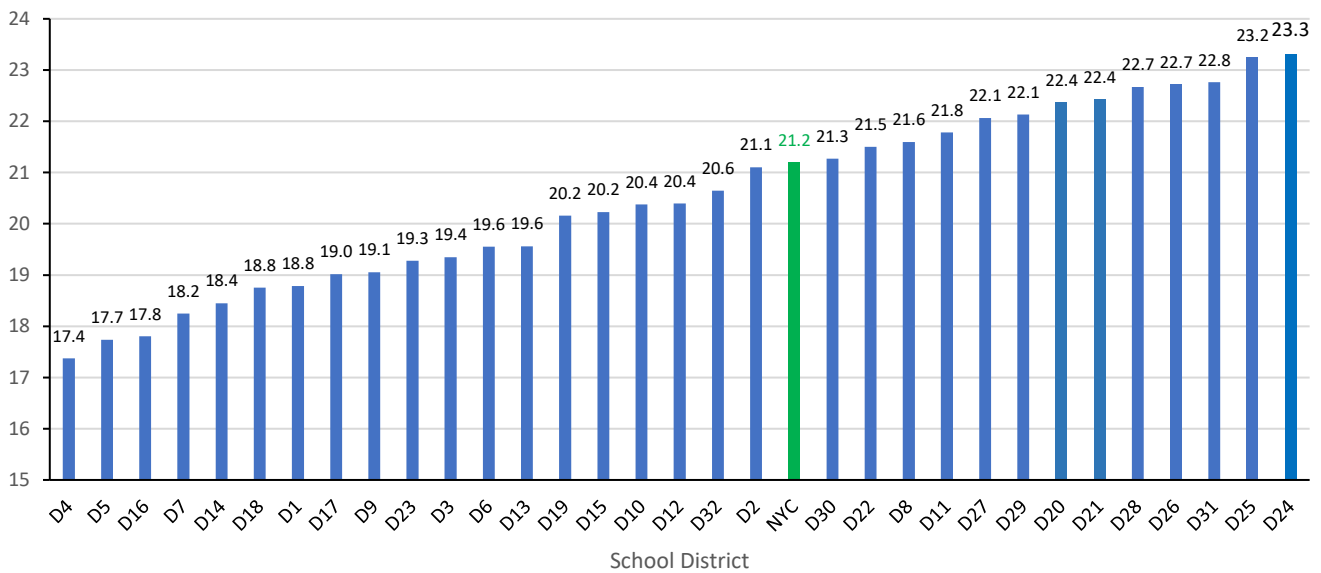
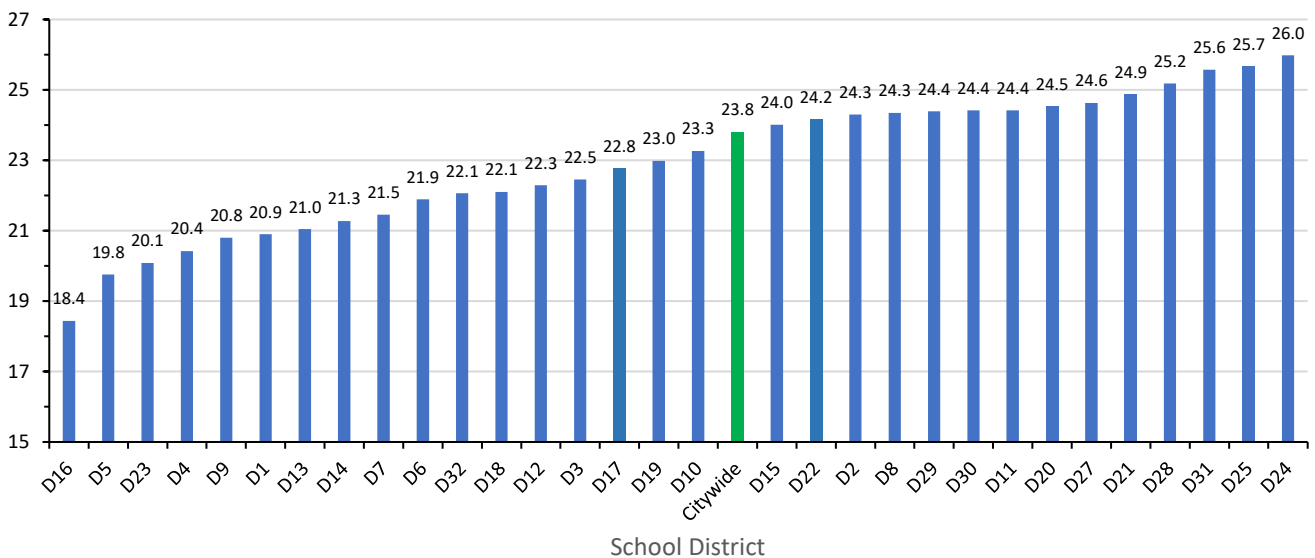
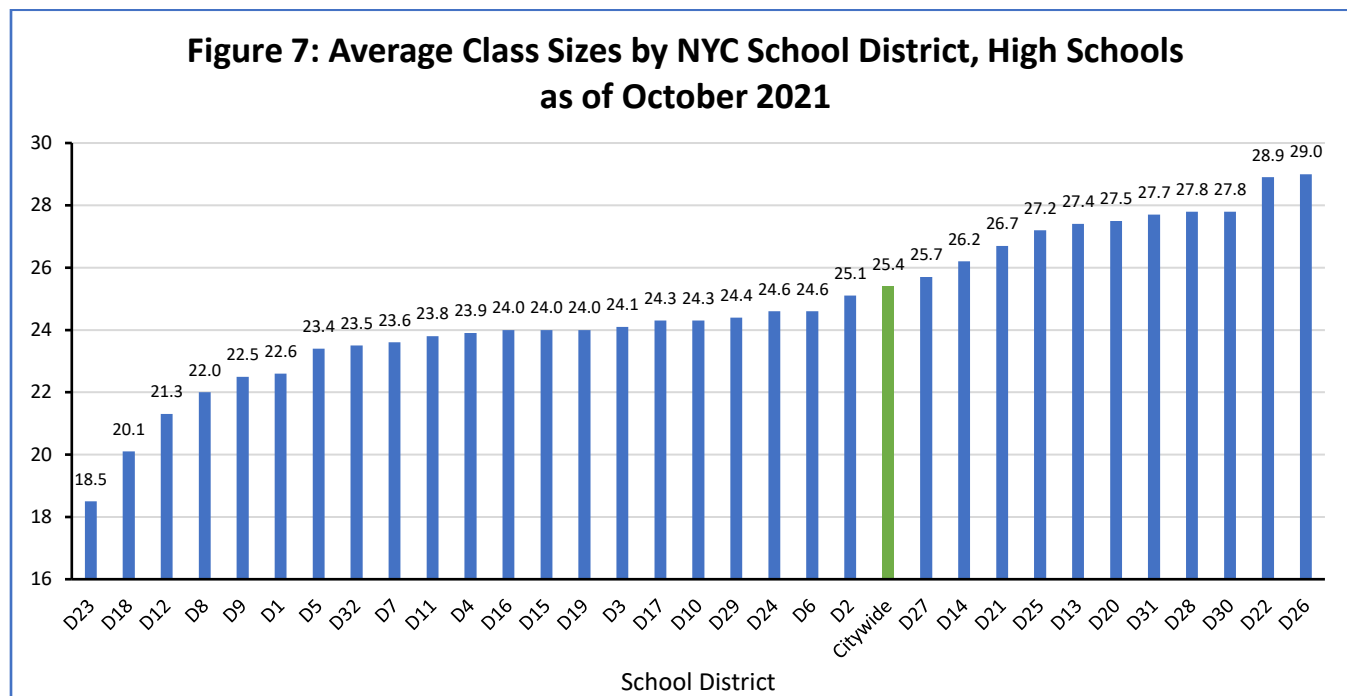


Figure 6 shows the average class sizes for grades 4-8 by school district as of October 2021. Here, average class sizes range from 18.4 students per class in District 16 to 26 students in District 24, and the citywide average class size at 23.8 students.

**Figure 6: Average Class Sizes by NYC School District, Grades 4th-8th  
as of October 2021**



Lastly, Figure 7 shows average class sizes in high schools by district as of October 2021. Average class sizes ranged from 18.5 students per class in District 23 to 29 students per class in District 26, with the citywide average at 25.4 students per class.



## **Class Size Reduction Pilot**

We also analyzed the pilot program established this year, in which 72 schools received a total of \$14,275,608 in additional funding to lower class size in grades K-2. According to the DOE budget allocation memo, *“The schools selected to participate in the pilot were elementary and K-8 schools that are higher need as determined by an Economic Need Index (ENI) exceeding 70% and students testing below the citywide average in both math and reading. Of these higher-needs schools, the 72 schools with larger average class sizes were selected to participate in the pilot.”*<sup>5</sup>

The memo specifically adds: *“Schools receiving these funds should prioritize the use of the allocation to reduce teacher/staff to student ratios in grades K-2 and help ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of second grade.”*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department of Education, Division of Finance. *School Allocation Memorandum No. 49, FY 2022*. Department of Education, Division of School budget Planning & Operations, 27 July 2021, [https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance\\_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy21\\_22/fy22\\_docs/fy2022\\_sam049.htm](https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy21_22/fy22_docs/fy2022_sam049.htm)

<sup>6</sup> New York City Department of Education, Division of Finance. *School Allocation Memorandum No. 49, FY 2022, Targeted Literacy Supports and Class Size Reduction, Table 1: Schools Allocation Summary*. 27 July 2021,

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Yet after receiving funds ranging from ranging from \$226,270 to \$165,306 per school, the average class size in the pilot schools continues to be slightly larger than the citywide average (20.96 students versus 20.90 students per class). Fifty-four of these schools have average class sizes over twenty, and more than half of these schools (45 of 72) have class sizes larger than the citywide average.

According to our calculations, of the 72 pilot schools, fewer than half (29 schools) added any classes in these grades (either general education, inclusion or gifted) compared to 2019, and only 38 schools appear to have added classroom teachers since that year.<sup>7</sup>

It is hard to see how these funds were actually spent in those schools that did not either lower class size or add classroom teachers.<sup>8</sup>

### **Class sizes will likely increase to pre-pandemic levels if proposed budget cuts are enacted**

The City Council's overall assessment of the Mayor's preliminary budget reveals education cuts of \$521 million for next year.<sup>9</sup> Of that, \$375 million is aimed directly at school budgets, euphemistically entitled "enrollment changes" – presumably because as enrollment declines, so does the Fair Student Funding provided to schools. Another \$37 million in cuts to schools are characterized as "school allocation efficiency".<sup>10</sup>

These cuts are projected to lead to a loss of 3,642 positions in Fiscal 2023.<sup>11</sup> Of these lost positions, 3,227 are pedagogues, mostly teachers, on top of a loss of 126 pedagogues this year.<sup>12</sup> All this, despite a city budget surplus that is estimated by the Independent Budget Office (IBO) to be \$3.92 billion this year

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[https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance\\_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy21\\_22/fy22\\_docs/FY2022\\_SAM049\\_T01.xlsx](https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy21_22/fy22_docs/FY2022_SAM049_T01.xlsx)

<sup>7</sup> We estimated the latter by counting how many inclusion classes were added, that have two teachers per class.

<sup>8</sup> DOE had claimed that they allocated over \$18 million for this pilot, while distributing only \$14.2 million to schools. What the remainder of nearly \$4 million is being spent on is unclear. For the \$18 million figure, see Jorgensen, Jillian. "72 Schools to Get Extra Cash to Cut Class Sizes." *Spectrum News NY1*, 27 July 2021, <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/education/2021/07/27/72-schools-to-get-extra-cash-to-cut-class-sizes>; and Amin, Reema. "NYC's Budget Deal Pilots Smaller Class Sizes, Dedicates Millions to COVID Learning Loss." *Chalkbeat New York*, 30 June 2021, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/6/30/22558104/nyc-budget-deal-2022-smaller-class-size-covid-learning-loss>.

<sup>9</sup> New York City Council Finance Division. *Report on the Preliminary Financial Plan for Fiscal Year 2022-2026*. 2 March 2022, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/FY23-Financial-Plan-Overview-1.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Singh, Nevin. *Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget*. New York City Council Finance Division, February 2022, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/FY23-Prelim-Budget-Dashboard.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> New York City Council Finance Division. *Report on the Preliminary Financial Plan for Fiscal Year 2022-2026*. 2 March 2022, pp. 10, <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/FY23-Financial-Plan-Overview-1.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> City of New York, Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. *February 2022 Financial Plan Detail, Fiscal Years 2022-2026*. February 2022, pp. 114, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/tech2-22.pdf>

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and \$1.45 billion in FY 23.<sup>13</sup> ***The most likely impact of these cuts is the largest increase in NYC class sizes since the Great Recession.***

The proposed cuts to school budgets are a direct result of the Fair Student Funding (FSF) formula, which provides funding to schools based primarily on their enrollment. This formula has long-been critiqued but only tweaked in a minor fashion since it was first instituted by DOE in 2007.

In recognition of the many problems with the FSF formula, in January 2019, the City Council passed Local Law 1174 to create a Task Force to analyze the formula and come up with a report by September 2019 with recommendations on how to improve it.<sup>14</sup> While the members of the taskforce met several times, they never came out with a report, because the Mayor's office resisted the recommendations of many of its members to revise the formula, in part because of how it incentivizes schools to increase enrollment and thus, class size.

Instead, eight of the parent and advocate members of the Task Force authored a separate report, in which they pointed out the flaws in the formula and revealed that nearly 80 percent of the principals who responded to a survey the Task Force developed identified large classes in their schools to be a direct consequence of the way the formula was designed.<sup>15</sup> These Task Force members called for a separate class size reduction program that the DOE would fund. As Shino Tanikawa, a parent member of the task force, recalled, "The DOE agreed to develop such a plan once our schools received full funding from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, but has reneged on that promise, once again, as it has so often in the past."<sup>16</sup>

## **The smaller class size standards in the Blue Book conflict with large cuts to school seats in the proposed capital plan**

In the most recent annual School Construction Authority (SCA) report on school utilization and capacity released in December 2021, otherwise known as the "Blue Book", the DOE and the SCA have lowered the maximum classroom capacity in their school utilization formula in grades 4th through 8th to 23 students per class compared to 28 students previously and in high school to 25 students per class versus 30 previously.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> New York City Independent Budget Office. *Key Findings From Our Latest Economic Forecast & Review of the Mayor's 2023 Preliminary Budget and Financial Plan*. 2 March 2022, <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-preliminary-budget-snapshot-print.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> New York City Council, Committee on Education. "Creation of a Fair Student Funding Task Force." New York City Council, Legislative Research Center, 11 January 2019, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3704386&GUID=A0533C7F-F4A4-422C-BABE-A94ED4B8A717&Options=&Search=>

<sup>15</sup> Fair Student Funding Task Force. "People's Recommendations for Fair Students Funding." April 2021, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vFeZ5ECysE8mXveCLjS-lzB0wNsilnwP/view>

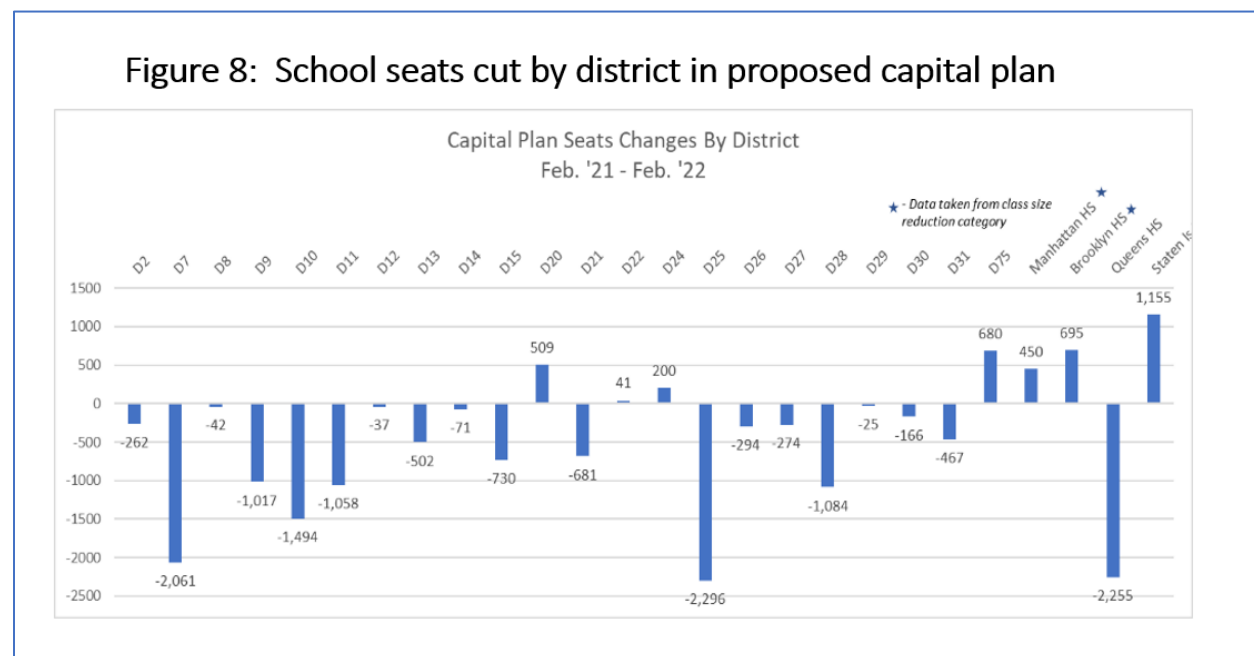
<sup>16</sup> Tanikawa, Shino. "Why the Fair Student Funding Task Force Report was Never Released, and Recommendations from Eight of Its Members." *New York City Public School Parents*, 10 November 2021, <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2021/11/why-fair-student-funding-task-force.html>

<sup>17</sup> New York City Department of Education & New York City School Construction Authority. *2019 – 2020 Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization Report: Target Calculation*. New York City Department of Education, 2020, pp. 4-5, <http://www.nycsca.org/Community/Capital-Plan-Reports-Data#Enrollment-Capacity-Utilization-69>

These class size standards are aligned with the goals of the original class size reduction plan proposed by DOE and approved by the state in 2007 in compliance with the Contracts for Excellence law passed by the State Legislature that same year. For grades K-3, the Blue Book capacity formula has been 20 students per class in these grades since 2003, the same goals in their original class size reduction plan.

The proposal to lower the class size standards in the Blue Book in grades 4-12 was one of the top recommendations of the Blue Book Working Group, established by then-Chancellor Farina in 2014. However, the Mayor’s Office rejected this recommendation in 2015.<sup>18</sup> The fact that SCA has now decided to revise the capacity formula to account for the need for smaller classes is promising.

However, in the latest proposed amendment to the Five-year Capital Plan for FY 2020-2024, released in February, the spending on new school capacity has also been cut by \$1.5 billion or 19 percent, compared to the capital plan as adopted in June 2021.<sup>19</sup> Instead of 57,489 school seats in the adopted plan, there are only 45,883 seats in the new proposed plan, including over 6,000 school seats eliminated from Queens and nearly that many from the Bronx. See Figure 8, showing the proposed seats cut per school district below:



<sup>18</sup> Welby, Julianne. “How Squeezed Are the Schools? We May Get a Better Picture.” WNYC, 28 July, 2015, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/city-make-changes-how-it-accounts-space-schools/>

<sup>19</sup> New York City Department of Education & New York City School Construction Authority. *FY 2020 – 2024 Five-Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment*. February 2022, <http://www.nycsca.org/Community/Capital-Plan-Reports-Data#Capital-Plan-67>

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The small number of seats added for Brooklyn and Manhattan high schools refers to the addition of annexes for the Harbor School and Medgar Evers High School, in the category called “Class size reduction.”<sup>20</sup>

On March 2, 2022, we sent a letter to Nina Kubota, the President of the School Construction Authority, along with the co-chairs of the Education Council Consortium, NeQuan McLean and Shino Tanikawa, asking what the actual significance of the revising the Blue Book class size standards actually means. Does it mean that the SCA expects that all schools will have adequate space to reduce class size to these levels at the end of the five-year capital plan, or by some other time in the future? And if the latter, when would that be?<sup>21</sup> On March 19, we received a letter in response from the SCA that did not answer this question.<sup>22</sup>

We have real concerns about these proposed cuts and do not believe that they are justified. The latest Blue Book also reveals that as of the fall of 2019, there were 609 schools that were at 102% utilization or more, with a collective shortage of 85,768 seats. Although citywide enrollment has declined since then, we do not believe that the 45,883 seats that are funded in this proposed plan are sufficient to meet the need to eliminate overcrowding and to lower class size.

## **Two city laws to strengthen school planning that have not been fulfilled**

Our doubts as to the accuracy of the sharp drop in the seat-need projections made by the SCA in the latest version of the capital plan are further reinforced by the fact that they continue to refuse to make the methodology by means they make these projections transparent. This ongoing problem was pointed out in the City Council report ***Planning to Learn*** issued in 2018:

*While some information related to school planning for NYC schools is readily available, including data on school capacity, enrollment projections, and housing starts, how the pieces of data are combined and used to determine future school seat need is not as transparent. In addition, there is no clear and transparent process by which new schools are funded. This opacity erodes public trust in decisions made related to building new school facilities and hinders the ability for the public, the City Council, and other officials to advocate on behalf of SCA and DOE.*<sup>23</sup>

In response to the perceived need to make these seat-need projections more transparent and credible, the City Council passed Local Law 167 in 2018, which required the DOE to explain their methodology as well as disaggregate the projections by grade level, as well as report on the number of seats lost each

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<sup>20</sup> These are the only two projects listed under the “class size reduction category,” though according to press reports much of the funding will be spent on building a swimming pool for the Harbor School and a gym for the Medgar Evers high school.

<sup>21</sup> The letter we sent to the SCA President is here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h9XLpapFgQrMS\\_vmQDzptEI8HVSLo\\_zT/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h9XLpapFgQrMS_vmQDzptEI8HVSLo_zT/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>22</sup> The SCA letter in response, along with our comments is posted here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dVWmx\\_qi-8OD4AHBQwFZU\\_-mVUUiuvi/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dVWmx_qi-8OD4AHBQwFZU_-mVUUiuvi/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>23</sup> New York City Council. *Planning to Learn: The School Building Challenge*. March 2018, pp. 41, <https://council.nyc.gov/land-use/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2018/03/Planning-to-Learn-3.16.2018-high-resolution.pdf>.

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year.<sup>24</sup> Yet the requirements of this law have still not been met. In fact, SCA currently provides very little additional information compared to before the law came into force on December 1, 2019.

The SCA has a web page on which they post some of the data specified by Local Law 167, but the following information is still missing, as follows:<sup>25</sup>

- No data is provided for the number of projected new school seats needed, disaggregated by grade span or type of school, i.e., with separate figures for Pre-K vs. elementary schools vs. middle schools, either citywide, or by district or sub-district, as called for in the law.
- The law also mandates that the DOE provide any inputs that are used to determine these projections, including *“any categories of non-quantitative criteria considered, which may include but need not be limited to, facility replacements, grade expansion and truncation, school rezonings, co-locating schools, and converting space in existing facilities.”* None of these qualitative inputs are reported on the SCA webpage.
- Finally, the law requires the reporting of not just the quantitative and qualitative data that the DOE relies upon to determine its projections, but most importantly, the methodology they rely upon to put all these various inputs together, to explain *“the process ... used to determine identified seat need.”* Yet nowhere does the SCA or DOE offer any description of the actual method or formula they use to incorporate mathematically the various factors they rely upon in developing their seat need projections, which they say include current levels of utilization, projected housing starts multiplied by the “public school ratio,” and their consultant’s enrollment projections, as well as lost seats caused by the removal of trailers and annexes, lapsed leases, and/or the replacement of school buildings.

Class Size Matters, along with the co-chairs of the Education Council Consortium, made these points in our letter to SCA President Kobuta, and asked when this information would be provided to the public. The letter we received in response simply claimed that all this information was already publicly available, without explaining where or how.

Another recommendation in the City Council’s *Planning to Learn* report was to improve the SCA school site identification process, which is often unacceptably slow and leads to schools being funded in overcrowded districts for many years and yet remaining unbuilt.

Currently, fewer than half of the 57,489 seats funded in the adopted five-year plan that was first introduced in 2019 have yet to be sited according to the new proposed Capital plan – only 23,990 seats. Furthermore, according to their website, the SCA employs only four real estate brokers to assist them in finding suitable sites, one per borough, except for Brooklyn and Staten Island, which share one.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> City of New York. *Locals Laws of the City of New York for the Year 2018: No. 167*. City of New York, Office of the City Clerk, Corporation Counsel, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6714467&GUID=ED9C486B-ACA7-4D5B-8D56-F2EA0A950976>

<sup>25</sup> New York City School Construction Authority. “Capital Plan Reports & Data: Local Law 167 Reports.” 2017, <http://www.nycsca.org/community/capital-plan-reports-data#Local-Law-167-Reports-352>

<sup>26</sup> New York City School Construction Authority. “Overview: Our Brokers.” 2017, <http://www.nycsca.org/Real-Estate/Overview#Our-Brokers-338>



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In response, the Council also passed Local Law 168 in 2018 to improve the efficiency of school siting. The law required the creation of a Task Force that would assess and report on the suitability of all vacant lots, both city- and privately-owned, for their potential use to site schools.<sup>27</sup> This Task Force was supposed to include representatives appointed by the heads of several city agencies, including the SCA, the DOE, the Division of Citywide Administrative Services, City Planning, Housing and Preservation, the City Council, and the President of a local development corporation.

The Task Force met only twice, and in the fall of 2019, the SCA issued a two-page report which Class Size Matters received from the City Council via a Freedom of Information request. The report was accompanied by a spreadsheet that ruled out hundreds of city-owned sites by claiming that no seats were needed in these districts. Yet many of these same districts had schools that had been funded in the Capital Plan but as yet lacked sites. Moreover, no assessment was included of any of the 22,070 privately-owned sites.<sup>28</sup> At least two of the members of the Task Force, including the representative appointed by the City Council, said the SCA had not elicited any input from them in their analysis or in their final report.<sup>29</sup>

In the letter we recently received from the SCA, they did not clarify why many of these potential city-owned sites were excluded, while adding that they were still in the process of evaluating privately-owned sites. They provided no data for when this analysis would be completed; nor did they explain why it has taken so long, given that the law required this analysis be completed by July 2019, more than two years ago.<sup>30</sup> The letter also said that they had eliminated roughly 4,900 of the 22,065 privately owned sites from the list provided them by the Department of Finance (DOF), about 22 percent of those listed, because they “*lack sufficient location information*,” though they did not say why the DOF could not be asked to supply that information.

### **City Council should reject these budget cuts and approve a measure to phase in appropriate class size caps over five years**

We strongly urge the City Council to reject the Mayor’s proposed cuts to the education budget, as well as the proposed cuts to the Capital Plan, and require that the SCA commit to providing the full transparency in their seat-need projections, as required by Local Law 167. They should also ask the SCA when their analysis of privately-owned lots will be complete, as mandated by Local Law 168, and clarify why so many of the city-owned lots were ruled out, often for confusing and even contradictory reasons.

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<sup>27</sup> City of New York. *Local Laws of the City of New York for the Year 2018: No. 168*. City of New York, Office of the City Clerk & Corporation Counsel, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6715118&GUID=2EE4A502-7E3B-44BF-9A06-EB8BC691F61B>

<sup>28</sup> School Siting Task Force. *School Siting Task Force Report*, October 2019, <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/School-Siting-Task-Force-Report-Final-10.4.19-1.pdf>; and accompanying spreadsheet at: <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Copy-of-School-Siting-Task-Force-LL168-Final-October-2019-4.xlsx>

<sup>29</sup> School Siting Task Force. *Memo to Council Co-Sponsors of Local Law 168: Analysis of the Results of the School Siting Task Force and Recommendations Moving Forward*. Class Size Matters and NYC Kids PAC, 7 February 2020, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sDpB\\_i6sOUKEJwxVRrE6SHYNQ6-bZ0vr/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sDpB_i6sOUKEJwxVRrE6SHYNQ6-bZ0vr/view)

<sup>30</sup> The letter from the SCA also reported that x privately owned sites, or 22%

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***In addition, the Council should re-submit a bill to phase in smaller caps in all grades.***

In July 2021, a bill was introduced by the former chair of the City Council Education Committee Mark Treyger that would cap class sizes at much lower levels to be phased in over three years. Int 2374-2021 would amend the city's administrative code to require 35 square feet of space per student in public school classrooms.<sup>31</sup> This bill was signed onto by 41 out of 50 members but never came to a vote.

The consensus for such a measure has grown even stronger, given the serious disruptions to learning from the pandemic and the need to provide uncrowded classrooms to allow for social distancing. Moreover, given that long last, the city is now in the process of receiving an additional \$1.3 billion from the settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, it is only right and just that the central issue in the case – the excessive class sizes in NYC public schools – be addressed as well.

We urge the Council to re-submit Int 2374 in amended form by extending the phase-in period to cap class sizes over five years instead of three, since it takes that long to site and build new schools. The bill should also differentiate the space requirements by grade, so that a typical 600 square foot classroom will hold no more than 20 students in grades K-3, 23 students in grades 4-8 and 25 students in high school, to be in alignment with the original goals of the city's class size reduction plan, submitted and approved by the State Education Department in 2007 but never implemented. These class size caps would also be aligned with the revised Blue Book utilization formula for classroom capacity.

The cost of such a program would be far less than previously estimated, because these class size caps are substantially larger than in the original bill and because class sizes are now substantially lower at most schools as a result of enrollment decline.

***This brief was written by Leonie Haimson, Executive Director of Class Size Matters, with assistance from Michael Horwitz and Parker Thomas. For more information on the benefits of smaller classes and/or the class size and overcrowding data by NYC district, check out our website at [www.classsizematters.org](http://www.classsizematters.org) or email us at [info@classsizematters.org](mailto:info@classsizematters.org)***

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<sup>31</sup> New York City Council, Committee on Education. *A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, in Relation to Classroom Capacity*. New York City Council, 29 July 2021, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5072014&GUID=C4487B7C-8916-4C24-A86C-FD376A3D55B5&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=classroom+capacity>



**Testimony of Anna Lilia Araiza, Director of Youth Leadership  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, my name is Anna Lilia Araiza, I am the Director of Youth Leadership at Community Food Advocates. I am here to ask for the council's full support to fund DOE's Office of Food and Nutrition Services Cafeteria Enhancement model for all middle and high school cafeterias.

Studies have demonstrated that an increase in school meals participation plays a critical role in boosting academic success. For example, after implementing Universal Free School meals in NYC, ELA and math scores increased an equivalent of up to 10 weeks of learning among our city's middle school students.

We know of the ongoing innovations in school food and applaud these efforts, and are encouraged to see the centering of student voices in this evolution. For many students, despite innovations in the menu and food they still step into an unwelcoming, outdated, institutional-looking cafeteria. When students don't step into their school cafeteria, they don't eat, and if they don't eat, they don't learn. OFNS has a solution with the Enhanced Cafeteria model -- and we want to see funds committed in the budget to bring these updates equitable across all middle and high schools.

**The cafeteria should be a safe student-centered space.** As a former middle school teacher in the Bronx, I learned pretty quickly that students would rather spend their lunch time in my classroom than in the cafeteria because they felt more welcomed in my room. I'm now discovering what was true for my one classroom continues to be the case for students across the city. I listen to young people from campuses across the city, and students just don't feel welcomed or comfortable in their school cafeterias.

Eating is a full sensory experience; the menu innovations and nutritional value of school meals is viewed with skepticism from students. The hard work happening behind the counter is not translating for them in the cafeteria space. This is why it is critical to invest in safe student-centered cafeterias where our young people can see the changes for themselves, feel welcomed, and are able to connect the importance of school meals to their academic success.

There is a real opportunity to transform each and every middle and high school cafeteria in a meaningful, tangible, and equitable way so that young people can see the elevated importance of healthy school meals with their own eyes.

Thank you for your time.

Anna Lilia Araiza  
Director of Youth Leadership  
Community Food Advocates  
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition  
110 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005



**Testimony of Faith Jones, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Hi I'm Faith Jones, I'm currently a 9th grader at Brooklyn Technical High School and a member of Youth Food Advocates. I am here today to ask for your support to bring cafeteria enhancements to all NYC middle and high schools.

The reason why I'm bringing awareness to this issue is because I've seen many kids at my school go without lunch because they couldn't afford to bring lunch from home and didn't want to be embarrassed to be seen with school food given its reputation. That said reputation is the student's perception of the cafeteria being old and outdated causing students to question if their cafeteria is suitable to be eating lunch in. This leads students to not eat school lunch in order to save themselves from being ridiculed by peers. Resulting in countless students going hungry themselves throughout the day, which is known to have negative effects such as tiredness, low mental health, and lower grades.

As of right now, there are many NYC students who aren't able to reap the benefits of universal school food, but that can change if you were to give the additional funding for cafeteria enhancements. I urge you to continue the fight for school food that the previous members of the city council have done by passing universal free school lunch in 2017. The next step in the battle for school food justice is to bring more modern and up to date cafeterias to NYC students. This action is necessary to bring about positive change in the student's life such as improved mental and physical health, better academic performance, and overall wellness.

Faith Jones, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates  
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition  
110 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005



**Testimony of Alexander Rijo-Martinez, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, my name is Alexander Rijo-Martinez. I am a sophomore at Central Park East High School and here as a member of Youth Food Advocates on behalf of all public school students in New York City. Today I'm here asking for your support in aiding the enhancement of all cafeteria environments in New York City middle and high schools.

As a student who has been in the ins and outs of predominantly minority institutions I've been a witness of the detrimental effects not eating the whole school day leaves on people like me. We must understand that this meal might be the only meal some students depend on, and so the best service must be provided for all students. In fact, when there is no money to support the school food program additional problems become present, one of them being the reputation of embarrassment it leaves on students. Because of the risk that students face of being stereotyped for eating school lunch, most students choose to avoid eating throughout a whole school day- I am one of these students. With a pandemic on our shoulders many families have been in the midst of a financial crisis. Students who eat school lunch are labeled a "schooly eater." "Schooly eater" is a slur that has been normalized in our schools and by providing funds to update cafeterias you can help make this change and overthrow these negative associations.

By offering renewed and improved school cafeterias where students feel comfortable eating the school food, you can support the intellectual growth of each and every student. By not investing in school cafeterias, we decrease the chances that students will eat and decrease their school performance, but most importantly offend them. In fact, we deserve quality space to enjoy our meals rather than eating in a dull space. We want togetherness!

And so I hope you will join Youth Food Advocates in the campaign for a better school food system in New York City, complete with universally improved cafeterias. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this.

Alexander Rijo-Martinez, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates  
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition  
110 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005



**Testimony of Leslie Gomez Rivera, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Hello my name is Leslie Gomez Rivera, I'm a senior at Midwood High School and I live in the 37th district. I'm here to ask for your support to fund cafeteria enhancements in all New York City middle schools and high schools.

I've been a part of the NYC education system for all my life and I've come to realize the importance of school food for growing children and their education. When my father was sick and my mother would be at the hospital with him, I had to rely on school food. I would make sure to get to school early and get breakfast and then make sure during my last period class, to ask for permission to leave early to get lunch before they closed the kitchen. I didn't want to be another burden on my mother. This opened my eyes to the importance of school food because it was accessible to me at the time that I needed it the most.

My freshman year, our cafeteria was the standard normal one. It was the long white tables that were placed next to each other, and the experience with this cafeteria environment wasn't the most pleasant because it was usually crowded and unappealing. After the cafeteria redesign, we had a booth where you sit across from your friends and it was much more inviting to eat school lunch. There were seats for just two people or big tables within individual seats. The entire cafeteria was more colorful and appealing to just sit there.

The number of people eating school lunch increased dramatically at Midwood, we are a school with over 4,000 students. So just imagine the change that all of you could create for all middle schools and high schools by supporting the redesigned cafeterias. More and more children would feel better about school lunch and would overall improve mood, attention, and the quality of our education across the board. Thank you for your time.

Leslie Gomez Rivera, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates  
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition  
110 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005





**Testimony of Elisha Verebes, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Good Afternoon, my name is Elisha Verebes and I'm a senior at West End Secondary School. I am here today to ask for your support in funding the \$250 million initiative to implement enhanced cafeterias across all New York City public High Schools and Middle Schools.

The cafeteria should be a space for socializing and meeting new people – a relaxing break in the school day amid the stress of academic classes. However, I have seen how the stigmatization of eating school lunch or sitting in the cafeteria has prevented the type of lively socializing a school cafeteria should foster. At my school, the cafeteria is eerily quiet because most students prefer to leave the building during lunch and view the cafeteria as a last resort place to eat. Therefore, the students who need to stay in because they can't afford to buy food off campus are left isolated, stigmatized, and without the beneficial social aspect of lunchtime.

The pandemic has taken an unfortunate toll on the students' education, and I am asking Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks and the City Council to take action to address the loss of learning in the past 2 years of interrupted schooling. One way to support a student's education is to ensure they are eating tasty, nutritious food in a welcoming cafeteria environment. The enhanced cafeterias will not only add more menu options for students, but the redesigned cafeteria spaces will make the experience of eating school food more enjoyable and less-stigmatized. Students will be able to enjoy the social aspect of lunch because all students - regardless of if they eat school lunch, bring their own, or buy outside and bring it back to school - will want to eat together in the cafeteria.

I hope you will join Youth Food Advocates in the fight for a better school food system in New York City with universal enhanced cafeterias. Thank you for your time.

Elisha Verebes, Youth Food Advocates  
Community Food Advocates  
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition  
110 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005





## **Testimony for New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Years 2023-2026**

**Testimony by *Patrick Joseph,***

*Education Policy Analyst*

**Before the New York City Council Committee on Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the issue of education expenses in a COVID-19 recovery. My name is Patrick Joseph, and I am the Education Policy Analyst at Community Service Society of New York (CSS), a nonprofit organization that works to eradicate poverty in New York. Since 2005, we have researched and defined the problem of out-of-school, out-of-work youth (OSOW) in New York City. Our work on this issue has moved the City towards making critical investments in education and skill-building for New York City's youth and young adults. These investments include:

- the modernization of the GED system to better prepare young people for the high school equivalency exams with emphasis on out-of-school youth on public assistance,<sup>1</sup>
- the creation of the Young Men's Initiative which supports Black and Latino men between ages 16 and 24 by connecting them to educational and vocational opportunities as well as mentors,
- legislation that improved how our city's Human Resource Administration (HRA) connects youth with public services,<sup>2</sup>
- and most recently, we saw the current mayoral administration expand the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to a historic high of 100,000 opportunities for young people, age 14 to 24.

We commend the mayor for this dramatic increase to SYEP and hope that we continue to see increases to SYEP opportunities over the upcoming years as we build toward a truly universal Summer Youth Employment Program. That said, we would like to inform the City Council of some of the challenges that remain and how we believe that these challenges should be addressed so that SYEP is as equitable and effective as possible.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that undocumented students are included in SYEP without impediment: Student and parent comments at Citywide Education Councils as well as testimonies at the recent hearing on English Language Learners have made clear that the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) was not able to deliver accurate and timely information about at-home instruction or

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<sup>1</sup>

City Invests in Second Chances for Youth. April 12, 2012. <https://www.cssny.org/key-successes/entry/second-chances-for-youth>

<sup>2</sup> The Road to a Win for New York City Youth. January 11, 2013. <https://www.cssny.org/key-successes/entry/the-road-to-a-win-for-new-york-city-youth>

device availability to undocumented young people during the pandemic. This bias towards English, in a city as diverse as New York, only works to deepen and broaden extant inequities in our education system. We strongly believe action should be taken now to increase language supports for our families. This is particularly important as the expansion of SYEP rolls out this summer. In order to ensure equitable access to SYEP, we ask that the council work with the NYCDOE to ensure that students are not excluded due to lack of timely, language-appropriate information.

- Invest in ongoing evaluation of the impacts of program participation on students and schools so that appropriate support services can be adjoined to SYEP: Currently, the datasets available on our city's open data website share information on NYCHA residents' enrollment in the program as well as which facilities in the city that offer SYEP. However, if we genuinely want to uplift young people and eradicate the issue of OSOW youth in our city, we must invest in program evaluation and this data should be made public. The mayor has emphasized efficiency and effectiveness, but that cannot be done without measuring progress, which requires data and analysis. While SYEP is highly effective at achieving short terms goals, there was a study done by MDRC in 2017 that found SYEP to have no impact on long-term employment or future college enrollment for the 2006 cohort.<sup>3</sup> However, this need not be the case for current or future cohorts. SYEP can be more than just something to do during the summer. Per our report on how to make universal SYEP a reality,<sup>4</sup> we believe that tightly coupling SYEP to our schools' curricula and extracurricular activities would be a boon to our students and the program design. By consistently analyzing and reflecting on the various aspects of SYEP, we will be able to see where and how to make deeper connections between SYEP and future educational and occupational experiences.
- Deeper investment in contracting rates and staff recruitment: Community Service Society of New York is a member and participates in ongoing meetings with a coalition of SYEP providers. During these meetings, providers share creative solutions for identifying, developing, and retaining staff. The coalition is deeply committed to improving the lives of young people and thinks outside the box when it comes to who they recruit and how they leverage existing resources. These providers are inventive and committed, making their resources stretch in miraculous ways, but this is not sustainable. Those who are hired to manage SYEP sites are doing difficult work which means they need competitive salaries. Improving the pay for these positions will go a long way towards recruitment of skilled personnel. We also believe that DYCD can support this work if they establish an SYEP staff recruiter position to bolster the efforts of providers.

The Summer Youth Employment Program is a great asset to our students and their families. Once again, we are excited about the growth of the program, and we want to see it continue to grow. CSS is ready to support that effort however it can, and we are happy to take your questions.

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<sup>3</sup> An Introduction to the World of Work: A Study of the Implementation and Impacts of New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program. April 2017. <https://www.mdrc.org/project/summer-youth-employment-program-syep#overview>

<sup>4</sup> How to Make Universal Summer Jobs a Reality in New York City: Lessons from Model Programs. October 2016. <https://www.cssny.org/publications/entry/how-to-make-universal-summer-jobs-a-reality-in-new-york-city>



**Testimony of Liz Accles, Executive Director  
Community Food Advocates**

**Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Hearing on Monday, March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon Chair Joseph and members of the Committee. My name is Liz Accles, Executive Director of Community Food Advocates (CFA). On behalf of Community Food Advocates and the Lunch 4 Learning coalition, it is a pleasure to testify on the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget and Capital Plan, and to inform this distinguished body of our Lunch 4 Learning FY2023 budget priority, which is aimed at ensuring the successful implementation of the “Universal Free School Lunch for All” (Universal) program and to build on its foundation.

As you know Community Food Advocates (CFA) spearheads the Lunch 4 Learning campaign, a broad, diverse coalition-based group that, in partnership with the City Council, successfully advocated for Universal Free Meals in all New York City public schools. However, much more work is needed.

Even before the pandemic 1 in 5 children experienced food insecurity, and we know this number has only risen over the past two years. Among the nearly 1.1 million students in the NYC school system, 73 percent are economically disadvantaged. Our children rely on school food programs for their daily nutrition. As part of our mission, CFA strives to identify and promote strategies that improve access to nutritious food, including through school meal programs.

Building on universal, we continue to advocate for initiatives that will have the biggest impact on school meal participation. The Office of Food & Nutrition Services’ cafeteria redesign—known at DOE as the Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE)—is an impactful and cost-effective approach to increasing participation. So far, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has redesigned 44 middle and high school

cafeterias, and we would like to see this transformation in school communities across the City.

The presentation of school lunch has a direct impact on school lunch participation rates. The OFNS cafeteria redesign transforms the serving line into a deli-style service that gives students more variety of options on a daily basis. The seating area, which includes diner-style booths, round tables, and high-top seating arrangements, transforms school cafeterias from an institutional configuration to a more welcoming environment for students. Additionally, the food court style serving lines have reduced the time students stand on line to obtain their lunch, allowing for more time to eat and socialize. Lastly, consumption of fruits and vegetables in the enhanced cafeterias are at least four times higher than schools without enhanced cafeterias. Cafeteria redesign should be a priority.

### **NYC DOE Should Implement a Master Plan for Cafeteria Redesign for All NYC High Schools & Middle Schools**

No student can learn on an empty stomach. In fact, research directly links participation in school meals to improvements in academic outcomes and classroom behavior. Yet school meal participation declines abruptly during middle school and is even lower among high school students. This is in large part because pre-adolescents and adolescents are sensitive to the stigma associated with school meals and are socially motivated and seeking independence. The redesigned cafeterias accommodate older students' need for autonomy, speed-of-service, and a more welcoming dining experience.

It is critical that we ensure our school meal programs best meet the needs of our students, and the deli-style, "enhanced" cafeteria is an overwhelmingly successful model. The 44 middle school and high school cafeterias—serving 75,000 students—that have received the enhanced cafeteria over the past couple of years have been a huge success. Among the first set of high schools that were enhanced, there was a:

35% increase in lunch participation

If all high school received the enhancement, we project:

30,000 more high school students would participate every day

We propose that DOE adopt a Master Plan to roll out redesign of high school and middle school cafeterias. The onetime capital cost of redesigning a cafeteria is approximately \$500,000. Considering the positive benefits, this is an extremely cost-effective initiative. We believe this master plan should be equitably distributed across

School Districts, phased-in by priority: high need/low participation rate; high need regardless of participation rate; and low participation rate/mixed income.

As you know, now more than ever, our public-school students face many challenges. As students return to schools to learn in-person, and eventually to cafeterias to eat, it is imperative that these inherently social spaces are responsive to the trauma brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cafeteria redesign is the response to ensure students feel safe and secure, by expediting the service line and reducing overcrowding, smaller tables that maximize space and minimize large groups, and reducing frequent surface contact. By increasing participation, it will also help to combat the prevalent food insecurity brought on by the pandemic. Additionally, while some students are now learning in-person again, cafeterias are not currently in use. This is an opportunity to revamp cafeterias for the time when students return to cafeteria spaces.

We were thrilled to see \$25 million committed in the Fiscal Year 2020 Capital Budget towards expanding this critical initiative to another 50 cafeterias. We were also pleased to see major expansion of deli-style cafeterias in schools included as a priority in the Speaker's Agenda on Growing Food Equity in New York City. However, to see the full potential of cafeteria redesign initiative realized in an equitable way, an additional \$250 million should be allocated to roll this out in another 500 cafeterias over the next five years.

Please see the attached one-pager and cafeteria redesign look book for additional information, including photos and analysis, of the enhanced cafeterias in NYC schools. We hope the Council will continue to be champions for this important initiative. Thank you.

Liz Accles, Executive Director  
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Candice Anderson  
Executive Director  
Tracey Greenidge  
Director of Development  
Cool Culture  
Tgreenidge@coolculture.org

My name is Tracey Greenidge, Director of Development at Cool Culture. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of my organization and the thousands of New York City families that receive free access to the city's rich cultural resources through our arts and cultural programs.

### WHO WE ARE



Cool Culture is a social justice organization that uses arts and culture to strengthen family and community wellbeing. With nearly 20 years of BIPOC leadership, Cool Culture was founded to correct the historic disparities in how (and which) communities are able to access cultural resources, and engage in creative practice. Today, our mission is to amplify the voices of families and strengthen the power of historically marginalized communities through engagement with art and culture, both within cultural institutions and beyond.

We harness arts and culture to build cross-cultural understanding, a movement for social change, and create a more equitable city. Our staff of 10 Cool Culture team members are Latinx, Native, Black, East- and South Asian American, LGBTQ+ and allies provide arts and cultural programs to 50,000 families, who reflect the cultural diversity of our nation. 83% of our families are BIPOC. 47% speak a primary language other than English. The majority are economically insecure. Cool Culture's community is comprised of:

- **50,000 families**, who reflect the cultural diversity of our nation.
- Over **1,000 educators and administrators** from over **450 schools, early learning programs, and community-based organizations**.
- Hundreds of **cultural workers, museum administrators, artists, and scientists from 90 of NYC's most celebrated** museums, historical societies, botanical gardens, and zoos.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Education Committee Rita Joseph and all the committee members for partnering with Cool Culture to address the needs of children and families throughout the five boroughs. We are happy to share our best practices as well as the success and challenges we face daily as communities seek to recover from the pandemic. We know that members of this committee understand the importance of arts within education and its benefits to the total learning experience of all children. Against this backdrop, your advocacy and policy support are greatly appreciated.

I know you are facing incredibly difficult choices as you address the needs of children affected by the pandemic. Not only have their communities been hit hard by Covid-19 they also continue to face systemic

oppression in the areas of housing, food security, mental and physical wellbeing and access to a high-quality education, one that includes the arts. As schools are often agencies of cultural education, Cool Culture is uniquely positioned to partner with the Education Committee to help mitigate the challenges of youngest New Yorkers through exposure to arts and culture.

### CULTURAL EQUITY AND ACCESS in EDUCATION

For more than 15 years, access to arts has been linked to improving the attainment levels of children, enhancing pedagogy, contributing to the development of the creative and imaginative mind, increased wellbeing, and a higher quality of life. Yet, many Title I Public Schools and Early Childhood Centers lack the resources to provide children and their families equitable access to the city's rich cultural landscape, particularly those located under-resourced communities. Today, many students and their families still face a stark reality of underinvestment and systemic inequity compared to affluent New Yorkers who continue to benefit from an array of the city's cultural and socioeconomic resources.



### RIGHT NOW: CENTERING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

In the wake of the pandemic, families face the harsh ramifications of financial poverty and racial and social inequities that already threaten to undermine the academic success of their children. In addition to these insurmountable challenges, cuts in the city's educational budget can derail the social-emotional supports of these vulnerable students. Families and children from under-resourced communities:

- experience disproportionate stress from the loss of loved ones and the resources to meet basic needs. However, the arts can be used to help children and their families heal from traumatic these experiences. Access to the arts will also help them to foster resilience and contribute to a happy school environment.
- need access to quality early childhood education with professionals who are well informed about the racially motivated violence, and other real-world issues that impact their lives. Early education professionals need both fair pay and preparation to respond with trauma-informed, asset-based practices that validate families' identities and lived experiences.
- have higher levels of vaccine hesitancy compared to other populations due to historic practices, placing them at greater risk of infection and greater isolation. Families and children deserve a holistic approach to wellbeing (mind, body, spirit, and civic engagement) and vaccination that includes dialogue about families' existing wellness practices and goals, build on community assets while acknowledging the historic and systemic inequities that impact the health outcomes of marginalized New Yorkers.

### COOL CULTURE'S RESPONSE & ROLE



#### Health + Wellbeing through the Arts: *We Are A Work of Art*

As the disruption to our daily routines and traditional support systems persist, Cool Culture's ***We Are A Work of Art: Health + Wellbeing Initiative*** is an ongoing community dialogue, series of hybrid community events, and informational campaign that supports wellbeing among families and access to vaccinations. Events feature artmaking workshops, and activations by BIPOC artists and health



practitioners. Gatherings and resources highlight indigenous and western wellness practices to ensure that information about vaccinations comes from trusted sources. Activities are co-designed with museums, educators, families, and other community stakeholders.

## PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Cool Culture's **Citywide Cultural Access Program** ("CityWide") connects families and NYC's cultural institutions. The largest program of its kind in the country, we facilitate a network of 450 Title I Schools and early childhood centers, and 50,000+ member families who enjoy unlimited free access to 90+ museums, historical societies, science centers, botanic gardens, and zoos. CityWide families make over 180,000 museum visits each year across the city. Multilingual resources support engagement with arts and culture at home and in the community. In response to requests from families and museum partners, we are in the early stages of designing a **Cool Culture Digital Platform**. A tool to support, complement and organize in-person creative gatherings and community building. Long-term, the goal is to reform publicly funded institutions so that they work in the service of BIPOC communities and families.

### Culturally Competent Family Engagement & Early Education through the Arts

Cool Culture's **We Are All Curators** initiative brings families, educators, teaching artists, and cultural workers together to imagine and co-create new practices that support equity in schools, museums, and communities.



- **Curators for Educators** is a seminar series and peer exchange that supports using arts and social justice concepts to create equitable learning environments. It also prepares educators to discuss the real-world issues that shape the lives of young children and families.
- **Curators for Families** is a place-based initiative that builds community among families with young children in Central Brooklyn, East Elmhurst and Corona Queens, and Chinatown and Lower East Side, Manhattan. Families, educators, teaching artists, and museum staff co-create projects that include experiences in galleries, art-making, storytelling, and curation of exhibits that center community priorities.

We strongly urge you to ensure the necessary support for organizations that offers access to arts and culture in schools, particularly BIPOC-led institutions that have deep relationships with disenfranchised communities in New York City. The Education Committee's support will enable Cool Culture and other arts and culture organizations to continue providing critical programs as many communities' struggle through the city's recovery phase.

Thank you.



**TESTIMONY**  
**NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**  
**CHAIR, RITA JOSEPH**

*New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearings*

**Presented on**  
**Monday, March 21st, 2022**



**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**  
**Mark Cannizzaro, President**  
**Henry Rubio, Executive Vice President**  
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Thank you, Speaker Adams, Education Chair Joseph, Finance Chair Brannan, and distinguished members of the City Council for conducting this hearing. I am Mark Cannizzaro, the president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). On behalf of some 17,000 in-service and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Educational Administrators, Supervisors and Directors/Assistant Directors of City-funded Early Childhood Centers, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the 2023 Executive Budget.

As we reach the 2-year mark of the global pandemic, all of us at CSA have are cautiously optimistic. No one in New York City, and indeed the world, has been left untouched by this health crisis, least of all our children. The U.S. and the City of New York seemed to have turned a corner on the pandemic phase of Covid-19 and, barring the emergence of a particularly dangerous variant, we could well be on our way to something resembling a more typical school experience for our students.

And, importantly, the State and City have committed to fully funding Foundation Aid and Fair Student Funding (FSF). To this, I will add a note of caution and a note of thanks. We must all be aware that, while welcomed, class-size reduction legislation must come with a commensurate increase in the FSF Formula. On behalf of all the members of CSA, I would like to thank all of you in the City Council for your many years of tireless advocacy for fully funding FSF.

Still, daunting consequences of the pandemic era remain to be addressed. Both students and staff struggle with mental health challenges resulting from extreme isolation and stress. It is likely that for some of the same reasons, rates of serious student misconduct are on the rise, significantly exacerbated by changes in the discipline code under Mayor de Blasio's administration prior to the emergence of Covid-19. Finally, lost instructional time has resulted in learning deficits which must be addressed. The cumulative impact threatens the retention and recruitment of educators and the loyalty of families to the public school system.

### **SAFETY PRIORITIES**

In order to teach and learn, teachers and students must feel valued, respected, and safe. The first and most important priority of our city's school leaders is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our students while maintaining a culture that is conducive to learning and respectful to all. During the pandemic, our school leaders and their staffs made heroic efforts to protect the health of their school communities, as they responded to ever-changing information and mandates.

It is important to point out that long before the pandemic, CSA was regularly communicating with the de Blasio administration and the DOE regarding our members' growing concerns about school safety, resources allocated to schools to provide safe learning environments, and the erosion of school leaders' discretion over decisions that affect the well-being of their communities. In a pre-pandemic survey, only 21% of school leaders reported satisfaction with the changes to the discipline code under the de Blasio administration, only 31% were satisfied with the direction of the DOE with respect to student/staff safety, and only 30% were satisfied with its direction with respect to school climate and culture.

Unfortunately, we are still hearing regularly from school leaders about safety concerns. In many schools, misconduct is on the rise, leading some students to believe there are few or no consequences for disruptive, openly defiant, threatening and even violent behavior.

CSA would like to call upon the City Council for its support as we continue to advocate with Mayor Adams' new administration for safety measures that will allow our children to learn, our teachers to teach, and our administrators to lead. Here are our safety priorities:

1. **Maintain an adequate number of school safety agents.** Our schools need an adequate number of safety agents, and they must be appropriately funded. Approximately 1,000 vacancies must be filled as soon as possible. We ask for the full support of the City Council in ensuring that all school safety agent openings are filled, and no hiring reduction occurs.
2. **Every NYC school must have at least one assistant principal and the budget to accommodate this.** Recognizing that safety issues and concerns are exacerbated in schools without an assistant principal, CSA recently secured a new contractual provision calling for an assistant principal in every building. It is absolutely necessary to have a licensed administrator to oversee the protocols and procedures to keep students safe in an emergency. In a few instances, superintendents have denied a principal's request for an assistant principal. In other instances, schools have been denied the budget assistance that is required for such a hire. This is unacceptable. The leadership of assistant principals is critical to ensuring a positive school culture. Assistant principals are particularly necessary given that our system is deeply committed to using restorative approaches to student missteps, which understandably takes time and requires training.
3. **Principals need more discretion over the discipline code and its application.** CSA supports the philosophical shift in intervention responses and champions de-escalation techniques. School leaders fully recognize the folly of the old zero tolerance policy and its disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities. However, many of our members believe that our system is faltering because the manner in which the de Blasio administration chose to implement these promising practices has eroded their discretion and tied their hands. As we have throughout our union's history, we continue to advocate that there must be regular and ongoing collaboration with school leaders over decisions that directly affect the operation of schools. We are hopeful that this collaboration will increase under the leadership of the new mayor and chancellor, who have so far expressed considerable regard for school principals.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS**

We face a dire threat to public education as we lose school principals, and we therefore urge you to help us stanch this loss by supporting their professional and personal development. We face this looming exodus partly because principals have been on the frontlines managing ever-shifting regulations and directives, dealing with declining student mental health and staff shortages, swerving from in-person to online learning and back again, then getting excoriated in the press.

In the City of New York, I can proudly and confidently say that no entity has done more to recruit, train and retain school principals than CSA's Educational Leadership Institute (ELI). As always, I would like to acknowledge that the City Council has long provided essential support for ELI's professional development efforts and this year we request an increase to 1.5 million dollars.

Training in social and emotional learning (SEL) have been at the forefront of ELI's professional development activities during the traumatic years of the pandemic. ELI has had a fruitful partnership with Marc Brackett at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to create an evidence-based approach to addressing the uncertainty and anxiety children and their families have been experiencing during the pandemic. Staff has been trained to deal with their own emotional concerns in order to be better able to deal with those of their students. The needs of children, families and staff have only increased, and, with your help, we will continue to expand these programs.

ELI's Advanced Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ALPAP) will also continue to be invaluable to the development of new leaders. ALPAP has a stellar track record in accomplishing these goals. It is a year-long principal preparatory experience in which the complex nature of decision-making and authentic leadership is explored. The principal retention rate for ALPAP graduates exceeds the citywide and national average

Also critical is ELI's two-year educational leadership program, which is cost-free for participants. The program is designed to support newly assigned Assistant Principals, Education Administrators, Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors. The School Leadership Institute (SLI) provides two years of professional development seminars and mentor resources to enhance a wide variety of skills. Each series is designed to build and expand fundamental school leadership skills. The mentors are highly experienced former supervisors who help mentees integrate the content of the SLI training into their daily routines, which of course includes a growing reliance on online learning.

Increased funding from the City Council will enable ELI to expand the outreach of recruitment and retention programs such as SLI and ALPAP and collaborate with superintendents to offer customized workshops to meet the needs of their supervisory staff, and to expand workshops dealing with issues such as bullying, equity, social and emotional development, and mental health. We have faith in the Council's continuing support for ELI, and we thank you for your past recognition of the role that professional development plays in the work of our educators.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

CSA's Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors have been on the front lines of the heroic work of re-opening their centers and providing many of our youngest learners with the attention and care they have needed while most of their parents have served the community as essential workers. We continue to ask you to support us in eliminating the shocking disparities in their pay and working conditions. Compared with their colleagues in the DOE, our Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors barely make a living wage. Over the years, CSA has tried to raise awareness of the inequities they face on a daily basis and to point out that the majority of them are professional women of color. These inequities must be addressed so that we can hold onto these educators and attract many more of them to ensure that our youngest learners are a priority. We are grateful to all of you on the City Council for making a request of Mayor de Blasio last year to address this issue. Unfortunately, it was not included in the budget.

After years exhausting all other options, CSA filed a lawsuit against the de Blasio administration on December 1, 2021, seeking to address that pay disparity, noting that "This pay scale inequity not only smacks of racial injustice and patent unfairness, it also threatens to compromise the stability and quality

of early childhood education for all – a frequently trumpeted priority of the administration. As long as CBO Directors are paid on a lower scale and treated like second-class citizens, they – and the children in their care – are stigmatized and branded as less important.”

While this union awaits the outcome of the lawsuit, we request your support once again for budget inclusion and advocacy.

### **SUPPORTING OTHER SCHOOL COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

Allow me to take this opportunity to address two other school community concerns: hunger and the environment.

Our union fully supports the efforts of Community Food Advocates’ (CFA) Lunch 4 Learning coalition in its request for a 5-year investment of capital funds to allow New York City’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services to transform all middle and high school cafeterias into welcoming environments that increase student participation in school meals.

CSA also fully supports the Carbon Free & Healthy Schools campaign being led by NYC labor unions to move to renewable energy and correct decades of underinvestment in New York City school buildings. The global pandemic shed a particularly harsh light on the deficiencies of our ventilation and filtration systems. Full funding will address an outdated infrastructure that is putting students and the planet at risk.

Finally, significant federal dollars were distributed directly to schools to provide extra tutoring, social and emotional support, and professional development. But ironically, some of this money remains unused, mainly because many of our principals are having trouble finding staff to put in the extra time when they are already so overworked.

Tutoring and enrichment programs require convincing staff to work extra hours at a moment when educators are greatly overworked. People are tired, and it’s difficult to find enough of them at this point who are willing to trade whatever little precious time they have for money. Our members will need your support to make sure that any unspent money will not be taken away but will be used, when possible, for the sake of our students. We have been able to count on you in the past and we know we will be able to count on you as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

Once again, I thank the finance committee for the opportunity to address you and share our triumphs and concerns. I look forward to working with you on behalf of our children.

Mark Cannizzaro

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**From:** Lew Bader <lew@counselingschools.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 4, 2022 9:24 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] March 21, 2022: Committee on Education

Counseling In Schools is a non-profit community based organization. We have been providing services to more than 7000 students each year in New York City Schools since 1986, helping them with their social and emotional growth which is as important as their intellectual growth. This year, as you might imagine, these critical services are in high demand.

You would think that the city and the Department of Education (DOE) would treat our organization as critical as well. Instead, we are tasked with supporting the payroll of more than 100 social workers and youth workers, the supplies to assist in their efforts and the infrastructure that keeps our organization running, with VIRTUALLY NO FUNDING thus far in Fiscal 2022. We have nine major programs with the city that total \$3.7 million. Thus far two of those programs have approved, registered contracts and budgets. To date we have only received \$280,000.

On top of that, the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) approved an increase to our Indirect Rate for Fiscal 2021 and forward. This will provide us with about another \$150,000 a year in funding. To date, we have received nothing from MOCS and our DOE and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) contracts are not recognizing the rate.

The deficits we are being forced to work with are not just unfair - they are unmanageable. These are ALL of New York City's children - YOURS and OURS - that desperately need the social and emotional support we provide. These are VITAL programs that we run at THE CITY'S REQUEST. Fund them appropriately so that our people can continue to meet the needs of the children, the families, the schools and the communities of this city.

Additionally, it should be noted that we did not receive a COLA this year. The reason given was that because there were new contracts and COLA was taken into account. However, this was not the case. Funding is level with previous years.

We are proud members of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

1. Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
2. Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
3. Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

The COLA is the biggest action that can be taken right now, during this budget season. We ask that the Council include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a 5.4% COLA based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about an \$108 million investment in an essential community workforce.



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**Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.  
Testimony at the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair  
March 21, 2022**

Congratulations and thank you Chair Joseph and the Members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 60,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. To that end, we are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

***CPC's testimony addresses the following concerns: Pay Parity and Low Child Rates, Funding for Indirect, Child Regression and Decrease in Quality of Programming, Community Based Support Capacity, Lack of Transparency and Language Access, Youth Mental Health Access (the need for funded mandates and investing \$28.5 million in school based mental health clinics), the Need for Community Schools and Adult Literacy, and Focus Investments on Education, Employment for Youth, and Economic Mobility.***

***Pay Parity and Low Child Rates***

CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. They are recognized as essential and vital to the reopening of New York City, but this recognition was only in words. CBO's are funded disproportionately to their counterparts in DOE. We are contracted to serve NYC children under the same capacity; to educate with the same curriculum, credentials, assessments and requirements. It is unethical that the DOE is not equitable in parity still. Support staff without longevity are paid a mere 30 cents above minimum wage due to the contract negotiated with the City. We are seeing an exodus of staff from the Child care system, due to the disparity, many have left for substitute positions within DOE, which pays a rate of \$33 an hour.





In addition to CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers, CPC holds contracts with DOE to operate Family Child Care (FCC) Networks in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The Networks assist low-income and immigrant families in applying for subsidized child care and help parents find high-quality in-network home-based programs for infants, toddlers, and 3-K children.

Pay rates for child care programs affiliated with Family Child Care Networks are dictated by DOE/ACS and do not promote equity within the industry. All home-based child care providers have been able to provide 3-K services after Mayor De Blasio expanded 3-K for All last year, which meant that all families living in NYC were eligible to apply for free 3-K services from 8AM-2:20PM September through June. However, if a parent needed extended hours and an extended school year for their child, they would have to apply for a subsidy through the City and be found eligible for the 8AM-6PM care, which includes the summer months. Child care providers are paid a rate of \$37 per 3-K child a day, regardless if they attend from 8AM-2:20PM or 8AM-6PM.

Although they provide high quality instruction to 3-K children with subsidy cases for an extra 3 hours and 40 minutes compared to 3-K children without a subsidy case, they are not compensated extra for those hours. This discourages providers from accepting children with subsidy cases due to the providers' difficulty in making ends meet in an ever-increasing rent market alongside paying for daycare expenses, and would thus rather find families who can afford to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars a month. This in turn impacts the most vulnerable by increasing difficulty in securing child care to work and provide for their families.

The low pay rate to providers fuels their challenge in staying open. These are educators who also follow the DOE curriculum, participate in professional learning opportunities, and follow DOH health and safety regulations. One permanently closed program means one less program in a community, effectively robbing one of parents' and childrens' most vital resources. We will be investing in our children when we invest in our home-based programs and centers.

This summer running, the **CPC calls for equitable investment towards Pay Parity for the staff within Center Based Organizations and further investment towards an increase in child rates for home-based child care providers.**

### ***Child Regression and Decrease in Quality of Programming***

CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. However, the lack of support and funding from the city has made it even more challenging to implement creative programming that meets the learning and developmental needs of children during COVID-19, and this has resulted in concerning childhood developmental regression.



The following anecdotal example of childhood regression is about a child with disabilities who enrolled in one of CPC's Childhood Centers when she was two years old. When she enrolled in the program, she

was unable to speak any words. Through CPC's support, she was able to speak coherent sentences at three years old. When COVID-19 hit and services shifted to remote, this child was unable to access their teletherapy sessions due to the language, digital, and financial barriers that her family encountered. Once CPC's Childhood Center reopened this fall, this child returned and was unable to speak in coherent sentences anymore. In six months, she had regressed two developmental years - back to speaking single word phrases.

Children with disabilities require paras (paraprofessionals who support students with disabilities with communication, instructional, and behavioral support), as well as services that are difficult to maintain through online systems due to the lack of equitable funding designated to support families who experience digital and linguistic barriers. Some parents with children who need extra support for their disabilities are also reporting that they are just now receiving their learning devices, even though they applied for them back when the pandemic first started in the US, in March 2020. Some students still have not received their learning devices. Along with the digital literacy gap disproportionately affecting working class immigrant parents, as well as the Broadband barrier affecting majority working class and Communities of Color, the lack of accountable follow through with providing digital learning devices is yet another systemic barrier that prevents working-class Children of Color from learning. These systemic inequities impact low-income children of color and children with disabilities, and immigrant-serving CBOs such as CPC end up taking on the mantle to support these children through interruptions to their cognitive development. **CPC calls for equitable investment in community-led Early Childhood services, the integration of intentional community outreach for families with digital and linguistic barriers, and provision of training on school reopening guidelines for community-based childhood centers to adequately support low-income immigrant families as NYC schools reopen.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has also been detrimental to children's mental health, which affects their academic performance and long term development. The disruption from in person learning and prolonged isolation has increased students' stress and anxiety. Fourth graders in CPC programs are asking questions such as, "what if it stays like this forever, what if my parents die, what if we don't have any more money, why...why do I need to...nothing will change," and they breakdown in tears from sadness and frustration trying to get answers. The overwhelming sense of uncertainty, grief, and hopelessness weigh heavily on students' minds, leaving them unmotivated and unable to focus in the classroom. Additionally, students carry onto their families' pain and loss, and are unable to receive the proper mental health support to fully process and heal from their traumas. CPC staff are not professionally trained to provide the comprehensive mental health support students need, and may experience vicarious trauma from consoling students as well. Additionally, many staff are living through the same stress, anxiety, and dilemmas the children are feeling. Social Services workers need to be better trained and equipped on what signs to look for in mental illness specifically in young children, in addition to how to address it appropriately. **CPC calls on the City ensures CBO's receive the same equitable support in mental health for the children they service as the DOE.**

### ***Community Based Support Capacity***



Since the start of COVID-19, CPC Childhood Centers supported families remotely without an increase in staff capacity. CPC staff provide synchronized blended lessons to accommodate children learning remotely. However, in order to follow social distancing guidelines, staff separate the children at the site physically - which makes it hard to maintain engagement and interaction with young children. Without proper guidance and support from the city to increase CPC's capacity, CPC staff have to make difficult decisions as to whether to properly adhere to social distancing guidelines or sacrifice the critical social engagement period for healthy childhood development. With only a decrease in license capacity 5%-10% overall, there is no guarantee that children can safely social distance, leaving many families hesitant about bringing their children back to school.

During COVID-19, AAPI unemployment claims have increased by 6900% in comparison to last year. Lines for free meal distribution events wrap around the block, and CPC staff have supported thousands of families navigate through different relief programs provided by City, State, and Federal level governments. At CPC's Early Childhood sites, without an increase in funding from the City, any increase in meal distribution comes out of the individual site's program budget. The children would rely on the organization and agency's own resources to get fed, rather than from the City they live in. **Therefore, CPC demands increased investment funding for CBO-run Early Childcare Centers, which provide necessary childcare services for working-class immigrant families.**

### ***Lack of Transparency and Language Access***

COVID-19 has exacerbated systemic injustices and has left many of our low-income and immigrant families without adequate resources to navigate unemployment and surface-level relief packages. CPC staff remain on the frontlines of the essential workforce, and have prepared and adapted to the ever-shifting policies throughout the past six months. However, critical information is still getting lost through the cracks, and CBOs such as CPC are left out of crucial communication around school reopening guidelines.

In early July 2020, DOE issued a survey for families to opt into blended or remote learning with very little details around the logistics behind the blended and remote formats. In mid-September 2020, the DOE sent out a bulletin mentioning that there is no funding allocated for blended and remote learning, leaving CBOs and families with no time to respond. Not only are updates around COVID-19 not reaching CBOs in a timely manner, but there is also no transparency regarding current allocated funds and what they are designated for. The DOE finally explained that they have no control over when they receive the information since they requested for blended learning through a state waiver. By the time CPC receives the information from DOE, it is already too late and as a result, CPC staff do not have proper guidelines and cannot respond efficiently to the families we serve, increasing the risks of COVID-19 exposure in our programs. As schools recover from COVID-19, working class immigrant families need holistic support with transitioning their kids back to in-person learning, including culturally competent and language accessible mental health services, investment in youth employment, funding towards Community Schools, and more. However, these programs will not reach working class immigrants without proper communication from DOE to CBO providers that serve marginalized communities. **Therefore, the City needs to pay CBO providers equitably with DOE teachers, and treat them with equal respect. The City also must hold DOE accountable to providing language-accessible communications in a**



**timeline that allows for CBOs to respond and prepare for the quality programming that NYC children deserve.**

Additionally, wait times for families who receive HRA Childcare Vouchers are extremely long. Families have not received answers since September of 2020, and they remain in limbo as their applications remain unprocessed by HRA. In the cases of ACS, families who have resubmitted applications multiple times still are receiving little to no answers in regard to their childcare options. The responses currently provided by ACS only cover remote services, which does not begin to provide the support that working-class families need.

ACS voucher applications are not the only applications with long wait times. Currently, early child care subsidy applications can take around an average of 2-3 months to be found eligible. Without the free or low-cost extended child care, families have found it extremely difficult to search for work or continue going to work and are forced to stay home with their children because they cannot afford to pay a provider out of pocket. Not only is this hindering the City's reopening, but it is impacting children during their most important stage of developmental growth, forcing parents to make difficult economic decisions, and increasing the number of families unable to afford rent and most basic necessities.

Even families that are able to apply for CPC's programs face difficulties with receiving adequate information to make the best choices for their needs. CPC's Learning Bridges/Learning Labs programs exemplify this problem. Currently, CPC Learning Bridges/Labs provide interpretation of schoolwork services for immigrant and LEP (Limited English Proficiency) families. Families apply for the program online and then choose one Learning Bridges Center to send their child to. The website shows multiple Learning Bridges Center locations across multiple boroughs, but does not provide any information regarding which languages are provided at each Learning Bridges/Labs Center. Parents are therefore ill-equipped to make informed decisions for their child, and there is no assurance of whether or not Learning Bridges/Labs students are able to receive the services in the languages they need. This information needs to be disseminated with full transparency and Learning Bridges/Labs need to be held accountable to providing the adequate services for the populations they serve.

### ***Youth Mental Health Access***

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will "require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities." Beyond grief, the learning loss and isolation has had an extreme impact on our young people. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis.

### ***The Need for Funded Mandates***



Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19

pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs—this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.

Summer Rising 2.0 - and subsequent programming in Fall 2022 and beyond - must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum, and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into Summer 2022.

### ***Invest \$28.5 million in School-Based Mental Health Clinics***

The City currently has 280 school-based mental health clinics, which feature community-based providers who operate satellite sites of their licensed Article 28 or 31 clinics in schools. Providers can offer group and individual therapy, clinical treatment, diagnosis, crisis mental health services, support for teachers, family support, and more. These clinics work to improve overall school wellness. They integrate with broader community-based services to support whole families, and seek to reduce punitive measures for children experiencing mental health challenges.

The City should make a robust, \$28.5 million investment in expanding school-based mental health clinics in the FY 2023 budget. This funding would support the creation of 100 new sites over the next two years (due to the time it takes for city procurement, state licensure, and securing space and staff) costing \$150,000 per program. It would also provide increases of \$75,000 per program to the existing 280 providers. Notably, staff retention at existing school-based clinics is a challenge due in large part to a lack of pay parity between community-based providers and DOE-employed professionals, including school social workers.

While clinics receive funding by billing health insurance, this is insufficient because insurance does not cover school wellness activities like mental health education and training; Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis; and commercial insurance often does not cover the service at all, or pays a rate that is so low that it covers only half of the cost of service. Further, because school-based clinics can bill insurance, which the DOE largely cannot, an investment in clinics will result in an infusion of state & federal dollars into schools, and ultimately cost the City less than hiring a DOE school social worker.

### ***Focus Investments on Education, Employment for Youth, and Economic Mobility***

Emerging evidence shows that the pandemic has widened pre-existing academic disparities; and raised new barriers for many students. This has a heightened impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are caregivers, both for entry into higher education and for continuing and completing their studies. Moreover, the number of young people 18-25 who are out of school and out of work likely doubled in the year after COVID-19 lockdowns began. We must:

- Build on recent investments to continue to expand access to social and emotional support for New York City students.





- Fully fund Restorative Justice practices within New York's public schools so that we can begin to create a cultural shift that encourages community, safety, and healing when harm occurs.
- Eliminate policing infrastructure, practice, and culture from New York City public schools and replace it with youth, parent, and educator-led solutions that center liberation and restorative justice.
- Increase City investments in year-round and summer youth employment. Support state-law changes to permit New York State's Earned Income Tax Credit to include eligibility for young adults without children.

### ***Expanding Child Care Subsidy Eligibility***

Currently, low-income families may apply for child care subsidies so long as they are found eligible to do so. One of the requirements is that the child whom they need child care for is a U.S Citizen or have legal documentation. The hardest conversation a CPC FCCN staff member had was when they spoke to a mother who recently immigrated to this country, desperately needed to start working as a single mother to build a life with her infant, but was ultimately found not eligible to apply for subsidy due to their infant not being born in the U.S and not having proper documentation. The mother pleaded and pleaded for the opportunity to apply for the financial child-care assistance since she did not know anybody she could rely on to take care of her infant.

Families with situations similar to this mother are being left behind by the City. It is disproportionately impacting immigrant children as they are not being given the same opportunities as other infants and toddlers and thus continuing the perpetual cycle of inequity. **The City needs to increase funding to expand child care subsidy eligibility to include ALL children, regardless of their citizenship or documentation.**

### ***The Need for Community Schools***

Students learn better when their various physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, it will only be that much harder to focus on academics. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community based organizations in holistic and innovative ways, and represent a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in youth, families, and communities.

The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to fill in the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars:

- **A total investment of \$60.3M will be needed to baseline funding after American Rescue Plan funding drops off in FY25.**
  - The funding gap left by federal aid in FY25 includes the following:
    - Community Schools Expansion: \$51.2M
    - Restoration of Community Schools Contracts: \$6M



- Community Schools Sustainability: \$3.1M
  - Additionally, in FY24, Community Schools will face a \$25.6M deficit that will need to be filled, as the community school expansion is only half-funded for that year.
  - The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.
  - Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of expansion to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

### ***Adult Literacy***

CPC also provides essential new-immigrant workforce programs such as Adult Literacy. Like so many Adult Literacy Programs throughout the city, CPC relies on City funding to provide quality programming to our communities. We urge the city to continue funding Adult Literacy Programs and continue the Adult Literacy Pilot Program Initiative. At CPC, this funding opens the door to about 600 immigrant ESOL students seeking free English classes every year. It has also meant providing much needed wrap around services to our students. For example, throughout this pandemic, students have received up-to-date information on COVID-19, testing sites, and vaccination centers. Students learn digital literacy skills to help their children with remote learning. They learn American Civics, how to register to vote, and what rank-choice voting is. Students learn about healthcare assistance and if needed, receive services for domestic violence. Classrooms provide information regarding rental and food assistance. And as Asian hate crimes ravage our communities, students learn how to recognize discrimination, racism, and learn how to report crimes to the authorities.

Investing in our communities works. However, at the current cost per student rate, Adult Literacy Programs citywide have struggled to maintain the costs of services and staffing needed. The Adult Literacy Pilot Project Initiative attempts to answer the question of what a fully funded Adult Literacy Program can provide our communities. CPC is one of the recipients of this Pilot Initiative. Even though only a fraction of the originally asked amount was received, this recently enacted addition means we have been able to triple the outreach and wrap around services to our students. This means more hours are dedicated to our students seeking childcare, senior care, housing, food assistance, insurance, college access, and workforce counseling. Modernizing aging technological and digital infrastructure has allowed students to access our classrooms remotely and learn digital literacy skills needed to be competitive.

To address the gap in funding for community-based adult literacy services, CPC calls on the Mayor and the City Council to:

- 1) The city must **maintain the \$8 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional \$13.5 million (for a total of \$27 million)** in order to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP.



Astonishingly, Mayor Adams has actually proposed a significant cut to the \$8 million that was baselined last year.

- 2) The City Council should **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to \$5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources.
- 3) The City Council should **renew the \$4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

**With all of the above in mind, CPC strongly demands for transparency and accountability in disseminating COVID-19 related guidelines and the full spectrum of services provided to community run childhood centers and NYC schools in working-class neighborhoods.**

**Additionally, agencies need to adequately invest in school-based mental health services, hire competent workers from the immigrant communities that they serve, focus investments in youth employment, and increase funding in community schools in order to meet the learning needs of LEP communities.**

### ***Closing***

Early Childhood centers and schools are critical social safety nets that cannot afford to be jeopardized by the COVID-19 pandemic. The city needs to prioritize investing in working-class communities of color and community-led efforts of recovery in order for NYC to be able to fully recover from COVID-19. All of these recommendations are only the beginning in providing the care our community members deserve. CPC appreciates the opportunity to testify on these issues that so greatly impact the communities we serve and look forward to working with you on them.

If you have any questions, please contact Mary Cheng at [mcheng@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:mcheng@cpc-nyc.org)





**Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.  
Testimony at the New York City Council  
Committee on Education Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair  
March 21, 2022**

Congratulations and thank you Chair Joseph and the Members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 60,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. To that end, we are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

***CPC's testimony addresses the following concerns: Pay Parity, Funding for Indirect, Child Regression and Decrease in Quality of Programming, Community Based Support Capacity, Lack of Transparency and Language Access, Youth Mental Health Access (the need for funded mandates and investing \$28.5 million in school based mental health clinics), the Need for Community Schools and Adult Literacy, and Focus Investments on Education, Employment for Youth, and Economic Mobility.***

***Pay Parity***

CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. They are recognized as essential and vital to the reopening of New York City, but this recognition was only in words. CBO's are funded disproportionately to their counterparts in DOE. We are contracted to serve NYC children under the same capacity; to educate with the same curriculum, credentials, assessments and requirements. It is unethical that the DOE is not equitable in parity still. Support staff without longevity are paid a mere 30 cents above minimum wage due to the contract negotiated with the City. We are seeing an exodus of staff from the Child care system, due to the disparity, many have left for substitute positions within DOE, which pays a rate of \$33 an hour.



This summer running the **CPC calls for equitable investment towards Pay Parity for the staff within Center Based Organizations.**

### ***Child Regression and Decrease in Quality of Programming***

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The following anecdotal example of childhood regression is about a child with disabilities who enrolled in one of CPC's Childhood Centers when she was two years old. When she entered in the program, she was unable to speak any words. Through CPC's support, she was able to speak in coherent sentences at three years old. When COVID-19 hit and services shifted to remote, this child was unable to access their teletherapy sessions due to the language, digital, and financial barriers that her family encountered. Once CPC's Childhood Center reopened this fall, this child returned and was unable to speak in coherent sentences anymore. In six months, she had regressed two developmental years - back to speaking single word phrases.

Children with disabilities require paras (paraprofessionals who support students with disabilities with communication, instructional, and behavioral support), as well as services that are difficult to maintain through online systems due to the lack of equitable funding designated to support families who experience digital and linguistic barriers. Some parents with children who need extra support for their disabilities are also reporting that they are just now receiving their learning devices, even though they applied for them back when the pandemic first started in the US, in March 2020. Some students still have not received their learning devices. Along with the digital literacy gap disproportionately affecting working class immigrant parents, as well as the Broadband barrier affecting majority working class and Communities of Color, the lack of accountable follow through with providing digital learning devices is yet another systemic barrier that prevents working-class Children of Color from learning. These systemic inequities impact low-income children of color and children with disabilities, and immigrant-serving CBOs such as CPC end up taking on the mantle to support these children through interruptions to their cognitive development. **CPC calls for equitable investment in community-led Early Childhood services, the integration of intentional community outreach for families with digital and linguistic barriers, and provision of training on school reopening guidelines for community-based childhood centers to adequately support low-income immigrant families as NYC schools reopen.**

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Since the start of COVID-19, CPC Childhood Centers supported families remotely without an increase in staff capacity. CPC staff provide synchronized blended lessons to accommodate children learning remotely. However, in order to follow social distancing guidelines, staff separate the children at the site physically - which makes it hard to maintain engagement and interaction with young children. Without proper guidance and support from the city to increase CPC's capacity, CPC staff have to make difficult decisions as to whether to properly adhere to social distancing guidelines or sacrifice the critical social engagement period for healthy childhood development. With only a decrease in license capacity 5%-10% overall, there is no guarantee that children can safely social distance, leaving many families hesitant about bringing their children back to school.

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### ***Lack of Transparency and Language Access***

COVID-19 has exacerbated systemic injustices and has left many of our low-income and immigrant families without adequate resources to navigate unemployment and surface-level relief packages. CPC staff remain on the frontlines of the essential workforce, and have prepared and adapted to the ever-shifting policies throughout the past six months. However, critical information is still getting lost through the cracks, and CBOs such as CPC are left out of crucial communication around school reopening guidelines.

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Additionally, wait times for families who receive HRA Childcare Vouchers are extremely long. Families have not received answers since September of 2020, and they remain in limbo as their applications remain unprocessed by HRA. In the cases of ACS, families who have resubmitted applications multiple times still are receiving little to no answers in regard to their childcare options. The responses currently provided by ACS only cover remote services, which does not begin to provide the support that working-class families need.

Even families that are able to apply for CPC's programs face difficulties with receiving adequate information to make the best choices for their needs. CPC's Learning Bridges/Learning Labs programs exemplify this problem. Currently, CPC Learning Bridges/Labs provide interpretation of schoolwork services for immigrant and LEP (Limited English Proficiency) families. Families apply for the program online and then choose one Learning Bridges Center to send their child to. The website shows multiple Learning Bridges Center locations across multiple boroughs, but does not provide any information regarding which languages are provided at each Learning Bridges/Labs Center. Parents are therefore ill-equipped to make informed decisions for their child, and there is no assurance of whether or not Learning Bridges/Labs students are able to receive the services in the languages they need. This information needs to be disseminated with full transparency and Learning Bridges/Labs need to be held accountable to providing the adequate services for the populations they serve.

### ***Youth Mental Health Access***

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will "require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities." Beyond grief, the learning loss and isolation has had an extreme impact on our young people. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National



State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis.

### ***The Need for Funded Mandates***

Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19 pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs—this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.

Summer Rising 2.0 - and subsequent programming in Fall 2022 and beyond - must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum, and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into Summer 2022.

### ***Invest \$28.5 million in School-Based Mental Health Clinics***

The City currently has 280 school-based mental health clinics, which feature community-based providers who operate satellite sites of their licensed Article 28 or 31 clinics in schools. Providers can offer group and individual therapy, clinical treatment, diagnosis, crisis mental health services, support for teachers, family support, and more. These clinics work to improve overall school wellness. They integrate with broader community-based services to support whole families, and seek to reduce punitive measures for children experiencing mental health challenges.

The City should make a robust, \$28.5 million investment in expanding school-based mental health clinics in the FY 2023 budget. This funding would support the creation of 100 new sites over the next two years (due to the time it takes for city procurement, state licensure, and securing space and staff) costing \$150,000 per program. It would also provide increases of \$75,000 per program to the existing 280 providers. Notably, staff retention at existing school-based clinics is a challenge due in large part to a lack of pay parity between community-based providers and DOE-employed professionals, including school social workers.

While clinics receive funding by billing health insurance, this is insufficient because insurance does not cover school wellness activities like mental health education and training; Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis; and commercial insurance often does not cover the service at all, or pays a rate that is so low that it covers only half of the cost of service. Further, because school-based clinics can bill insurance, which the DOE largely cannot, an investment in clinics will result in an infusion of state & federal dollars into schools, and ultimately cost the City less than hiring a DOE school social worker.

### ***Focus Investments on Education, Employment for Youth, and Economic Mobility***

Emerging evidence shows that the pandemic has widened pre-existing academic disparities; and raised new barriers for many students. This has a heightened impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are caregivers, both for entry into higher education and for continuing and





completing their studies. Moreover, the number of young people 18-25 who are out of school and out of work likely doubled in the year after COVID-19 lockdowns began. We must:

- Build on recent investments to continue to expand access to social and emotional support for New York City students.
- Fully fund Restorative Justice practices within New York's public schools so that we can begin to create a cultural shift that encourages community, safety, and healing when harm occurs.
- Eliminate policing infrastructure, practice, and culture from New York City public schools and replace it with youth, parent, and educator-led solutions that center liberation and restorative justice.
- Increase City investments in year-round and summer youth employment. Support state-law changes to permit New York State's Earned Income Tax Credit to include eligibility for young adults without children.

### ***The Need for Community Schools***

Students learn better when their various physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, it will only be that much harder to focus on academics. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community based organizations in holistic and innovative ways, and represent a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in youth, families, and communities.

The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to fill in the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars:

- **A total investment of \$60.3M will be needed to baseline funding after American Rescue Plan funding drops off in FY25.**
  - The funding gap left by federal aid in FY25 includes the following:
    - Community Schools Expansion: \$51.2M
    - Restoration of Community Schools Contracts: \$6M
    - Community Schools Sustainability: \$3.1M
  - Additionally, in FY24, Community Schools will face a \$25.6M deficit that will need to be filled, as the community school expansion is only half-funded for that year.
  - The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.
  - Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of expansion to preserve fidelity to the community school model.



## **Adult Literacy**

CPC also provides essential new-immigrant workforce programs such as Adult Literacy. Like so many Adult Literacy Programs throughout the city, CPC relies on City funding to provide quality programming to our communities. We urge the city to continue funding Adult Literacy Programs and continue the Adult Literacy Pilot Program Initiative. At CPC, this funding opens the door to about 600 immigrant ESOL students seeking free English classes every year. It has also meant providing much needed wrap around services to our students. For example, throughout this pandemic, students have received up-to-date information on COVID-19, testing sites, and vaccination centers. Students learn digital literacy skills to help their children with remote learning. They learn American Civics, how to register to vote, and what rank-choice voting is. Students learn about healthcare assistance and if needed, receive services for domestic violence. Classrooms provide information regarding rental and food assistance. And as Asian hate crimes ravage our communities, students learn how to recognize discrimination, racism, and learn how to report crimes to the authorities.

Investing in our communities works. However, at the current cost per student rate, Adult Literacy Programs citywide have struggled to maintain the costs of services and staffing needed. The Adult Literacy Pilot Project Initiative attempts to answer the question of what a fully funded Adult Literacy Program can provide our communities. CPC is one of the recipients of this Pilot Initiative. Even though only a fraction of the originally asked amount was received, this recently enacted addition means we have been able to triple the outreach and wrap around services to our students. This means more hours are dedicated to our students seeking childcare, senior care, housing, food assistance, insurance, college access, and workforce counseling. Modernizing aging technological and digital infrastructure has allowed students to access our classrooms remotely and learn digital literacy skills needed to be competitive.

To address the gap in funding for community-based adult literacy services, CPC calls on the Mayor and the City Council to:

- 1) The city must **maintain the \$8 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional \$13.5 million (for a total of \$27 million)** in order to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP. Astonishingly, Mayor Adams has actually proposed a significant cut to the \$8 million that was baselined last year.
- 2) The City Council should **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to \$5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources.
- 3) The City Council should **renew the \$4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

**With all of the above in mind, CPC strongly demands for transparency and accountability in disseminating COVID-19 related guidelines and the full spectrum of services provided to community run childhood centers and NYC schools in working-class neighborhoods.**



**Additionally, agencies need to adequately invest in school-based mental health services, hire competent workers from the immigrant communities that they serve, focus investments in youth employment, and increase funding in community schools in order to meet the learning needs of LEP communities.**

***Closing***

Early Childhood centers and schools are critical social safety nets that cannot afford to be jeopardized by the COVID-19 pandemic. The city needs to prioritize investing in working-class communities of color and community-led efforts of recovery in order for NYC to be able to fully recover from COVID-19. All of these recommendations are only the beginning in providing the care our community members deserve. CPC appreciates the opportunity to testify on these issues that so greatly impact the communities we serve and look forward to working with you on them.

If you have any questions, please contact Mary Cheng at [mcheng@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:mcheng@cpc-nyc.org)





**Testimony of the Day Care Council of New York  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education  
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair  
At the FY 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Presented by Gregory Brender, Director of Public Policy**

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Thank you Chair Joseph and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Education for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY), the membership organization of New York City's early childhood education provider organizations.

As providers of early childhood education, DCCNY members engage families at the crucial earliest stages of their children's development. The first years of a child's life are the first opportunity to provide them with the social-emotional development and early skills development that supports them throughout their education and throughout their lives. As such, DCCNY and its network of community based early childhood educators and caregivers have long recognized that access to strong and stable early childhood education and care programs has profound effects on students' learning and academic achievements.

DCCNY and its members also recognize that reliable and quality child care is a necessity for working parents and thus a necessity for the City's recovery from the economic devastation of COVID-19. For New Yorkers to return to work, families with young children must have places that are safe, nurturing and educational when parents are working, including those parents who work non-traditional hours.

The City Council and this committee are an important voice for New York City's early childhood education sector and we are excited to work with you to strengthen early childhood education in New York City.

**The Unfinished Work on Salary Parity**

In 2019, the City made a historic commitment to put the City on a path towards salary parity between the early childhood education workforce in community based organizations and the workforce in public schools. While this agreement was a significant first step, the work remains unfinished.

As of September of 2020, certified teachers in community based organizations are earning salaries on par with the *starting salaries* of teachers in the public schools. Community Based Organizations are not funded to offer their teachers the longevity increases that public school teachers receive. This inequity

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remains stark. A certified early childhood educators in a community based organization may earn only 53% of what a similarly experienced certified teachers earns for the same work in a public school setting. This stark disparity presents a constant challenge to organizations looking to retain teachers who have developed expertise in early childhood education from their years of experience.

The unfinished work of salary parity also includes the directors and support staff in community based early childhood programs who continue to receive significantly lower salaries than their counterparts in public schools. Many centers struggle to retain directors who could earn more as a DOE teacher than they can as a community based director.

DCCNY urges the City to close the remaining wage gaps on the path to parity so that the hardworking early childhood workforce can finally earn the compensation that their important work deserves.

### **Enrollment Based Payments**

When Department of Education released its Birth-To-Five and Head Start / Early Head Start RFPs, members of the City Council and leaders in the ECE community raised significant concerns and objections to DOE's plans to pay providers based on enrollment and to implement enrollment procedures which limited enrollment exclusively to DOE's Centralized Enrollment System.

Under this system, CBO providers had no guarantee that they would be able to serve families who wished to enroll their children in CBO programs and faced financial peril if they were underenrolled.

These issues have been exacerbated by volatile enrollment throughout the pandemic. Enrollment will likely continue to fluctuate as necessary changes are made in how New York City's economy reopens. Some parents who are currently working from home or unemployed due to the pandemic are waiting until further reopening of schools and businesses to re-enroll their children.

As workplaces reopen, parents need to be able to quickly obtain safe, affordable child care for their children. To fill this need, providers must be able to maintain their staff and infrastructure to facilitate a more comprehensive reopening as more parents return to work.

Recently, Department of Education has taken steps towards holding providers harmless for underenrollment in Fiscal Year 2022. DCCNY is grateful for this reform and for DOE and the City Council's leadership on this issue. It is crucial that the City takes action to stabilize its community based early childhood education providers beyond this fiscal year. DCCNY urges the City to implement line-item budgeting for contracted early childhood education programs in FY 2023 as they work to return their operations to pre-pandemic stability.

### **Improving Enrollment Procedures**

As previously discussed, the implementation of DOE's Centralized Enrollment System stripped community based organizations of the power to process their own enrollment. This change required all families to go through DOE's Centralized Enrollment System.

Under DOE's Centralized Enrollment System, there have been significant wait times for families' applications for child care subsidies to be approved leaving vacant seats in child care centers and family child care homes and putting stressors on parents' trying to access affordable child care. Moreover,

many families, including those of many immigrant essential workers, are weary of engaging with a government agency and feel safer with a community based organization with whom they already have a trusting relationship. Many prefer the smaller environments that community based centers provide over their DOE school-based options.

Over the summer of 2021, DOE briefly allowed providers to enroll families after the CBO itself has done a complete eligibility check. This empowered CBO's to start serving eligible families immediately and helped them to leverage their community relationships. However, this policy ended with the start of the school year on September 10, 2021.

Local community based early childhood providers have strong connections to the neighborhoods they serve. The City should leverage these strong relationships to ensure that families are able to quickly access the child care programs in which they want to enroll their children.

DCCNY urges the City to allow community based enrollment in contracted early childhood education programs.

### **Looking Ahead**

DCCNY is excited to work with the City Council to ensure that all of New York City's children and families have access to strong and stable early care and education.

Last week, the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate issues their "one-house" budget resolutions expressing the priorities of the respective houses for the State Budget starting April 1, 2022. We are thrilled that both houses proposed investments of over \$3 billion to put New York on a path to universal child care and proposed long overdue regulatory changes that will remove unnecessary obstacles that families face in trying to obtain child care. DCCNY, our members and allies, and many members of the City Council are working hard to ensure that this important funding is included in the Enacted Budget.

As the City works to implement changes from the State or to enact its own early childhood policy agenda, it is crucial that the community based organizations who provide early childhood education are included in planning. DCCNY member organizations are hubs of innovation with deep histories and connections to the communities they serve. These organizations must be fully and stably funded to ensure the stability of services for children and families. DCCNY and our member organizations stand ready to work with the City to achieve an early childhood system that meets the needs of NYC families and businesses, teaches children to succeed and respects and fairly compensates the ECE workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for all your work to support early childhood education. DCCNY's policy platform is attached to this document. I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at [gbrender@dccnyinc.org](mailto:gbrender@dccnyinc.org).



## **Day Care Council of New York FY 2023 New York City Platform**

Day Care Council of New York is a membership organization of New York City's early childhood education providers. New York City's early childhood education system is at a pivotal moment. Below are immediate steps that the City leaders must take to strengthen early childhood education for New York City's children and families.

### **Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce**

- Fund longevity increases for teachers in community based early childhood education programs
- Address salary disparities between directors and support staff and their counterparts in public schools
- Increase rates for child care for infants and toddlers
- Support career advancement for early childhood teachers, directors and staff

### **Address Service Gaps**

- Ensure all neighborhoods have access to Extended Day and Extended Year programs based on work schedules
- Increase center based capacity for child care for infants and toddlers

### **Improve Enrollment Processes**

- Suspend Department of Education's (DOE) Pay for Enrollment policy which penalizes providers financially for temporary fluctuations in enrollment
- Allow community based organizations with Department of Education contracts to directly enroll families
- Increase income eligibility for child care subsidies (currently at 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines) and reduce or eliminate burdensome paperwork requirements for families seeking child care

### **Commit to Working with Community Based Organizations in Planning Reforms to Early Childhood Education**

- Ensure that community based organizations have a voice in planning early childhood policies and procedures

You can also find further explanation of these agenda items in Day Care Council of New York's report ["Supporting New York City's Unsung Heroes: How the Next Administration Can Prime the Early Childhood Workforce for Success"](#) and Campaign for Children's Policy Platform ["A Call to Action: The Campaign for Children's Plan for Incoming City Leaders"](#)



**TESTIMONY OF STEPHANIE NILVA, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DAY ONE,**  
to NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
REMOTE HEARING  
March 21, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Joseph and Council Members, for your support of [Day One](#) and for the opportunity to speak to you today. We welcome the many new City Council members and we look forward to working with you. With the new leadership, diversity and majority of women in the Council, we see many exciting opportunities ahead to improve the lives of NYC students.

This pandemic, the racial justice reckoning, the isolation, and the many transitions of the past year have been particularly difficult for youth, and more so for youth of color and specifically Black youth. As an organization focused on building healthy relationships among young people, Day One has seen the effects of skyrocketing domestic violence, technology-facilitated abuse, a mental health crisis, and the limited services tailored for this issue and this age group. Demand for our help has been as much as 70% higher in our direct services programs.

**About Day One**

Day One focuses all of its resources on ending dating abuse and domestic violence among youth, 24 and under. We combine preventive education for students with legal and therapeutic services for young survivors of relationship abuse and leadership activities for adolescents and teens. Every year Day One educates and assists more than 10,000 youth and train thousands of adults in their lives. We are the only nonprofit in New York that commits its full resources to addressing intimate partner abuse among this vulnerable population.

Day One ensures that all of our youth-focused services acknowledge the intersecting identities and complex dynamics of intimate partner violence, youth sexuality, and consent. Our educational programs reach middle and high school students in hundreds of schools each year discussing healthy relationships and linking them to direct services, which include legal and counseling services. Our legal department routinely assists young clients with obtaining orders of protection, petitioning for custody, visitation, and child support, and criminal justice advocacy. Our social workers provide critical counseling services to young survivors, giving them the tools to heal. Year-round youth development programs help cultivate the next generation of leaders by building their transferable job skills like advocacy, organizing and public speaking.

The vast majority of our consultations have involved at least one form of technology-facilitated abuse. In one case, we provided assistance and criminal justice advocacy to a minor whose partner shared intimate photos and videos of them on social media; this incident contributed to their decision to change schools. In another case, we provided legal representation and advocacy for a client whose abuser, among other things, tracked her location and accessed the contents of her cell phone without her knowledge. Our social services team supported a student being harassed and threatened by a classmate while attending a mandated Zoom class.

### **Pandemic Services**

Day One was able to deliver services uninterrupted during the pandemic. We converted our school-based trainings to be online workshops and developed new downloadable teaching and parenting tools. Professional trainings pivoted to webinars and reached hundreds of educators, health care and social workers. Our social workers provide counseling via video call and are also available by phone, text, and online. Despite the New York City Family Courts being largely closed for in-person operations for over a year, our legal team has successfully advocated for clients seeking orders of protection, custody, visitation, child support, and paternity. We have seen an increased number of referrals from the Family Justice Centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. We have also seen increased participation from people for whom travel or other barriers kept them from engaging with us in person, and we expect to retain many changes that will enhance Day One's programming, bringing direct services and educational opportunities to a wider audience.

### **Day One Priorities and Request**

**Day One has submitted requests to every City Council member for the following allocations:**

- **Support for district-specific and citywide funding from the DoVE Initiative**
- **Continued Support of \$60,000 from the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault**
- **New funding from the Young Women's Initiative, including**
  - **\$25,000 from the Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence**
  - **\$75,000 from the Prevent Sexual Assault Initiative for Young Adults**

**We are proud to be working in many of your districts delivering prevention and direct services pursuant to DoVE funding, and we hope to be continuing that work and focusing services in the rest of your districts as well.**

### **Launch an Initiative for Preventive Education and Teacher/Youth Worker Training**

We'd also like to briefly address bigger picture issues. We shouldn't be asking schools if they need information about healthy relationships when a 1 in 3 young people are consistently found to be experiencing harm in their relationships (numbers for homeless and system-involved youth are dramatically higher). We should be making sure they get the information. While New York State would have to pass legislation requiring all schools to mandate healthy relationships education in kindergarten through 12th grade - and we support that - the City can make this happen on its own.

**We propose a new \$10 million Initiative that would fund preventive education for youth, in schools or wherever youth come together, and training for teachers and youth workers.** It wouldn't be cheap, but domestic violence isn't cheap either; it costs the United States upwards of \$9 billion annually. Local data is hard to find, but between costs for medical care, law enforcement, interrupted education, mental health, unemployment, credit issues, housing etc., domestic violence is likely draining hundreds of millions of dollars from New York City each year.

The need is dramatic. The biannual Youth Risk Behavior Survey of students in schools steadily finds that when asked about the immediate prior 12-month period, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 students in New York City report experiencing abuse while dating. In New York City, teen survivors of dating abuse are 3x more likely to miss school due to not feeling safe, and 3x more likely to carry a weapon to school,

When they experience harm do they come forward? Multiple studies say only 10-15% of them will speak to an authority figure about harm they're experiencing. And what do they find if they want to come forward? The NYC Dept. of Education does not require teachers or guidance counselors to be trained about warning signs of dating abuse or how to manage disclosures of harm. One survey of high school guidance counselors found that 81% said their school had no protocol for responding to a report of dating violence. And while 61% said they had had occasion to advise a survivor of dating violence in the previous two years, 90% said there had been no staff training in the previous two years regarding students experiencing dating abuse.

The DoVE Initiative is wonderful; it is over \$10 million and largely committed to direct services for survivors. **Let's put an equal amount of funding toward prevention and improving the lives of New York City's children so that they never need those services.**



### **We Support the #JustPay Campaign**

We are proud members of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor. Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

- 1. Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.**
- 2. Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State-funded human services workers.**
- 3. Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.**

At minimum, we call on the Council to include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a 5.4% COLA based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about a \$108 million investment in an essential community workforce.

Thank you for allowing us to elevate these issues, and for the time and consideration you have given to youth and to young survivors of violence. Your legislation and advocacy play an essential role in our ability to provide necessary and life-saving services. We would be honored to partner with you in your individual districts and to improve the health and safety of youth citywide. Thank you for prioritizing preventing and addressing gender-based violence, and for your continued support of both young survivors and Day One.

*Stephanie Nilva can be reached at [snilva@dayoneny.org](mailto:snilva@dayoneny.org) or 516.696.4628.*

*Day One EIN# 06-1103000*





## **Education Council Consortium**

### **Testimony of Education Council Consortium before the New York City Council Committee on Education on Fiscal Year 2023 Budget**

March 21, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. The Education Council Consortium is a group of parents, caregivers, advocates and community members with a mission to develop and support NYC public school parent leadership through education, networking and organizing.

We are deeply concerned about the Mayor's proposal to cut the education budget by \$557 million,<sup>1</sup> particularly when the cut translates to a loss of 3,600 positions, a large majority of which are pedagogical. Now is not the time to reduce the number of teachers in our schools even in the face of declining enrollment. Our class sizes remain too large. As we continue to grapple with the impact of the pandemic, we must commit to reducing class size so that our students' needs are met adequately. We cannot afford to lose any more teachers from the system.

Where we would like to see a staff reduction is in the number of school safety agents in our schools. Any vacancies in school safety agent positions must be filled by school counselors and support staff, who are trained in social emotional learning, restorative justice and de-escalation techniques. As behavioral incidents increase in our schools, we firmly believe these issues stem from trauma that is unaddressed or addressed inappropriately. Punitive measures are not what these students need. We need school staff who can get to the underlying issues that lead to problematic behaviors. We need trained staff to do this work.

While we support the administration's effort to streamline bureaucracy and eliminate inefficiencies within the Department of Education, we strongly caution against drastic reorganization without collaborating with parent leaders and other rights-holders (e.g., teachers and administrators). Reorganizing with a simple mission to reduce headcounts can compromise appropriate support for schools and institutional knowledge, both of which are important in a system the size of ours. The administration may actually create more inefficiencies through poorly planned reorganization.

An untapped State revenue source can plug this budget hole: State Transitional Aid. This funding reimburses school districts for increases in charter school student enrollment. NYC is the only school district with charter schools in NYS that does not receive this funding, although NYC meets both the enrollment and expenditure threshold requirements. One analysis estimates that the City may be eligible to receive more than \$200 million annually<sup>2</sup>. Currently, the increase of \$349 million in Foundation Aid from the State is drastically reduced by increases in charter school tuition. Although charter school students make up 14 % of the student population in NYC, the 57% of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/2/18/22941418/nyc-mayor-adams-2022-budget-proposal-education-cuts-school-hiring-freeze>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edlawcenter.org/news/archives/new-york/the-unsustainable-cost-to-new-york-city-schools-of-charter-school-growth.html>



## Education Council Consortium

increase in Foundation Aid will be spent on charter school students. We should not be forced to sacrifice traditional public school students in order to support charter school students.

**We urge the City to demand that the State legislature immediately expand Transitional Aid to include NYC.**

We also urge the city to invest in professional development, which is always one of the first items to be cut from any budget - both at the city level as well as the school level. We cannot stress enough the importance of professional development, particularly now when we are still dealing with the pandemic's impact on our students, parents, teachers and principals. We all need to learn how to recognize signs of trauma so that we can begin to heal in a culturally responsive manner. The DOE will not be able to effectively implement the Chancellor's priorities—focusing on career pathways and civics, supporting what is working, prioritizing wellness, and creating partnerships with parents—without robust professional development. This work need not be performed by expensive outside consultants.

Finally, we wholeheartedly support the addition of 30,000 positions to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). We have supported a robust and well funded SYEP and this increase is a much needed commitment. SYEP is an important program that not only allows our young people to earn money but also learn new skills and gain new knowledge and valuable experiences that will benefit them for a long time to come. Furthermore, the Education Council Consortium is a member of the New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools, which has issued [this budget request](#) with areas for investment and divestment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We look forward to a continued dialog as we move forward with the FY 23 budget.

Shino Tanikawa & NeQuan McLean  
Co-Chairs



## **The Education Trust—New York**

**Presented before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 – Education  
March 21, 2022**

To: Chair Joseph and members of the Council’s Education Committee:

I am Dia Bryant, executive director of The Education Trust—New York. The Education Trust—New York is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. We work to attain educational justice through research, policy, and advocacy that results in all students – especially those who are from low-income backgrounds or students of color – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The past three school years have been exceptionally challenging for New York City students, parents and school staff — with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, ever-evolving adjustments to teaching and learning, and the continued national reckoning with the impact of systemic racism. Unfortunately, the same students who experienced significant educational inequities before the pandemic remain the most underserved by our education system. New York City is receiving an unprecedented number of fiscal resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including over [\\$7.3 billion](#) in federal education aid to support the school system’s pathway to recovery in addition to the full funding of foundation aid.

We applaud the administration for outlining its vision for transforming New York City schools, and we would like to elevate areas where there remains an opportunity to meet the challenges of the moment and set New York City’s 1.1 million students on a path to a bright future.

The mayor’s proposed budget includes the reinstitution of the policy for schools to lose funding due to declining enrollment numbers over the next two school years. Given national and local enrollment trends, we believe that this is not the best approach to recovery. In fact, this policy would make it more challenging for schools to maintain adequate staffing levels, offer enrichment opportunities to students and families, provide mental health services, and other critical supports that we know students need to be academically successful.

The mayor’s proposal also cuts over 3,600 vacant positions at New York City’s Department of Education (DOE), 95% of which are for pedagogical positions. Given the instructional interruptions that students have faced over the last three years, such action seems counterproductive. The city should be focused on filling these positions with a highly qualified, diverse educator workforce that is prepared to meet the varied needs of New York City students and their communities. Further, the mayor called for a hiring freeze for most city agencies, and approximately half of those reductions will come from the DOE where we need highly qualified teachers now more than ever.

The significant loss of instructional time and the trauma experienced over the past three school years calls for the administration to invest in more support and staff for students, not less. The

impact of the pandemic on education has been catastrophic, especially for those who experienced inequity before the pandemic. We urge city leadership to leverage the fiscal surplus to close persistent and widening opportunity gaps.

### **Early Childhood Education**

We were pleased to hear Chancellor Banks' recent comments recognizing the importance of the first three years of life as a critical period of development that can build a lifelong love of learning and healthy development. As the administration develops its plans to support early learners, we would like to offer the following recommendations:

- **Streamline early childhood systems to increase parent accessibility:** Parents seeking high-quality, affordable child care often experience disjointed systems, which can lead to the duplication of efforts and increase the burden on families as they seek support for their children, as evidenced in Fall 2021 [focus groups](#) conducted with parents from the South Bronx. We urge the administration to improve the streamlining of early childhood systems and foster partnerships with community-based programs, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs.
- **Address shortage of infant & toddler child care slots:** According to a [2019 NYC Comptroller](#) report, nearly half of New York City neighborhoods were considered infant care deserts and had less than 20% capacity to serve neighborhood children under age two. Citywide, the number of licensed seats in home-based and center-based providers covers only 22% of the City's infant and toddler population. Infant and toddler child care is essential for families and New York City's economy. According to a recent [poll](#) by Robin Hood, 45% of New York State business decision-makers reported that a lack of child care has increased burnout and stress for their employees. To that end, we encourage New York City to allocate additional resources and funding to creating more infant and toddler care slots across all modalities.
- **Expand a high-quality rating system to all child care programs:** While we appreciate the City's expansion of early childhood education programs over the years, it is critical that with expansion comes a focus on quality. We encourage the administration to invest in quality and improvement rating systems, like QUALITYstarsNY, to help provide transparency for parents aiming to enroll their children in a high-quality child care system.

### **Provide Data Transparency for Measuring Student Academic Progress**

Last school year, New York City's, participation rates in statewide exams were at a historic low, with about 20% of third through eighth grade students taking statewide assessments, compared to 96% of students taking assessments in 2019. The cancellation of Regents exams led to many students, especially students in high-needs districts, receiving exemptions to meet graduation requirements. According to a March 2021 [analysis](#) by The Education Trust—New York, 17% of New York City graduates had one or more Regents exemption. The reinstatement of assessments this Spring will serve as a new baseline, but it is necessary for DOE to have a clear plan to collect and publish data on student academic progress. We urge the administration to:

- **Provide data transparency and a strategy to increase participation in assessments:** New York City spends \$36 million on assessments intended to measure student knowledge and monitor their progress. New York City should invest in data transparency platforms that

publicly report and track the assessment results at the school, district and citywide level including disaggregated data for all student groups including by race/ethnicity, income status, English learner status, disability status, and housing status. New York City should develop a clear and transparent strategy to increase participation in assessments to pre-existing pandemic levels. This strategy could include a campaign to increase awareness regarding the value of assessments to all stakeholder groups.

- Implement a school improvement plan: In 2019, [124 New York City](#) schools were in need of comprehensive support and improvement and targeted support and improvement. There is minimal public information regarding whether these schools have improved since their designation or how the DOE is investing in their progress. DOE should publish data regarding the progress of these schools along with a clear school improvement model and plan of action.
- Expand summer programming: DOE recently announced a summer learning and enrichment program that will help fortify 110,000 students' academic, social and emotional skills; however, little information is known about how the department will measure the impact of this investment on students' academic achievement and overall wellbeing. Additionally, the program will serve only 10% of the City's student population leaving many students without summer opportunities. DOE should invest in resources to expand summer programming – ensuring that programming is available to all subgroups of students. Students with disabilities and those from historically marginalized communities should be prioritized for enrollment.

### **Improve equitable access to advanced coursework**

New York City has made progress with expanding access to advanced coursework in recent years, and DOE's [academic recovery](#) plan includes a plan to add 48 additional remote AP courses in Fiscal Year 2022. Still, there remain many students, especially students of color and those from low-income backgrounds, who do not have access to advanced courses – even when the courses are offered in their schools. According to an [analysis](#) by the New York Equity Coalition, during the 2019-20 school year, in New York City, White high school students were 2.4 times more likely to be enrolled in Calculus than Black students and 2.5 times more likely to be enrolled than Latinx students. Reports show that although young people believe advanced coursework is important for college preparation, few actually have access. In a February 2022 [poll](#) of young people in New York City, the REACH NY Network found that 67% of young people said that having access to Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes was the most or very important for high school students to prepare for college. However, only 30% of young people reported having access to these courses. To help improve access to advanced coursework we encourage the administration to:

- Eliminate enrollment disparities: It is imperative that DOE continues to invest in additional AP, IB, and dual enrollment courses in high-need school districts — including planning time for teachers and equity-driven course enrollment policies. The city should also ensure that any school or school district that has disparities in advanced course enrollment implement an action plan to decrease disproportionality with parent, educator, and student input.
- Support parents and students: The city should require schools to provide every family with clear and concise information, in multiple languages, beginning in the late

elementary grades about the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers, and civic engagement – including the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

- Implement automatic enrollment: The city should enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple measures. Families should have the right to opt out of course work should they wish. This proven practice has been used throughout the country and here in New York as well. In fact, Yonkers Public Schools automatically enroll every eighth-grade student in Algebra I which has contributed to their stable and growing high school graduation rates since 2017.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss strategies to improve educational equity. We look forward to working with you to help provide a more equitable education for all New York City students.

Please contact Dia Bryant, executive director, The Education Trust–New York, at [dbryant@edtrustny.org](mailto:dbryant@edtrustny.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.



**New York City Council  
Committee on the Education  
Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair  
Preliminary Budget hearing  
March 21, 2022**

Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Elizabeth Bird and I am the Director of Public Policy at Educational Alliance.

For more than 130 years, Educational Alliance has brought together and partnered with diverse communities in Lower Manhattan, offering individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Today I would like to highlight two aspects of the preliminary education budget that have particular importance to the work of Educational Alliance: allocations for Community Schools and Early Childhood Education.

**New York City Community Schools**

The Community Schools strategy involves a holistic approach to children by integrating health, youth development, wellness, and family engagement into the school experience. Providing wraparound services, including health and mental health services, and connecting families to community or municipal services for basic needs, Community Schools are dynamic and connected places that support students and families from all sides. Throughout the pandemic, Community Schools across the City have proven how effectively schools operate as resource hubs where children and their families can access supports in a safe and trusted environment.

Educational Alliance serves as a CBO partner at five Community Schools. Like most Community Schools in the City, our schools enroll more students experiencing poverty than the citywide average, including a higher percentage of students living in temporary housing. While the specific programs offered within each of our schools differs according to the needs of that student body, we embrace a core strategy in all our Community Schools that is grounded in a solid research base of the key factors that contribute to student success: parent involvement, high-quality and engaging enrichment activities beyond the school day in afterschool and summer, health and wellness of the student, and family stability. As we emerge from these past years of disrupted learning, the network of resources we offer to students and families is more valuable than ever.

As you know, the City poised to significantly expand the Community Schools initiative in New York City using federal funds available through the American Rescue Plan. We agree that this is a judicious use of these dollars and represents an important acknowledgement of the value of the Community Schools strategy to improve student outcomes. However, federal stimulus dollars will sustain these schools only

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in the first few years. Because ARP funds must be spent by the end of FY25, funding for these schools will drop off completely in FY26.

**The Community Schools strategy is not a one-time intervention but a long-term investment in communities.** Without a permanent long-term funding solution, the future of Community Schools remains uncertain, despite the proven value of this strategy for supporting children and families. The City must make sustainable investments in the Community Schools initiative to support the long-term existence of these crucial partnerships and services. **We urge you to ensure that any plan to expand the initiative is inclusive of baselined and sustainable funding solutions to secure the longevity of the Community School initiative.**

### Early Childhood Education

I would now like to speak about early childhood education and child care.

At the Manny Cantor Center, one of Educational Alliance's flagship locations, we provide a truly unique model for early childhood education by successfully blending Head Start, Early Head Start, Universal Pre-K, tuition, and private funding streams to create an economically integrated program that serves families on the Lower East Side and beyond. We base our early childhood programs on the principles that all children are competent, capable, and curious, and that all families have something to contribute.

To support New York City's families in recovering from the economic impacts of the pandemic, the City must ensure reliable, high quality child care options are available to all families. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- **Ensure all neighborhoods have access to extended day care.** Many families have unpredictable work schedules or work at irregular hours yet need reliable, high quality child care. To better accommodate the schedules of more families, particularly in the current economy, the City must increase center-based capacity for infant and toddler child care.
- **Improve and streamline enrollment procedures for early childhood programs.** We are grateful that DOE has agreed to suspend the 'pay for enrollment' policy which penalizes providers for temporary fluctuations in student enrollment. We believe this suspension should be extended, as the fluctuations due to COVID and changing employment opportunities are projected to continue. Additionally, we recommend that the City allow community-based organizations with existing contracts with DOE to directly enroll families.
- **Work with New York State policy makers to increase income eligibility for child care subsidies** and to reduce burdensome paperwork requirements that too often prevent families from applying for benefits. Despite hard-won policies to raise wage floors in recent years, many families who do not meet the federal poverty threshold, nonetheless struggle to make ends meet due to rising costs. By increasing income eligibility criteria, New York can ensure more families can access high quality child care options.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





Reporting on Food and Nutrition Education in NYC Schools  
New York City Council, Education Committee Hearing  
March 22, 2022

Testimony of Erin Johnson, Development Manager  
FAN4Kids (Fitness and Nutrition for Kids)  
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[erinj@fan4kids.org](mailto:erinj@fan4kids.org)  
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Good afternoon. My name is Erin Johnson and I am the Development Manager with FAN4Kids (Fitness and Nutrition for Kids). FAN4Kids is a school-based program that teaches and reinforces healthy choices that empower children and families in underserved marginalized communities of color to advocate for and make smart decisions about their eating and fitness habits. FAN4Kids educates children, involves parents/caretakers and mobilizes the community. It's a sustainable model that creates a ripple effect in communities with lack of access to health education which results in sustainable changes in lifestyle habits for all.

First, I would like to thank Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph, Council Member Gale A. Brewer for introducing the bill, and all the members of the City Council Education Committee for holding today's hearing on the food and nutrition education reporting bill (Int. No. 0081). FAN4Kids couldn't be more on the same page with the City Council's interest in making sure all children and families, regardless of where they live and their background, to have access to this critical programming which prevents so many detrimental outcomes and actually offers a solution to expenses related to our overrun healthcare system. This bill would truly be life changing for millions of people. FAN4Kids has witnessed this first hand.

FAN4Kids has been in operation since 2004 and cannot stress enough how deeply important the education component of our program is. For instance, there are children in our program that have never learned what a melon looks like at the store – let alone what its nutrition properties include, what parts of the body that it can affect by eating them, and even how they taste. As much as we've seen new initiatives to change the food in the schools to be healthier for the kids (i.e. new plant based menus, etc.) - we feel that without the education component, and children being able to continue these healthy behaviors once at home with their families (let alone with the lack of accessibility of healthy food in their neglected communities), these efforts won't be successful. This is why we support this bill. We are grateful for the council districts that understand the importance of this work and have supported our program through the years who are on this committee including Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member Abreu, Council Member Althea Stevens, Council Member Ana Sanchez, Council Member Feliz, and Council Member Ung. You are all helping us make these important changes, but there are over a million children and families who need this to be a staple in their schools.

Not only does FAN4Kids have first hand knowledge of what goes into teaching children and families about health (and fitness) in the most marginalized communities in NYC, but we have over a decade of results driven metrics which prove this including surveys and focus groups with parents/guardians, teachers,

principals and the students themselves. In fact, FAN4Kids has been funded through Maimonides Hospital Division of Population Health in schools in East New York and Brownsville for the past three years because they were looking for unique, cost effective solutions to the epidemic of wellness related diseases.

We say all of this because the one thing that is very clear to us in over 17 years is that the consistent (multi-year/academic year-long) education piece is the MOST IMPORTANT component of our work and why our program has been so successful in changing health behaviors both for our students and their families (and even the school as a whole).

We continue to be humbled by the City Council's dedication to food and nutrition education in New York City schools, and we look forward to working with you to continue growing healthy New York City students and families – especially as one of the partner organizations sitting on the Food Ed Hub with the Tisch School. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please reach out anytime if you would like to learn more about the outcomes of our work to help further this initiative.



Testimony – March 21, 2022, 2pm  
NYC Council Committee on Education  
Hearing: *FY23 Preliminary Budget*

Ellen Kodadek  
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Sami Abu Shumays, Deputy Director, Flushing Town Hall

Thank you Chair and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.

I'm Sami Abu Shumays, deputy director of Flushing Town Hall, a cultural organization (we're a member of the city's Cultural Institutions Group – CIG – and the Latinx Arts Consortium of NY) and Arts Education services provider in NYC Schools (we are a DOE contractor and vendor). Pre-pandemic our Arts Education department served more than 30,000 students, teachers, senior citizens, and family audiences with programs– including more than 21,000 NYC school students alone. In the current School year, we're offering 110 distinct programs including 82 workshops and assemblies, 11 in-school residencies, 11 CASA, and 6 SU-CASA programs.

What sets us apart is our cultural responsiveness: we offer programs representing artistic and cultural traditions from all over the world, taught by master tradition-bearers from these cultures, to schools with enormously diverse student populations. We give BIPOC students the opportunity to see themselves and their own cultures represented on stage and in the classroom, in programs like "Traditional dance of Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador," "Korean Music and Dance," "West African Dance and Drumming," "Music, Dance and Performing arts of China," "Poetry & Storytelling (Native Peoples of Queens, Long Island, and the Caribbean)," "Afro-Brazilian music and dance," "Indian Dance, Culture & Foodways," "Chinese Paper Cutting, Indian Rangoli and Madhubani, and Mexican Paper Flowers."

This type of arts education is tremendously important for community building. We all know that arts education has a number of important benefits beyond simply arts enrichment – it amplifies learning in other fields and gives cognitive and social benefits to students; it can be an important tool in violence prevention among youth; it strengthens family ties through intergenerational experiences and gives the children of immigrants new ways to connect with their parents and grandparents. However, the strength of these benefits depends in large part on the cultural responsiveness of the programs, because if students don't see themselves represented in the arts, they do not identify and engage at the same level.

Therefore we, and other cultural organizations like us, offer something that schools cannot provide on their own. As a society, we woefully underfund the arts in schools. When I was growing up in the 70's and 80's, I had art and music classes every year. Now my 11-year old daughter only occasionally gets either an art or a music class. The great jazz DJ Phil Schaap used to remark that the teenage Louis Armstrong got a better musical education as an *incarcerated African-American in Jim Crow Louisiana* in the 1910s than NYC school students get today. So I and many of my colleagues would like to see much more robust arts education in the schools themselves – with music and dance and drama and visual arts teachers in every grade level – and I strongly advocate for increased DOE funding explicitly for that



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purpose. Yet even if we achieve that goal, there is still an important function that outside cultural organizations and teaching artists provide – the greater diversity of arts and cultural forms we can offer.

New York City is home to hundreds of cultural groups and languages, and setting aside the Eurocentric focus of current arts education, it would be impractical for every school to hire teaching artists representing every cultural group in their student bodies. But through providers like Flushing Town Hall, and through the thousands of teaching artists certified to work in public schools, students can have access to an enormous diversity of cultural enrichment programs.

In order for this to happen, however, cultural organizations need to be properly funded. Our organizations were underfunded well before the pandemic, and our sector was the hardest hit by the pandemic. Yet the mayor's FY23 preliminary budget shows cuts to the arts. We're asking the mayor and the city council to restore DCLA funding to FY22 levels, through an add-on of \$35 million to the preliminary budget – which includes a number of arts-education specific initiatives like CASA. We're also asking for significant increases beyond that restoration, especially to support smaller cultural organizations serving BIPOC communities in the outer boroughs, that have been historically undercapitalized.

Finally, we're also here to note that DOE's current yellow school bus policy for field trips needs to be addressed. During the current school year, schools can use charter coach buses for travel as yellow bussing for school field trips is not available. However, most schools cannot afford the expense of charter coach buses, and smaller arts organizations like Flushing Town Hall cannot underwrite charter busing for schools. As a result, we cancelled this year's school performance series which provided high quality national and international theater, music, and dance to as many as 5000 school students per year. Without yellow school buses for field trips, students do not have access to live arts and cultural experiences presented in a professional theater. For many of the students Flushing Town Hall serves, we are their only opportunity to experience a theatrical performance of any kind.

~ ~ ~

## Reviews:

### **PS 199 – Residency: Folklore Cumbia – March 4, 2022**

"Parents were so excited to see their child dancing and singing! Working with Anna, Pablo, and Daniel has been such an amazing experience. They are such professionals and so kind to all of the students and their abilities. Parents and students have reached out to me to tell me how happy they are. I hope to continue to work with them in the future."

*Flushing Town Hall (1862) is a New York City landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.  
In 1996 the facility became an officially designated cultural institution in the City of New York.*



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**Forsyth Woods Elementary School – “Al Andalusia to Dizzy: Latin, African, and Caribbean Music Assembly” – February 25, 2022**

“It was wonderful. The students were engaged and learned about different kinds of music through Napoleon's energetic presentation. Thank you so much. This was well put together for a Zoom program as opposed to a live theater performance. I appreciated that we could bring Napoleon in virtually from NY to our small school in Orlando, which makes it all the more valuable to our students.”

~ ~ ~

**FY22 Flushing Town Hall Residencies:**

**Flushing International High School**

Alberto Lopez - Mexican Dance

Ling Tang - Chinese Dance

Napoleon Revels-Bey - Afro-American Drumming

Vado Diomande - West African Dance and Drumming

Note: \$25,000 funded by DOE Summer Rising Program Grant

**PS22** - Angela Rostick - Creative Movement for K-5 entire school

Note: \$24,960 long-term school partner

**PS199** - Anna & Pablo & Daniel from Folklore Urbano - Colombian Music and Dance

Note: \$22,000 school's first music program after many years

**H308 Robert Goddard High School** - Tenesh Webber - ELL Story Mosaic & Multimedia

Note: \$18,930 The school used to partner with Lincoln Center Education but Lincoln center is not working with TAs this year

**PS221** - Marcela Carvalho- Monet's Garden Bottle Painting

Note: about \$16,250 The school used to partner with Studio in a School but can't reconnect this year.

**PS94** - Suzanne DeMarco - Visual Arts and Social Studies

Note: \$15,000 DOE Arts Partnership Grant



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### **Forest Hills High School**

Alberto Lopez - Mexican Dance

Guanglei Hui - Chinese Tai Chi Fan Dance

Vado Diomande - West African Dance and Drumming

Note: \$14,250 long-term school partner & funded by DOE Arts Partnership Grant

**JHS185** - Ling Tang & Folklore Urbano - Chinese Dance & Chinese Paper Cutting & Colombian Dance

Note: \$12,400 long-term school partner

**PS32** - Tenesh Webber - ELL Story Mosaic Art Making

Note: about \$8,200 new partnership

**PS24Q** - Alberto Lopez - Traditional Mexican Dance

Note: \$4,320 new partnership

### **Selfhelp Clearview Senior Center -**

Steve Palermo - What's my line? Workshop Series & Exhibition

Note: \$1,800 long-term senior center partner. The center is excited to have Steve back for one of their first in-person art programs as this program was paused in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Stephanie Lee - Korean Minhwa Folk Art Painting Workshop series & Exhibition

Steve Palermo - What do we belong to? Multimedia Art Making Workshop Series & Exhibition

Note: \$4,500 funded by NYSCA Creative Aging Grant



## About Flushing Town Hall

*Flushing Town Hall, originally known as Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts, is one of the pioneers of multicultural arts programming in New York City.*

In 1979 Flushing, Queens was a rapidly diversifying neighborhood. The 1964 world's fair in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, followed by the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965, meant that people from all over the world began to settle all across Queens, and by 1979 the founders of Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts (FCCA) recognized the need to create an arts organization that served these new residents – by celebrating and uplifting the dizzying variety of cultures and artistic practices being brought to the borough. For the next decade and a half FCCA produced hundreds of multicultural events, including African and Asian festivals in Flushing Meadows Corona park, featuring dance

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traditions, music, crafts, food, and more. In 1990 we began the rescue and restoration of historic Flushing Town Hall (built 1862), and committed to continuing several legacies: the legacy of diversity and multiculturalism that defined our first programs; the legacy of Jazz in Queens, which was home to many of the greatest Jazz musicians in the world; and the legacy of Flushing itself, whose defining moment was the Flushing Remonstrance, which in 1657 established the principle of religious freedom and pluralism that were later written into the first amendment.

As the communities around Flushing Town Hall have continued to evolve and change, so have our programs, and the last decade has seen significant growth in Latinx, Chinese, Korean, and South Asian programming; a deeper collaboration with Matinecock tribal elders who represent the original residents of Flushing; an increase in cross-cultural programming such as our popular “Global Mashups” that bring together bands representing different traditions of global music into one evening of dance (for example “Haiti meets China” or “India meets Brazil” or “Korea meets Greece”); and an increase in arts education services to schools in Queens, deploying our roster of 30+ teaching artists, many of whom are master tradition bearers from different parts of the world, serving more than 23,000 students annually with culturally relevant programming.

***Representation is essential to enabling peoples from diverse backgrounds to feel included in a community.*** Given how diverse NYC and especially Queens is, the more diverse our arts and cultural programs are, the more people can feel included and represented. In addition to creating positive images to support the identities of people from different backgrounds, arts programs also have a wide range of benefits for all participants, including health, well-being, cognitive skills, social bonding, and violence prevention. Robust arts programming across NYC is essential to helping the city bounce back from the pandemic, and it is especially needed in underserved neighborhoods, whose communities were also the hardest hit by the pandemic.



# Testimony to the City Council Committee on Education - March 21, 2022 –

## Preliminary Budget Hearing

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and committee members,

Thank you so much for allowing me to testify this morning. I am testifying on behalf of Freedom Agenda as a Community Organizer, and Native New Yorker. For years, we have been pushing and pulling for system transformation. Yet we continue to overly invest in systems of punishment like DOC (Department of Correction) instead of towards systems of healing and empowerment.

I was educated in The New York City's Department of Education from the years 1998-To 2011, I was educated at a PS89 elementary school in Elmhurst. A school that failed me, and many years later also failed my nephew, who is currently on Rikers Island, or would say funneled into Rikers by NYC school to prison pipeline. I've sat in classrooms of over 30+ kids to one teacher. I watched extracurricular activities and afterschool programs constantly being stripped, educational resources that provided access to the arts, music, and 1:1 tutoring. Not to mention the support after-school programming provided to our communities in which parents may be working multiple jobs. At the start of the school year, I remember being sent home with a long list of items, which my mother and other parents in the neighborhood had to supply, items like crayons, paper towels, glue, scissors, crayons, etc. Communal items that the community had to supply. Our schools often went without basic needs, needs like access to stationery, computers, and decent up-to-date textbooks. ad more access to NYPD or school safety staff and metal detectors, th/an I did to guidance counselors and true support.

Education is an equity issue tied to racial, social, and economic justice. Gaps in student achievement along racial and socioeconomic lines are longstanding in this City (and we saw that firsthand during this pandemic). Equity in education cannot become a reality if we prioritize preserving an inflated D.O.C budget but find savings by cutting education funding and that is exactly what our mayor has proposed, and this Council needs to step in and insist that we will not cut the teaching workforce at this time when students need more support than ever. Cutting school budgets is not an unfortunate financial necessity. It is a choice. In 2021, New York City spent almost 3 times (290%) more per incarcerated person than the second most expensive jail system in the country, yet people in DOC custody are subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation.

The FY2022 DOC Budget is currently forecasted at around \$2.697 billion, that is **simply unparalleled**. We've lost three lives already this year at the hands of the department of corrections.



We can start by shifting at least some of these resources wasted on a corrupt and deadly jail system towards education and true community resources. Funding for mental health resources in schools, restorative justice, and in school and after-school extra-curricular programming will provide support to students who need educational spaces that offer safety, and transformative possibilities for students in historically marginalized underserved communities, in addition to funding their education and futures. Thus, achieving equity by providing support for schools, nonprofit and cultural organizations that primarily serve Black, Brown, immigrant, disabled, indigenous and low-income communities throughout the city. No teacher should have to worry about not being able to provide the most basic resources for their students. The youth of our city show up at classroom doors lacking far more than school supplies that we can supply through divestments

We are really counting on the City Council to make that a reality.

Thank you so much,  
Ashley Conrad,  
Community Organizer, Freedom Agenda  
[aconrad@urbanjustice.org](mailto:aconrad@urbanjustice.org)

Ashley Conrad  
Community Organizer, Freedom Agenda  
Pronouns: she/her



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**Testimony of Carolyn O'Neil**  
**New York Program Director, Generation Citizen**  
**March 21, 2022**  
**New York City Council**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen ("GC") at the New York City Council Education Committee. I'm Carolyn O'Neil, Program Director at Generation Citizen New York ("GCNY"). GC is thankful for the Council's \$500,000 investment this year in our programming through the *Civics Education in City Schools Initiative*. In Fiscal Year 2023, Generation Citizen seeks an increase of \$100,000 for a grant of \$600,000 to support our major expansion of programming throughout New York City.

Last year in Fiscal Year 2021, Generation Citizen New York served 1,750 students in 70 classrooms through our "Action Civics" curriculum, in which secondary school students apply social studies learning to the real world by studying - and, more importantly, advocating for - an issue of importance in their communities. In fall 2021, Generation Citizen students advocated on a range of issues impacting the general welfare of their communities and loved ones.

As an example, 10th grade students at the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities in Rockaway Park, Queens, agreed through our program that they wanted to take collective action about the metal detectors in their school building. The daily security checks made them, in their own words, feel "uncomfortable, angry, and embarrassed." They said the experience negatively impacted their school culture. Through research they learned that schools with a majority black and brown population are significantly more likely to have metal detectors. To take action, they surveyed fellow students, spoke with school leadership and security guards, and contacted their Superintendent to ask for the changes they wanted. This experience gave them a glimpse into how government works and how it can work for them.

In the current Fiscal Year 2022, Generation Citizen New York has embarked upon an ambitious programmatic expansion from 70 classes to at least 170 classrooms, serving at least 4,250 students. We have achieved this through systemic partnerships with school districts and networks -

specifically, NYC DOE D5/Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline, NYC DOE D24, the Urban Assembly, New Visions for Public Schools and CUNY Medgar Evers. Through these partnerships, we are creating lasting communities of practice that can collaborate for mutual support. In Fiscal Year 2023, we are on a trajectory to add even more classrooms through these and other systemic partnerships, and we wish to ensure sufficient funds and capacity to do so.

We've been able to achieve growth in this challenging school year by highlighting to our school partners how our work supports students' social-emotional learning - and buttresses their connection to each other and their communities - as well as contribute to culturally responsive and sustaining education practices. Throughout the pandemic during virtual and hybrid learning, we received feedback from teachers about how our work enabled interconnectedness during disrupted learning, and GC is looking forward to continuing to do this as we look to more fully emerge from the pandemic.

GC is an eleven year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is a "student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice" ([National Action Civics Collaborative](#)). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any "hands-on," project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

When faced with pandemic-related disruptions in spring 2020, GC nimbly shifted to remotely supporting teachers in implementing our programming and we look forward to continuing to leverage both in person and virtual supports to most efficiently support our educators in the field. GC also created online resources for educators and caregivers to engage young people and sustain high quality programming through the entirely online [Kick Start Action Civics](#) program. These resources are also available in Spanish [here](#).

All students - especially youth of color, socio-economically disadvantaged youth, immigrant and refugee youth for whom our public education system

may be their first exposure to our democratic process, and other youth from underprivileged or otherwise underrepresented backgrounds - need meaningful and empowering engagement within our political institutions as an integral part of their core social studies education.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council's renewed funding despite myriad challenges and budgetary concerns in the past few years. GC hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring civics education to more schools as we continue safe operations of our schools moving forward.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I can be reached at [coneil@generationcitizen.org](mailto:coneil@generationcitizen.org) with any questions or comments, and I have attached a one-pager with more information about our programming.



# GENERATION CITIZEN

## DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

### Mission & Vision

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Generation Citizen (GC) is working to transform civics education so that young people are equipped and inspired to exercise their civic power.

We envision a **just, inclusive democracy** that is responsive to all young people.

### Our Work

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For over a decade, GC has been transforming how civics education is taught by bringing the subject to life for students through real-world engagement with democracy. With **Action Civics** students address local community issues and develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills to learn and practice the behaviors of active citizenship within an academic setting.

We also provide thought leadership, conduct research, and build coalitions to advocate for state- and district-level policies that ensure schools prioritize Action Civics. By investing in teachers and their capacity to activate youth voices in the classroom and beyond, GCNY is enabling a movement of young people prepared to lead in our democracy.

### Who We Serve

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To ensure that our democracy represents the voices of all people, we prioritize working with students from communities that have been historically excluded from the political process.

- Approximately **79%** of Generation Citizen students identify as persons of color
- **72%** of GC students are low-income, defined as “economically disadvantaged” by the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Education Department
- **55%** of Generation Citizen students speak a language other than English at home



### The Action Civics Approach

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GC's published and award-winning civics curriculum is at the heart of our work. It is action-based, aligned to Common Core and state standards, and academically rigorous. Over the course of the twice-weekly semester-long in-class program, students choose an issue, develop a focused, strategic plan to address the issue, take real action, and then reflect on their successes and challenges.





# GENERATION CITIZEN

**DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.**

## Impact

Academics and experts in the field agree upon three indicators which best predict a student's likelihood of future civic engagement: Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills, and Civic Motivation.

### CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

**81%**

of students could identify the best action to make to address an issue after completing their GC course

### CIVIC SKILLS

**71%**

of students improved use of acquired skills to effectively participate in the political process. This includes oral and written persuasive communication, group-work, and critical thinking.

### CIVIC MOTIVATION

**70%**

of students, after GC, believe they have the power to make a difference in their community

## CLASSROOM FOCUS ISSUE EXAMPLES



JUSTICE & EQUALITY: Bullying, Discrimination, Immigration, Affordable Housing & More



HEALTH: Sex Education, PTSD among Veterans, Suicide Prevention & More



ENVIRONMENT: Reducing Plastic Use, Water Conservation, Littering & More



ECONOMY & JOBS: Youth Unemployment, Job Training, Employment Opportunities & More



PUBLIC SAFETY: Police and Community Relations, Gun Violence, Safe Streets & More



EDUCATION & STUDENT VOICE: Life Skills, Equitable School Funding, College Access & More

## Classroom Highlight

### Focus Issue: Educational Funding in Minority Schools

### School: Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women

Students found that low funding is one of the root causes of inequality in NYC public schools. The quality of education students receive in low income and higher earning communities varies greatly largely due to funding and resource disparities. To find out more about this topic students invited Nequan McLean, President - District 16 Community Education Council, NYC to gather information and tactics for action steps. After this interview, students determined their goal would be for "Community education councils to require a student to advocate for the district. Furthermore, the mayor controls how schools are funded. Ultimately, don't be afraid to speak up to your principals and legislators, your voices matter." Students were also able to gather information from Larry Woodbridge, Senior Executive Director of NYC Department of Education. Students also created surveys to get the thoughts of their community stakeholders.





**Girls for Gender Equity Testimony to the City Council  
Committee on Education – Education Budget Oversight  
Delivered by: Quadira Coles  
3.21.22**

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and the members and staff of the Committee on Education. My name is Quadira and I am the Deputy Director of Policy at Girls for Gender Equity.

GGE is an intergenerational organization based in Brooklyn, New York committed to the all-around development of girls and young women. GGE challenges structural forces, including racism, sexism, gender-based violence, transphobia, homophobia, and economic inequity, which constrict the freedom, full expression, and rights of transgender and cisgender girls and young women of color, and gender non-conforming youth of color. We do this work through direct service, advocacy, and culture change. GGE has been a leader in the conversation around gender-based violence and consistent advocates against youth policing.

It makes sense to repurpose some of my old testimonies because here we are again, demanding, now a new council to prioritize police-free schools and invest in students' education with healing services, programs and support. Also, rectify the inequities and harm that were laid bare by the pandemic and remote learning.

While some parts of the city can pretend that the pandemic is a thing of the past, students are still feeling its two-year impact. There is a citywide consensus amongst the students themselves and adult allies, that their emotional and mental well-being is top priority right now, and we can't ignore that. Funding to the School Safety Division which fosters harmful policing tactics and surveillance takes away from areas within our education system that need adequate and sustainable fiscal support, such as staff retention and restorative and extra curricular programing. During the pandemic, students have lost access to their school buildings, peers and teachers and had to rapidly adjust to new routines and a new method of learning that has exposed a multitude of educational inequities within the New York City school system. This has brought on a tremendous amount of stress and mental

health issues that students are consistently uplifting. Neither school communities nor students were prepared for this, and we are still trying to play catch up.

So the plan to upscale officers in the School Safety Division seems absurd considering the many other things that need the investment and that will truly ensure holistic safety for students. And as we begin to see rollbacks on the progress this city has made to undo pathways to harm and abuse by the NYPD in our own communities, **we must ensure that we cut more than \$400 million school policing budget. This includes money for school police as well as police officers the city calls “Youth Coordination Officers”** who are supposed to form relationships with students in and outside of school. Student’s do not need mentorship from officers who are also being told to bring back heavy handed policing tactics on the quest to allegedly “get tough on crime”, which disproportionately targets Black and brown youth.

Furthermore, we and that includes our fellow DSC advocates and students here, demand the city invests in:

1. Hiring 2,000 New Yorkers to Strengthen Schools
2. \$75 million to hire restorative justice coordinators in 500 high schools and \$45 million to implement restorative justice practices
3. Support for Students’ Social and Emotional Wellbeing
4. Move Money Away from Policing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





**Girls for Gender Equity Testimony to the [New York City Council]  
Committee on [Education – Budget Oversight Hearing]  
Delivered by: [Isabella]  
[3/21/22]**

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and the members and staff of the Committee on Education. My name is Isabella and I am a youth participant in A Liberation Legacy at Girls for Gender Equity.

Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) works to center youth, through a Black feminist lens, to achieve gender and racial justice by centering the leadership of Black girls and gender-expansive young people of color to reshape culture and policy through advocacy, youth-led programming, and shifting dominant narratives. GGE has been a leader in the conversation around gender-based violence and consistent advocates against youth policing..

We are offering testimony today for a safer and fairer school experience for all. Schools are not prisons, they are a place for creative minds and education to flourish, so why are we making young people feel like they are being locked up with watchful eyes, metal detectors and a lack of privacy? Why are adults allowed to go through student's bags and lockers without permission? Why are these security guards allowed to target my black and brown peers without even glancing at their white counterparts? I would like to repeat once more, schools are not prisons and we should not be treating young people as prisoners.

I would like a call to action to shift the current funding away from policing in schools and put that money into other resources. Our schools are inundated with youth from all boroughs, but most times, they do not have the support they need. Our systems are punishment based and many do not take the time with students to understand why they are acting a certain way. I remember one of my teachers took the time to communicate and sit down with a student who was labeled as "troubled", he offered the student to play chess with him after school, share his story, and work with him to understand the root of the problem. That same student turned from a "troubled" student into an honors student within a couple of weeks. A little support and understanding can go a long way, especially for Black and Brown young people,

queer young people, and disabled youth. That means we need more social justice coordinators, social workers, school counselors, and community support leaders to help uplift the youth and not put them down. The young generation is our future, we have to support them.

Furthermore, we stand in solidarity with the many organizers and education justice advocates across New York City who demand the following:

1. Hire 2,000 New Yorkers to Strengthen Schools
2. Fund School-Based Restorative Justice
3. Support Students' Social and Emotional Wellbeing
4. Move Money Away from Policing

Thank you for your time.



March 21, 2022

Dear Education Committee

Thank you, Chair Joseph and the Council Members of the Committee on Education for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the importance of the Learning to Work model.

I have worked for Good Shepherd Services (GSS) for the past 17 years, dedicated to our Learning to Work high schools. I am thrilled to see that there were no cuts to the larger Learning To Work model for FY23. I am equally thrilled to see the Mayor's commitment to SYEP and other work-based programs. I am writing this testimony to highlight a concern regarding the future funding of LTW as an integral part of supporting NYC's youth. I would like to call the City's attention to finding sustainable streams of funding for the LTW program. Formerly the entire \$42.1m of the budget came from tax levy funds, but more recently, the funds have shifted and now 70% (or \$30.4m) is made up of federal stimulus dollars, set to expire by 2025.

This issue is compounded by the fact that the DOE budgets in transfer schools are based on this year's numbers, which have been the lowest ever enrollment numbers due to COVID. Our principals are worried about drastic cuts to their budgets as we head into the next school year. We know we will need more spaces for students who have struggled in school these past two years, not less. The concern is that transfer schools will be penalized by reducing funds in the educational budget because of these low enrollments going into next year. This year's low enrollment numbers are a symptom of the larger issues our city is dealing with from the pandemic.

I am part of the LTW Coalition, we welcome working with the City to find other solutions to sustain these vital funds. Our schools support communities still reeling from the pandemic; our students are still struggling with being in school – as many have had to choose between work and school to sustain their families. LTW's internship program is often the only strategy tethering our students to school. The concern is that transfer schools will be penalized by reducing funds in the educational budget because of these low enrollments going into next year and then as we look forward, the stimulus dollar expiration date of 2025 is a real cause of concern for the whole LTW system. This year's low enrollment numbers are a symptom of the larger issues our city is dealing with from the pandemic.

LTW works, it is a successful strategy that has moved the needle on the dropout rate in NYC. The dropout rate plummeted 13 percentage points from 22% in 2005 to 7.8% in 2019. LTW is a vital path to graduation and the world beyond high school for students who need an alternative pathway. I hope we can work together to ensure sustained funding for these schools.

Sincerely,

Rachel Forsyth

Senior Vice President of Education and Vocation Services

Good Shepherd Services

Rachel\_Forsyth@goodshepherds.org

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is **Tameesha Simon** and I am **the Director of Special Services and Model Fidelity overseeing the Education team in our Family Foster Care program at Good Shepherd Services.**

It's imperative for the city to lift the DOE hiring freeze so the DOE could move forward with hiring positions designated to supporting students in foster care. My agency, along with many others, advocated for the DOE to hire staff specifically focused on the needs of students in foster care. Finally, in December 2021, the DOE announced that it would launch the first-ever team focused on students in foster care, but, because of the hiring freeze, the positions are all on hold and there is not a single staff member at the DOE focused on the needs of students in foster care.

Working for a foster care agency, I see the need every day for the DOE to have personnel with foster care knowledge and expertise who could support Teachers, Social Workers, Guidance Counselors, Assistant Principals and Principals when it comes to decision-making and troubleshooting the many challenges children in foster care experience. Far too many times, school personnel do not know where to turn when complex questions or issues come up involving students in foster care. Schools do not understand the trauma students in foster care are facing and do not know how to get support navigating behavioral or trauma related issues with our children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster home after foster home, after foster home. Most often the stable environment they need is their school – but only if they can get the right support in school.

We need a DOE team focused on students in foster care to bridge this gap. We need the village to come together to REALLY ensure our young people have access to the same educational opportunities. We need to come together, for the sake of OUR children in care, and we need the DOE to support our young people during the most tender moments of their lives.

We need to Educate students in foster care, we need to get them to and from school, we need to Love them, and we need to Care for them in a way that their education and foster care experience doesn't allow them to become a victim of their reality; we must give them the opportunity and support needed to overcome all obstacles. It's hard to do that when there is nobody at the DOE focused on the needs of students in care.

Please make sure the City lifts the DOE hiring freeze and hires a team focused on students in foster care.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education

March 21, 2022

On behalf of the Good Shepherd Services' Civic Engagement Internship team, thank you Chair Joseph and the Council Members of the Committee on Education for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the importance of the Learning to Work model.

Good Shepherd Services is a leading New York City multi-service youth and family development agency that operates over 80 programs and a member of the Learning to Work Coalition— a group of 26 community-based organizations working in Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC). The LTW model supports every student in a Transfer School or YABC as they work towards their high school diploma and the development of a post-secondary plan. Community based organizations are embedded in the fabric of these schools through LTW contracts with the DOE and provide academic and socioemotional support, career and college exploration, skills development, internships, and much more.

The Good Shepherd Service's Civic Engagement Internship is one of the many opportunities for career exploration. This Internship began during the pandemic to cultivate meaningful relationships with the youth we serve during a time of great uncertainty. The internship consists of weekly meetings where students' voices are elevated and empowered through conversations about relevant social justice issues such as police reform, the Capitol insurrection, and voter's rights. Students attend these sessions, actively participate, and submit relevant assignments related to the topics discussed. Our current focus is to guide our youth to structure and host their own civic engagement conversations with their peers.

This impactful internship that challenges our youth and provides a safe space to confront the complexities of social injustice is a testament to the strength of the LTW model. Sadly, funding concerns jeopardize the longevity of this work. While we are deeply grateful that there were no cuts to the larger LTW program for FY23 and ecstatic over the Mayor's commitment towards SYEP and other work-based programs. We push this administration and City Government to support more programs like Learning to Work, which provide wrap-around services within a work-based learning model.

Important steps to support this current work include refraining from penalizing programs by reducing the educational budget because of low enrollment numbers. Community based organizations are still supporting communities reeling from the pandemic, and low enrollment numbers are just a symptom of that larger problem. Additionally, we call on the city to look into sustainable streams of funding for the Learning to Work program, as of the \$42.1m of LTW's entire budget, a whopping \$30.4m (or more than 70%) is made up of federal stimulus dollars set to expire by 2025.

While these statistics concern us, we greatly value our partnership with the City Council and know you stand with us as we work to support young people in Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers.

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to testify. Below are the names of staff involved in our Civic Engagement Internship who ask for your support:

Alyssa Garcia, *Division Director of Brooklyn Community-Based Programs*

Annie Mínguez, *Director of Government and Community Relations*

Eric Connor, *Program Director at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School YABC*

Fernando Tinio, *Division Director of Bronx Community-Based Programs*

Gabby Kasper, *Public Policy Fellow*

Melody Ruiz, *Senior Internship and Career Coordinator at Monroe High School Educational Campus YABC*

Nigel Charles, *Economic Mobility Manager*

Ramon Reinoso, *Economic Mobility Manager*

Trequan Bekka, *Job and Internship Coordinator at West Brooklyn Community High School*

#### About Good Shepherd Services:

Good Shepherd Services is a leading New York City multi-service youth and family development agency that operates over 80 programs which help nearly 30,000 youth and family members across the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. Guided by social and racial justice, Good Shepherd Services partners and grows with communities so that all NYC children, youth, and families succeed and thrive. We provide quality, effective services that deepen connections between family members, within schools, and among neighbors. We work closely with community leaders to advocate, both locally and nationally, on behalf of our participants to make New York City a better place to live and work. GSS leads in the development of innovative programs that make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families today.

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FY23

Preliminary Budget  
Hearing – Education  
Committee

Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair

*Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO*



Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE)**. I am here today to ask that you continue that support by prioritizing our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Established in 1992, New York Edge is the largest provider of afterschool and summer programs in New York City, having been created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

**From these beginnings, we have grown into the largest provider of after-school and summer programming in New York City, serving youth in all five boroughs.** Our Education Team, comprised of educators with expertise in curriculum, professional coaching, and program development, take learning beyond the traditional classroom walls. **With academic instruction now accounting for more than 50% of our programming, core components include:**

- **Academics/STEAM Education**
- **Social-Emotional Learning**
- **Sports & Wellness**
- **The Arts**
- **College and Career Readiness**
- **Summer Camps**
- **Learning Labs**

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. And as our name

implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the EDGE that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

Students need healthy minds, bodies and relationships, as well as creative outlets, to thrive. Our programs help them develop all four. From homework support and engaging academic activities to sports and movement, to social-emotional learning and creative activities, our programs offer opportunities to develop in every aspect of their lives. NYE programs are making a world of difference in the lives of thousands of young people across the city:

- **86%** of students in our summer program advance to the next grade.
- **80%** of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools.
- **86%** of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.
- Students in NYE's High School Today, College Tomorrow program have a four-year high school completion rate more than **1.5 times higher** than the citywide rate.

New York Edge is a leader in the afterschool community, well-regarded for our evidence-based approach to afterschool programming, grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL). We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access programs.

Targeting underserved communities throughout the city, NYE's entire student population is **90% or more African American** or Hispanic, with an approximately equal number of males and females. **More than 85% come from low-income households eligible for Title 1 free or reduced-price lunches.**

**With funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative we annually impact tens of thousands of students in grades K-12 from over 100 sites across the city through our school year and summer programs.** Programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **The past two years have brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks, Hip Hop Heals and:**

- **Modern States Education Alliance** - a non-profit dedicated to making a high quality college education free of cost and accessible to any person who seeks one. We have introduced their Freshman Year for Free™ (FYFF) program to our high school students and staff. FYFF lets students earn up to one year of college credit without tuition or textbook expense. The program is offered in partnership with edX, the leading online learning platform founded by Harvard and MIT. FYFF offers 30 high quality freshman college courses, taught by some of the world's leading universities and professors. Students can transfer credits earned to more than 2,000 colleges and universities across the country.
- **One Million Guitars** - founded by internationally renowned Israeli singer-songwriter David Broza, One Million Guitars is a nonprofit organization that gives school children around the world hand-crafted guitars and the foundation of a musical education. One Million Guitars is sending New York Edge 250 guitars for our arts programs in elementary and middle schools.
- **National Grid's Grid for Good Partnership** – over 250 NYE students are learning about the energy industry and receiving the job skills, is tools, resources and employment opportunities to help them pursue successful careers in this field.

**We also created a Student Book Publishing Initiative, which published its first book last year (available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble), and a student led podcast which is coming soon to a podcast player near you.**

I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 30 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York's most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps and to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past three decades of support from the New York City Council. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!***

Thank you.

**Testimony re: Budget Hearing - Education**

Submitted to:  
New York City Council Committee on Education

Submitted by:  
Tydie Abreu, Director of Policy and Social Impact at Hispanic Federation and  
LEAD Coalition, a Project Powered by Hispanic Federation

March 23, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Joseph and all other committee members, for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Tydie Abreu, and I am the Director of Policy and Social Impact for Hispanic Federation (HF); a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy. HF's testimony is also informed by the Latino Education Advocacy Directors (LEAD) Coalition, which consists of leading educational advocacy organizations committed to improving Latinx academic outcomes and opportunities in New York State. Created by the Hispanic Federation, the coalition works to highlight and address the educational needs of Latinx students in the following ways: identifying and supporting effective practice; public policy advocacy and research; and the advancement of a shared educational agenda.

I am here to advocate for Latinx students in New York, who are struggling to face the challenges that COVID-19 has posed to their learning and mental health. The pandemic resulted in a teacher shortage that has impacted school resources and a mental health crisis that has gravely impacted ELL students' socio-emotional wellness. The additional funds from the American Rescue Plan enable this mayoral administration and city council to make significant investments in our education system to meet the direst needs of our students and families.

**Mental Health/Socio-Emotional Supports**

Fifty-seven percent of New York's 4,200 parental deaths from COVID-19 were concentrated in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise that these deaths occurred in areas in the city with the most low-income communities. Unfortunately, up to 23% of these children lost their sole parent/guardian leaving them at risk entering the foster care system.<sup>2</sup> The city's high unemployment rates resulting from the pandemic have also gravely affected students, with more than one million children having at least one parent lose a job since March 2020, resulting in an unprecedented number of children living in or near the poverty line.<sup>3</sup> Even with many parents having re-entered the workforce since losing their jobs in the height of the pandemic, many of our city's students facing grief and uncertainty will experience short term or long-term mental health issues like depression, anxiety, or more serious implications.



It is urgent for the city to invest in hiring more staff support and focus on trauma-informed mental health workers for schools. Additionally, mental health counselors must be trained in culturally relevant and linguistically diverse practices that meet the needs of our students. Access to mental health services and supporting students' social/emotional wellness improves the odds for children to succeed. This can also make a difference in long-term goals for youth to graduate from high school and have access to postsecondary and career opportunities.

Funding for the Mental Health Continuum connecting mental health practitioners with schools in neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic must be sustained. This partnership between the NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) and the NYC Department of Education have enabled students to receive trauma-informed supports, therapy, and clinical services. This initiative links a hospital staffer with each of the schools receiving these services. The designated staffer ensured smooth referrals to H+H so students could obtain ongoing mental healthcare with a community-based provider. These integrated and intensive services ensure that students with significant mental health challenges receive the supports they truly need.

These services enable schools to address school climate using a restorative approach. The Mental Health Continuum funding provides a centralized system for mental health experts to direct school staff on how they are to respond to student behavioral issues and students in crisis. This ensures that school incidents are less prevalent and do not escalate to the point of suspensions, expulsions, and police intervention. We appreciate the Mayor's commitment to continue funding this initiative by transferring funding from the NYC Department of Education to the Department of Health and Mental Health and NYC Health + Hospitals directly. We support this transfer of funds as long as it maintains the integrity of the current program with the same, if not enhanced, level of supports for schools. The NYC Council must support this critical funding for our students in the final NYC budget.

### **Restoring the Teacher Workforce & Ensuring Diverse Teacher Pipelines**

According to city data, in 2020, the education sector lost over 35,000 jobs due to the shift to virtual learning.<sup>4</sup> In 2021, the sector restored over 8% of jobs as classes returned to in-person in the Fall. While this shows an upward trajectory, the education subsector's recovery is not expected to return to its 2019 levels until 2026.<sup>5</sup> This means that our students will have less in-school supports for the next four years. We urge the city council to invest in robust teacher workforce initiatives to guarantee quality learning for all students.

The NYC Department of Education has about 142,000 English Language Learners<sup>6</sup> – among the largest populations of ELLs in the country. A recent data report from the State Education Department highlights that the state experienced a nearly 10% increase in Multilingual Learners over a three-year period.<sup>7</sup> To support these students, it is imperative for New York City to invest in a diverse teacher workforce to meet the needs of multilingual learners. With the existing teacher shortage, there is a dire need for direct investments to attract and retain teachers with specialized focuses. Having more bilingual teachers and instructors willing to assist these students can provide them with alternative learning methods and ways to measure their



academic progress. Intentional investments in the city budget for MLLs/ELLs teachers can provide schools to provide the additional materials, services, and learning Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) need for academic success and college and career readiness. This includes consistent interpretation/translation services.

In addition to the aforementioned investments, the following services should also be funded and prioritized:

**Multilingual Learners:** Ensure schools can provide the additional materials, services, and faculty Multilingual Learners (MLLs) need for academic success and college and career readiness. This includes consistent interpretation/translation services.

**Parent Engagement:** Schools need to bolster their methods to engage with families, particularly undocumented and mixed-status families who historically have been hesitant of interacting with government and even schools, due to fear of deportation. This is a critical piece that can be supported by working with community-based organizations, parent groups, and/or other companies that disseminate information across the city through radio, TV, and print.

**College & Career Supports:** To mitigate lost post-secondary opportunities, administration, counselors, and educators must collaborate to support students in greater capacities and guide students' transition to college and career. We are pleased with the budget's allocations for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and are thankful for the reinvestment of a plan that works to advance our students' career development. Integrating work-based learning supports through students' earlier years in middle and high school has shown to be critical in ensuring long-term success for our students. Now more than ever, postsecondary and career readiness is interconnected with economic opportunity, and we must ensure that our students are presented with more opportunities for advancement.

We ask that the NYC Council continues to prioritize funding for schools to maintain programs that address gaps that have arisen from or been further exacerbated by COVID-19. As we recover from the pandemic, we continue an uphill battle to address the needs of our students and families, but the city can only recover if we continue to make bold investments in our education. I thank you for your time and reemphasize how critical it is to focus on these priorities for the benefit of our students, communities, and in turn the entire city.



Testimony before the New York City Council  
Education Committee – Budget Hearing

Submitted by  
Christopher Treiber  
Associate Executive Director for Children's Services

On behalf of  
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL of  
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March 21, 2022





Good afternoon, Council Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee, my name is Christopher Treiber, and I am the Associate Executive Director of Children's Services for The Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. The (IAC) was formed in 1977 as a not-for-profit membership organization. Comprised of voluntary service providers supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities in the greater metro-New York area, IAC currently represents over 140 member agencies and organizations helping more than 100,000 individuals and their families in New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties. Support programs and services offered by IAC member agencies include early intervention, Pre-K for All, special education preschool and school-age programs, as well as residential services, job training and employment programs, day habilitation programs, home and community-based supports, recreation, clinical and health services, and an array of supports to families. The IAC has a long history of working in partnership with the New York City Department of Education to improve the quality of services and programs for young children with developmental disabilities and their families.

On behalf of the IAC and our preschool special education provider's I would like to thank the New York City Council Education Committee for holding this public hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony here today.

My testimony will focus on Preschool Special Education and the children and families who depend on these critical services.

Special education preschools or 4410 programs provide special education services to children with disabilities ages 3-5. Many of these young children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, or other developmental disabilities.

These children live in your neighborhood and would have attended a 3-K or Pre-K for All program if she or he did not have a disability. Every child who attends a 4410 special education preschool are public school children. Their parents do not pay for these preschools and their children are placed in our schools only after a determination has been made by a local Committee on Preschool Special Education that there is no other educational option for these students. These 4410 programs work in partnership with the NYC DOE to serve many of New York City's most vulnerable children and help the city meet its legal responsibility under the Federal Law to provide a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE) to all New York City children regardless of disability.

Based on information in the Mayors Preliminary Management Report September 2021– p. 291. [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2021/2021\\_mmr.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2021/2021_mmr.pdf)

we know that **88% of the more than 25,803 preschool students with disabilities in NYC attend 4410 programs** and the NYC DOE serves about 12%. Our 4410 preschools are NYC early childhood programs for children with the highest levels of educational need. However, our 4410's have not received funding to meet those

challenges. In the past ten years our 4410 programs have received only a 10% increase in tuition funding while public school districts have received a 46% increase in education funding during the same time. This inequity in funding is making it nearly impossible for our 4410 programs to recruit and retain certified special education teachers.

### **Salary Parity Agreement In New York City - A Major Accomplishment but a Nightmare for 4410 preschool Special Education programs**

While this agreement is a significant accomplishment for the teachers in the early childhood CBO's in New York City we are alerting the New York City Council that the consequence of this agreement has had a devastating impact on our special education preschool programs and their ability to retain certified special education teachers. Early Childhood Special Education Teachers in 4410 programs were not included in the salary parity agreement and the result is that ***the majority of teachers in our 4410 preschools are now the lowest paid early childhood teachers in NYC.***

Every certified teacher at early childhood education programs in NYC (except for 4410 teachers) have received the following salary increases over the past three years.

<b>Increase Schedule</b>	<b>With Master's Degree</b>	<b>With Bachelor's Degree</b>
10/1/19	\$53,581	\$48,372
10/1/20	\$62,295	\$55,651
10/1/21	\$68,652	\$61,070

However, our 4410 teachers have not excluded. They believe they have been forgotten by the city. We ask that you not forget our preschool children with developmental disabilities and our teachers who provide critical special education services. Over the past two years the City Council prioritized ensuring that all early childhood teachers in NYC continued to receive the salary increases based on the parity agreement despite the budget challenges caused by the pandemic. Since October of 2019 every early childhood teacher in New York City received salary increases totaling almost \$15,000 dollars - ***EXCEPT OUR TEACHERS.***

Teachers in 4410 special education preschools are all certified special education teachers and work 12 months a year and are paid almost 40% less than public school teachers. Based on data from the New York State Education Department we know that average salary disparity between what our 4410 schools can pay teacher and the public schools pay exceeds more than 37,000 dollars a year.

***The “Tale of Two Teachers” illustrates the significant difference in salary and benefits for a certified special education teacher in our school and a teacher in public school.***

# A Tale of Two Teachers



- I teach in a 4410 or 853 State Approved Special Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid \$51,000 dollars a year\*
- I work 12 months a year
- I have to pay for my medical insurance, and I have no pension.
- My average fringe benefit is worth 23 % of my annual salary\*



- I teach in a public school Special Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid \$87,000 dollars a year\*
- I work 10 months a year
- I will get lifetime medical insurance and a full pension.
- My fringe benefit is worth is 63.89% of my annual salary\*

\*Data provided by the New York State Education Department

InterAgency Council 2019

School districts can pay their teachers between \$30,000 and \$40,000 dollars more than our schools. As a result, children with the highest levels of educational need in the state are being taught by new and inexperienced teachers.

This huge salary disparity makes it extremely hard for our schools to retain their teachers and recruit new teachers and the majority of our 4410 schools have many teacher vacancies. Our schools are facing a dire staffing crisis that is getting worse every day. The Part 200 New York State Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and Article 47 of the New York City Childcare Regulations require that children in our

4410 preschools are taught by a certified special education teacher. It is important to remember that only a certified special education teacher can implement an Individualized Education Program (IEP). ***Our children have a right to have a certified special education teacher in front of their classroom, but it is almost impossible to guarantee this anymore.***

The struggle to recruit and retain certified teachers is making it increasingly difficult for our 4410 schools to continue to provide a quality education to our students. We have schools that are considering closure simply because they can no longer recruit new special education teachers.

Our 4410 preschools have a high number of teachers who leave each year. We have many students who have more than one teacher in one year. ***When a teacher leaves, it is devastating to the child but for a student with a developmental disability it can be heartbreaking. How do you tell a student her teacher left because the public school pays more?***

The numbers below illustrate the extent of the crisis facing our 4410 preschools and the children and families who depend on the critical services, this data is based on a survey of our 4410 preschools that we conducted in October 2021.

**25%** - this is the current turnover rate for certified special education teachers in our 4410 special education preschools last year

**33%** - this is the average vacancy rate for certified special education teacher positions in our 4410 preschools. More than one in 3 positions is vacant. This number has doubled in the past 4 years. In 2016-17 the average vacancy rates for certified teachers was 17% and is now 33%. We believe that the vacancy rates have increased since October 22021 since schools have continued to lose teaching staff every day.

**212** - the number of certified special education teachers who left our 4410 programs last year.

**90** - Preschool 4410 classrooms that are currently closed simply because the schools do not have enough teaching staff.

We know that numbers can sometimes be overwhelming, but we want to remind you that **behind these numbers are preschool children with disabilities.** Young children with developmental disabilities who do not have an experienced special education teacher. Children with disabilities that were making progress and are now regressing and losing skills because their teacher left to go work for the NYC DOE.

When a teacher leaves a public school, it is devastating to the typical children but for a preschool student with a disability **IT CAN BE HEARTBREAKING!**

***This year the staffing crisis is different and poses a real threat to the viability of these 4410 preschool programs***

Our 4410 preschools have struggled with staffing for many years but this time it is different. Typically, our 4410 preschools expect to lose some teachers to the NYC Department of Education in September until the middle of October each year as public schools recruit teachers. The preschools then spend the next few months filling their vacant teacher positions and by February they are usually almost fully staffed but NOT THIS YEAR. In 2021-2022 preschools are continuing to:

- Lose teaching staff every day to public schools
- Teachers are resigning without any notice because the New York City Department of Education requires immediate start date. Teachers are expected to report the very next day. They are given no time to say good-bye to their students – Our preschool children with disabilities are New York City public school students!
- Schools losing senior education staff who they never thought that they would lose. In a recent survey almost 90% of our school leaders report they have lost senior staff they never thought would leave their school.
- Administrators are teaching in classrooms and providing classroom supports.
- **Schools are constantly advertising for the vacant teacher positions but they are not receiving any resumes. Many of these teacher positions have been vacant all year and there are no candidates interested in these positions.**



- If teachers continue to leave and there is no one to replace them how much longer can these schools continue to provide services?

***Preschool children with disabilities are sitting at home because there are no preschool special education seats available.***

NYC DOE projects that they will need more than 900 new seats to meet the needs of our youngest children with special needs. Preschool 4410 programs are closing at an alarming rate. In the past several years more than 63 preschool special education programs have closed. 34 of them in the five boroughs of New York City. We are losing high quality programs because they can no longer afford to stay open due to the inequity in funding and the significant unreimbursed costs of re-opening school to in-person instruction. We are genuinely concerned that if nothing is done to address this funding inequity more preschools will close their doors and preschool children with developmental disabilities will wait for seats.

New York City must prioritize providing fiscal support for 4410 schools who serve New York City's most vulnerable children and ensure that there is a certified special education teacher in every classroom.

Why do children who need the most get the least? Why are children are not receiving the same funding as all other children in public schools? And why do children in 4410 preschool special education programs not have access to a certified special education teacher?

***The NYC Council needs to address the teacher salary disparity by increasing funding for teacher salaries to assure pay parity.***

We want to remind the council members that the young children with developmental disabilities who attend 4410 programs – ARE YOUR CHILDREN.

### **Our Kids are Your kids!**

4410 preschool programs are New York City's early childhood programs. Our preschools serve 88% of all New York City children aged 3-5 who need preschool special education services. They are a vital resource to the city, but they have not been treated that way!

**We would like to know why children who attend 4410 preschool special education programs are not given the same financial resources and support as children who attend their local public schools when their parents pay the same taxes!**

**Why are the children who attend these special schools not afforded the same rights as a child in a public school to a certified special education teacher?**

We must guarantee that every preschool student with a disability has access to a certified special education teacher and the special education services they need.

The only way we achieve this goal is to address salary parity for our 4410 teachers and ensure equitable funding for our children in this year's final budget.

**Nelson Mandela said that "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."**

**Think about Nelson Mandela's powerful statement as you vote on this year's budget and the lasting impact it will have on the youngest and most vulnerable children in New York City.**

**We are calling on the City Council to address the exclusion of our preschool special education teachers from the salary parity agreement and to provide the funds to ensure that certified special education teachers in 4410 preschool special education programs receive the same pay as their 12-month teachers in the DOE so that preschoolers with disabilities get the critical special education services they are legally entitled to receive.**

**Thank you**

**New York City Council Oversight Hearing  
on FY23 Preliminary Budget**

March 21, 2022

We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Education for holding this important oversight hearing on the City's FY2023 Preliminary Budget. My name is Lori Podvesker, and I am the Director of Policy at INCLUDEnyc. For nearly the last 40 years, INCLUDEnyc (formerly Resources for Children with Special Needs) has helped hundreds of thousands of NYC families navigate the complex special education service and support systems.

We commend the Department of Education and all staff at 1800+ schools for their ongoing commitment to our children and their families during the last two very challenging years. We testify today to urge the City to better prioritize meeting the needs of the near 300,000 students with disabilities in the FY23 budget.

Despite the unprecedented amount of funding the City has received from the federal government and New York State in the last year to address learning loss for students with disabilities, and to provide educational opportunities equal to their peers, the City did not adequately do that this last school year. Tens of thousands of students with disabilities were excluded at Summer Rising programs last year as the result of the City failing to provide timely information to families, special education supports, and mandated busing services to students. In addition, the City first started delivering Special Education Recovery Services (SERS) in December 2021, three months into the school year, and almost all services are not in person, creating the same access barriers for disabled students and their families as full time remote instruction did.

We have worked with thousands of parents and educators in the last school year, and we know firsthand that the City is not adequately delivering timely and legally required special education evaluations, supports, services, and programs for tens of thousands of students with suspected or known disabilities, ages 3-21-years old. We also know too many families are kept in the dark about their child's special education services and programs as the result of inferior communication from individual schools and the City. And the Fiscal Year 2022 Mayor's Management Report further substantiates this by stating parent engagement was down nearly 30% during the 2021-22 school year.

-more-

As a result, we recommend City Council ensures there is adequate funding in the budget for the Department of Education to do the following:

- Increase salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) with salaries on par with their 12-month Department of Education (DOE) counterparts
- Immediately lift hiring freeze and address staffing shortages of qualified special education teachers, paraprofessionals, school psychologists, social workers, related service providers, and transition counselors
- Strengthen systemwide capacity to conduct quality special education evaluations for students from preschool and K-12th grades
- Create borough based centers this Summer to deliver in person SERS services to students who did not receive any during 10-month school year
- Expand Extended School Year (ESY) services to include all students with IEPs who need additional instruction
- Provide mandated IEP busing services to students homes from Summer Rising programs this July and August
- Require schools to deliver all SERS in person as of September 2022
- Create a public facing accountability system that tracks how and where special education funding is spent, including targeted IDEA funding through the American Rescue Plan Act
- Provide parents with more support and training on: specially designed instruction and online learning, behavior supports, digital literacy, educational rights

Thank you for taking the time today to consider this important matter. We look forward to working together and partnering with you to improve equity and access for all young people with disabilities in New York City.

Sincerely,

*Lori Podvesker*

Director of Disability and Education Policy



**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Meeting on March 11, 2021  
Testimony By: Juan Carlos Salinas**

Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Juan Carlos Salinas, and I am the Director of Education at Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL).

JCAL was founded in 1972 as part of a large effort to revitalize Downtown Jamaica. Since then, JCAL has become the cultural destination for local residents and a magnet for local economic growth.

As a CIG and the one and only multi-disciplinary arts center in Southeast Queens, JCAL serves as an arts oasis in a neighborhood of New York City where cultural opportunities are limited for one of its largest communities of color. Even during the current pandemic, JCAL continues to provide high quality arts education at no cost for any student in need, with a focus on our Southeast, Queens community.

There are many education programs out there, but JCAL is unique. Our students grow with us. Elementary, Middle, High School, college, and adults, our education programs cover the depth and breadth of a lifetime education in the arts.

It is often said that the arts have the power to change lives. I'm sure the arts have impacted many of you in different ways. Though for many of us, the arts were the turning point in our lives. And many times that turning point begins in the after school programs such as CASA, College Access, and our School Assembly/ Family Matinee series especially, for children's from Southeast Queens. Now more than ever, our community needs us.

As the director of the education programs, I see every day how the arts transform into opportunity and possibility, while restoring the creativity that is so often stifled in our students in New York City.

Our programs service over 1000 students directly and over 2000 students indirectly in the South East, Queens community, often listed as a "arts poor district". Over 98% of our participants are students of color, and for most of our students, we are the only arts education they receive.

As Ms. Christine Guzman parent coordinator at PS 160 Q says, "I don't know what we would do without JCAL. When our federal funding for the arts was cut, JCAL was there to fill the void. Whether it was dance, drama or visual arts, our students were able to explore their artistic talents under the tutelage of dynamic teaching artists.

JCAL, along with other CIG's, will be crucial in the revitalization of New York City. The arts alone may not build a neighborhood, but they can help shape the culture of a community to help celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. We ask that the cultural budget be held harmless and maintained at FY'21 levels as we await further information on federal COVID relief that may be made available to the City and State. Thank you for your time.



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The Jewish Community Center of Staten Island services preschool children in both the Pre K 3 and PKA programs, as well as special education preschool children. We currently operate the special education preschool programs in 3 locations on Staten Island, serving over 100 children with disabilities.

During the 2020-21 school year, our classrooms operated using several models; full-time in-person, blended, and via remote (parent choice). We had a successful year as we were able to serve most students fully in-person.

Our special education preschool program employs 56 full-time and 5 part-time staff including therapists, teachers, and teacher assistants as well as administrative staff.

Each year, we lose qualified and experienced teachers in which we invest time and training providing the children with the best possible outcomes. As of September, of this current year, we had minimal vacancies. Once the vaccine mandates took effect, we lost 2 full-time and 3 part-time staff. It did not end there.

In a matter of days, many of our special education staff were hired by the NYC Department of Education. This occurred without notice, overnight, causing a significant and impactful staffing shortage. At one point, we closed due to safety concerns as several staff were out sick and we were unable to safely operate the program. Within a few weeks, we lost 10 additional full-time classroom staff and 3 full-time therapists. We were quickly down 18 staff members within a few weeks. This continues today as in the as in the past week we lost additional therapy staff.

While these staff members left with little or no notice, it takes us at the very least 2 to 3 weeks to re-staff each vacancy as our clearance process is much more detailed.

**Our PK programs were impacted less by the DOE opening their vacancy list as we lost only part time hourly staff to the DOE. Pay Parity for these staff have ensured staff retention.**

The salaries paid to our special education preschool program (4410) staff are substantially less than those paid to the PK program staff. For example, a fully certified PKA teacher makes \$68,000 for 10 months of work, while we pay the same amount to our special education teachers for 12 months, based on our current rate from State Education.

Comparing the staff loss from each program, it is evident that salary was a primary reason for staff resignation. **Our teachers are entitled to equal pay for equal work.**

Retention of quality and qualified staff for our most vulnerable children is vital to their future success. Many of these children have been greatly impacted by the pandemic, through loss of in-person Early Intervention services and social isolation. An investment in special education preschool programs will be an investment our youngest and most vulnerable children.

Jayne M. Smith, Chief Program Director for Early Childhood and Disability Services

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**Thank you, Chairperson Rita Joseph and members of the City Council Education Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony at this hearing. I am Tracy Weber-Thomas, the Chief Operating Officer of the Joe Torre Safe At Home Foundation.**

**When our co-founder, Joe Torre, was a child he witnessed the unrelenting verbal abuse and saw the results of the physical harm inflicted on his mother. The perpetrator was not some stranger, but his father. The emotional and physical pain his mother suffered scarred her life, and Joe's, too.**

**As Joe grew older and came to terms with his experience, he wanted to ensure that no child grew up as he did - feeling alone and afraid. That's why he started Safe At Home over twenty years ago in New York City.**

**Our work is critical.**

- **60% of children in the U.S. have experienced violence in their homes, schools, and communities.**
- **90% of children exposed to intimate partner violence are eyewitnesses.**
- **In 2020, the NYC Police Department responded to over 635 domestic incidents each day.**
- **During the COVID-19 pandemic, children could no longer rely on going to school as a reprieve from the dangers they faced at home.**
- **Overall calls to Domestic Violence hotlines and visits to resources increased dramatically during COVID-19.**

**Safe at Home currently operates 17 school-based prevention and intervention programs called Margaret's Place – named after Joe's mother – four of which operate in New York City.**



JOE TORRE  
**SAFE AT  
HOME.**

**Our program is trauma-informed and healing-centered. Margaret's Place is a youth-friendly space within the school, staffed by a full-time, master's-level counselor who provides counseling to youth, anti-violence workshops, peer leadership engaging youth to break the cycle of violence, and support for school staff and parents. We are there when students need us – over 50% of referrals from teachers have been for students in immediate crisis.**

**And when COVID-19 hit, we were already embedded within the school communities and we were able to continue our work with the students during the difficult time.**

**The Principals at our locations are our greatest champions. One stated: “Margaret's Place is much more than a room. It is a force in shaping who we are. It says ‘We are determined to provide a respectful supportive environment for all members of our community. No one is alone.’ I cannot imagine my school without Margaret's Place. It is and will continue to be part of who we are.”**

**Exposure to violence, without timely intervention, can impact a child's ability to learn and attend school, impact their physical safety and mental health, and increase the likelihood of continuing the cycle of violence.**

**However, there is hope. There are factors that can decrease harm– resilience, positive coping skills, and a supportive social network. Our programming is designed with these protective factors in mind.**

**We are kindly asking for your support today to be able to continue providing critical services to children impacted by violence, abuse, and trauma.**

**Specifically, we are requesting citywide initiative funding of \$100,000 to support our four Margaret's Place locations. We are also seeking member support for four specific school-based programs.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.**



EARLY CHILDHOOD  
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Visit [JustKidsSchool.com](http://JustKidsSchool.com)  
\*\*\*

Cam-Held Enterprises Inc.



@justkidsschool1

## Testimony of Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center for New York City Council Committee on Education

### Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget - Education

March 21, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the proposed budget. My name is Steve Held and I have been the Executive Director of Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center for the past 42 years. Our program has educated over 1200 children between the ages of birth to 5 with and without disabilities and today I would like to speak to you about our Far Rockaway school.

Since NYC opened 3K and UPK for all and negotiated staff salaries to align with their public school counterpart, Just Kids has struggled to retain special education staff at our Far Rockaway site. Our reimbursement is promulgated by the SED and it cannot support NYC's 3K and UPK staff salaries. In fact, our staff have been solicited by the BOE to come work in 3K and UPK at their higher salaries.

Importantly, I am at least 5 staff short at this moment and, based on the SED regulations, I will be required to submit my "intent to close" our Far Rockaway site no later than April 1 (in 10 days) if positions remain unfilled. This will mean as of July 1 nearly 100 children will need a placement in an existing program. This is heartbreaking to me. Our site is the only program in the area and our special education children present with profound developmental delays.

Just Kids has applied to the BOE for an enhanced tuition rate and we have had direct discussions with the wonderful staff at the BOE. Our understanding is that they would like us to agree to limit a 12-seat classroom to 6 or 8 in order to meet our areas LRE for children awaiting placement by the BOE. They cannot, at this time, promise any enhanced funding without this Council's support and the support of the Mayor's office.

I would respectfully request that the Council support this initiative with the dollars needed for your children and their families. Please know that for too long preschool children with disabilities have not had equal access to your wonderful programs. Our children were determined to need an individual education contract with many specialized services and 3K and UPK cannot provide these mandated services and sadly, are often left at home without a program to go to.

Please consider your support of the BOE's proposals and please visit our program. We promise you will enjoy the children. Thank you



**Testimony to the City Council**

**March 21, 2022**

**Jeanne Alter, Executive Director of the Kennedy Children's Center**

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address the City Council on the early childhood special education crisis. My name is Jeanne Alter, I am the Executive Director of Kennedy Children's Center located in East Harlem and the South Bronx. For the 30 years that I have been working in NYC 4410 programs, salary parity has always been an issue.

4410 programs like Kennedy Children's Center provide mandated preschool special education programs for NYCDOE students. Like the NYCDOE, Kennedy is publicly funded and relies on certified special education teachers, certified teacher assistants, and licensed related service personnel to provide children with IEP services. Why should our staff make any less money than their colleagues at the DOE who are doing the exact same work? If you truly care about equality in education, you cannot continue to discriminate against one sector of providers. Everyone deserves to make a decent living, our teaching staff is no different.

We know the pandemic has upended education, but the staff turnover this year has been exhausting. Since July 1, 2021, we have lost 51% of our teachers and 42% of our teacher assistants. Over half of these former staff have accepted positions with the NYCDOE. Currently, there are 28 children with IEP's, sitting at home, waiting to start school at Kennedy. We cannot bring them onsite because we cannot hire enough staff for three additional classrooms.

Because DOE teachers make more money for a 10 month program, and our staff have to work 12 months, you are denying DOE children and families the certified and qualified staff they deserve simply because they attend a 4410 program. I have spent my career fighting for the needs of children and families in NYC and will continue to be a voice for our community. There is not a shortage of teachers who care about young children with special needs – rather, there is a lack of funding and support for teachers like ours who want to work with these very young and vulnerable learners in programs like Kennedy Children's Center.

Therefore, I urge you to provide salary increases to preschool special education teachers and staff in order to address the shortage of classes.

**Preliminary Budget Hearing, Committee on Education**  
**March 21, 2022**

Testimony submitted by:

Andrew Barrett, Food Ed Hub Director

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

Teachers College, Columbia University

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The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University (the “Tisch Food Center”) conducts and fosters research about the connection between a just and sustainable food system and healthy eating. Importantly, we translate our research into recommendations and resources for educators, policy makers, and advocates who support their communities with access to healthier food choices. We have more than twenty years of experience working in NYC public schools, collaborating with countless educators, parents, students, food service professionals, and school wellness programs.

We value participation and collaboration, and understand that the research and resources we develop will only be useful if they are co-created with the programs and communities they are intended to serve. With support from the City Council, the Tisch Food Center established the Food Ed Hub in September 2019. Within the Food Ed Hub, we convene the Food Ed Coalition, a diverse group of over 300 program leaders, school community members, advocates, and other stakeholders. **The Coalition has identified three budget priorities that the City Council must support** as we work together to create a future in which all NYC students have quality food and nutrition education and sustainably-produced, culturally-responsive, healthy school food:

**1. Renew Funding for the Food Ed Hub: A Critical Support for Food Education Partners**

The Food Ed Hub, based within the Tisch Food Center, facilitates coordination and collaboration among food and nutrition education (“food ed”) programs across NYC; promotes inclusiveness and equity in food ed and food access; advocates for policies that support healthy school food and food ed; convenes stakeholders; develops capacity among organizations; and provides resources and professional development opportunities to educators.

The Food Ed Hub supports the most marginalized school communities in NYC through our partnership with organizations and advocates who offer virtual and in-person food ed, build and maintain school gardens, help implement school wellness policies, support healthy meals, and promote food assistance.

**The City cannot afford to lose a critical resource designed to maximize impact, increase efficiency, and ensure that services are equitably distributed.** With ongoing funding, the Food Ed Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to community-based organizations and educators.

## **2. Hire Additional School Food Managers: Enhance Capacity and Increase Participation**

The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) at the NYC Department of Education has worked tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they need to succeed in school. **OFNS needs more school food managers to plan and review appealing menus, train new personnel, partner with school leadership to create positive meal experiences, and increase participation in the school meals program.** Funding for an additional 60 managers would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn.

## **3. Provide Flexible Food Ed Funding: Tailored Programming to Meet Local Need**

Food ed is crucial to all NYC students' health and wellness, now and throughout their lives. NYC is failing in this regard: 44% of our public schools do not partner with a food ed organization, and approximately two-thirds of middle school students do not receive the full state-mandated Health Education course. **All schools should have sustained, flexible funding to provide vital food ed programming.** For example, flexible funding would enable schools to build and maintain school gardens and outdoor classrooms, hire a School Wellness Coordinator, provide per session pay for teachers who lead after school programs, or partner with a food ed organization to help teachers effectively integrate food and nutrition into their curriculum.

We are grateful to the City Council for its commitment to quality food and nutrition education and food access in New York City schools, and we look forward to working with you to continue growing healthy students and families.

**TESTIMONY**  
The Legal Aid Society  
to  
The New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
March 21, 2022

The Legal Aid Society  
199 Water Street  
New York, New York 10038

(212) 577-3300

The Legal Aid Society submits this testimony and thanks the Education Committee for inviting our thoughts on New York City's budget for fiscal year 2022-23.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's largest and oldest provider of legal services to low-income families and individuals. From offices in all five boroughs, the Society annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in some 300,000 legal matters involving civil, criminal and juvenile rights issues.

The Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Typically, our Juvenile Rights staff represents more than 33,000 children in the Family Courts each year. At the same time, the Criminal Defense Practice ("CDP") provides indigent criminal defense to individuals as young as 13 charged in adult court, and includes the Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Project. Many thousands of CDP's clients are school age teenagers and young adults. Annually, our Civil Practice works on more than 52,500 individual legal matters, including advocacy for families with school-age children. The Criminal, Civil and Juvenile practices engage in educational advocacy for our clients, in the areas of special education, school discipline, and school placement and programming. In addition to representing these children each year in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients.

Our perspective comes from our daily contacts with children, adolescents, and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and city agencies including the NYC Department of Education (DOE), NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).



## Students in the Child Welfare System

In the 2020-21 school year, 7,416 New York City public school students were in foster care.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 94% were children of color.<sup>2</sup> Children in foster care face unique challenges in accessing education and this makes them a vulnerable group of learners. Nationally between 35% and 47 % of children and youth in foster care have been identified as students with disabilities who require special education services.<sup>3</sup> Seventeen- and eighteen-year-old students in foster care have an average 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.<sup>4</sup> Attendance rates for students in foster care in New York City are significantly below average. The average attendance rate for 11-15 year-olds in foster care is only 85%, meaning that they miss more than five weeks of school per year.<sup>5</sup> The average attendance rate for students 16-20 years old plummets to 58%, a clear indication that the DOE has failed to engage these students in a meaningful way.<sup>6</sup> In New York City only 43% of students in foster care graduated on time in 2021, the lowest graduation rate of any student group and 38 percentage points lower than the rate for students not in foster care.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services Division of Policy, Planning and Measurement, Office of Research and Analysis: High School Graduation Rates of Youth in Foster Care (2021)

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2021/HSFosterCareAnnualReport2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> ACS reports reveal that 50.3 % of students living in foster care in New York City in the 2020-2021 school year were African American, 36% were Latinx, 2/5% were Asian, and 4.7% were identified as Other/Unknown. New York City Administration for Children's Services Division of Policy, Planning and Measurement, Office of Research and Analysis: High School Graduation Rates of Youth in Foster Care (2021)

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2021/HSFosterCareAnnualReport2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> National Working Group on Foster Care and Education "Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care" April 2018 <http://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NationalEducationDatasheet2018-2.pdf>; Courtney, M.E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Conditions of youth preparing to leave state care. P 40 Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>5</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services, School Attendance Rates of Children While in Foster Care, School Year 2020-2021. Available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2021/LL142SY20202021.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> See New York State Education Department, NYC Public Schools Graduation Rate Data (4 Year Outcome as of August 2021) Available at <https://data.nysed.gov/gradrate.php?year=2021&instid=7889678368>



It is imperative that the City invest in children in the custody of ACS to ensure that they are able to engage in school and to obtain the educational services to which they are entitled and which will support successful outcomes of higher education and employment. We therefore ask that the City Council provide funding and oversight to support the DOE in 1) prioritizing staffing of the team for students in foster care, 2) the provision of school bus transportation to all children in foster care in grades K – 6.

### **1. DOE Office for Children in Foster Care**

In March 2018, the City’s Interagency Foster Care Task Force, whose membership included the Commissioner of the Administration for Children’s Services and the DOE Chief Operating Officer, recommended that the DOE establish an office to focus on the needs of students in foster care, similar to the DOE Office of Student’s in Temporary Housing.<sup>8</sup> In May 2021 Advocates for Children and the Legal Aid Society released a joint report outlining the need for such an office.<sup>9</sup>

Currently, responsibility for children in foster care rests with a wide range of different DOE staff members and offices: enrollment, transportation, special education, guidance, office of legal services, and academic policy, to name a few. There is no central DOE resource that schools, foster care agencies or families can turn to when they have questions about students in foster care. There is also no central resource to assist in setting policies relating to school stability, transportation, parental rights and involvement, access to records, consent for special education evaluations and services, court orders, data sharing and analysis, or credit transfers for students in foster care who change schools. No one within the DOE is currently developing

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<sup>8</sup> See Report of the Interagency Foster Care Task Force, March 2018  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/testimony/2018/TaskForceReport.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See Building a Network of Support: The Case for a DOE Office for Students in Foster Care, May 2021.  
<https://legalaidnyc.org/news/doe-support-students-foster-care/>

training for school staff in how to serve this population. At the time the joint report was released in 2021, more than 30 organizations, including foster care agencies, groups of educators, and organizations representing children and parents in Family Court joined together in calling for a DOE team to focus on this group of students so that schools could be equipped with the knowledge and resources they need to serve students in foster care and their families effectively. In December 2021, the City announced that it had appropriated funding to support the creation of a team including nine staff members dedicated to serving the unique needs of students in foster care within the Office of Students in Temporary Housing, however today those positions remain unfilled due to the current hiring freeze.

In his public address on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Chancellor Banks expressed a commitment to reaching students who have been poorly served by the DOE in the past. Youth in foster care fall squarely within this group. A large portion of them are not proficient in reading or math, need access to meaningful academic experiences and career pathways, and need services to support their social-emotional well-being. In order to improve outcomes for this vulnerable group, the DOE must engage in an intensive, sustained effort to analyze and address their needs.

We learned on Friday that Adam's Administration has approved the DOE hiring one staff member who will focus exclusively on students in foster care, a Data Analyst, and a Director of Capacity Building who will focus on both Students in Temporary Housing and Students in Foster Care. During his testimony on March 21, 2021, Chancellor Banks stated that hiring will begin for some of the positions on this team. This is an important first step and we applaud the Administration for its attention to this vulnerable population of students. However, one dedicated staff member is not sufficient to adequately address the needs of

Students in Foster Care. We therefore call upon the City Council, Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks to prioritize the entire team for Students in Foster Care, and exclude this entire team from the hiring freeze.

## **2. Bus Service for Students in Foster Care**

The DOE must ensure that every child in foster care is able to get to their school, including to the expanded Summer Rising program announced by Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks on March 11, 2022. More than just being the right thing to do for children in foster care, New York City has a legal obligation to ensure that children in foster care are able to get to school. The federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008 and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 require school districts and child welfare systems to collaborate in preserving school stability for children in foster care and in providing adequate transportation.

NYS Education Law § 3244, provides that the school district where the child attends school must provide transportation to and from the foster care placement and the child's school of origin. Despite these federal and state requirements, transportation remains a significant barrier to preserving school stability for students in foster care in New York City. In 2019 and 2020 the Administration agreed to use existing resources to ensure busing for students in foster care.<sup>10</sup> However, the de Blasio Administration did not achieve this goal.

Currently, the DOE permits students in foster care in preschool through 6<sup>th</sup> grade to submit an Emergency Evaluation Request for busing. The DOE approves such requests if, and only if, the foster child can easily be added to an existing route. The DOE will not create a new route or significantly alter an existing route to accommodate a child in foster care. Data provided

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<sup>10</sup> See FY 2020 Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary, June 2019, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/12/Fiscal-2020-Schedule-C-Final-Merge.pdf>

by the DOE pursuant to Local Law 34 shows that during the period from January 2021 to June 2021, only 65% of students in foster care grades K-6 who applied for transportation received DOE bus service.<sup>11</sup> Thirty five percent (including 33% of kindergarteners) received a MetroCard instead, which is entirely inadequate for this age group. Young children are unable to safely and comfortably travel alone on public transportation using a MetroCard. Foster parents often have other obligations, including employment and the care of other children that prevent them from accompanying a foster child during a long commute. Foster care case workers are also unable to accompany children to and from school due to their primary job responsibilities.

When DOE denies busing, ACS tries to piece together a transportation plan, which typically involves the use of expensive taxis, car services and paid chaperones. These ad hoc transportation arrangements are difficult to manage and costly to taxpayers.

When children in foster care are denied DOE busing, they are often effectively forced to change schools. No student in foster care should be forced to change schools or foster home placements due to lack of transportation – students in foster care are entitled to stable foster homes and stable school placements. We urge City Council to hold the DOE accountable for providing yellow bus transportation to all children in foster care from preschool through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We ask the City Council to include sufficient funding in the budget (approximately \$5 million) to ensure that the DOE provides legally mandated bus service for students in foster care.

Students in foster care (who are overwhelmingly students of color, and who have high rates of special education needs) are amongst the most vulnerable of New York City residents. Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks and the City Council have a unique opportunity to create a

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<sup>11</sup> See SY 2020-2-January-June Local Law 34 Report on School Bus Transportation Services, available at [https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Education/School-Bus-Report-October\\_2021\\_21-993/jbtw-tj3x](https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Education/School-Bus-Report-October_2021_21-993/jbtw-tj3x)

lasting change for these students by ensuring that they have reliable school busing and a dedicated team within the DOE that is able to support their schools and ensure that these students are being provided with the educational services that they need and are entitled to. Many thanks for the opportunity to provide testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Contact: Melinda Andra  
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Literacy Assistance Center

**New York City Council Committee on Education  
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 21, 2022**

**Testimony of Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center**

Thank you, Chair Joseph, for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), a 39-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the adult education system and to advancing adult literacy as a core value in our society and a foundation for equal opportunity and social justice. The LAC is a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL), a coalition comprised of adult literacy teachers, program managers, students, and allies from over 40 community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs across the five boroughs.

Currently, there are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English proficiency or who lack a high school diploma. Many of these New Yorkers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing the essential work that has been sustaining our communities – as grocery workers, delivery workers, home care workers, and parents. Others are service workers and domestic workers who lost their jobs and incomes and have faced a harsh reality with little or no safety net. While adult literacy education is only one part of the solution, it is essential to a fair, just, and sustainable recovery.

Adult literacy education is an immigrant rights issue, a feminist issue, a racial justice issue, and an issue of educational justice. The majority of adults in NYC with limited literacy skills are women and people of color. Over 75% are immigrants, including many who are

undocumented. Others are BIPOC who were born in the US and underserved by the public school system. According to the most recent census, 30% of all parents in New York City have limited English proficiency, and, for immigrant parents, that number is 52%. Adult literacy education can provide the foundation for greater security and autonomy, as well as the tools to access, navigate, analyze – and ultimately transform – social, political, and economic systems and conditions.

When it comes to city and state funding for adult literacy education, there are three fundamental challenges:

- 1) Combined city and state funding is so limited that fewer than 4% of the 2.2 million adults who could benefit from adult basic education, high school equivalency, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are able to access seats in any given year.
- 2) The level of investment per student is so low that programs are unable to provide the full range supports, services, and resources that students need and deserve.
- 3) Funding places such an emphasis on increasing test scores, accruing credentials, and achieving workforce outcomes that it fails to recognize and honor the full breadth of students' goals and the myriad ways that programs work to build the collective power of individuals, families, and communities.

Last year, the City Council made great strides in addressing these issues by pushing then-Mayor de Blasio to baseline \$8 million in year-to-year funding for adult literacy education, creating a total of \$13.5 million in baselined funds, and by allocating \$2.5 million of Council Discretionary funding to a first-of-its-kind pilot project that provided 20 programs with between \$70,000 and \$150,000 of additional funds to invest in full-time teachers, counselors, expanded student support services, professional development and planning time for staff, and upgrades to technology to support digital literacy development. The pilot also recognized and encouraged a

broader range of outcomes, including support for health literacy, financial literacy, immigrant rights, workers' rights, housing advocacy, culturally responsive education, and student leadership development.

Higher levels of literacy are associated with greater health knowledge, use of healthcare services, and the ability to manage chronic health conditions and communicate with healthcare providers. Moreover, according to the National Institutes for Health, “a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.”

In addition, we know that greater levels of literacy can lead to greater economic security for individuals and families. A national study from Gallup shows that the average annual income of adults who reach the minimum level of proficiency in literacy (level 3 on the international PIAAC assessment) is nearly \$63,000, substantially higher than the average of \$48,000 earned by adults who score just below proficiency (level 2), and much higher than those at low levels of literacy (levels 0-1), who earn just over \$34,000 on average. Yet, in parts of New York City, well over 50% of adults fall below level 3: In the Bronx, 81% of adults are below level 3 and 50% are at or below level 1 in reading. Similarly, census data show that median wages for adults with a high school diploma or its equivalent are 24% greater than for those without a diploma; and immigrants who speak English “very well” are half as likely to live in poverty as those who do not.

Increased literacy not only benefits individuals, it also drives broader economic growth. The same Gallup study finds that “getting all U.S. adults to at least a Level 3 literacy proficiency would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion in annual income for the country,” and that large cities like New York would see a 10% increase in gross domestic product.



Clearly, adult literacy education is vital to the health and economic recovery of our city, to the ability of parents to support their children's education, and to ensuring greater quality of life for all. It is time that we stop treating adult literacy education as a supplement to the education system and start recognizing it as a right of all those that need it.

So what do we need to do?

- 1) First, the city must **maintain the \$13.5 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional \$13.5 million** in order to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP. Astonishingly, Mayor Adams has actually proposed a significant cut to the \$8 million that was baselined last year.
- 2) Second, the City Council should **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to \$5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources.
- 3) Third, the City Council should **renew the \$4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

Adult literacy education is about cultivating individual leadership and building community power, and it is an essential piece of broader movements for racial, social, and economic justice. Adult literacy education can provide the space for community members to read, write, and speak the truth of their lived experience; to build understanding and solidarity across differences; to examine historical and current systems of oppression and envision alternatives; and to act to transform the cultural, social, political, and economic structures that circumscribe their lives.

Literacy skills give individuals the power to understand and command information, to communicate in the language of access, to make informed choices, to access critical resources and opportunities, to stand up for themselves in the workplace, to fully participate in civic life and institutions and, ultimately, to transform their lives and the world around them. A substantial investment in adult literacy education will mean that more people will have the skills to access better jobs and higher wages; more parents will be able to support their children's education; more families will be healthier; more people of all backgrounds will know and speak up for their rights; and more New Yorkers will participate in the democratic process. If we are truly a city committed to equality and justice, we should commit to no less.

Thank you.

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*Submitted by:*

Ira Yankwitt, Executive Director

Literacy Assistance Center

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TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES  
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME  
TO THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
MARCH 18, 2022  
1:00 PM

Public Safety Committee Chairwoman Kamillah Hanks and distinguished members of the committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 - AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the approximate 2,600 Level-I and 80 Level II School Crossing Guards we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I.

School Crossing Guards are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take transit to school. Student-pedestrians often face major safety traffic hazards everyday caused by double-and-triple parked cars at bus stops, in front or near the school building. As essential workers, School Crossing Guards remained vigilant throughout the pandemic, even when the schools were shut down, to ensure that children and pedestrians crossed the streets safely in their morning and afternoon commutes. These workers have risked their own health and safety, while others were safe in their homes, to perform these vital services to the community over the past year.

Approximately 90% of School Crossing Guards are female, working daily at a 25-hour capped part-time schedule that includes early morning, lunch time and after school hours to serve 1.2 million charter, parochial, and public-school children. Additionally, many of our members are at higher risk because they are older, with 33% of the membership over 55. Our workforce is predominately Black and Latino at 85% living and working in the zip codes, with the highest COVID-19 rates than other communities.

However, despite their role on the frontlines, School Crossing Guards are not always treated like the essential workers they are. At the height of the pandemic and with schools being closed, School Crossing Guards were mandated to return to work, having been warned they would not get paid if they did not show up. These workers often make the hourly minimum wage, earning approximately \$20,000 per year, and can't afford to not be paid. To make matters worse, School Crossing Guards do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their paychecks dependent on the whims of the weather. A snow day might just be the determining factor as to whether a School Crossing Guard can put food on the table. For many New Yorkers who are living paycheck to paycheck, like School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin.

On top of the immediate, tangible concern over lost wages, this also represents an issue of equity for our members. Despite working under the New York Police Department ("NYPD"), School Crossing Guards are functionally analogous to school support staff titles working under the New York City Department of Education ("DOE"). Likewise, School Crossing Guards and DOE school support staff should also share the same privileges and pay rights. Just as DOE school support staff are currently compensated for this lost time, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. The current pay practices for School Crossing Guards are harmful to these vital workers and Local 372 requests permanent reforms to conform School Crossing Guard pay practices to that of other support staff titles. We must prevent School Crossing Guards from slipping through the cracks through no fault of their own.

Additionally, the role as first line of defense for students and pedestrians often places School Crossing Guards in a vulnerable position with no immediate assistance on hand. School Crossing Guards are at risk not only from cars veering too close or from viral exposure to COVID-

19, but from physical attacks and harassment from people on the street. A number of School Crossing Guards have been the victims of on-duty assaults, which is a violent felony under current law. Local 372 respectfully requests City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against School Crossing Guards.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your continued support on behalf of Local 372's School Crossing Guards. I will now answer any questions you may have.



**Legal Services NYC  
Written Testimony Submission for Preliminary Budget Hearing,  
City Council Education Committee  
March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify at this budget hearing. Legal Services NYC's ("LSNYC") (<https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/about-us>) mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New York City residents. Through litigation, advocacy, education and outreach, LSNYC has advanced the interests of our clients and created systemic changes that strengthen and protect low-income communities. We work to protect the rights of veterans, immigrants, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable constituents. We are deeply appreciative to the City Council for its many years of support for legal services, and for its championship of our mission and our work.

The Education Rights practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and their families each year to ensure access to education. We support English Language Learners (ELLs), limited English proficient (LEP) students and their parents, and other vulnerable student populations and their families with a host of education issues including school enrollment, language access, special education, disciplinary proceedings, transportation, disability accommodations, and academic intervention services. Over 80% of our student clients are children of color and/or immigrants ranging in age from 3 to 21. Our clients experience a range of behavioral, emotional, and developmental disabilities including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), the disabling impacts of trauma/adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and depression. Our goal is to support vulnerable populations by improving educational outcomes and removing systemic inequities.

As you know, this is the third year that New York City schools have been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, most recently by the Omicron and other COVID-19 variants. The pandemic has hit students in vulnerable populations significantly hard. These populations include students with disabilities who were unable to meaningfully benefit from remote learning and continue to struggle with the return to in-person learning; students from households where English is not the first language; and students from households where technological and academic skills have not been available over the last two years.

Throughout the pandemic, LSNYC has continued to advocate and protect students' access to their education. Our education advocates represent parents citywide, at IEP meetings, administrative hearings, and mediations, to protect the academic rights of their children. We have secured special education supports and services necessary for our clients with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and have successfully secured compensatory education services for clients to make up for special education instruction and services the Department of Education failed to provide during the pandemic. We have advocated

with schools to ensure that families are able to access information and necessary resources for their children's well-being in this time.

I am here today speaking as more than a legal services advocate, but as a parent leader in education reform, and as someone who attended several New York City schools throughout the five boroughs. I went through so many schools and in each one I felt adrift and alone, with little support from school staff. How different might my education have been had a guidance counselor or social worker been available to me as a resource, to guide me academically, and support me emotionally! Now, as a parent to a child attending New York City schools, I continue to see how the inequities in our public-school system impact children and why it is essential that we prioritize healing centered practices within our schools.

It is no secret by now that the pandemic has shown how trauma can have far-reaching impact on the cognitive and behavioral development of children. All too often students who have been exposed to trauma or adverse childhood experiences ("ACEs") engage in behaviors that educators interpret as defiance or aggression. A growing body of research has concluded that punitive responses to students coping with trauma exacerbates those behaviors.

And yet school staff continue to respond to students in a punitive manner without consideration of a student's disability, personal history, or the underlying or mitigating circumstances of each incident. Take for example the story of M, a 15-year-old student in Staten Island who was suspended for allegedly pushing school staff when she tried to enter the school's cafeteria. The school failed to acknowledge the pattern of prior incidents that had occurred upon M's return to in-person learning and insisted that she be disciplined notwithstanding her disability and its impact on her emotional functioning.

M's suspension is just one example of a steady uptick in school staff implementing excessive, and often unnecessary, discipline since schools returned to in-person learning in September 2021. Our office recently helped an eleven-year old student with a disability in Brooklyn who was suspended for behaviors directly related to his disability. The school staff, including members of the child's IEP team, failed to recognize the direct connection between the behavior and the disability. However, with our help, the student was transferred to another school and is now receiving the social emotional support he needs to participate in school. Our efforts in this case are reflective of the ways in which our services are critically important in ensuring students' rights are protected when they face suspension or exclusion from their class.

Over the last three years, LSNYC has led the advocacy for more appropriate responses to students impacted by trauma and ACEs with the Healing Centered Schools Working Group. As the aforementioned experiences with school discipline make clear, school staff need training to respond appropriately with supports for those students coping with stressful experiences in their lives. Our efforts to bring trauma-responsive and healing-centered practices to NYC schools have become critical since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the DOE has recognized the importance of addressing trauma, and the need for healing practices in schools by offering the Working Group's Roadmap as a resource in the prior school year,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that we

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<sup>1</sup> *New York City Department of Education Bridge to School: Strengthening Community and Fostering Resiliency*, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bridge-to-school-plan-08272020>

have a long road ahead as we strive to educate staff, parents, and students on the need for healing-centered approaches as part of the education recovery plan for students.

In addition to helping students with disabilities, and those facing school discipline, LSNYC advocates have witnessed the ways in which low-income English Language Learners (ELL) and limited English proficient (LEP) students have suffered higher rates of learning loss due to the digital divide. Statistically, these immigrant families are less likely to have access to computers and high-speed internet and have overall lower digital skills and training than their English-fluent counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, students from households where English is not the primary language experienced additional learning loss and academic setbacks due to the DOE's inadequate interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient parents.<sup>3</sup> With roughly 396,000 students (42%) speaking a language other than English at home, the wide reaching, and long term consequence of this loss on immigrant communities cannot be ignored.

These students have fallen behind and require systems in place to ensure they are getting the language support they need, are in the appropriate classrooms, and in some circumstances can receive compensatory services and support to help them make progress. Take Nancy, a nine-year old special education student in Queens who struggled to both learn English and keep up in school these last three years. Remote learning made learning English all but impossible and she grew frustrated and stopped participating in all her other classes. Now, having returned to in person learning, she has struggled to keep up with assignments, stay engaged with the work, and develop language skills. With the help of our advocates, Nancy was placed in a more appropriate classroom setting, with increased English language learner support, and is slowly making progress in school. A.R. is an English Language Learner (ELL) with medical, physical, and learning issues. He and his mother have overcome significant hardship and trauma, both in their native country of Honduras and in New York City. Despite many requests for evaluations and school support to meet the student's special needs, school officials ignored A.R. and his mother. Through litigation and other legal advocacy, LSNYC asserted the student's FAPE rights and received a favorable decision mandating that the DOE provide the student with a series of evaluations in areas of suspected need, and access to bilingual support, and compensatory tutoring services. LSNYC also helped the student to secure a barrier free school, additional related services, and assistive technology.

The need for LSNYC's education advocacy services far outstrips our resources. Our representation and advice have made a positive impact in low-income and communities of color. With a staff of eight attorneys, one paralegal, and one social worker, our city-wide Education Project can only assist a small volume of clients directly. We leverage our resources by addressing systemic issues through litigation and policy advocacy designed to make an impact beyond our individual clients. But the need, exacerbated by the inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic is great, and our capacity is limited.

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<sup>2</sup> See Office of the Comptroller of the City of N.Y., *Overcoming NYC's Digital Divide in the 2020 Census* at 5 (July 2019), [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wpcontent/uploads/documents/Census\\_and\\_The\\_City\\_Overcoming\\_NYC\\_Digital\\_Divide\\_Census.pdf](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wpcontent/uploads/documents/Census_and_The_City_Overcoming_NYC_Digital_Divide_Census.pdf) ("2019 Comptroller Report").



Our recommendations on the NYC budget center around the vulnerable communities we serve, and are rooted in equity.

**Recommendations:**

**1) Expand assistance to students with disabilities and students who have fallen behind grade level to receive compensatory educational services.** Many low-income students were academically delayed prior to the pandemic and the transition to remote learning. We must ensure that students harmed by lost educational opportunities receive the services they need to make academic progress. Tutoring supports and other services are desperately needed for these students who lost out on their education during the pandemic and are now further behind.

**2) Expand assistance to students who have experienced trauma and will need social/emotional support.** Countless students and their families have experienced food insecurity, loss of income, isolation, sickness, increased racial hostility, and death during the pandemic. Students impacted by the trauma of COVID-19 and those experiencing emotional vulnerabilities will need increased resources, services and programs to address their social emotional and developmental needs. Additionally, investments in mental health services are necessary to meet the higher-level needs of those students more severely impacted by both the pandemic and the long history of poverty and racism

**3) Expand assistance to students and parents who do not speak English as their first language.** English Language Learner (ELL) students have struggled to learn while their Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents have faced numerous obstacles navigating the school landscape, both online and in person. LSNYC has a lawsuit pending in Federal court regarding the NYC DOE's failure to provide mandated interpretation and translation to LEP parents. Ensuring adequate resources for ELL students and their families is particularly important now as they face these ongoing challenges with remote and blended learning.

LSNYC is working hard to address the issues raised above, and ask that you provide \$500,000 to support our Access to Education Project, which will deliver legal services designed to help children catch up and keep up with their educations so that they are not further hurt by this pandemic. Our representation and advice have made a positive impact in low-income and communities of color, but these students also need access to fine arts education, sports, and other extracurricular activities in order to overcome inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our services will help students with special needs and disabilities, will provide language access advocacy for ELL students and their limited English proficient parents, and will work with the schools to implement restorative healing programs so that all students can be responded to with measures that are supportive and not punitive.



**New York City Arts in Education Roundtable**  
*Written Testimony - Committee on Education (March 21, 2022)*

First a thank you to Chair Joseph and fellow Committee Members, we are so grateful for your passion, leadership, and stewardship of the City Council's Committee on Education.

My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable and teaching artist working at P396K a District 75 school in Brownsville.

NYC's public school students have been through a lot the last two years during COVID:

- Lost learning time
- Suffering from the mental and emotional strain of remote learning
- Processing trauma associated with pandemic and racial injustices in our city and country

**Transforming our city's schools starts with the arts.**

The arts provide evidence-based solutions for engaging students in learning, increasing our parent involvement, improving academic outcomes, supporting student mental health, and promoting well-being.

We know an excellent arts education is the foundation and launching pad to success in school and life. However, under-investment in Arts Education in NYC has been recurrent. Prior to COVID-19, 67% of principals noted funding for the arts was generally insufficient. Only 34% of middle schoolers are meeting the state arts learning requirements. 17% of schools still lack a certified arts teacher. Almost 30% of schools no longer partner with an arts or cultural organization.

As echoed on this hearing we want inviting, colorful, vibrant, and thriving school communities — that starts with the arts.

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable recommends that the DOE makes sure all schools can provide required arts instruction to all students by taking the following steps:

**1) Baseline Per Capita Arts Education Funding**

In the 2021-22 school year, the DOE recommended that schools use just \$79.62 per student of their FSF allocation for arts. We recommend boosting the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$79.62. These funds give schools the resources needed to meet NYSED arts instructional requirements and are spent at each principal's discretion for hiring new art teachers, buying supplies, and building community partnerships to meet the unique needs of their school community (Pre-COVID, 67% of principals reported that funding for the arts was "insufficient").

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable recommends that the DOE makes sure all schools can provide required arts instruction to all students by raising the per student arts allocation to \$100 per student per year and by requiring the funding be spent on the arts.

There is a precedent for required per capita spending in arts education. Per the [former Comptroller Scott Stringer's 2014 State of the Arts report](#), "In 1997, BOE created Project ARTS, the first per capita funding allocation for arts education since the 1970s. Project ARTS funds were targeted for direct instruction in core arts areas, related equipment, resource materials and supplies and partnerships with arts and cultural

services.” In FY 2008, the Bloomberg administration eliminated Project ARTS due to the financial crisis of 2007–2008.

## **2) Center Arts and Cultural Education in Summer Rising, After School, and Tutoring**

Mayor Adams has announced plans to continue and expand the Summer Rising program and has indicated that the City will improve after school and tutoring programs available to families. The cultural community has long partnered with schools to enrich programming, improve instruction, and provide out-school experiences for students. In the first year of Summer Rising alone, 225 schools partnered with arts and cultural organizations to create hundreds of murals and community-rooted pop-up performances.

We request that the DOE build on success by continuing to direct at least \$5.6M in funding for arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities during Summer Rising. We also call on the City Council to continue funding the CASA and Su-CASA initiatives.

## **3) Continue American Rescue Plan Act Academic Recovery Funding for Arts Instruction**

*Continue 20% allocation to standards-based arts instruction to promote social, emotional and academic support for all students*

For the current school year, the DOE set aside \$70 million or twenty percent of the \$350 million in American Recovery Plan Act funding for academic recovery services specifically for the Arts. Engagement in the arts is not only therapeutic but also boosts academic achievement and school attachment. As we all know, schools were in pandemic response mode for much of this year and recovery will last for several years.

The DOE must devote 20% of the Fiscal 2023 [American Rescue Plan Act Academic Recovery funding](#) to expand standards-based arts instruction for all students and roll used Fiscal 2022 ARPA arts funding into Fiscal 2023 for summer and school year programs. The pandemic recovery will take years and these vital supports for arts-based interventions should remain in place. This ~\$44,000 allocation per school represents a down payment on what should be the universal right and access to quality arts education for all students, which begins by prioritizing students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students with economic need, and those in neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19.

## **4) Restore Cuts to Arts Services**

The DOE must restore and baseline the \$24 million for Arts Services cut when the pandemic hit New York City’s economy. This budget line includes Arts Partnership Grants that provide targeted opportunities for diverse groups of students, with a focus on English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Family Engagement programs.

These arts services were among the first items cut in 2020 yet boost student achievement in and through the arts, while developing and promoting best practices in arts education, and supporting strong partnerships with community-based organizations.

The arts are an essential part of every student’s academic program. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to our students.

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FY23

Preliminary Budget  
Hearing – Education  
Committee

Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair

*Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO*

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE)**. I am here today to ask that you continue that support by prioritizing our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Established in 1992, New York Edge is the largest provider of afterschool and summer programs in New York City, having been created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

**From these beginnings, we have grown into the largest provider of after-school and summer programming in New York City, serving youth in all five boroughs.** Our Education Team, comprised of educators with expertise in curriculum, professional coaching, and program development, take learning beyond the traditional classroom walls. **With academic instruction now accounting for more than 50% of our programming, core components include:**

- **Academics/STEAM Education**
- **Social-Emotional Learning**
- **Sports & Wellness**
- **The Arts**
- **College and Career Readiness**
- **Summer Camps**
- **Learning Labs**

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. And as our name

implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the EDGE that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

Students need healthy minds, bodies and relationships, as well as creative outlets, to thrive. Our programs help them develop all four. From homework support and engaging academic activities to sports and movement, to social-emotional learning and creative activities, our programs offer opportunities to develop in every aspect of their lives. NYE programs are making a world of difference in the lives of thousands of young people across the city:

- **86%** of students in our summer program advance to the next grade.
- **80%** of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools.
- **86%** of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.
- Students in NYE's High School Today, College Tomorrow program have a four-year high school completion rate more than **1.5 times higher** than the citywide rate.

New York Edge is a leader in the afterschool community, well-regarded for our evidence-based approach to afterschool programming, grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL). We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access programs.

Targeting underserved communities throughout the city, NYE's entire student population is **90% or more African American** or Hispanic, with an approximately equal number of males and females. **More than 85% come from low-income households eligible for Title 1 free or reduced-price lunches.**

**With funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative we annually impact tens of thousands of students in grades K-12 from over 100 sites across the city through our school year and summer programs.** Programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **The past two years have brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks, Hip Hop Heals and:**

- **Modern States Education Alliance** - a non-profit dedicated to making a high quality college education free of cost and accessible to any person who seeks one. We have introduced their Freshman Year for Free™ (FYFF) program to our high school students and staff. FYFF lets students earn up to one year of college credit without tuition or textbook expense. The program is offered in partnership with edX, the leading online learning platform founded by Harvard and MIT. FYFF offers 30 high quality freshman college courses, taught by some of the world's leading universities and professors. Students can transfer credits earned to more than 2,000 colleges and universities across the country.
- **One Million Guitars** - founded by internationally renowned Israeli singer-songwriter David Broza, One Million Guitars is a nonprofit organization that gives school children around the world hand-crafted guitars and the foundation of a musical education. One Million Guitars is sending New York Edge 250 guitars for our arts programs in elementary and middle schools.
- **National Grid's Grid for Good Partnership** – over 250 NYE students are learning about the energy industry and receiving the job skills, is tools, resources and employment opportunities to help them pursue successful careers in this field.

**We also created a Student Book Publishing Initiative, which published its first book last year (available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble), and a student led podcast which is coming soon to a podcast player near you.**

I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 30 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York's most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps and to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past three decades of support from the New York City Council. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!***

Thank you.





NEW YORK

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Education on the  
Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023**

**March 21, 2022**

**Submitted by No Kid Hungry New York**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, Chair Joseph and members of the Committee on Education of the New York City Council. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of No Kid Hungry New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on the preliminary budget for the New York City Department of Education for Fiscal Year 2023.

First, we thank the City Council for your continued commitment to protect New Yorkers from food insecurity. The City Council has long been a leader in addressing food insecurity, from supporting Breakfast in the Classroom to the expansion of universal school meals to leading the charge for increased, baselined funding for food pantries and soup kitchens to ensuring addressing food insecurity remained a top priority throughout the pandemic. Now more than ever, we are grateful to count you as our partner in the fight against food insecurity.

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry campaign builds public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children have access to the healthy food they need, every day. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, No Kid Hungry provided nearly \$2 million in emergency grants and support across New York City and Puerto Rico. In addition to our grant-making, we also offered strategic assistance to hundreds of local organizations and advocated for policies to address the unique barriers and unprecedented level of need brought on by the pandemic. This included national child nutrition waivers, which allowed meal providers to adapt and streamline their federal child nutrition program operations so they could keep serving meals to kids, other program flexibilities for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Pandemic EBT to help reach more kids in need. No Kid Hungry will also continue to operate a local text line this summer – “NYC FOOD” or “NYC COMIDA” to 304-304 to help families locate meals, and No Kid Hungry New York will continue to work closely with the New York City Department of Education to customize the service to reflect their specific offerings. Since 2011, our No Kid Hungry New York campaign has helped connect millions of

children across the state with school breakfast and summer meals.

## **IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUNGER AND POVERTY IN NEW YORK CITY**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all parts of our lives as New Yorkers. For many of our city's children and families, the pandemic and its economic consequences have had a disastrous impact on food security. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 5 children in New York City were food insecure. ***Recent estimates show that 1 in 4 New York City children may face food insecurity this year*** and the numbers would likely be higher without interventions from the federal, state and city governments.<sup>1</sup>

**No Kid Hungry New York believes that all children, no matter their borough or circumstance, deserve the opportunity to be nourished and safe, so they can live up to their full potential and achieve their dreams.** Adequate nutrition, both at school and at home, helps lay the foundation for a child's physical and emotional development, educational attainment, and health and well-being. Years of data and research have demonstrated that federal nutrition programs are our nation's most effective defense against hunger and food insecurity and have helped lift millions of families out of poverty.

As the impact of the pandemic lingers, there are numerous investments that can and must be made in FY 2023 to improve food access and food security for children and families across New York City. By providing needed support to expand participation in federal nutrition programs and increase coordination and innovation, New York City can help to reduce food insecurity for New Yorkers in every borough and continue to reverse the trend of drastically increased food insecurity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 NEW YORK CITY BUDGET**

For many children, school meals are their only source of consistent nutrition. The importance of school meals has never been more apparent than when school buildings closed for classroom learning in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. Over the years, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) has expanded access to school meals by implementing Breakfast After the Bell programs in select schools and offering no-cost breakfast and lunch to all students.

### **Full Implementation of Breakfast After the Bell**

In 2015, New York City made a bold commitment to equity, requiring all city elementary schools to implement Breakfast in the Classroom and ensuring students in those schools could start the school day with a nutritious breakfast. New York City became a national model for child nutrition programs and paved the way for New York State, which passed legislation in 2018 requiring breakfast be part of the school day for more than 1,400 schools statewide, including over 1,000 schools in New York City. Despite these agreements, many schools chose not to participate and claimed there were operational

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. *Food Insecurity and Access in New York City during the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020-2021*. Epi Data Brief, No. 128, Nov. 2021.  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief128.pdf>.

barriers to offering grab and go breakfast or breakfast delivered to the classroom. Since the pandemic, all New York City public schools have provided alternative breakfast options and this program expansion must become permanent. Students who start the day with breakfast have higher attendance, better test scores and fewer chronic health problems. We urge the Council to support funding that ensures the Department of Education has appropriate funding to fully implement Breakfast After the Bell.

### **Culturally Relevant Meals**

The New York City Department of Education has prioritized offering kosher and halal meals to children and families across the city. Each year, they have also expanded vegetarian and now vegan options. Failure to accommodate cultural food preferences can discourage children from participating in school, out-of-school time, and childcare nutrition programs, so this expansion has helped increase participation. New York City should continue to expand diverse food options and provide city agencies with training and tools to engage communities and plan culturally relevant menus.

### **Summer Meals Accessibility**

Summer meals historically reach far fewer eligible students than meals served during the school year, making summer the hungriest time of the year. In New York City, barriers to access often include accessibility of meal sites and lack of program awareness among families. Broad promotion of the summer meals program and available meal sites is integral to reducing summer hunger among New York City's children. Ensuring that information regarding meal sites comes from trusted messengers, such as schools, local elected officials, principals, parent advisory councils, and faith leaders, is an important way to encourage families to participate in the summer meals program. Many families also struggle with reaching meal sites, especially if meal sites are not close to home or when facing extreme weather. Expanding the number of meal sites and strategically placing them to avoid gaps in service are both essential strategies to increase summer meals participation. We also urge the Council to help promote summer meals to your own constituents.

### **Expand School Pantries and Mobile Markets**

In 2016, New York City created first-in-the-nation food and hygiene pantries in New York City public schools. The school pantries provide food, cleaning supplies, menstrual products, and tools to address hygiene for families in the school community. Investing in new school pantries would help families put food on the table, and pantry location could be determined based on food insecurity rates, if the school was in an area considered a food desert or did not have an emergency food provider in proximity. Knowing how many communities across the city struggle to access fresh produce, partnering with other city agencies and nonprofit organizations to set up mobile markets could also increase access to fresh produce and resources for families. School pantries also provide another opportunity to promote other programs to families. We urge the Council to increase support so that more schools across New York City can offer food pantries and mobile markets to their families.

### **Provide Support and Protection for Nutrition Staff Working to Serve Families and Children**

We also want to recognize the members of the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services staff who have been on the front lines of the pandemic serving school meals to kids and families. The entire New York City school system relies on the incredible men and women of Local 372, DC 37 to provide nutritious meals to children year-round. We must ensure the Department of Education has appropriate supplies, tools and resources to protect staff members as they continue their essential work of feeding children. We also owe them tremendous gratitude for these heroic efforts.

### **Increase Awareness, Outreach and Enrollment for Nutrition Programs**

With many New Yorkers still facing unemployment and underemployment, especially in the face of rising food prices and rent, safety net programs are more important than ever. Federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid and the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) exist to help families get back on their feet during hard times. However, these programs only work when people can access them. As many New Yorkers are qualifying for benefits for the first time and the chilling effect of the rescinded Public Charge rule is still being felt by immigrant families, accessing public benefits can be confusing and lead to lack of confidence in enrolling or utilizing programs. New York City must prioritize funding for outreach and education efforts to help immigrant families enroll in programs, including food and nutrition programs, for which they or their children are eligible. Schools are an important and trusted vehicle to communicate about these programs with families.

### **CONCLUSION**

New York City is recovering from a prolonged period of unprecedented loss and challenges. Throughout the pandemic, city agencies and nonprofit organizations sustained and fed children and families. With the city reopening for business and life taking on signs of more normal existence, it is essential that no New Yorkers are left behind. As you deliberate the FY23 New York City budget, we urge the New York City Council to prioritize funding programs that ensure none of New York's children face hunger. No Kid Hungry New York stands at the ready to work with the New York City Council and our fellow New Yorkers to ensure all children and families have access to the food they need to thrive.



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**Testimony of Melanie Hartzog  
President and CEO  
The New York Foundling**

**To the New York City Council  
Preliminary Budget Hearing- Education**

**March 21, 2022**

As President and CEO of The New York Foundling, one of New York City's oldest and largest nonprofit providers of human services, I am pleased to share our deep commitment to creating a safe and nurturing environment for New York City's students, particularly those who are struggling with crises and trauma that interfere with their education. First and foremost, I'd like to thank Chairwoman Joseph and the committee members for their unwavering commitment to our community's children.

For the past three years, The Foundling's Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) has been allocated a generous grant of \$248,000 from the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault which has been crucial to our ability to prevent abuse from occurring and from going unreported. The Foundling is requesting increased funding for CAPP to address the rising threat of child abuse at a critical moment for our community. The economic consequences of the pandemic have placed tremendous stress on families and strained family relationships. Increased online activity has also created a dangerous "opportunity" for internet predators. Children in our community are only just beginning to heal from the social, emotional, and psychological harm that has been caused by a prolonged period of isolation and anxiety, and without additional support, we will be poorly equipped to meet those needs.



CAPP is designed to help third and fourth grade children recognize situations that may be abusive, and assure children that they have the right to seek help from a trusted adult if they experience abuse. The program uses relatable child-sized puppets to discuss "safe," "unsafe," and "confusing" touches. After the Workshop, children are given the opportunity to stay and speak to a trained counselor or prevention specialist (during virtual Workshops, students are also given an activity sheet asking if they would like to speak privately with a counselor).

The Foundling is also requesting \$100,000 in discretionary funds to continue and strengthen the



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important work of the Road to Success (RTS) and Road to Success – Citywide (RTS-Citywide) programs which are designed to provide holistic tutoring and educational supports to young people who are involved with the child welfare system. The trauma-informed work of these programs has helped hundreds of students stay on track academically during both personal and communitywide crises in recent years.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with schools and with the City Council to help our students and community heal—socially, emotionally, and academically—as we emerge from this crisis. Thank you for your time.

**The New York City Charter School Center**  
**Erik Joerss, Director of Government Affairs**  
**Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Education**  
**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Hearings**

**March 21, 2022**

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committees on Education and Finance for providing the opportunity to comment on the Executive Budget Hearings on behalf of the New York City charter school sector.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City (NYC), and in the 2021-22 school year there are 271 public charter schools operating in the five boroughs. These public schools employ an estimated 11,400 public school teachers and educate over 140,000 students, representing over 14% of public school students, of which 90% are Black/African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income NYC families (over 80% are economically disadvantaged), offering additional high-quality educational options for families.

The students (and families) who attend NYC's public charter schools represent some of the communities hardest hit by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these obstacles, however, NYC's public charter schools – the most underfunded public schools in NYC - have demonstrated a unique ability to pivot during the past two years.<sup>1</sup> In addition to adapting content for remote learning and prioritizing student advancement, charters supported their families by immediately and continuously providing technology and ensuring wireless access. And understanding the unprecedented crisis that COVID-19 has wrought, many schools used their community partnerships and volunteerism from their staff to provide a range of supports, from

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<sup>1</sup> See Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), New York Charter Schools: Remote Instruction During COVID Crisis (Spring 2020) – Results for All Authorizers, 2020, available at: [https://credo.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6481/f/ny\\_charter\\_schools\\_-\\_remote\\_instruction\\_-\\_2020\\_-\\_all\\_authorizers.pdf](https://credo.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6481/f/ny_charter_schools_-_remote_instruction_-_2020_-_all_authorizers.pdf). CREDO's study findings included that 91% of charter teachers increased the amount of time they communicated with families and when students were not present in remote classes, about two-thirds took additional steps such as conducting home visits, providing wireless hotspots, or reaching out the individual student's extended network to try and re-engage the student.





reengaging and collaborating with their respective alumni networks to providing families essential supplies and rental assistance.

During the pandemic, all schools have had to navigate learning models, with little to no advanced notice, from fully remote to blended and in-person learning. Despite public charter schools being among the most underfunded schools in the city, navigating learning models throughout the pandemic has been an obstacle charters have conquered, largely, at greater success than district schools. In February 2022, Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) published their second COVID-19 related report on New York charter schools' response to the pandemic. The findings showed that in Spring 2020, after building closures, 55% of New York charters provided internet to students via devices embedded with hotspots, and 46% provided other actions, such as parent training and monetary assistance for at-home broadband costs. Furthermore, CREDO found that 99% of charters provided teachers with professional development specifically related to remote learning.<sup>2</sup> As education and classrooms continue to adapt for the future, supporting charters through funding, resources, and partnership will continue to enhance and illuminate the academic and socioemotional outcomes for all students.

As we move beyond the two-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, this time of strife has exacerbated and highlighted disparities of resources, services, education, and economics between communities and demographics, and NYC has not been spared from these effects. The many ways schools and communities attempt to mitigate these unique challenges and disadvantages fell far short during this public health crisis, affecting those most vulnerable in our communities: our children. The education sector in NYC has not been immune, as educators, parents, and advocates noticed that services and programs provided to district students by the NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE) have been withheld from charter students, even though charter students are public school students and New Yorkers.

With respect to the 2022-23 Fiscal Year Executive Budget Proposal, we were disappointed to see that among the influx of both federal and state money, the NYC DOE has not reinstated the District-Charter Partnership (DCP) program. The DCP program, which was one of the Equity and Excellence initiatives established in 2015, provided opportunities for over 350 charter and district schools to come together in a variety of forums to learn from and share with each other. This work has included School-to-School Partnerships; Professional Learning Partnerships; and Systemwide Partnerships. Following Mayor Adams's and Chancellor Banks's desire to scale up educational excellence, the DCP program is an ideal vehicle for educators to exchange ideas and collaborate for the betterment of all New York City students. While it is understandable why program cuts such as this one had to be made to the budget in a time when all budgets were being cut, there is no reason the DCP program should not being reinstated in the 2022-23 school

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<sup>2</sup> New Research Tracks Charters' Early Moves During Pandemic, see <https://www.the74million.org/new-research-tracks-charters-early-moves-during-pandemic/>





year. We provide two examples of the important work the DCP program started and request that funding is reinstated in this year's budget so it can continue.

As part of the School-to-School Partnership program, Campus District–Charter Partnerships (CDCOP) were created to build positive cross-sector relationships in more than 150 school buildings where district and charter schools are co-located. CDCOP fostered collaboration between charters and district schools that share a campus through structured meetings focusing on topics of shared interest, including improving campus-wide instruction, student engagement, and parental involvement. These partnerships are even more important as schools acclimate to in-person, unmasked learning environments and work together to maintain the health and safety of all in the buildings.

Another important DCP program was the District–Charter Special-Education Partnerships. While charter schools are autonomous in many respects, the NYC DOE is the local education agency (LEA) for special education in NYC charter schools, which means all decisions about the provision of special education services for charter students is made by the DOE's Committees on Special Education (CSEs). Students with disabilities make up 18.1% of charter school students (which is comparable to the percentage of students with disabilities in the district), representing 25,390 students. All charter schools and families benefit from the central support for the CSEs that has been improved and expanded under this program. As charter schools work in partnership with the CSE to ensure students with disabilities receive all they need to make up for lost time, it is critical that funding for this partnership be restored along with the central DOE positions that support the provision of special education services to charter students.



## **TESTIMONY**

Preliminary Budget Hearing:

“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:  
Worker Cooperatives As An Innovative Workforce Development Strategy”

### **Presented to**

New York City Council, Committee on Economic Development  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Chair  
Mon, March 21st, 2022

### **Prepared By:**

Melat Seyoum, Worker  
New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNoWC)

### **New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives**

P.O. Box 800028, Elmhurst, NY 11380-0028

Phone: (212) 390-8178

Good afternoon, Hon.Chairperson Gale Brewer and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Economic Development. My name is Melat Seyoum, and I'm the Worker Coop Policy Advocate for the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (also known as NYC NoWC) the local trade association representing worker cooperative businesses & democratic workplaces in the New York City metropolitan area. I am here alongside my colleagues from the Democracy at Work Institute, The Working World, Workers Justice Project and the NYCNOWC Advocacy Council members representing 9 other organizations that make up the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), asking NYC City Council to continue supporting the expansion of worker-ownership in next year's budget and firmly into the future.

Eight years ago, NYC Council made history by passing the nation's first Worker Cooperative development initiative. Since then more than 20 cities across the nation are looking closely, replicating, and catching up to our city. Cities like: Madison, Philadelphia, Oakland, Boston, Santa Clara, and many others have introduced similar legislation or budget allocations.

Since the inception of the *initiative we have created over 175 new cooperatives businesses and approximately 1000 new jobs, that are not only providing higher hourly wages but also building wealth and assets for individuals who are overwhelmingly women BIPOC and immigrants.* We have seen first hand how the initiative has served to bolster our sector, strengthening existing cooperative businesses and creating new ones, which are overwhelmingly immigrant and women owned. The Initiative Partners have collectively worked to create a comprehensive ecosystem of support for cooperative businesses that not only ensures the creation of new cooperatives in low income areas, but also the technical assistance needed to sustain businesses and create jobs, as well as the education and outreach needed for communities, interested entrepreneurs, and allied organizations.

Worker cooperatives are good businesses that operate for the benefit of the workers and the community at large. They are a solution to issues of inequity, issues that have been further exposed and exacerbated during this pandemic. During this time, worker coops are doing everything they can to weather the storm, prevent layoffs, and center their products and services on the needs of the broader community. For example, some are working to address food insecurities right now, and others are providing critical health and safety training during this pandemic online.

**Over the past year of this crisis, the WCBDI organizations have been working tirelessly to support our distressed businesses in navigating this crisis and in pivoting their businesses to respond effectively to the times.** This support is crucial to ensuring that some of NYC's most vulnerable businesses, and business owners, are able to survive this pandemic.

**In addition, WCBDI works to save businesses and jobs by converting to worker-ownership:**

Thousands of NYC small businesses are in danger of closing as a result of the pandemic. Many small business owners will work hard to rebound from this crisis, but many others, especially those near the age of retirement will have little option but to shutter. Before this crisis, ***85% of small businesses were facing closure due to lack of succession planning.*** Selling the businesses to their workers and converting to a worker cooperative is one of the only options available for preserving these businesses and securing local jobs. WCBDI partners have developed wrap-around services, education and training, financing and expertise to assist in making this possible. My colleagues here today will shed more light on these important aspects of WCBDI.

This pandemic has drastically shown us just how vulnerable the economy is. As we potentially start to emerge out of this pandemic, we can't just return to business as usual. We need an economy and an approach to economic development and recovery that centers people first. Workers cooperatives are a solution to that and the solution is thriving here. NYC is home to the largest worker cooperatives in the country, Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA) which has been working to lift up standards in the home care industry. It is also home to the nation's first workers cooperative franchise, Brightly, which has been supported by our WCBDI partner and member, Center for Family Life and which has led to an acceleration of cleaning cooperatives across the city that are also working to raise standards in that sector. Cooperatives are also growing in a variety of industries from manufacturing to construction to the arts, as communities across this city are seeking better employment opportunities and finding solutions in workers cooperatives.

Over the years we have worked closely with the NYC Department of Small Business Services, our contracting agency for WCBDI. We have also worked with other city agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, which has produced incredible research into economic democracy and workers cooperative, looking at examples from all over the world where cooperative economies are much larger and thriving. However, up until this point, we have not worked much with the NYCEDC. We know that the agency has much it can offer to support worker cooperatives. There is so much that workers cooperative businesses need beyond education and technical assistance support. They need affordable space and community land trusts so that their models can grow and thrive. They need direct financing and procurement opportunities with city agencies. We would like to sit down with you, Chair Vallone, and with NYCEDC to continue discussion around these needs.

**We ask city council to enhance our funding to \$5.012 million in order to for us to double down on the essential long term economic recovery work that will be needed to claw ourselves out of this crisis**

We thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify. We hope that you will consider our budget priorities and recommendations during this year's budget negotiation process.

# **New York City Council**

## **AT-PROMISE YOUTH ARE NOT EXPENDABLE AND NEITHER ARE THOSE WHO SERVE THEM**

March 21, 2022

Testimony Presented By  
Michael De Vito Jr.  
Executive Director  
NYCID



Good Day Councilmembers:

I'm Michael DeVito from New York Center for Interpersonal Development. NYCID is a member of the Learning to Work Coalition and we represent at-risk youth who are enrolled in Transfer schools and Young Adult Borough Centers across the City. Our programs serve more than 16,000 youth annually.

First, thank you, to everyone who ensured that there were no large cuts to our programs in FY23. We need some room to breathe for sure.

I raise my voice today because there is a tsunami of young people who are in need and don't even know it yet. For the last year high schools, with an injection of stimulus money, have been attempting to solve their own problems associated with youth falling behind. We have been here before in the 1990s. It's why LTW exists. And when stimulus money runs out those long-term absentee rosters will be as long as the days we spent in lock down.

So, I am here today to implore you to take a proactive approach to this truth.

A while back I reported to this committee that the partnerships that CBOs like NYCID have with the city have saved the Big Apple BILLIONS.

Here's the figure that has been presented over the years to many committees: \$325,000 - that's the aggregated figure presented by Northeastern University and the Community Service Society,

*"in lifetime budgetary terms, 'each individual without a high school diploma represents a net cost to New York City of \$134,037, whereas each New Yorker with a high school diploma or GED yields a net benefit of \$192,715 – a swing of more than \$325,000 per person.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the aggregate, simply helping one low-skilled New Yorker earn a high school degree or equivalency is worth more than \$325,000 to the city."<sup>2</sup>*

In the last 20 years we have helped more than **15,000** New Yorkers obtain a high school diploma. That's \$4.9 **billion** dollars of net benefit for our city.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Service Society, From Basic Skills to Better Futures: Generating Economic Dividends for New York City at 9 (Sept. 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Id. at 1.

As you move forward, you must remember this number. Because to stay the wave of need coming, we need a real commitment from you all. Our programs are funded through tax levy dollars. Therefore, we've found ourselves constantly on the chopping block. That needs to change under your watch because we can no longer rely on "what-ifs." We need a true sustainable commitment to the kids who our system continues to fail.

What we are asking for is sustainable streams of funding for the Learning to Work programs City Wide- It's \$42.1m a year. 42.m to save Billions.

We also ask for the city to make a commitment to LTW programs of \$30.4m from the federal stimulus dollars set to expire by 2025. 30.4m to save Billions.

It is not news to any of you that CBO's do the City's heavy lifting. Give us everything we need to keep lifting. We serve without the protection of a union we should not have to sing for our supper or prove our relevance each year. We serve at the behest of the City and we keep saying "yes" because we refuse to say "no" to those we serve.

Say "yes" now to this simple idea – you'll save Billions.

I'd like to leave you with one final thought: We all understand how important it is to invest in the infrastructure of our roads, bridges, and waterways. I ask you now to invest in the infrastructure that serves our most vulnerable. In the end we will save. Remember: Billion!

We all know there is a way to get this done.  
In the field – we always find a way.

Please find a way.

Thank you.



**Testimony of Jenny Veloz**  
**New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**  
**New York City Council Education Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing**  
**March 21, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Joseph, and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak at today's Preliminary Budget hearing on the critical issue of funding for electric school buses.

As we continue to face this ongoing climate crisis, we must consider how transportation, especially New York City's school bus fleet, contributes to the toxic emissions that continue to plague disadvantaged, environmental justice communities and intensifies the adverse health conditions, of our most vulnerable populations - children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

New York City has one of the largest school bus fleets in the state, with approximately 10,000 school buses in operation across the city. These school buses are old and environmentally inefficient. The average age of a New York City school bus 16 years. The amount of pollutants that school buses emit poses a huge health risk to students who depend on them daily to get to and from school. On average, students can spend almost two hours on a school bus (sometimes longer for special education students) because of the inefficiency of school bus routes. It is unimaginable to think that a student with asthma continues to ride a school bus that will worsen their medical condition.

This issue is exacerbated because many school buses depots are housed in disadvantaged, environmental justice communities. Upon exiting the depots in the mornings, school buses leave behind a trail of diesel fumes that continue until they reach their destination. Furthermore, school buses often idle in front of schools and designated bus stops (longer than legally required) resulting in the inhalation of these toxic fumes, increasing the likelihood of asthma and other respiratory ailments. Students are not the only ones affected by the harmful pollutants of diesel school buses. Individuals living in these communities are also adversely affected by the toxic fumes emitting from these buses. COVID-19 related illnesses continue to be aggravated by diesel school buses, emphasizing the need to ensure an efficient and equitable transition to electric school buses.

The passage of Intro 455 (now Local Law 120), which requires the electrification of all school buses by 2035, is a crucial first step and will go a long way in improving the operation of school buses. Both this year and going forward through 2035, we need to ensure there is sufficient funding in DOE's budget to purchase and/or lease electric buses, as well as the financial resources needed to maintain them. We must ensure that bus drivers and maintenance workers have the necessary training needed to operate electric buses in a way that fosters a Just Transition away from gas and diesel vehicles. A successful transition also includes creating and prioritizing electric school bus routes in environmentally overburdened communities to lessen the negative impacts of cumulative air pollution.

Infrastructure is also an important component to a successful transition. Priority should be given to environmental justice communities in the construction of charging stations since these are the communities where most school bus depots are located. Benefits of the transition will include more students riding these buses that no longer subject them to breathe in harmful diesel fumes. And by extension, communities that house school bus depots will no longer worry about school bus driving up and down the street polluting the air.

Student health extends beyond transitioning diesel school buses to electric. It also entails equity to access and opportunity to after school sports. For years, Black and Latinx public high school students had minimal to no access to PSAL sports. Sports contribute to the overall well-being of student-athletes, both physically, mentally, and scholastically. A student athlete should not be penalized because he/she attends a school with minimal sports options. We are encouraged by the settlement reached in the class action lawsuit, *Jimenez v. the Department of Education (DOE) and Public School Athletic League (PSAL)*, that expands access to PSAL sports to Black and Latinx high school students. However, we must make sure that there is and will be appropriate funding in this year's budget, as well as future DOE budgets to ensure the success of the settlement and the DOE and PSAL's commitment to sports equity for all New York City students.

If we are serious about wanting a cleaner and healthier New York (Local Law 120 and *Jimenez v. DOE and PSAL* settlement are proof of that), ensuring proper and sufficient funding in DOE's budget for the transition to electric school buses and expansion of PSAL funding need to be top priorities. Purchasing and/or leasing buses, charging stations and job training are core to a successful transition from diesel to electric school buses. While, making sure there is equitable funding for

the expansion of sports contributes to healthier, more active students. Both these initiatives get us one step closer to a cleaner, healthier New York City.

**March 17th 2022**

Hello my name is Tanesha Grant I am the founder and executive director of Parents Supporting Parents NY. This is my written testimony to the education committee giving my thoughts as PSPNY and as a community organizer in Harlem. For far too long as everyone always states we know our children have gone without their public school education being fully funded. From technology including a permanent remote option, to culturally responsive curriculum and education, smaller class sizes, school safety, bus services for children with and without IEP services, IEP services in general, school nutrition, social emotional learning, mandated reporting and various other services our children don't get the high quality education they deserve. Black, brown, Indigenous, and immigrant parents have for years, giving their free time to address all of these issues with elected officials and the Department of Education. We even work really hard on solutions that we then present to DOE and elected officials. Equity can't wait and neither can our public school communities.

Parents are quite tired of everyone telling us and our students it takes time and we must wait for these resources to be put in place. Why should we be made to wait for our children to get a high quality education and all of their mandated services as public school children. Who is held accountable for continuing the cycle of starving our public schools of money in the NYC budget to adequately address these very serious harmful issues affecting NYC public school children? We have high hopes this new City Council not only allocates monies to fully fund public schools but also follows up with the Department of Education continuously making sure the DOE budget is used wisely to build responsible effective programs that actually work to address these issues in a holistic manner that stops the cycle of our public schools being more traumatizing to our children rather than a space to learn and be supported with every resource. This is every public school student's right that for generations has been denied. There is a reason that we are the most segregated school system in the nation. We at PSPNY and many other parents and students urge the City Council Education Committee of 2022 to finally put the children 1st. That starts by allocation of City Council budget funds. We know that the money given from the federal government has barely been used and we also know Eric Adams is proposing to cut even more money from education in his budget proposal. As City Council members you have the power to stop our newest mayor from continuing a pattern that hurts our public schools and gives our students less opportunities to succeed in life. You can't complain about reading levels and various other areas where the public school system is failing our children and then blame our children for the outcome.

It is time that elected officials and the department of education truly work and listen to the voice of parents who send their children to the public school education system. We want to be fully involved with the operations and curriculum of our children's public schools. It's time for the DOE to understand you can no longer continue to waste money on one size fits all children actions when we know our children are individually unique as a person. We must use different techniques that speak to that individual child instead of expecting all our children to learn the same or need the same resources and support. We keep hesitating about going back to normal. Normal never worked for many of us. It is time to create a new normal that centers equity. We

will continue to be heavily involved with advocacy for high quality education in every public school in NYC. Thank you for your time

**Tanesha Grant**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**Parents Supporting Parents NY**  
**Moms United for Black Lives NYC**

Testimony for City Council Education Budget Hearing held March 21, 2022  
from **Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST NYC)**  
[Submitted on March 24, 2022 by Sara Catalinotto, founder of PIST NYC]

School busing is a necessary educational service for approximately 150,000 NYC children and youth who attend either Early Intervention, 3-K, pre-K, state-funded non-public school, parochial school or Yeshiva. It is also a key component of activities such as school trips, sports games, and vocational programs and internships.

Transportation is a mandate within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, NYSED law, and NYCDOE Chancellor's Regulation A-801. Medicaid reimbursement can be pursued for specialized busing (a Related Service equivalent to Speech/Language Therapy and others) to supplement funds procured through these federal, state, and local mandates.

Beyond that, school transportation as a part of education is eligible for the Equal Funding which the State owes our school district(s); as part of the transportation infrastructure is eligible for upcoming federal Infrastructure investments, especially with the pending transition to electric vehicles; and the understaffed school bus (and mass transit) workforce are Essential Workers eligible for Covid Relief funding sources.

This past weekend, we hosted a cross section of impacted families and interested allies to promote our legislative campaign for a 2022 ballot initiative nicknamed the School Bus Bill of Rights. Pasted below you will find a summary and selection of quotes from organizations and individuals—including current and former school bus riders with disabilities advocating for themselves—from the day.

We would like for the Council to incorporate into its budget projections the growing demand for system change in pupil transportation. We believe that an investment now, for example into acquiring more bus fleets such as was done with the buy-out of Reliant Transportation by non-profit New York City School Bus Umbrella Services (NYCSBUS), will ultimately save money. A large chunk of the Office of Pupil Transportation budget currently only goes to private owners of these fleets who may or may not be local taxpayers—with no public oversight as to how or whether they meet standards we would set for upkeep of the vehicles, recruiting, training, and retaining a dedicated workforce, and efficient and compassionate customer service for worried parents and caregivers whose only wish is to get their children to school and home on time in decent physical and mental condition. In addition to the billions of dollars that school bus companies are paid directly from the taxpayers, every day they issue multiple outrageous fines to hardworking drivers for petty infractions, e.g. \$200 for wearing the uniform but not the necktie. The insult and injury heaped on these safety professionals is one more thing driving attrition, to the point that as OPT admitted, 550 routes had no driver assigned on the first day of school year 2021-22.

We feel strongly that waste can be cut and redirected into making sure this vital public service is of the quality that our students deserve. Thank you for your consideration and please read on.

## **Families, unions, electeds and advocates rally and march for a ‘School Bus Bill of Rights’**

On Saturday March 19, dozens rallied in Brooklyn’s Cadman Plaza Park before marching over the Brooklyn Bridge to the Department of Education (DOE), to highlight the need for systemic reform in student transportation. The crowd of sixty or so included families, groups of paraprofessionals and teachers, several delegates from the largest NYC school bus union, environmentalists, and other advocates. ASL interpretation for the Deaf community was done by Katie Peacock Heale.

### Quotes:

Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST NYC) founder Sara Catalinotto: *We’re here because we want the young people to know that people care if, when, and how they get to school. The rules about busing are not made by the people who have to live with it. The **School Bus Bill of Rights** campaign seeks to give power to Disability leaders, parent/caregiver leaders, worker leaders and school leaders over decisions about student transportation.*

Advocate for Disabilities Christopher D. Greif, referring to the program for students who are ready to learn how to ride mass transit alone: *Travel training shouldn’t be stopped; it should be an option, but meanwhile we need the school buses to get the kids with and without disabilities to school. I want to thank the unions who do the hard work, even in Covid and snowstorms. Let’s work together and get a School Bus Bill of Rights.*

Amalgamated Transit Union local 1181-1061 Recording Secretary Tomas Fret: *We need the DOE to step up and route these routes correctly for our children to get to school safely, on time. We need E.P.P. (Employee Protection Provisions) to make this a career again. We need a School Bus Bill of Rights.*

State Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon: *It’s when everybody comes together, and puts their needs, thoughts, skills, and experiences on the table, that we can come up with a School Bus Bill of Rights that reflects what our needs are—and make the improvements...We need this to be a part of every budget conversation, every education, environmental, and transportation conversation.*

Bronx mom Monica Roman: *It took for my daughter to be in the newspaper, on the front page in October, to get her busing—after all the money I spent on cabs, because she has a disability that makes walking to school too hard.*

Kathy Park Price, Transportation Alternatives activist and former Panel for Educational Policy member: *Student transportation, environmental and social justice are all connected.*

Justin Wood, Policy Director for New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, part of the Electrify NY Coalition: *Across New York State, there are disproportionate numbers of students with disabilities, workers, and environmental justice neighborhoods breathing the emissions from fifty thousand dirty diesel, outdated school buses. NYC needs funding from the state to transition to electric buses by 2035.*

Education Council Consortium statement, read by Lupe Hernandez of District 2: *We still have thousands of students unable to participate in Special Education Recovery Services (SERS) because there is still no transportation in place to transport students back home from these after school programs. We...demand...that all students eligible for pupil transportation be treated with respect and dignity, and we demand oversight and accountability from the Office Of Pupil Transportation (OPT).*

Deputy Public Advocate for Education and Opportunity Elizabeth Kennedy, on behalf of NYC Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams (whose office has been collecting school bus complaints): *These issues have been here long before the pandemic. They look like staffing shortages; doubled up routes; crowding; lack of PPE for the workers; and students having longer rides than ever before.*

Milagros Cancel, president Timon Family Services: *We need a law that protects the rights of the students and the E.P.P. of the workers – that is what will change the problems of busing.*

Amy Tsai, Community Council for District 75: *For the 26,000 students in District 75, and all other students with disabilities that require transportation, it is a related service under law, not a privilege. Families are in desperate need of a change.*

Charles Jenkins, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, New York Chapter: *Our children are suffering with inadequate transportation to get to school to learn—breathing in fumes that are harmful to the mind—while the bus companies rake in millions and billions of dollars. CBTU is committed to working on this issue with you.*

Paullette Healy, representing NYC Councilmember Alexa Aviles: *85% of District 75 students are bused. If the DOE fails to get our kids to school, they fail altogether. \$1.6 billion was allocated for school transportation last year, and yet more children are not able to get to school than ever before. Where is the accountability?*

Lucas, District 75 student: *If we can't get to school safely, how can we learn? Transit equity for all!*

Gloria Brandman, Retiree Advocate/UFT: *As a special educator, I spent time putting transportation services in the Individualized Education Plans (IEP)-- legal documents—but then spent more time on the phone with OPT and companies trying to get the services, and with parents wondering where the bus is.*

Maggie Sanchez, Protect NYC Special Education: *There shouldn't be a shortage of bus paraprofessionals, drivers or matrons, because New York State and City has received lots of funding. Where's it going? Show us the data that you cannot provide E.P.P. for the drivers.*

Also represented were 350 NYC, the Coalition to Finally End Mayoral Control, Haiti Liberte newspaper (which also provided Kreyol translation for flyers and publicized the event in print), Struggle/La Lucha newspaper, Bronx Autism Family Support, Lower East Side Community Partnership Project, and longtime Citywide Council on Special Education member Ellen McHugh. United Federation of Teachers Brooklyn Parent and Community Outreach liaison Tesa Wilson gave out water bottles, and her Queens counterpart Delci Rodriguez donated hand sanitizer. City University of New York students who formerly had IEPs volunteered for first aid and filming, coordinated by PIST NYC co-founder Johnnie Stevens.

For more information contact [pistnyc@gmail.com](mailto:pistnyc@gmail.com)  
Interviews in Spanish, contact [comitetimon07@gmail.com](mailto:comitetimon07@gmail.com)





Part of the group at Tweed building

*Photo: Eleonora Francica*



Delegation from school bus union ATU 1181

*Photo: Facebook of Anthony Cordiello*

**Testimony for Queens Botanical Garden  
FY2023 Education Committee Hearing**

**March 21, 2022**



Hello, I'm Rebecca Wolf, Deputy Director at Queens Botanical Garden. We are thrilled to work with the new and returning councilmembers throughout the City and grateful to this committee and Chair Joseph for providing this opportunity to discuss the impact and importance of education to the Garden's programs and our community.

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) is located on 39 acres of city-owned land in Flushing. We are the place **where people, plants, and cultures meet**. We demonstrate this through our inspiring organic gardens, innovative educational programs, and real-world applications of environmental stewardship. Public Gardens and parks are even more important now than ever, and QBG is a stabilizing organization that offers environmental education, engaging programming, and cultural activities. QBG also provides an essential resource for people who do not have a yard, giving them access to trees, flowers, plants, and open space. But above all, the Garden's most important undertaking is to foster sustainable choices—decisions that protect and nurture our environment and our community.

In a typical year, QBG welcomes over 220,000 people each year—from people who take a stroll through our luscious 39 acres to those who participate in more in depth educational programs. We pride ourselves in being the primary source of botanical education for children, adults and families in Queens. We see the incredible diversity of Queens and NYC on our campus every day.

A few educational and community accomplishments that I would like to share:

- Before COVID-19 our school-based programs were expanding; we were working with 30-35,000 school children both on our site and at their schools
- We are a partner as part of Urban Advantage, a program working with 7 other science-rich cultural organizations, to serve teachers, administrators, students and the broader school community through providing professional development, school trips and wider engagement to promote science learning. This program is at schools in all 51 council districts, 269 middle schools and 51 elementary schools.
- Through our Compost Project, funded through Department of Sanitation, we have been able to expand our work back into education this year. We are bringing back master composter as well as multiple education programs per month, both onsite here and offsite at our partner organizations. We also make and give out compost to the public—what we call black gold!
- We are doing incredible work on our 1-acre farm this year—bringing over 5000 lbs. of produce to food pantries in our area. We also continue to provide free farm programming to over 300 SNAP recipients from Queens Museum food pantry. We are excited to continue these partnerships.
- We will work with 11 schools this spring on CASA after-school programming—an incredibly important way we can get into the community and offer enriching, science programming for students.
- We continue to work with many Work-Based Learning groups including partnerships with John Bowne High School, SYEP, P993 at Frank Sinatra Performing Arts High School, Lexington School for the Deaf, Summit School, Flushing International High School, International School of

Health Sciences, CUNY, KCS. We work with about 250 interns yearly and over 2000 event volunteers.

The lack of busing for school children has had a direct impact on our ability to do our work, as well as many other cultural organizations and CBOs around the city. We are excited to hear this is coming back, as we are thrilled to provide green space and programming back to our schoolchildren.



Work on our QBG Farm:



We are excited to share about our new Education Building, to break ground early 2023. New York City Department of Design and Construction, Department of Cultural Affairs and the Queens Botanical Garden and BKS Architects have worked together to create a new Educational Building to replace and expand on the current Educational facility. There will be more room for public programs, environmental workshops, adult education and teacher training. With this new building the Queens Botanical Garden is able to serve more people of all ages, and opens up more opportunities in nutrition, cooking, horticulture therapy, and hiring for greener jobs. Rendering below:





We are proud to be a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations across the five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York.

We would like to see the FY22 PEG Cut to the Cultural Development Fund restored.

As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 Funding. We will be requesting an additional \$50 million for the cultural community.

We look forward to continued and new support that will ensure that **Queens Botanical Garden** remains a premier destination for the people of Queens and the tourists now returning to New York.



Testimony of Queens Community House  
Committee on Education  
Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair  
Preliminary Budget for Education  
March 21, 2022



As the Committee on Education considers the preliminary budget, Queens Community House (QCH) is proud to submit our testimony to support the DOE's Learning to Work (LTW) program.

QCH is the community partner for five LTW programs. LTW programs are alternative high schools operated in partnership between the Department of Education and community-based organizations like QCH. These schools enroll students who have dropped out or who have fallen substantially behind in credits and are at risk of dropping out, and provide them with holistic supports to help them re-engage, get back on track, and moving towards graduation. Through their CBO partnerships, LTW programs offer paid internships, in-depth job readiness, college & career exploration, and a range of counseling, coaching, and social & emotional learning components. These supports are key components of the LTW program model, and are critical to student success, giving thousands of our city's most vulnerable young people a second chance to earn their high school diplomas and get meaningful work experience before they graduate.

Throughout the pandemic, LTW's community partners across the city remained engaged with students. LTW staff addressed the needs of students and their families to ensure that, despite the public health crisis, they remained stably housed, earned income through project-based internships, and continued to participate in classes remotely. As schools reopened this year, those same community partners have been key to addressing the emotional trauma and learning loss that many students faced when returning from months of isolation and dealing with issues like the loss of family members and the transition back to in-person education.

As an LTW community partner, QCH is grateful to the City Council and the Department of Education for maintaining existing funding for the program through FY23. We were also delighted by Mayor Adams' commitment to grow the City's summer youth employment program, which many of our LTW students participate in and benefit from. We encourage the Council and the Department of Education to continue to prioritize vulnerable young New Yorkers by investing more in programs like LTW that provide wrap-around services within a work-based learning model.

In particular, we urge the City to make plans for supporting LTW beyond the expiration of the federal stimulus. Currently, New York City budgets \$42 million per year for LTW programs, but more than 70% of that amount is funded by the stimulus. With that money set to expire by 2025, the City must replace the federal stimulus dollars with other funding streams so community partners can continue helping young New Yorkers graduate high school.

We know that New York City continues to face budget challenges. However, decreasing the effectiveness of Learning to Work programs would lead to increased long-term financial and human costs for the city and for our communities, as young adults would lose the supports that have kept them engaged and on the road to successful and productive lives. Without programs like LTW, many more of our young people will fall through the cracks.

Queens Community House therefore calls on the Committee on Education and the City Council to invest more in LTW. We ask the Council to ensure LTW and similar programs are fully funded beyond the expiration of federal stimulus money, so community partners can provide holistic programs with wrap-around support services to New York's most vulnerable young people for years to come.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify in this important matter.





# Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

## Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth.

Success should be determined by equal access to well-rounded education, instruction that supports all learners, fair access to resources, and equal opportunities that enable each student to realize their full potential.

The events of the last few years have highlighted the enormous barriers to true equity and inclusion in the fundamental pathways to success. For decades, we've heard industry leaders from the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math (STEAM) call for greater diversity within their professions and a greater pool of qualified candidates from local communities.

Yet, for far too many of our City's students, the obstacles to success are great.

Without diminishing the importance of overcoming systemic shortfalls in fair and safe housing, nutritious food supply, and affordable healthcare, this paper will focus on the strategies and resources needed to build a strong foundation for students' success in STEAM careers.

This can be accomplished if we work together to:

- Build on the strengths of the City's in-school and after-school programs
- Provide access to affordable, accessible, and impactful STEAM education
- Leverage the resources of the private, non-profit, and public sectors

However, we need to start where resources are needed most:

- Economically disadvantaged communities
- Under-resourced after-school programs
- And wherever students struggle to see themselves as successful



***“Success should not be determined by the color of someone’s skin, their zip code, gender, sexual orientation, or their family’s wealth.”***



Unfortunately, there are not enough STEAM experts to go around; students need:

- Access to curricula and instruction that are easy to understand and follow
- Engaging lessons that are designed for all learning styles
- Opportunities to debate, discuss, and design solutions to real world challenges

And for far too long, after-school programs that serve our city's under-resourced communities, have lacked high quality, low cost resources. After-school providers that serve our city's students in these communities are desperate for access to reliable, consistent, and proven experts in STEAM education.

To make matters worse, the negative financial impact of the COVID pandemic hit the DOE's budget hard for both the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years.<sup>1</sup> And we don't yet know the longer-term impact on student learning. While all schools suffered, those without access to supplemental resources, or the volunteers to secure those resources, will be hit exponentially harder. Similarly, NYCHA and many City-sponsored after-school programs within its Community Centers, already strapped for cash, scramble to survive through the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Solving these challenges may seem insurmountable, but together we *can* solve them.

This white paper proposes a three-part solution to serve after-school centers in under-resourced communities. Robust underwriting through a public, private, and non-profit partnership could support:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profits for elementary students
- Stand-alone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle and high school students
- Mid-career STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/22/21334981/education-budget-cuts-hiring-freeze>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cbcny.org/research/nychas-operating-outlook>



## New York City has what it takes...

There is no better place than New York City to build the next generation of engineers, architects, designers, and other building industry professionals. The city is rich in resources, experiences, and opportunities. Our nation's financial capital, a world-renowned cultural hub, and a center for innovative technology, construction, engineering, design, and architecture, is a 21st century STEAM city.

So, it is no surprise that New York City continues to be a magnet that draws young, creative talent from all over the world. People come to New York to realize their potential, forge their futures, make their fortunes, and realize their ambitions.

But what about our children?

New York City students have just as much potential to succeed in STEAM fields as anyone else. In fact, with all New York City's resources ~ private, public, and non-profit ~ our students should have pathways to success that others can only dream of.

Our schools are filled with hardworking and dedicated teachers and administrators. Our Department of Education (DOE) produced the STEM Framework, an excellent guide to impactful STEM instruction.<sup>3</sup> And our city has the Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS)<sup>4</sup> and Schools Out New York City (SONYC)<sup>5</sup> programs that supplement in-school learning.

But despite our hardworking educators and the city's existing resources, too many students are missing out.

For example, because there isn't a teacher certification in STEAM, teachers must independently research and develop ways to integrate STEAM into their classrooms. More often than not, they must do this in their own time. Teachers with more free time and/or resources can create these additional enrichment lessons for students (we call them additional, but really, they are essential). Students whose teachers have less free time and resources lose out.



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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/stem-framework/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page>

<sup>5</sup> <https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/sonyc/>

This disparity in access to quality STEAM education prevents a strong continuum of learning for all.

### **Tapping available resources to build success...**

Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.

New educational initiatives must address grade-specific learning, deliver age-appropriate instruction, and create new approaches to engaging students. They must engage subject matter experts in STEAM education to provide push-in programs for younger elementary students who need a STEAM educator to guide their learning. They must provide intuitive and easy to follow independent learning opportunities for older middle and high school students. And they should partner with STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM.



***“Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.”***

Vital to any successful STEAM program is a deep understanding of the NYC DOE’s STEM Framework and clear alignment with educational standards such as the Common Core math standards, Next Generation science standards, and the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Visual Arts. Programs should build STEAM literacy, place theoretical concepts in familiar contexts, and give students the opportunity to practice new skills and apply new knowledge to real-world challenges.

STEAM programs are in high demand in any after-school environment.

But many City-run after-school programs struggle to retain qualified program staff, especially at entry level. Newly trained employees often move swiftly to higher paying jobs with new employers. While this is great for employees’ individual growth, after-school programs are left with inexperienced program staff and an expensive, ongoing training cycle, while students continue to suffer.

By contracting with qualified nonprofit STEAM organizations, City-sponsored after-school

programs have regular access to highly trained educators and state of the art curricula that reinforce in-school learning through fun, engaging activities. Effective STEAM educational non-profits constantly refine and update curricula. Their educators engage in year-round professional development on best practices, classroom management, and how to communicate STEAM concepts at various grades ~ they are subject matter experts in STEAM.

While issues of access and quality can cross socio-economic boundaries, under-resourced communities always experience the greatest disadvantage.

Families in wealthier neighborhoods may have access to private and corporate support. Parents might only work one job or have a partner who doesn't have to work at all. They can afford to contribute more to their student's school, the PTA, or help obtain coveted grants to fund programs that are beyond the school budget.

But why reinvent the wheel? New York City is rich with STEAM educational organizations dedicated to developing and delivering rigorous STEAM instruction.

There are many organizations like the Salvatori Center that provide rigorous grade-specific K-12 programs to support and supplement in-school education through engaging, rigorous, and impactful age-appropriate after-school programs. Programs that help reduce the STEAM gap for students who lack access to quality STEAM education.

New York City has great after-school centers filled with students eager to learn. And our STEAM industries have young professionals burning to make a difference and open the world of STEAM to the next generation.

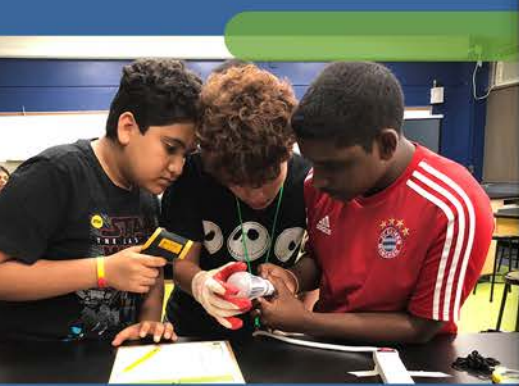
Together, through a true public/private partnership, we can help our most vulnerable communities overcome these disparities. We owe it to our children, and to the future of New York City's STEAM industries, to provide opportunities and programs that help local students see and believe that they too can excel in science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math.

We have the experts, the talent, and the desire to help all our city's students succeed.



***“We have the experts,  
the talent, and the desire  
to help all our city’s  
students succeed.”***





*“Young children are quite capable of doing, at a developmentally informed level, all of the scientific practices that high schoolers can do: they can make observations and predictions, carry out simple experiments and investigations, collect data, and begin to make sense of what they found. Having a set of practices like these that become routinized and internalized is going to really help them learn about their world.”*

*“Research also shows that STEM support should start early: children in disadvantaged circumstances, especially, start school lacking the foundation for that success.”*

## The Core Principals of Success

We all know teaching STEAM ~ science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math ~ at an early age is important. It captures students’ interest at an early age, builds confidence, and the self-perception that they can succeed.<sup>6</sup> A 2016 study, for example, examined learning experiences in more than 7,750 children from kindergarten entry to the end of eighth grade, and found that early acquisition of knowledge about the world was correlated with later science success:

Children’s early knowledge about the natural and social sciences, self-regulatory behaviors, and reading and mathematics achievement may constitute modifiable factors that, if increased through school-based interventions, may help prevent or reduce the early onset of science achievement gaps.<sup>7</sup>

Salvadori believes teaching STEAM also builds the 21st Century skills that all employers seek:

- **Creativity**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**

Education professionals recognize the importance of building students’ self-confidence and self-perception that they can succeed in school ~ valuable insights and integral to any STEAM education.



<sup>6</sup> [https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc\\_stemstartsearly\\_final.pdf](https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc_stemstartsearly_final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2016). Science achievement gaps begin very early, persist, and are largely explained by modifiable factors. *Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 18–35.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X16633182>



### Impact In Action

On a recent STEM program classroom visit, a parent described how his daughter's behavior changed during a recent family trip out of the city. Usually she sat in the back seat, eyes glued to her iPad. But this time, she was absorbed by what they drove past and wouldn't stop talking about what she saw. She pointed out the trusses on bridges, different types of beams on buildings under construction, and even described how one stone arch reminded her of Roman arches.

We can build these strengths for all students by making learning truly accessible. Yes, that means providing lessons that are fun, engaging, and tied to students' cultural traditions, daily experiences, their neighborhoods, and the city they live in. We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.

### We need to make the theoretical concrete.

For example, Salvadori ties grade-specific STEAM concepts to the built environment ~ structures built by humans. Students see math in the buildings they enter, science in the bridges surrounding the city, technology in the simple machines in their playgrounds, engineering in the structures that break the skyline, and arts/architecture in the City's landmarks, monuments, and memorials. Other organizations use our waterways, the ecosystem, or outer space.

***“We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students’ lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.”***

When programs tie new concepts to what the students experience every day, where they live, their cultures, traditions, and the world around them, students see how learning is relevant.





## Creativity

Creativity is fostered by self-expression and the ability to give voice to ideas, concepts, and thoughts. This requires courage. Courage to be vulnerable. Courage to express ourselves, to take risks, and yes, the courage to fail.

However, it can be harder for students to express thoughts if they don't see themselves in what they are learning. When learning is student centered, when they see themselves and their culture contextualized in educational settings, they make connections faster. They feel part of the system and abstract concepts become concrete.

Familiar contexts can encourage students to express themselves, explore new concepts, and share ideas. As students feel safe and understood, they gain confidence to succeed, despite the obstacles that may lie ahead.

The last year has reminded us of the importance of inclusion for all students.

Responsive STEAM curricula incorporate underrepresented STEAM leaders ~ architects, engineers, builders, etc. ~ and their work. We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers.

Inclusion provides a safe environment that opens the door to risk-taking, which fosters creativity.

***"We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers."***



## Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a vital component of any STEAM program. It is integral to problem-solving and to the creative process.

The engineering, design, and scientific methods are similar. Each identifies a problem or challenge, analyzes a situation (posing questions as part of inquiry-based learning), proposes solutions, solicits feedback, develops/refines ideas, and improves the solution. All build on new knowledge gained through experimentation, trial and error, observation, and/or data. Each repeats the process until the desired effect is achieved.

Teaching STEAM effectively incorporates one or all three methods.

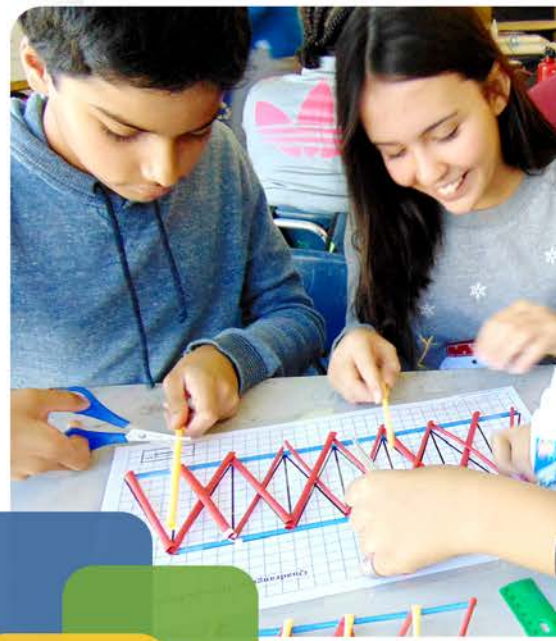
As students solve real-world challenges, they critically analyze a situation or problem. They form hypotheses and build experiments with their hands (project-based learning). And through trial and error they test and refine their hypotheses.

As you know, a hypothesis is merely an educated guess. As our knowledge grows our hypotheses become more accurate. Through trial and error ~ trying, failing, observing, analyzing, modifying the approach, and repeating until the desired result is achieved ~ students see the impact of critical thinking and learn the value of persistence and resiliency.

For many students, understanding “why they need to know this” increases engagement and improves knowledge retention.

For example, when a student is asked to form a hypothesis on which geometric shape will produce the strongest column in a building, they may wonder why it matters.

By learning that the shape of a column is based not only on its load bearing capacity (strength) but also on the amount of material used, which impacts cost and open space,



### ***Our Impact in Action:***

On a snowy icy day, I was entering a NYCHA Community Center to check-in on one of our programs. A maintenance worker asked, “What are you teaching these kids?” With some trepidation, I asked, “Why?” The maintenance worker replied in an annoyed tone, “A kid just told me to put rock slat on the handicapped ramp to increase the friction.” I couldn’t have been more proud. This is exactly what we want ~ students applying what they are learning in school to real world problems.



students ‘get it.’ Connecting school learning to the real world ~ such as columns in new construction around the city and in their schools ~ drives the concept home.

When concepts are made familiar, accessible, and relevant, students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore new concepts. Understanding why, and making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete. They understand why analysis and critical thinking are important and can begin to apply this to other areas of their life.

***“making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete.”***

## **Collaboration**

Collaboration fosters creativity through new ideas, perspectives, and points of view. And it is vital to any problem-solving process.

STEAM professionals must seek feedback and input from others. They gain perspectives beyond their personal world view. And they learn to work with and value the contributions of others ~ even people they may not know or like.

A collaborative approach to learning provides an environment where an individual student doesn’t have to have all the right answers. They can share ideas, build on each other’s insights, and work together to find the best solution. They can “think outside the box” more freely as they explore new ideas. As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.

***“As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.”***



More importantly, they are learning an essential skill needed to succeed in any career, and for every relationship.

## Communication

Communication is key. It isn't enough to have good ideas or to understand a problem. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively.

We need our students to develop STEAM literacy.

The confidence to express themselves, the patience to hear others, the strength to question their position, and the courage to re-formulate their ideas. They need to learn how to seek the opinion of an opposing side, to embrace contrasting points of view, and to gain the insight to improve their solutions and projects.

Talking is the smallest part of learning how to communicate.

When students work in small groups of 3 to 4 students, they can more freely express themselves. They can critically analyze problems collaboratively as they talk it through. And they can use new vocabulary as they share creative approaches and debate ideas and concepts. They are freed from the pressure of presenting to a large group, the entire class, or failing to impress their teacher. As discussions pulse between small group interactions to whole class conversations, students are given opportunities to practice communicating effectively as they learn how to express new ideas, pose thoughtful challenges, and hone new vocabulary.

Students develop STEAM literacy, become effective communicators, and acquire the ability to remold and build on each other's ideas.

STEAM learning that uses the engineering and design processes don't typically culminate in traditional "show and tell" presentations. Students articulate how knowledge gained throughout the semester informed the solution to their real-world final project. They now understand how to apply knowledge to solve new challenges.





I had the chance to see students who have difficulty in regular academic courses excel through this hands-on, interactive experience.

**-MS 72 (Bridges)**

The hands on nature of the projects excites all learners and gives them a chance to problem solve unlike any other class projects.

**- Salvadori Starter Teacher, PS 132 (My Community)**

As I have consistently stated, one of the greatest benefits of the Salvadori program is the emphasis on “hands on” activities. During my observations I was able to notice students taking on different roles during the actual “construction” process and witnessed students successfully taking on some leadership roles.

**- Salvadori Starter Principal, Northeast Intermediate (Bridges)**

These skills are key elements of success!

Not just in STEAM, but in life. Every employer wants people who can work with others to critically analyze a situation, pose creative solutions, and communicate effectively.

## Low Tech, High Impact

Tools that cost money ~ computers, internet access, equipment ~ can empower but they can also divide. We’ve learned the hard way that the technology gap unfairly favors students whose families can afford these tools as well as access to the internet, and who have an adult with time to help their child navigate new technology. Similarly, many cash strapped schools and after-school centers struggle to keep up with the latest technology.

A fair and equitable solution may take time to achieve, time we do not have.

Low tech project-based learning can quickly reduce this divide. Research shows that project-based learning can have a positive impact on learning outcomes for all students, irrespective of their background or socio-economic status:

Students in project-based classrooms passed their AP (Advanced Placement) tests, outperforming students in traditional classrooms by 8 percentage points. Students from low-income households saw similar gains compared to their wealthier peers, making a strong case that well-structured PBL can be a more equitable approach than teacher-centered ones. Importantly, the improvements in teaching efficacy were both significant and durable: When teachers in the study taught the same curriculum for a second year, PBL students outperformed students in traditional classrooms by 10 percentage points.<sup>8</sup>

Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective. Materials are often affordable or even free. More importantly, students learn by doing. They don’t just listen to lectures or read texts. They experience all modes of learning ~ seeing, reading, hearing, and doing. Adding a collaborative approach to project-based learning engages classmates in discussion and discovery.

<sup>8</sup> [https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study\\_18feb2021\\_final.pdf](https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study_18feb2021_final.pdf)





### ***Successful programs:***

Design curricula so each lesson builds on content from the previous session, and engages students in activities that help them learn STEAM concepts by addressing real-world problems. Support increased student achievement by providing a coherent, in-depth learning experience that explores STEAM principles relevant to a particular theme.

Engage students as they build foundational knowledge, conduct controlled experiments, and complete projects that integrate engineering vocabulary, math skills, and design processes around a single topic, such as bridges or green design.

## ***“Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective.”***

Through collaboration, students learn that they don’t have to have all the right answers. Each contributes to success by seeing, thinking, and sharing ideas that the others might not have noticed. Through a collaborative process, students build communication skills as they discuss and debate ideas, explore results, and share observations on the process.

By working together, the group is more effective than the sum of its parts.

A project-based approach to experimentation, especially one with a variety of instructional methods (seeing, hearing, reading, and discussing), supports all learners. Before beginning, it is important to work with other educators to gather relevant information on individual student learning styles in order to heighten understanding, improve access to new knowledge, and form teams that naturally build on each other’s strengths.

Those who absorb information by hearing, gain through discussions and spoken instruction. Visual learners watch experiments unfold and appreciate image-based instructions. Those who learn by doing experience new knowledge through hands-on activities. And students who understand concepts through repetition gain while sharing ideas and presenting their projects.

Schools and after-school programs need hands-on, collaborative, project-based STEAM lessons more than ever, whether in-person, fully remote, or through blended learning. And while remote learning enables organizations to serve students in new ways, we must maintain a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and providing a rigorous, transformative experience for all students, including those with special needs, such as English Language Learners, students living in transitional housing facilities (shelters), and students in hospital schools.

A collaborative, project-based approach can embrace learners of all abilities.

## Call to action ~ Public Private Partnership

Laying the foundation for the next generation of STEAM professionals may seem like a herculean task but it is achievable. We can do it through a partnership between STEAM companies (architects, engineers, contractors, developers, etc.), STEAM educational organizations, and City government.

STEAM companies (engineering and architectural firms, contractors, developers, etc.) can support schools and under resourced communities by underwriting programs. They can open their doors and their project sites to the community ~ introducing students to the vast range of jobs needed to build our future. Companies' young STEAM professionals can serve as mentors, helping students see themselves in STEAM careers.



Educational non-profit organizations working in STEAM education, can work together to strengthen the pipeline of STEAM education. Starting with pre-school or Kindergarten and building a continuum of STEAM learning and success through college and beyond. STEAM educators can enhance school-based curricula, providing enriching after-school programs.

City government can provide financial, logistical, and physical support. City-operated spaces can house programs offered in collaboration with STEAM organizations. Agencies that serve our young people (NYC DOE, DYCD, DCLA, etc.) can provide access to students and teachers as well as partnership opportunities.

Independent programs, like those delivered by Salvadori and other industry non-profit organizations, are extremely valuable. But, despite quadrupling in size in ten years, Salvadori teaches only 8,500 of the NYC's 1.1 million students. Like so many organizations, we can do so much more but we need help, access, and partnerships.

A broader public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.

We support a public/private partnership to fund intensive after-school programs in select New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Community Centers across all five boroughs of New York City. Each NYCHA Community Center would receive:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profit organizations for elementary school aged students ~ a reasonable start would be 100 after-school programs
- Standalone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle school students ~ starting with 1,000 classes
- Connections to young STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce high school students to college and career pathways in STEAM

***“A broad public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.”***

Salvadori has a proven track record working with NYCHA on expansive programs serving students from all five boroughs.

Salvadori provided 50 STEAM programs across 25 sites (5 per borough) that reached thousands of students in public housing. Sites were selected based on need and in partnership with NYCHA leadership. To ensure a successful program, site staff were required to attend a full-day training program to establish buy-in and to develop an understanding of Salvadori’s approach, instructional merit, and partner responsibilities.

The program was a success. The funder noted the high intellectual merit and broad impact, and described the program as a “successful”, “interesting”, “unique” program that “invests in training the instructors to provide good quality delivery”. Unfortunately, sustaining long-term funding for broad City-wide initiatives is challenging for most funders even when successful.

Although the need was great and the program was effective, agencies serving students in our under-resourced communities can’t afford to self-fund the program.

But together we can improve students’ futures, and build a pathway for success!





## Contributors to this white paper include:

### **Kenneth Jones, M.Arch. Executive Director**

Executive Director



Kenn Jones started his career as a licensed architect working in New Jersey and New York City. His career as an educator paralleled his career in architecture where he taught undergraduate courses in studio art, design, and the history of art and design, as well as graduate courses in non-profit management. Kenn has substantial experience developing project-based curricula, interdisciplinary programs, and adult education/professional development. He has served as a U.S. Diplomat in the Middle East and as the Executive Director of Peters Valley Craft Education Center and the New York Foundation for Architecture; before joining Salvadori he was the Curator of Education for the New Jersey State Museum. Kenn holds a M.Arch. degree from the University of Maryland and post-graduate studies in historic preservation and design as a Rotary Foundation Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Using strategic planning and creative problem solving to achieve organizational goals and objectives, Kenn ties together his experiences in education, executive management, and philanthropy ~ an approach he brings to the Salvadori Center.

**Email: [jones@salvadori.org](mailto:jones@salvadori.org)**

### **David McGillan**

Deputy Director



David joined the Salvadori Center as Operations Manager in 2010 and changed roles in 2012 to become Development Director. A British native, David settled in New York City and managed four senior centers from 2005 to 2010, after several years working for local government in England and a year spent traveling the world. David graduated with a Master's in Public Administration, in 2011, from Baruch College, where the United Way of New York City honored him with a Senior Fellowship. In 1997 David received a BA with honors in Creative Writing from the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. David is an active volunteer with Street Soccer USA – helping the homeless develop life skills through soccer.

**Email: [david@salvadori.org](mailto:david@salvadori.org)**



### **Malika Khalsa**

Education Director

Malika is a Virginia native who moved to New York to attend St. Johns University where she received a degree in Childhood Education. After teaching for a year, Malika became a Child Protective Specialist, investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and ensuring safety for children. Later, Malika went on to work with City Year New York as a Program Manager, Program Director and Senior Program Director, managing different levels of staff whose goal was to provide academic tutoring and mentorship to students in under-resourced schools. Malika leads Salvadori's team of seven Educators in New York City region and Northeast Pennsylvania to develop curricula and deliver programs to students through in-person, fully remote, and blended learning.

**Email: [malika@salvadori.org](mailto:malika@salvadori.org)**



### **Emiliano Maghallighen**

Senior Educator

Emiliano Maghallighen was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to New York to study at City College. He received a BS in Architecture in 2004 and joined Gensler as a job captain where he helped design retail stores including Apple, Victoria's Secret and Gap. While teaching at the Guggenheim museum and interning at the Museum of Modern Art, Emiliano became interested in education and the arts. In 2009 he joined Organizacion Tepeyac, a non-profit organization that provides after school programs, adult education, and immigrant advocacy to Mexicans in New York.

**Email: [emiliano@salvadori.org](mailto:emiliano@salvadori.org)**



### **Roxanne Meija**

Senior Educator

Roxanne was born in New York City and grew up in Queens, NY. As a child, she always had an interest in art and design. In 2006, she received her BFA in Architecture from Parsons The New School for Design, moving on to work in the design and construction industries. In July of 2010 she joined the Salvadori Center full-time to manage an after-school program in New York City Housing Authority community centers across the 5 boroughs. Currently, Roxanne serves as a Senior Educator and helps develop new curricula for Salvadori.

**Email: [roxanne@salvadori.org](mailto:roxanne@salvadori.org)**





## **Juliana Wong**

Senior Educator

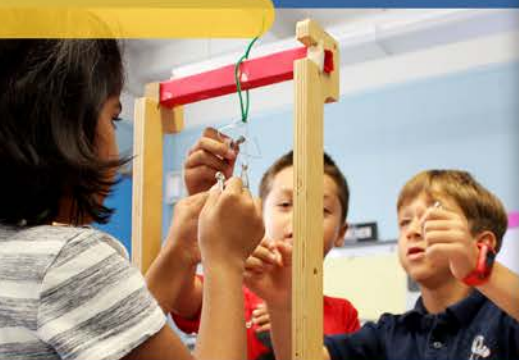
Juliana grew up in London, UK where she received her BA Honors in Interior Design at Kingston University. She moved to Hong Kong and designed for Ronald Lu & Partners on a wide range of commercial and residential projects before joining Goudie Associates as Senior Designer on the expansion offices for Credit Suisse. Settling in New York City, she worked for Lowery Design and then as an Educator for the Brooklyn Center of Urban Environment. Juliana concurrently trained with the DOE as a parent advocate for the School Base Support Team, and furthered her interest in how children learn through project-based learning whilst being an active parent volunteer at NEST+M, one of the first K-12 grade seamless public schools in NYC. She holds a Certificate in TEFL, Diplome de Langue Francais and in Danielson's Competencies. Juliana joined the Salvadori Center staff in 2009 where she has been writing and developing curricula, leading professional development, mentoring and teaching in Salvadori programs across all five boroughs as a Senior Educator.

**Email: [juliana@salvadori.org](mailto:juliana@salvadori.org)**

Additional contributions from Richa Sadana and Jessica Guice.



# About the Salvadori Center



"Lessons and achievements were scaffolded to build understanding of architecture and design, even at a kindergarten level: impressive! The educator infused our themes of character and building in her lessons, giving students a feeling of belonging, evident by the personal influence/experiences seen in final product."

- *My Community, Flatlands*

"The Salvadori experience allowed my students to gain 21st century skills through collaborative and innovation. The hands-on activities kept them engaged and most importantly, the gained an understanding of how to be responsible, future citizens of the world."

- *Building Green, Belmont Preparatory High School*

## About the Salvadori Center

Salvadori's in-school, after-school, and summer multi-day programs celebrate a collaborative, hands-on, project-based approach to learning through the built environment ~ buildings, bridges, parks, and communities.

Students learn new things about the city they live in. They see the math and science in the buildings they enter, the bridges they cross, and the parks they play in. They quickly understand why math and science are relevant to their lives. The teachers we coach become our strongest advocates and schools return to work with us year after year. In fact, over 75% of schools returned each year.

Salvadori Educators work with schools to build durable skills, engage all students, provide results that reflect high levels of ownership, and directly support educational standards through the (4) C's:

- **Collaboration** ~ working together to hypothesize, build, test, and solve problems
- **Critical thinking** ~ analyzing how and why things work
- **Creativity** ~ posing creative solutions to real-world challenges
- **Communication** ~ listening, learning, and articulating complex ideas and concepts

Our programs help schools:

- Make math, science, and the arts intellectually accessible for all learners
- Increase student comprehension and success at grade-level math and science
- Lay the foundation for future STEAM degrees and/or careers







"I think this is a great thing that Salvadori does. As a non-for-profit, city funded program, our funds are often limited in bringing quality educational programs, especially STEM related programs for minimal costs or free, and Salvadori does just that. We at South Beach were honored to be chosen for the program and the children are very impressed with themselves and their achievement of the "Big Bridge" as they call it, which has drawn quite a bit of attention as it is on display in our center lobby, and participants give the history of its making. This program gave participants not only engineering concepts, but built up their self-esteem and confidence to achieve. Thank you!"

**- Salvadori After School Teacher,  
UAU South Beach**

## Academic Rigor

All Salvadori curricula support grade-specific math, science, and arts concepts. Curricula are reviewed and updated to ensure STEAM concepts are current and applicable. And all our curricula align with:

- Common Core math Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

Throughout the year, our Educators engage in vibrant professional learning. They continually work to strengthen their teaching skills ~ pedagogy, communication, classroom management, etc. They participate in 'Deep Dive' exercises to develop their ability to teach with greater agility to different grade levels. This enables us to easily adapt STEAM concepts to real life situations; bringing STEAM life for students.

Additionally, we work with STEAM professionals to make sure that engineering and architecture concepts are aligned with industry standards. This diverse group of young professionals serve as mentors, sharing their journey, and helping students see themselves as successful in STEAM degrees and careers.

As a team, we have delivered programs in thousands of classrooms across the City ~ in schools, after-school centers, museums, and other cultural institutions. Working in such a broad cross-section of learning environments builds an unparalleled depth of knowledge and insight into what works and what doesn't.

## Salvadori's Approach

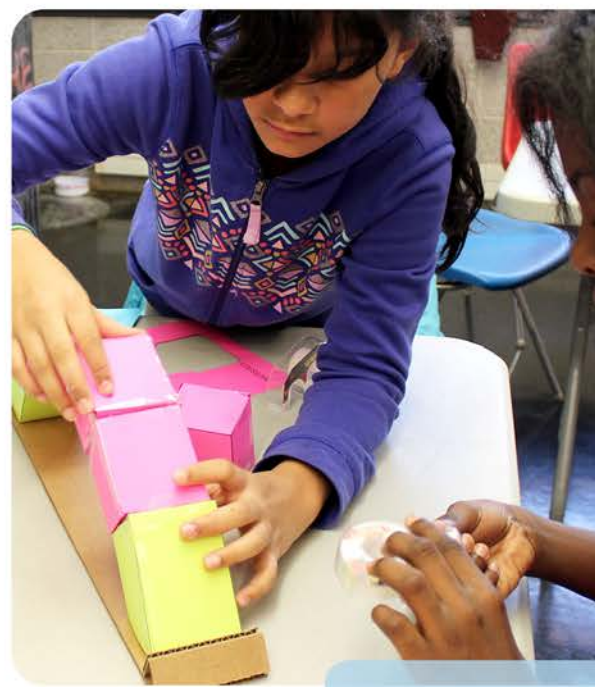
Our hands-on approach to building projects gives students an intimate and personal experience. Working collaboratively, students learn that they don't need to have all the answers; each team member contributes to a more dynamic view. The small





group scientific approach allows students to form hypotheses, build and test apparatus, record observations, and draw conclusions. Results are shared, discussed and analyzed with the entire class.

Each multi-day residency or program includes multiple collaborative experiments that build toward a culminating activity. Individual sessions start with a re-cap activity that reinforces the previous week's session on a higher level. This reminds students where they left off and enables those who missed the previous session to catch up. The primary activity explores new concepts with hands-on, project-based experiments. Sessions end in a brief wrap-up activity, which is often a "cliff hanger" that motivates students to engage in future sessions. Students combine the design approach to problem solving with the scientific method of experimentation to explore new concepts and solve real world problems.



Salvadori programs help close the achievement gap for students living in poverty, such as those at NYCHA facilities. We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

### A Culture of Assessment

Our main goals are to increase comprehension of STEAM concepts ~ particularly math and science ~ to help students feel more confident in their abilities, and to encourage students to pursue



***"We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership."***



### ***Impact in Action:***

Salvadori Educator Kaelin described the powerful impact the program had on one struggling student:

I'll never forget the day I met Erica. Her teacher told me that she was on the autism spectrum and would not be able to participate. We thought about giving her independent work. I asked if she could try – I have a special education background – and knew she could participate in some way.

I don't expect high pre-assessment scores as students haven't learned physical science concepts yet. Erica scored 27%.

Although she had a hard time communicating, Erica had amazing fine motor skills. So I appointed her as our materials manager. She measured, marked, cut, and distributed materials to each group. Erica gained a sense of purpose and began smiling. Groups that struggled appreciated her help to complete projects on time.

Erica gave her all in every session. She made friends and found she was capable of learning in a general education setting.

In the post-assessment Erica scored 97%!

***“Childrens’ perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori.”***

STEAM education and career choices.

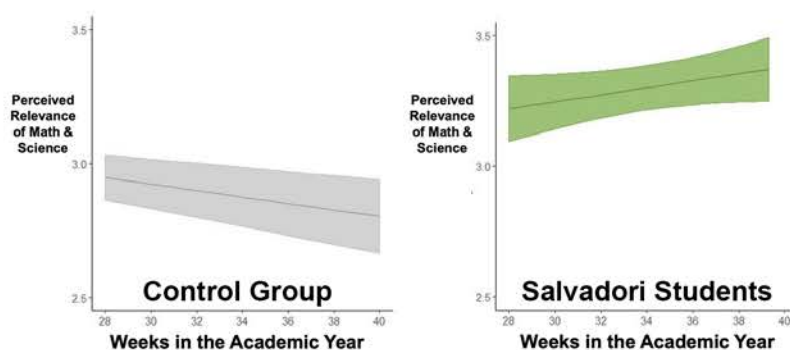
Perhaps Salvadori's greatest accomplishments over the past few years are the results of our third-party assessment reports, conducted by Youth Studies, Inc., and New York University.

Results demonstrate statistically significant increases in student ability. For eight consecutive years of Youth Studies reports, Salvadori students:

- felt more confident in their math and science ability
- were more motivated to pursue educational/career choices in STEAM fields
- improved their knowledge of math, engineering, and architecture concepts
- increased their understanding of the scientific inquiry process

And there's more good news! A preliminary study by researchers from New York University's (NYU) Department of Psychology showed promising results of Salvadori's impact on students' perception that what they learn in school is relevant to their lives. The study began with these hypotheses:

- Salvadori programs help children see how math and science are relevant to their everyday lives
- Childrens' perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori
- This perception persists after their participation in Salvadori



Graph shows what happens after participation (for the Salvadori students) hence the initial difference in starting points.



### Salvadori measures effectiveness through a six-tiered evaluation system:

- Principal surveys assess ties to school-wide goals
- Anonymous teacher surveys assess curricula impact and ties to classroom objectives
- Independent assessment measure changes in students' STEM comprehension
- Intensive year-long training of new Educators, including mentoring by Senior Educators
- NYC Department of Education vendor performance review system
- On-site evaluations assess the quality of instruction

Preliminary results were extremely positive:

- In general, students who didn't receive Salvadori's program showed a steady decrease in their perception that math, science, and art are relevant to their lives
- Students who received a Salvadori program showed an increase in their perception that math, science, and art was relevant
- More impressively, students who received a Salvadori program maintained a sense that what they learned is relevant several months after the program ended

The beauty is that hands-on, collaborative, project-based learning not only has a significant impact on a child's perception that math and science are relevant to their lives, but the perception of relevance stays with the child well after the program is complete – unlike students who didn't receive Salvadori.

We plan to be able to generalize the results by replicating the study over the next four academic years. The new study will follow students in two schools and measure the impact of Salvadori's programs on students who receive our curricula compared with students who don't.

Thankfully, the expanded study will be fully funded by our Board so the cost is not included in this request.

Qualitative and anecdotal data collected from classroom teachers, Salvadori Educators, and students complement and reinforce independent assessment findings. All of our assessment results are available at: <http://salvadori.org/wordpress/programs/testimonials-results>

### Serving through the Pandemic

As soon as New York City schools closed in mid-March, 2020, Salvadori Educators went into overdrive to produce versions of our curricula that could be taught remotely. This was no small feat,



considering our model has always relied on our built environment experts delivering the program directly, in the classroom, through collaborative project-based learning.

We wanted to respond and serve while staying true to our mission.

Within two weeks, we had updated and begun to distribute new versions of our hands-on lessons so that classroom teachers and new at-home educators, could continue to educate our children. From March to June, we distributed FREE project-based Salvadori lessons every week to schools in our network and worked with city officials and our funding partners to spread the word and to share these valuable resources as widely as possible. Among those who helped spread the word were our funding partners, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

At the same time, our Educators began delivering lessons to our school partners via Google Meets for direct instruction, uploads via Google Classrooms to account for changing class schedules, and pre-recorded instructional videos for young students and supplemental resources.

Perhaps more importantly, in the last few months of the school year, we delivered free resources to “new home educators” across New York and beyond through:

- **FREE STEAM Lessons** each week for 15 weeks ~ to over 75,000 teachers and new at-home educators
- **Instructional videos** for NYC DOE’s *Lets Learn NYC!* on WNET THIRTEEN for 3 to 6-year-olds

By doing this, we helped teachers transition to remote/online learning, aided families by providing educational activities they can do at home with household materials, and reached new audiences across New York City and the tri-state region.





*"This was a great experience for the kids this year. With the pandemic things have been rough. The program was done virtually and Salvadori Educator did an excellent job. She had a lot of patience with the students. Her instructions were clear and the students had no problem following them. She kept the students interested and engaged. The students looked forward to Fridays when we had the Bridges program and they were sad to see it end. It provided the students with some hands-on learning, a little diversion from our regular classwork, and a lot of encouragement and personal attention that the students need during this hard time."*

### Moving forward:

As we slowly return to normal, Salvadori is already back in the classroom. We currently offer in-person, fully remote, and blended learning for in-school, after-school, and summer programs. We expanded our partnership with NYC DOE's Lets Learn NYC! on WNET THIRTEEN to include a 20-episode series entitled My Community for 3 to 6-year-olds

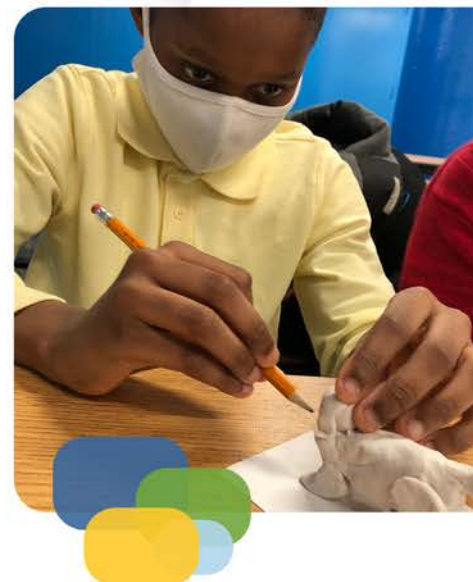
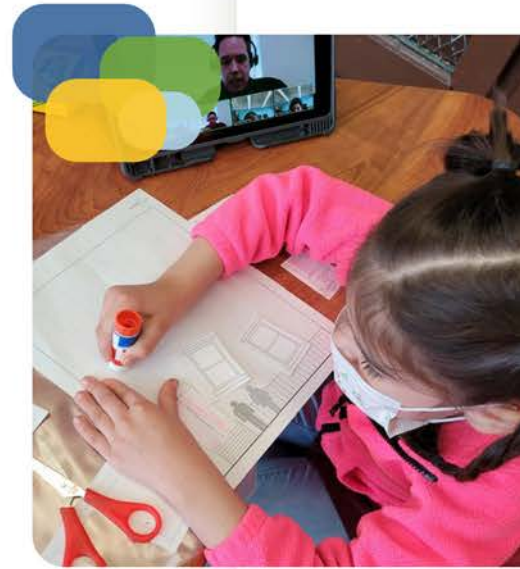
### In summary, Salvadori programs:

- promote college and career readiness
- engage students through project-based exercises
- use the built environment as a vehicle for learning
- employ collaborative problem solving that involves all participants
- produce results that reflect high levels of creativity and ownership

### The Team:

Salvadori's team is as diverse as the schools we work in.

Our Educators reflect the students we serve. In fact, several were once NYC DOE students themselves and some have children currently in NYC public schools. When hiring Educators, we seek professionals who have a teaching background as well as previous professional





experience or education in related fields ~ NYC history, fine arts, design, and STEAM careers such as architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction.

Educators' backgrounds give them greater insight into our curricula and enables them to speak to our core concepts from a point of personal experience. More importantly, the diversity of our staff enables students to see themselves in their Educator ~ helping to plant the seed that they too can succeed in STEAM careers.

Our entire staff reflects the diversity that makes NYC great ~ a collection of unique voices and perspectives formed by race, gender, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation, religion, and immigrant status. They know the challenges facing NYC students because they've lived it. They have been new immigrants, English Language Learners, BIPOC students, GLBTQ students, girls interested in STEAM, and so much more.

Their circumstances and experience gives them a first-hand understanding of the challenges facing NYC students today.

Full staff profiles can be found here: <https://salvadori.org/wordpress/about-us/staff/>





*See it. Build it. Know it.*

See what is new at Salvadori by visiting our web site and following us on social media:

- [Salvadori Web Site](#) ~ assessment reports, resources for teachers, etc.
- [YouTube](#) ~ short videos of classroom projects
- [Facebook](#) ~ news and images of student experiences
- [LinkedIn](#) ~ professional relationships and networking

# *The Samaritans ...because we all need someone to lean on*

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## **The Samaritans of New York, Inc. Suicide Prevention Center**

### **Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education Budget Hearing March 23, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Fiodhna O'Grady, and I represent Samaritans Suicide Prevention Center in New York.

Samaritans created the world's first suicide hotline 70 years ago, a service we now provide in 42 countries. The Samaritans of New York's hotline answered close to 75,000 calls in FY21 and is staffed by compassionate volunteers from NYC's diverse communities. These 80-100 volunteers donate \$800,000 in free labor annually that nearly matches \$3 to every \$1 the Council provides, making our Hotline one of the City's most cost-effective crisis services. We ask that you support the restoration of \$312,000 (the same amount we received in FY22) through the Mental Health Committee's "Mental Health For Vulnerable Populations Initiative" for Samaritans Hotline.

Samaritans is the go-to service for the underserved and offers a safe alternative to formal clinical or government-run programs.

Samaritans education program has trained over 40,000 individuals and DOE credits Samaritans with "making [suicide prevention] an ongoing priority for professional development" (Josh Marquez former DOE Citywide Coordinator, Child Abuse and Neglect).

Samaritans received a total of \$65,000 in Council Member Discretionary Line items from 14 Council Members from Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Queens in FY21. Samaritans provided suicide prevention and awareness education, training, coalition-building and technical support to 1,364 guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, alcohol and substance abuse counselors, community members and others working in 459 NYC DOE schools and 303 community-based organizations and government agencies that serve, respond to and treat at-risk populations from NYC's multi-cultural communities. We work closely with the NYC DOE Citywide under the umbrella of their Child Abuse, Neglect and Maltreatment Program. We ask that Council Members consider bringing our education programs to their Council Districts and boroughs.

Since the start of the pandemic rates of suicidal ideation have more than doubled and our city's youth are not immune:

- 36% of NYC students reported feeling so sad or so hopeless that it interfered with their daily activities (YRBS, 2019).
- 9% attempted suicide and 3% were injured in an attempt (YRBS, 2019).
- The vast majority of NYC youth who expressed a need for mental health services last year never received care or treatment (Citizens Committee for Children, 2021).
- And the pandemic has worsened pre existing deficits in available mental health services for BIPOC youth (SAMHSA).

Mental health providers caring for these students face the monumental task of supporting at-risk youth through a global pandemic while managing extremely heavy caseloads (the current estimate is 1 mental health provider for every 225 students <https://bit.ly/3tp3YHi>).

Despite their genuine compassion, education and experience, providers often lack the suicide prevention training and skills to respond effectively and confidently.

Samaritans education programs adapt to real-time concerns and don't take a "one-size fits all" approach. We are the only organization that provides trainees an added layer of support through our 24-hour hotline.

Suicide can be prevented, but we must come together and prioritize mental health for our students and those entrusted with their care.

I want to thank the City Council for its continued support of our 24-hour suicide hotline and, once again, restore our \$312,000 funding under the Council's vulnerable populations initiative as well as our Public Education program.y

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# Samaritans

SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER

## STRENGTHEN THE SAFETY NET

***The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened NYC's suicide crisis!***

- 44% of New Yorkers report anxiety
- 36% of New Yorkers report depression
- Rates of suicidal ideation have **more than doubled**

The unprecedented increases in psychological disorders (the leading risk factor for suicide), isolation and substance abuse means Samaritans services are needed more than ever!

**Support Samaritans FY2023 Speaker/Citywide Suicide Hotline Restoration of \$312,000. *Save Lives & Save Money!***

**A REAL GAP EXISTS**—There are still significant gaps in the kind and quality of support services available to many New Yorkers that are depressed and suicidal. This is especially true for minorities, those living in poverty, those most impacted by stigma (elderly, LGBTQ, struggling with mental illness or substance abuse, victims, immigrants), veterans and adolescents.

**CONSUMERS NEED OPTIONS**—Evaluations of effective prevention programs reveal more people access help when they have choices that make them feel safe and comfortable. With so many of the mental health services available to NYC consumers operating under Thrive's government-run network, consumers have fewer options

**THE NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES IS CLEAR**—Increases in suicide and self-harming behavior have put increased demands on NYC's costly crisis response services. Samaritans availability at any point during a person's crisis, often many times a day, helps to alleviate emotional distress and diffuse a self-destructive or violent episode

**CONSUMER/ COMMUNITY BENEFITS**—Research shows calls to Samaritans reduce work loss and medical costs tied to suicide/depression and the frequency expensive clinical/emergency services are used by providing consumers with support as they transition from in-patient to outpatient care, are discharged from ER's, etc.

**SAVING LIVES FOR 35 YEARS**—Since 1982 Samaritans has been providing: immediate and ongoing support to those in distress; a path to healing for those touched by suicide; effective crisis intervention trainings for health providers; and an essential alternative to clinical/government-run programs for the underserved and untreated.

**CARING VOLUNTEERS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE**—SAMHSA-sponsored research shows that well-trained hotline volunteers are more effective than their clinical counterparts. Samaritans hotline's 100 volunteers from NYC's diverse communities responded to around 75,000 calls each year from people in distress, donated 30,000 hours of free labor (worth \$850,000), while providing a *free* caring, empathetic crisis response support service to those in need. This makes Samaritans NYC's most cost effective crisis response service.

**The NYC Council has been the primary funder of Samaritans Hotline since 2012.**

By restoring our \$312,000 hotline funding for FY 2023 the Council provides the resources necessary to maintain this essential safety net for New Yorkers in crisis.

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE

### COVID-19 & SUICIDE, ANXIETY & DEPRESSION:

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the national suicide crisis.

According to the CDC since the pandemic:

- the rates of suicidal ideation in the US have more than doubled
- the rates of anxiety went from 8.1% in 2019 to 25.5% in 2020
- the rates of depression went from 6.5% in 2019 to 24.3% in 2020

Children and young people have not been not immune to this crisis, mental health related emergency department visits and hospitalizations are up 24% for ages 5-11 and 31% for ages 12-17 compared to 2019 (CDC, 2020).

### WHAT IS BEHIND THESE WORRISOME TRENDS?

Though there are many reasons for the ongoing increase in suicide and self-harming behavior—some of which we may never know—it is clear that the ripple effects of social isolation, unemployment and slow economic recovery have left many struggling to cope.

We see this clearly in the alarming increase in substance abuse, a key risk factor for suicide. This year the CDC reports that over 100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses. This is the highest number of drug related deaths ever recorded and it is almost double the number pre-pandemic overdose fatalities.

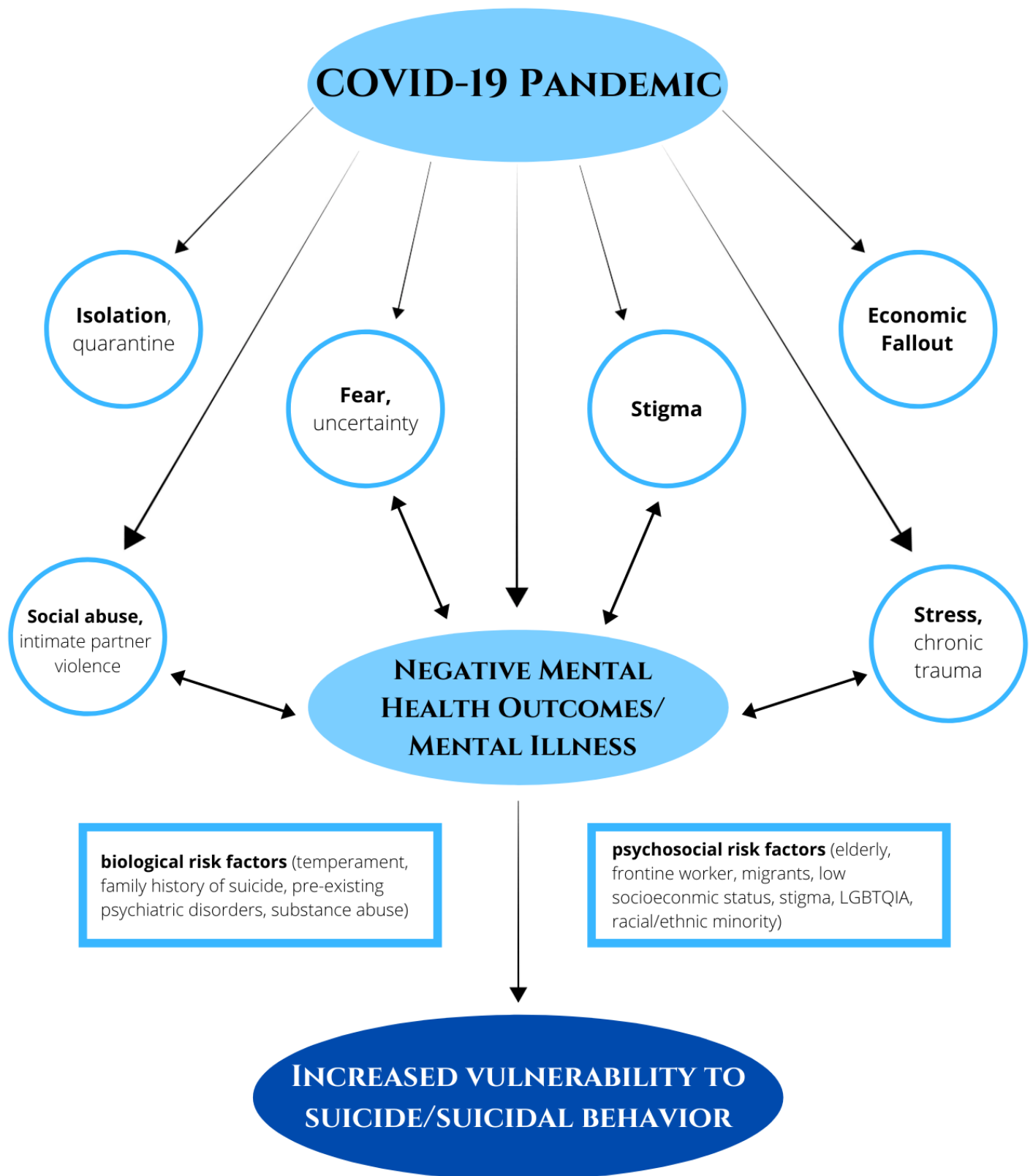
### SAMARITANS CAN HELP!

The unprecedented increases in psychological disorders (the leading risk factor for suicide), isolation and substance abuse requires means Samaritans services are needed more than ever!

Samaritans hotline is an essential safety net for “underserved” populations who fall through the cracks of NYC's health care system. Our programs offer an alternative to traditional clinical services; they reduce the length and severity of crises and eases the demand on more costly city services.



# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE





### **Samaritans 24-hour Suicide Prevention Hotline** **(212) 673-3000**

*NYC's only completely confidential crisis response hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for immediate and ongoing emotional support.*

Samaritans completely confidential **24-hour Suicide Prevention Hotline** provides those who are in distress, depressed, experiencing a crisis or personal loss, coping with psychological disorders, substance abuse, self-harming and suicidal behavior with immediate and ongoing support that alleviates emotional distress and helps diffuse a self-destructive episode. The service is provided by caring volunteers from NYC's culturally diverse communities that are professionally trained in active listening and crisis response. The hotline provides a safe alternative to existing NYC clinical and government-run programs for those who are resistant to seeking help and/or impacted by stigma.



### **Samaritans Mental Health Wellness Support Line**

**For help coping with COVID**

**(212) 673-3661**

*NYC's only crisis service that lets people in distress schedule a wellness call at their convenience.*

Samaritans **Mental Health Wellness Support Line** fills the gaps and provides a needed alternative to other NYC crisis response services, especially for people having trouble coping with ongoing anxiety and distress during the pandemic. Instead of waiting until you have reached a crisis state, Samaritans support line allows people to plan ahead and arrange to receive a wellness call at their convenience. The support line is designed for those strongly impacted by the pandemic as well as those who care for them, providing an opportunity to make a wellness call part of your ongoing mental health maintenance; something that can be scheduled in advance and made a component of your personal wellness plan.



### **Samaritans Safe Place Support Program for Survivors of Suicide Loss**

*Group Meetings hosted by Samaritans on the  
1st Wednesday and 3rd Tuesday every month on Zoom.*

Samaritans **Safe Place Program for Survivors of Suicide Loss** provides those coping with their loss with programs, services and resources for immediate and ongoing support as they seek a path to healing. Safe Place Group Meetings offer a supportive environment that is confidential and non judgmental, where "survivors" are surrounded by others that have had similar experiences. Meetings are run as "peer support groups" by trained facilitators, and are only open to those who have directly lost a loved one to suicide, that is someone with whom they had a close relationship. Participants must be 18 or older and register in advance by going to: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/SamaritansSAFEPLACE](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SamaritansSAFEPLACE)

# STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SAMARITANS SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES

“It’s just like a miracle. It’s who you are. I don’t know how you people are able to do this. The difference it makes when you pick up the phone. You don’t know how much it helps.”

*Samaritans Hotline Caller, anonymous “thank you” note*

“It was like the turmoil of an ocean inside me and my mind was dissolving into it. In the middle of the night when I didn’t have anyone to talk with, you were there for me... Thank you for being the bridge in the middle of the night.”

*Samaritans Hotline Caller, anonymous “thank you” note*

“This work [Samaritans] is very, very important and very, very valuable work. It is not at all rhetorical to say that this work saves numerous, numerous lives in New York City and does not get the recognition that it deserves.”

*Rudolph W. Giuliani, (former) Mayor, City Hall Press Conference*

“It is essential that distressed individuals have access to immediate support the moment they call a hotline, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Samaritans provides this service to callers who are actively in distress and may be suicidal. Furthermore, the hotline provides a caring, non-judgmental volunteer from the community who is trained in active listening and suicide risk assessments, two best practices in suicide prevention which are crucial to saving lives.

“In these tough times, the need for a broad-based humanistic safety net for all New Yorkers, especially one that has proved as effective as Samaritans is not something the City can or should do without.”

*Monica M. Matthieu, Ph.D., LCSW, Washington University, St. Louis VA Medical Center*

“For many, calling a hotline is how they get through tough times. When the office of a therapist or counselor is closed and a crisis occurs, having access to trained volunteers is a vital link for those in need. For those without health insurance, the services of a hotline are critical. Knowing what is available in the community, how to navigate complicated systems and having a caring listener to help pass crisis moments is what hotlines are all about.

“The services Samaritans of NYC volunteers provide meet the vital needs of callers and are in no way duplicative. They are in fact quite unique. The availability, compassion and expertise provided by the volunteers at any time of day for those in crisis are what this organization is all about. ...No matter where you travel around the world, a name held in high regard is the name of Samaritans.”

*Jerry Reed, Ph.D., MSW, Director, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, SAMHSA*

“I must stress my dismay at the complete removal of funding from the Samaritans confidential crisis hotline. Should this funding be withdrawn, you will remove a safety net that serves people who are trying to cope with every kind of physical illness, mental illness, personal problem, social stigma, cultural bias and job-related fear that makes most people who need help during their time of distress even more hesitant to seek help.”

*New York State Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, Chair of Mental Health, Assembly District 51*

“My own research on the effect of telephone help lines concur with over 50 years of past studies that have found that in the area of suicide prevention volunteers do a better job than professionals. ...[If] people are no longer able to contact The Samaritans, they will use other more costly services such as hospital emergency room visits and, since a great many are contemplating suicide, they will receive expensive services from the trauma response and rescue teams, ambulances and hospital visits.”

*Brian L. Mishara, Ph.D., Director, CRISE, Psychology Department, University of Quebec*

“The reality is that the Samaritans of New York is responsible for the advancement of suicide prevention at the [Department of Education] and for making it a priority for ongoing professional development and training. ... It is not an exaggeration, not an embellishment to say that your work has helped saved the lives NYC students and prevented difficult situations with at risk youth from escalating.”

*Joshua Marquez, Citywide Coordinator, Child Abuse and Neglect, NYC Department of Education*

"In the nine years the department has been working with Samaritans, you have made great strides in addressing the needs of those New Yorkers at risk of suicide. Samaritans works around the clock to maintain the city's only 24-hour suicide prevention hotline... a life-saving link for our citizens who are struggling with pain and despair."

*Luis R. Marcos, M.D., (former) Commissioner, NYC Department of Mental Health*

"During my tenure as Chairman of the State Senate Mental Hygiene & Addiction Control Committee, I became acutely aware of the need for suicide prevention and crisis intervention services across a wide range of age groups. The Samaritans provide these services in a cost-effective and efficient manner. It is a massive undertaking and provides a vitally needed service to the residents of New York City."

*Frank Padavan, New York State Senator, 11th District*

"...the Samaritans of New York provides a unique and unduplicated service.... The hotline is staffed by highly trained and dedicated volunteers and receives calls from, individuals who, for a variety of reasons, often do not seek help from traditional mental health services...."

*Robert Gebbia, Executive Director, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*

"People of color are the least likely to seek professional help for mental disorders and are less likely to stay in treatment because of the general attitude that mental illness is a sign of weakness. There is a large number of untreated mental illness among minorities and having access to a crisis hotline will help neutralize suicidal crises that generally develop from untreated mental illnesses."

*Donna Barnes, Ph.D., President, National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide*

"The Samaritans phone number is regularly given out to clients of social service agencies and mental health sites as the number to call if clients need someone to talk with in the middle of the night, over holidays, on weekends—the times when professional offices are closed."

*Risa Breckman, LCSW, Gerontology Program, Weill College of Medicine, Cornell University*

"The services that Samaritans provide are helpful to agencies like GMHC because they give us useful expert knowledge that improves the quality of many New Yorkers who are struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, the 24-hour helpline at The Samaritans is a critical resource for clients in need of assistance/support during hours when the agency is closed or when clinicians are out of the office."

*Larry Woodland, LCSW, Associate Director, Gay Men's Health Crisis*

"Their services are so necessary. They are known around the world for their hotline work and the emotional support services they provide. In addition to helping New Yorkers who are suicidal, they help organizations like ours learn the keys to effective crisis response, prevention and training."

*Ross Ellis, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Love Our Children USA, STOMP Out Bullying*

"Your training--"Suicide in the Elderly: Risk, Response and Agency Protocols" for case management directors and supervisors--has significantly expanded the Department for the Aging's suicide prevention education capacity. ...In addition to the training, the Samaritans have helped the Department develop a more comprehensive approach and response to suicide prevention education and intervention by assisting in the development of agency protocols and procedures in response to suicide."

*Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, Commissioner, NYC Department for the Aging*

"Your assembly this morning was terrific.... Early adolescents are a hard group to make contact with on such a sensitive topic, but you eased them toward it with a nice mixture of authority and informality. The number and kind of the questions... indicated that they took seriously the subject of distress and how to keep it from being self-destructive."

*Kingsley Ervin, Headmaster, Grace Church School*

"...a very special thanks and gratitude to [Samaritans] who have helped me navigate my way through the shock, grief and powerful sadness surrounding my brother's suicide. I can't even begin to explain how much your listening, guidance and level of commitment, no matter what, has meant to me. Safe Place continues to be the single most healing place for me to be when the grief or sadness over my brother's death unexpectedly returns. I will forever be grateful for that."

*Safe Place Suicide Survivor Group Participant*

## Samples of Samaritans Mental Health Wellness Support Calls

Rosemary D – said she is feeling trapped and alone. She is stressed from being quarantined and is really worried about her mother who is in the hospital with COVID. She said she's unable to get her doctors on the phone and expressed frustration and bewilderment.

Dana G – finds it difficult not having an outlet and said that she is feeling so exhausted and heartbroken seeing so much death among the population her work serves. She said that her family life and work are such that she provides a lot of support but that no one ever asks her how she is doing.

Doug G – said he has been feeling anxious and that it is difficult to stay in his apartment and not go anywhere. He's noticed himself getting obsessive about the stock market as a response to anxiety. This obsession adds to his stress and has led to sleep deprivation which is affecting his ability to cope and distract himself. He said that some days are more difficult than others and that it helps to talk.

Jessica L – is currently furloughed from work and has been feeling irritable and unable to connect with her boyfriend and friends because she's not been feeling up to talking to them. Easter/springtime is the toughest part of the year for her and now, the current climate has just intensified what is already difficult enough on its own.

Simon H. – is feeling stressed and fatigued at not knowing when all this will end. When he has unproductive thoughts, he said he watches them float through his mind and tries not to let them ruin his day.

Jessica J – recently moved to the city and said she feels completely isolated now with family and friends being so far away. She has a therapist but says that isn't helping much now and while she does video-chat with her daughters who are both asymptomatic with COVID, she is unable to talk to them about her 'stuff'.

Larry A – has been experiencing economic issues and it's taken a turn for the worse as the pandemic has interrupted his job search. He said he is 65, lives alone in Queens and is worried about his exposure to the virus and how he is going to stay connected to other people now.

Susan M – said she is feeling her depression worsen from being cooped up. She is having trouble sleeping because she is unable to use her standard systems for coping right now with everything that is going on.

Lidia N – said she is trying to navigate this difficult situation just like everyone else. She's taking care of her mom (91) and working from home, but working a lot, which has been a major adjustment. She feels her practical side has taken over and she's not been overly emotional until now and is realizing the benefit of finding a place to help her make space for her feelings.

Skye D - hasn't been able to establish a routine. She said it has been difficult not getting outside to feel the sun but fear of exposure keeps her in. She has been trying to talk herself down from being scared because she does not want to inundate her friends who've got their own issues to contend with. She said she is grateful to have her brother and Samaritans to talk to.



# SUICIDE PREVENTION IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS!

## Understanding Suicide

- 1 While there is no single cause for suicide, it can be prevented.
- 2 Suicide often occurs when an individual is in distress, overwhelmed, experiencing some form of mental health problem or personal crisis and is struggling to cope.
- 3 Most people who are suicidal exhibit warning signs and risk behaviors.
- 4 Suicide affects people of every age, race, gender, culture & socioeconomic background
- 5 Experts agree that the key to preventing suicide is increasing protective factors and decreasing access to lethal means.

## Overview of the Problem

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US and has been increasing for over a decade

More than twice as many people die from suicide than homicide in New York

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in the US for youth aged 10-14, adolescents and young adults aged 15-24, and adults aged 25-34

White, older middle age and elderly men comprise the largest group that die from suicide.

Women attempt suicide 3 times as often as men.

In 2017 30.4% of NYC High School students reported feelings of depression in the last year and 10.1% reported that they had attempted suicide.

## Learn the Warning Signs

- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and that life is not worth living
- Talking about suicide and or announcing a plan to do it
- Statements like: "I wish I was dead"
- Obtaining a weapon or other lethal means
- A sudden worsening in school performance and/or changes in behavior
- Impulsive/risk taking behavior
- Increased or excessive consumption of drugs/alcohol
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- Changes in mood: depression, anxiety, agitation/anger, or a sudden improvement
- Giving away prized possessions

# YOU CAN HELP PREVENT SUICIDE

Don't be afraid  
to talk to a  
person in  
distress!

## Practice Samaritans 5 C's

- Contact
- Care
- Communication
- Catharsis
- Community

## Always take talk of suicide seriously!

You do not make someone suicidal by asking them how they are feeling or by mentioning the word suicide.

## Responding to Someone in Crisis

1. Create a safe environment
2. Establish rapport and trust
3. Look for warning signs, risk & protective factors
4. Ask if they are feeling suicidal
5. If they say yes, ask:
  - a) What is making them feel that way?
  - b) Have they thought about what they would do?
  - c) Have they thought about, how and when they would do it?
  - d) Have they ever attempted suicide in the past?

***\*People who plan suicide and have the means are high risk\****

6. Explore available resources  
(see Samaritans NYC Guide to Suicide Prevention, Services and Resources)
7. Decide the best course of action
8. Provide ongoing support

[www.samaritansnyc.org](http://www.samaritansnyc.org)







**Testimony for New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget - Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you for allowing Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services to provide testimony today. Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest providers of child welfare, education, youth development, juvenile justice, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We serve approximately 250 school-aged children through our family foster care program and two group homes.

Children in foster care are among the City's most vulnerable. School is critical to their well-being -- it has the potential to be a source of stability and comfort during a time of uncertainty and crisis. Unfortunately, however, education for students in foster care is frequently disrupted. **To address their needs, the City must include funding in the budget to guarantee transportation for students in foster care and lift the hiring freeze so the DOE can move forward with plans to hire a small team focused on students in foster care.**

At the most basic level, the DOE must ensure that every student in foster care can get to school. Federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools. However, the DOE has refused to guarantee bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students. As a result, students who cannot travel to school on their own have been forced to transfer schools, or even transfer foster homes, even though it is not in their best interest.

Students in foster care often wait months for busing, and that wait can be exacerbated by the lack of understanding among DOE staff about the unique considerations affecting these students. One child, Christian R., worked with our Education Specialist when he was in 5th grade to gain admission to Eagle Academy for Young Men of Harlem for middle school. Christian himself chose to apply to Eagle Academy, and he was excited to attend. Over the summer before 6th grade, Christian was moved to a foster home in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx. Our Education Specialist reached out to DOE on August 23rd to have the student's address updated so that we could apply for busing to begin at the start of the school year. Receiving no response, she continued to reach out until his address was finally updated at the end of September, at which point she submitted the busing request to the Office of Pupil Transportation. On January 3rd, Christian's foster parent received a letter stating that a bus route had been assigned, but since there was no driver, busing would not begin. Busing finally began February 18th, more than halfway through the school year.

**We ask the City Council to ensure that the budget includes \$5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to the relatively small number of students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.**

Students in foster care, who are disproportionately Black and come from the City's poorest communities, are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma. They were also impacted particularly hard by the closure of schools. In fact, last year only 43% of students in foster care graduated from high school in four years – by far the lowest rate of any student group in the city, and almost 40 percentage points below the city average of 81%. Despite the obvious need, there is not currently a single full time employee at the DOE focused on meeting the needs of students in foster care. Foster care agencies' attempts to assist these students are often delayed by schools' lack of understanding. For example, although Federal law was amended in 2008 to ensure child welfare agencies access to educational records of students in their care, our staff routinely face resistance from school personnel who believe that a parent's consent is required for release of records. We have to educate DOE staff again and again on this basic issue.

This fall, the DOE finally announced that it would hire a small team of staff to focus on students in foster care. Due to the DOE's hiring freeze, however, none of the positions have been filled. Particularly at a time when the DOE is receiving increased state and federal funding, there is no reason to impose a hiring freeze on positions designed to support one of the most marginalized groups of students—leaving students in foster care with no DOE staff dedicated full time to meeting their unique needs. The Administration's desire to find cost-savings and efficiencies should not come on the backs of students in foster care. **We urge you to ensure the DOE can hire its first-ever team focused on students in foster care.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these important issues.

**New York City Council Committee on Education Preliminary FY23 Budget Hearing**  
**Testimony Submitted by Student Leadership Network**  
**March 21, 2022**

Good morning. My name is Robert Robinson, and I am the Senior Managing Director of CollegeBound Initiative (CBI) at Student Leadership Network, formerly known as Young Women's Leadership Network. As a Brooklyn native and proud New York City public school alumnus, I began my career as the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions at my alma mater, New York University (NYU). I worked specifically with their Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) in an effort to increase enrollment for students from underserved communities. Following my time at NYU, I joined CBI as a Director of College Counseling at Middle College High School at Medgar Evers College. I also served as a Director of College Counseling at Juan Morel Campos Secondary School before joining Student Leadership Network's central office team in 2008. On behalf of Student Leadership Network, thank you to Chair Joseph and all of the members of the Education Committee for this opportunity to testify about the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget.

Student Leadership Network operates two programs in New York City that support young people from diverse, underserved communities to access educational opportunities that prepare them to lead successful lives: The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), a high-performing network of single-gender, traditional district public schools, and CollegeBound Initiative (CBI), a comprehensive college access, persistence, and success program for young people of any gender.

In 1996, Ann and Andrew Tisch partnered with the Center for Educational Innovation and the New York City Department of Education to launch The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of East Harlem, the first public all-girls school to open in the United States in 30 years. Their vision was to provide girls growing up in underserved communities with a high-quality college preparatory education modeled after the finest private schools. Today, Student Leadership Network impacts more than 2,500 students through our five TYWLS public schools in New York City and nearly 8,000 through 16 partner schools nationwide modeled after TYWLS. The sixth TYWLS will be opening in Staten Island this September, 2022.

In 2001, with a vision for making the dream of college a reality for students from underserved communities and first generation college students, Student Leadership Network launched the co-educational CollegeBound Initiative (CBI), first to support TYWLS of East Harlem's inaugural graduating class. Today, more than 13,000 students in 25 New York City public schools are impacted by CBI, which places full-time college counselors in schools who, just as in the best private schools, do it all. CBI's Directors of College Counseling support *all* students with college selection, financial aid, scholarship resources, applications, essays, interviews, and so much more. CBI's Director of College Counseling cultivate a college-going culture across their schools, working with students and their families as early as the sixth grade. Our average student-to-counselor caseload is 100:1, compared to the national average of 500:1. Since 2001, CBI has helped more than 19,000 students enroll in college. Cumulative college enrollment rate for students who graduate from a CBI partner school is a stunning 87%, with 74% enrolling in four-year colleges.

The impact of institutionalized racism in the United States in tandem with COVID-19's disproportionate impact on communities of color in New York City creates and exacerbates disparities in educational outcomes for students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). This chronic, on-going disparity is linked to systemic, institutional barriers that disproportionately impact students from underserved communities, particularly BIPOC students, including unequal access to rigorous academic preparation and enrichment opportunities, shortages of qualified college counselors, a lack

of opportunities to visit college campuses, and an overall unfamiliarity with the increasingly complex college admissions and financial aid processes among students and their families. While college is one of the most important economic mobility engines in this country, far too many BIPOC students and students from underserved communities are underrepresented in higher education and do not receive a college degree. The critical support provided by CBI's Directors of College Counseling ensures that students from these communities (95% of CBI students identify as BIPOC) earn college degrees, leading to better career and economic prospects for themselves, their families, and their communities. Many of our students, along with several of our partner schools, reside in communities that were among the hardest hit by COVID-19 in New York City and must maintain their comprehensive college access support provided by CBI to ensure students stay on track in achieving their dreams of higher education. As such, we are requesting the Education Committee's support and advocacy to restore critical College Access for All (CA4A) funds to pre-pandemic levels to ensure students' complete educational recovery and future success amid the aftermath of the global health crisis.

In addition to our proven college access programming, SL Network continues to support students after their high school graduation through our Alumni Engagement Team, which supports students' persistence through their postsecondary plans via college and career events (now virtual) and targeted programming to see them through to their college graduation day. This critical task has become increasingly urgent as COVID-19 creates new obstacles and disrupts many of our students' future plans. Many students continue to struggle with food and housing insecurity in addition to lack of access to the internet and transportation options. Additionally, even more students faced economic uncertainty and were forced by necessity to pause their studies to take on jobs to help support their families who continue to experience job loss amid the COVID variant surges. Our Alumni Engagement Team works hard to help combat these challenges by deepening collaborations with external organizations, leveraging college connections, and tapping into innovative technology platforms that help develop skills and provide opportunities for students to succeed in college and beyond, focusing on the critical transition between students' first and second year in college.

COVID-19's drastic impact on the college application and admissions process cannot be understated. Our work is now more important than ever, and Student Leadership Network is committed to meeting our students' and partner schools' needs during this incredibly challenging time. Our CBI team has codified their learnings and virtual college counseling best practices to best support students across our 25 partner schools, and we have expanded our reach to support students citywide through our [suite of virtual resources](#).

Our successful programming would not be possible without our strong and exemplary partnerships with the New York City Department of Education and the New York City Council. We sincerely appreciate the New York City Council's investment in Student Leadership Network's CollegeBound Initiative program and look forward to continuing to partner with both the Council and the Department of Education to ensure that *all* students have the resources that will propel them to achieve their dreams.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



## Office of the President & CEO

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### **Education Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing Monday, March 21**

**Testimony By  
Stacey Hengsterman, President & CEO  
Special Olympics New York**

Even champions need champions.

One in every 5 students enrolled in New York City Department of Education (DOE) schools has a disability. The same ratio is seen among New York State's general population.

It is on behalf of these students and citizens that I submit the following testimony for the Education Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing. Thank you for the opportunity.

New York is home to one of the largest Special Olympics chapters in the country. We currently serve more than 31,000 athletes – children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) – statewide, providing year-round sports training, authentic competition, and health screenings. We also partner with schools throughout the state to offer Unified Sports, where students with and without disabilities compete as teammates. All Special Olympics New York programs are offered at no cost to athletes, their families or caregivers.

In short, we change lives. People with intellectual disabilities who never dreamed they could play a sport, be part of a team, or compete – *really compete* – are given the chance. With our help, they learn to discover and unleash the champion within themselves. And in the process, they show our communities what true inclusion looks like and why it's important.

To understand the impact of Special Olympics on someone's day-to-day life, let me tell you about a 17-year-old young man with Down syndrome who joined our program about two years ago. Before finding Special Olympics, Alex went to school every day, a public school in Upstate New York. He had some classes with neuro-typical students his age, but the vast majority of his time was spent in a self-contained environment with other students who have varying disabilities. He came home from school and spent the afternoon with his babysitter, his family and his computer. He was happy, but he was lonely. His friends didn't call him to hang out after school or on weekends.

When Alex first joined Special Olympics, it was at his parents urging. Sports had never been his thing; he didn't see himself as an athlete. So he took his time, tried a couple activities here and there. Surprising everyone who knows him, what he ended up enjoying most was powerlifting. Flash forward to today ... Alex meets his Special Olympics teammates and coaches at the gym three days a week and trains *as a powerlifter*. He works out from 7 – 8 p.m. on weeknights and at 10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. He has become so confident in his athletic abilities that he's also joined the Special Olympics Unified Bowling team at his high school.

Alex has new friends and teammates. He has coaches and an entire community of people who believe in him and support him. He has championship lifts and matches on his calendar. He is proud to identify himself as an athlete and he is even learning to tell his story, to advocate. Alex is healthier, both physically and mentally. He isn't lonely anymore. He is too busy to be lonely.

Not long ago, Alex said to me: "Mom, Special Olympics changed my life."

I am the president and CEO of the organization that changed my son's life, and I can't separate the pride that gives me as both a parent and a leader. I only wish we had found Special Olympics sooner. Like so many people living with disabilities in New York City, we were not aware of the impact that Special Olympics could have on our family. I am determined to do everything I can to make sure that kids like Alex and parents like me know what we know now: that Special Olympics New York can improve their lives.

Increasing our footprint in New York City priority #1 because it's where our work is most urgently needed. Despite being the highest populated and most diverse area of the state, New York City is home to only 1,371 athletes who participated in traditional Special Olympics sports programs in their community in 2021. This, in a city that more than 18 million people call home.

Special Olympics is slightly more prevalent within the DOE, where approximately 22,000 students were exposed to some form of our programming in 2021. However, this – in the largest school district in the United States, where more than 1 million students are enrolled – is not enough.

It means 2% of the students this committee aims to serve had access to Special Olympics programming in school last year. Yet 20% of DOE students have a disability, and for the most part, the other 80% never even see a student with a disability in the hallway, let alone interact with them. It's not even close to being enough.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. Special Olympics New York offers programs for students of all ages. We offer training for educators and coaches. We provide equipment and uniforms. *All with zero start-up costs to impact school budgets.*

One of our most successful models is the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program, which my son and nearly 10,000 students currently participate in at more than 250 high schools statewide. In a Unified Champion School, students with and without ID compete as teammates against other schools in their section, just like any Varsity or Junior Varsity team. These students not only enjoy the physical, mental and social



benefits of being on a school sports team; they lead inclusive activities that bring the entire student body together. The culture in a Special Olympics Unified Champion School is what all schools should strive for: one where every student is welcome, empowered and included.

While we are seeing the Unified movement grow quickly upstate, it has been a struggle to partner with schools in the city. In fact, of the more than 250 Unified Champion Schools we work with statewide, just 12 of them are within the NYC DOE.

Equally as important as comprehensive Unified Champion Schools programming, which is the most inclusive and engaging for students both with and without intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics New York offers training and coaching for school staff interested in providing Unified Physical Education classes, health and wellness programs, youth leadership and more. We have made some inroads at this less-immersive level over the years, with approximately 140 NYC DOE schools currently involved in some way. However, this is still a small fraction: slightly more than 7%.

I know this committee will agree that the country's largest and most diverse school system – and its surrounding communities – should be doing much, much better. With your help, it can.

There are tens of thousands of people with disabilities in New York City who need Special Olympics and don't know it yet. So many Alex's out there with a champion sleeping inside of them, waiting to be awakened.

Special Olympics can do that. I see it happen every day. But even champions need champions, and they need you.

###



*All Special Olympics New York programs are offered at no cost to athletes, their families or caregivers. The organization has earned the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.com, making it one of the most trusted charities in the business nationally. For additional information about Special Olympics New York, to learn more about getting involved, visit [www.specialolympicsNY.org](http://www.specialolympicsNY.org).*



**March 17th 2022**

Hello my name is Tanesha Grant I am the founder and executive director of Parents Supporting Parents NY. This is my written testimony to the education committee giving my thoughts as PSPNY and as a community organizer in Harlem. For far too long as everyone always states we know our children have gone without their public school education being fully funded. From technology including a permanent remote option, to culturally responsive curriculum and education, smaller class sizes, school safety, bus services for children with and without IEP services, IEP services in general, school nutrition, social emotional learning, mandated reporting and various other services our children don't get the high quality education they deserve. Black, brown, Indigenous, and immigrant parents have for years, giving their free time to address all of these issues with elected officials and the Department of Education. We even work really hard on solutions that we then present to DOE and elected officials. Equity can't wait and neither can our public school communities.

Parents are quite tired of everyone telling us and our students it takes time and we must wait for these resources to be put in place. Why should we be made to wait for our children to get a high quality education and all of their mandated services as public school children. Who is held accountable for continuing the cycle of starving our public schools of money in the NYC budget to adequately address these very serious harmful issues affecting NYC public school children? We have high hopes this new City Council not only allocates monies to fully fund public schools but also follows up with the Department of Education continuously making sure the DOE budget is used wisely to build responsible effective programs that actually work to address these issues in a holistic manner that stops the cycle of our public schools being more traumatizing to our children rather than a space to learn and be supported with every resource. This is every public school student's right that for generations has been denied. There is a reason that we are the most segregated school system in the nation. We at PSPNY and many other parents and students urge the City Council Education Committee of 2022 to finally put the children 1st. That starts by allocation of City Council budget funds. We know that the money given from the federal government has barely been used and we also know Eric Adams is proposing to cut even more money from education in his budget proposal. As City Council members you have the power to stop our newest mayor from continuing a pattern that hurts our public schools and gives our students less opportunities to succeed in life. You can't complain about reading levels and various other areas where the public school system is failing our children and then blame our children for the outcome.

It is time that elected officials and the department of education truly work and listen to the voice of parents who send their children to the public school education system. We want to be fully involved with the operations and curriculum of our children's public schools. It's time for the DOE to understand you can no longer continue to waste money on one size fits all children actions when we know our children are individually unique as a person. We must use different techniques that speak to that individual child instead of expecting all our children to learn the same or need the same resources and support. We keep hesitating about going back to normal. Normal never worked for many of us. It is time to create a new normal that centers equity. We

will continue to be heavily involved with advocacy for high quality education in every public school in NYC. Thank you for your time

**Tanesha Grant**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**Parents Supporting Parents NY**  
**Moms United for Black Lives NYC**

# OUR SCHOOLS, OUR FUTURES: A BUDGET FOR SAFE AND JUST NYC SCHOOLS



DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN-NY (DSC-NY) IS A COALITION OF NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS, FAMILIES, EDUCATORS, AND ADVOCATES ORGANIZING TO ENSURE THAT EVERY YOUNG PERSON—REGARDLESS OF WHICH NEIGHBORHOOD THEY LIVE IN OR SCHOOL THEY ATTEND—HAS ACCESS TO SAFE AND THRIVING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES. WE CALL ON NYC'S ELECTED OFFICIALS TO TAKE AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD OUR VISION BY ADOPTING A FY 2023 BUDGET THAT SHIFTS FUNDING TOWARDS THE RESOURCES AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT EVERY YOUNG PERSON TO LEARN AND GROW, AND AWAY FROM THE POLICE PRESENCE AND CULTURE THAT DIRECTLY DISRUPTS LEARNING AND VIOLATES THE DIGNITY AND SAFETY OF BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, AND LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE.

## 1. HIRE 2,000 NEW YORKERS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS

WHEN STUDENTS ARRIVE AT SCHOOL, THEY SHOULD BE GREETED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND TEACHERS, NOT POLICE. BUT FOR YEARS, THE NYPD AND SCHOOL POLICE UNION HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PRESSURED LAWMAKERS TO INSTEAD DIRECT SCHOOL FUNDS INTO HIRING AND TRAINING SCHOOL POLICE WHO HARM BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, LGBTQ+, AND OTHER MARGINALIZED YOUNG PEOPLE. WE WANT SCHOOL-BASED JOBS THAT SUPPORT STUDENTS, CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFETY OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES, AND WHICH HIRE BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PAY THEM WELL.

- **\$75 MILLION DIRECTLY TO 500 HIGH SCHOOLS TO HIRE SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COORDINATORS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE BY AN ADDITIONAL \$55 MILLION EACH YEAR FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS TO HAVE AN RJ COORDINATOR IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, ULTIMATELY A SUSTAINED ANNUAL EXPENSE OF \$240 MILLION.
- **\$75 MILLION TO HIRE 500 NEW SOCIAL WORKERS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO ACHIEVE A RATIO OF 1:150 ACROSS SCHOOLS, WITH 1:50 FOR HIGH NEEDS SCHOOLS.
- **\$75 MILLION TO HIRE 500 NEW SCHOOL COUNSELORS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO ACHIEVE A RATIO OF 1:150 ACROSS SCHOOLS, WITH 1:50 FOR HIGH NEEDS SCHOOLS.
- **\$75 MILLION DIRECTLY TO SCHOOLS TO HIRE 500 COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTO SUPPORTIVE POSITIONS BASED ON NEED.**
  - POSITIONS SHOULD INCLUDE PARAPROFESSIONALS, YOUTH ADVOCATES, PARENT COORDINATORS, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATORS; AND STAFF TO GREET STUDENTS AT THE DOOR AND CHECK-IN VISITORS.

ALL NEW POSITIONS MUST BUILD SAFETY FOR STUDENTS AND GOOD LIVES FOR WORKERS. PRIORITY FOR THESE POSITIONS MUST BE GIVEN TO BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND RECENT NYC PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES. THESE MUST BE WELL PAID UNION JOBS IN THE DOE WHICH ARE EXEMPT FROM THE TYPICAL BARRIERS TO ENTRY SUCH AS AN ADVANCED DEGREE. HOWEVER, THE ADVANCE DEGREE REQUIREMENT WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND COUNSELORS. ALL POSITIONS MUST REQUIRE TRAINING IN AND COMMITMENT TO DE-ESCALATION AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE; AND HIRING AND TRAINING MUST BE OVERSEEN BY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES (STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND PARENTS). THESE MUST NOT BE NYPD OR POLICING POSITIONS.

## 2. FUND SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SAFE, WELCOMING PLACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GROW AND LEARN IMPORTANT CONCEPTS, INCLUDING HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AND NAVIGATE CHALLENGES. OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE CITY HAS INVESTED IN A TOP-DOWN IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, WHICH HAS BEEN INEFFECTIVE AT REACHING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO MAKE ANY MEANINGFUL IMPACT. FULL COMMITMENT TO AND FUNDING FOR A SCHOOL-LED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MODEL WILL MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER FOR ALL STUDENTS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP LIFELONG SKILLS TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS, PRACTICE EMPATHY, AND TAKE OWNERSHIP FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

- **\$45 MILLION (ON TOP OF FUNDING FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COORDINATORS) DIRECTLY TO SCHOOLS TO:**

- ACCESS ONGOING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TRAINING FOR ALL SCHOOL STAFF, AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO THE BROADER SCHOOL COMMUNITY (E.G., STUDENTS AND FAMILIES). REQUIRE THAT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TRAININGS INTEGRATE AN ANTI-RACIST APPROACH. NO MONEY SHALL BE USED FOR TRAINING SCHOOL COPS.
- FUND SAMs FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEAD RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES AND BUILD SKILLS THAT WILL SET THEM UP FOR THE FUTURE.
- DEVELOP RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CURRICULUM WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.
- OFFER RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CLASSES OR ADVISORIES, AND OTHER PRACTICES.

IMPLEMENTATION MUST BE OVERSEEN AND INCLUSIVE OF LONG-TIME RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS, STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS. FUNDING MUST BE ALLOCATED DIRECTLY TO SCHOOL COMMUNITIES LEADING THE WAY TO ENSURE MONEY IS SPENT ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS' NEEDS. IT SHOULD NOT GO TO PRIVATE CONTRACTS WITH NONPROFITS THAT HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.

### **3. SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

ANY YOUNG PERSON EXPERIENCING CRISIS OR CHALLENGES IN THEIR LIFE SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES TO HELP THEM TO MANAGE THROUGH DIFFICULTIES, STAY IN SCHOOL, AND THRIVE. FOR TOO LONG, NYC'S ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE CHOSEN TO SEND POLICE INTO SCHOOLS TO RESPOND TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISES INSTEAD OF INVESTING IN SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES—DENYING SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND OFTEN COMPOUNDING HARM THROUGH PUNITIVE RESPONSES. IN FY 2022, THE CITY ALLOCATED \$5 MILLION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM—A PROMISING MODEL TO HELP STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ACCESS DIRECT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOL AND CONNECT STUDENTS TO OTHER SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THE MODEL IS SET TO LAUNCH IN SPRING 2022. HOWEVER, FUNDING MUST BE EXTENDED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THIS INITIATIVE DOES NOT EXPIRE IN JUNE 2022, AND THAT STUDENTS AT EACH OF THE 50 PILOT SCHOOLS IN SOUTH BRONX AND CENTRAL BROOKLYN DO NOT LOSE ACCESS TO THESE CRITICAL SUPPORTS.

- **\$5 MILLION BASELINE FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO \$15 MILLION BY 2024.

### **4. MOVE MONEY AWAY FROM POLICING**

SCHOOL IS A PLACE WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO FEEL SAFE, TRY NEW THINGS, AND LEARN. BUT PUNITIVE DISCIPLINE AND POLICING CREATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND VIOLATES THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF STUDENTS—PARTICULARLY BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, AND LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO ARE TARGETED MOST HARSHLY BY SCHOOL POLICE. THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THE CITY CURRENTLY CHOOSES TO SPEND ON THE NYPD'S SCHOOL POLICING DIVISION SHOULD BE REDIRECTED TO FUND THE RESOURCES, STAFF, AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT EVERY YOUNG PERSON TO LEARN AND GROW.

- **REDIRECT \$450 MILLION FROM SCHOOL POLICING TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:**
  - DISBAND THE NYPD'S SCHOOL POLICING DIVISION (\$425 MILLION)
  - ELIMINATE THE YOUTH COORDINATION OFFICER POSITION (\$25 MILLION), THE REBRANDED NAME FOR THE 300 UNIFORMED OFFICERS THAT SURVEIL YOUNG PEOPLE AND PATROL SCHOOL BUILDINGS
- **DO NOT HIRE 1,363 NEW SCHOOL COPS TO REPLACE CURRENT VACANCIES.**
  - THIS FUNDING MUST BE REDIRECTED TO FILL SUPPORTIVE STAFF POSITIONS DETAILED IN DEMAND #1.
- **NO FUNDING FOR NEW OR EXISTING STUDENT SURVEILLANCE AND SCANNING EQUIPMENT.**
  - THIS SHOULD BE A FIRST STEP TOWARD THE FULL ELIMINATION OF METAL DETECTORS AND STUDENT SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES BY 2025.

THE CITY MUST REJECT MAYOR ADAMS' DANGEROUS EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES THAT INCREASINGLY SEEK TO HIDE POLICING INFRASTRUCTURE FROM SIGHT—SUCH AS HIS PROPOSAL TO REPLACE METAL DETECTORS WITH "HIGH-TECH" SCANNING TECHNOLOGY, AND POLICE UNIFORMS WITH PLAIN-CLOTHES. GIVING A MAKEOVER TO SCANNING AND SCHOOL COPS WON'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS HARMFUL TO THE BLACK AND BROWN STUDENTS THEY TARGET, BUT WILL ONLY MAKE THAT HARM MORE INSIDIOUS.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US AT:**

**KATEM@DIGNITYANDRIGHTS.ORG**



**Testimony Submitted by**

**Shanon Morris, MS, RD, CDN, Executive Director, Edible Schoolyard NYC**

**Submitted to the Committee on Education**

**March 21st, 2022**

My name is Shanon Morris, and I am the Executive Director of Edible Schoolyard NYC. I am asking you to support quality food education and healthy food access by renewing funding for the Food Ed Hub, providing flexible funding to schools for during and after-school programs, and improving the Outdoor Learning Initiative.

The Food Ed Hub facilitates coordination and collaboration among food and nutrition education ("food ed") programs across NYC; promotes inclusiveness and equity in food ed and food access; advocates for policies that support healthy school food and food ed; convenes stakeholders; develops capacity among organizations; and, provides resources and professional development opportunities to educators. The Food Ed Hub supports the most marginalized school communities in NYC through partnerships with organizations and advocates who offer virtual and in-person food ed, build and maintain school gardens, help implement school wellness policies, support healthy meals, and promote food assistance. The City cannot afford to lose a critical resource designed to maximize impact, increase efficiency, and ensure equitably distributed services. The Food-Ed Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to community-based organizations and educators with ongoing funding.

Renewing funding for the Food Ed Hub, providing flexible funding to schools for during and after-school programs, and improving the Outdoor Learning Initiative would help support impactful programs like Edible Schoolyard NYC that bridge the gap for NYC students. Edible Schoolyard NYC's mission is to support edible education for every child in New York City. We partner with New York City public schools to cultivate healthy students and communities through hands-on cooking and gardening education, with the goal of transforming children's relationship with food. Today, we provide direct services and school garden support to seven

public schools serving nearly 3,000 students and their families in Brooklyn, East Harlem, and the Bronx, in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by food, health, and educational system inequities. We also provide free professional development workshops to hundreds of educators across our city, expanding the reach of edible education to thousands more students.

“So many problems are tied together, and they could all be solved by having a school garden.”

A fifth-grader shared this piece of wisdom at P.S. 216, Arturo Toscanini, in Brooklyn. P.S. 216 partnered with Edible Schoolyard NYC and local partners in 2010 to transform a cement parking lot into a flourishing half-acre, organic garden. This transformation was supported by former Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and former New York City Council Member Domenic Recchia. Since 2010, we have founded another demonstration school site in East Harlem, building a courtyard and rooftop garden, greenhouse, and kitchen classroom, again with the support of the former Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and former New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. We have worked with many schools across the city on a smaller, more replicable scale as well, supporting each school site with school garden infrastructure.

School gardens and food education provide tremendous community, educational, health, and environmental benefits, including distribution of locally-grown, organic produce. Learning in school green spaces enables children to observe and understand where their food comes from by making them part of a truly local food system. Garden education has also been shown to improve academic performance, especially in science and math; build social-emotional skills such as teamwork and self-regulation, and increase student preferences for choosing fruits and vegetables.

Importantly, school gardens support more equitable and culturally responsive education---they are welcoming spaces for all types of learners, including English Language Learners and hands-on learners; school gardens encourage cultural, intergenerational, and community connections; and they are restorative green spaces for families who may not have easy access to yards and parks otherwise. Students, families, educators, and community members build community through food education when the crops grown in the garden and the recipes cooked in the kitchen reflect the school community and its cultures, allowing all to identify how their own culture and cooking traditions already support health and wellness.

Food education and school gardens can be incorporated into any school, no matter the space and resources at hand. We have seen lush garden learning spaces grown indoors and outdoors, on playgrounds, basketball courts, parking lots, and hallways. Whether it's hanging planters along the school fence or installing raised beds in the schoolyard, every public school can and should have a school garden. And, we believe every student and school community deserves to



benefit from the green and restorative space, socio-emotional learning and academic enrichment, and connection to the land and community that school gardens can offer.

Thank you for your consideration and support. Please reach out to [sm@esynyc.org](mailto:sm@esynyc.org) with any questions or feedback. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

## **TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**

### **New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023**

#### **New York City Council Committee on Education Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Submitted by:  
Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you Chairperson Joseph and members of the Committee on Education for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA has more than 50 thousand engaged donors in the New York area, supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services, and allocates over \$150 million each year to strengthen Jewish life, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA submits the following recommendations for the FY 2023 budget:

#### **NONPROFIT HUMAN SERVICES PROVIDERS**

##### **Nonprofit Contracting**

New York City provides a wide range of human services to low-income and vulnerable individuals and families to address a myriad of needs including but not limited to, early childhood education, afterschool and summer programs, senior services, fighting food insecurity and behavioral and mental health care services. These services are provided by nonprofits and managed through contractual relationships that dictate who is eligible for the services and how the services will be administered. However, the ability of nonprofit organizations to provide the services required by their contracts is challenged by a host of issues that can jeopardize service delivery, including late registration and inadequate and delayed reimbursement for services rendered.

According to the recently released *A Better Contract for New York*, more than 75% of contracts were registered after the contract start date in FY22. Additionally, a survey by the Human Services Council of its membership indicated that 70% of organizations reported delayed payment from the City in the last year. Nearly 46% of respondents were forced to take out loans or draw on a line of credit due to withheld or delayed payments—sometimes at significant cost. The average annual cost of interest for those loans is reported as \$223,000. Late registration forces nonprofits to begin service delivery without startup costs or payments covered. UJA participated in Mayor Adams and Comptroller Lander's Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid on Time, which produced *A Better Contract for New York*. **UJA encourages the City to implement these reforms promptly, which will directly support human services organizations and the communities they serve.**

## **Increase Wages for Human Services Workers**

UJA is also a member of the #JustPay campaign, a campaign dedicated to increasing wages for human services workers. Despite the essential services that they provide their communities, human services workers are some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. UJA is urging the City to adopt three core reforms:

### **1. Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.**

Investing in the COLA is the most impactful action the City Council can take to support the human services workforce. City contracts have not included a COLA for two years. Ideally, human services workers could benefit from a multi-year COLA agreement. In the absence of this, the City should include a 5.4% COLA based on the Consumer Price Index and mirroring the COLA included in the FY23 State budget for human services workers. **UJA is urging the City Council to include \$108 million in the budget to provide a COLA for human services workers.**

### **2. Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.**

There is longstanding underinvestment in the human services sector, making it difficult for providers to keep up with the demand for services or holistically raise wages across all staff lines without increased funding. The average human services contract in New York pays only 70 cents on the dollar for direct program expenses. This chronic underfunding puts providers in the impossible position of taking contracts that neither pay fair wages nor fully fund services or turn down those opportunities—resulting in laying off employees and closing vital community programs. A living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour is vital to helping retain and recruit a committed and talented human services workforce.

However, not all employees at human services nonprofits are paid 100 percent through City contracts. When salaries are increased for contracted workers, there is an unintended spillover effect that must be addressed. If a higher wage floor were put in place, providers would have to find the funds to increase wages for workers not paid through City contracts, which would create undue burden, particularly at time when nonprofits are struggling more than ever. We implore the Administration and Council to not overlook these workers and consider ways to support the full workforce.

### **3. Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.**

Because the Government is the predominant funder of human services, they are also the primary driver of human services salaries. Under this system, it is the workers themselves who have borne the brunt of decades of chronic underfunding all while ensuring programs with inadequate funding meet their targets. Government contracts either directly set low salary levels or do so indirectly by establishing low rates for services along with required staffing levels on a contract. This creates low starting salaries that are often stagnant because human services contracts last five to seven years (or more) with no opportunity for cost-escalators to allow for raises. A comprehensive wage and benefit schedule is needed as workers, advocates, providers, and elected officials continue to work together to ensure that human services workers finally earn fair pay for their labor.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

### **Preschool Special Education Programs**

UJA recommends that the FY 2023 budget include **\$30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) with salaries on par with their 12-month Department of Education (DOE) counterparts.** In 2019, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood education teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs. Excluded in this agreement were teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs. These teachers work 12-month jobs serving young children with disabilities with intensive needs. The City has not committed to salary parity for these educators, despite a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes. In fact, the DOE is projecting that it will fall short by more than 900 seats in preschool special education classes this spring leaving more preschoolers with disabilities without the educational supports they are legally entitled to receive.

CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. The City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting in July by offering a “contract enhancement” to the CBOs that run these classes. The City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it’s hard to see how the City will be able to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide. **UJA urges the Administration to ensure that the FY 23 budget includes \$30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts.**

### **UPK and 3-K programs**

UPK and 3-K programs in CBOs had to overcome a number of challenges during the pandemic including remote learning, understanding and implementing constantly changing safety protocols once children came back to the classroom, fluctuating enrollment, and ensuring enough staff were present to work with children when staff became ill or left for other employment opportunities. Despite these challenges, CBOs continued to provide opportunities for young children to learn about math, science, language arts and social studies in a safe environment. As New York continues on the path to pandemic recovery, UJA urges the City to implement the following recommendations in order to invest in CBOs who are educating the majority of young children enrolled in the 3-K and UPK programs:

#### **1) Compensate CBOs based on the true cost of overseeing programs**

Enrollment fluctuates in early childhood education programs. However, costs for overseeing programs remain the same. Reimbursing providers based on enrollment causes many to deal with a deficit they cannot absorb. UJA urges the City to reimburse UPK and 3-K programs based on the true cost of overseeing their programs and not how many children are enrolled in their programs.

#### **2) Create comprehensive pay parity for all 3-K and UPK staff in CBOs**

The 2019 salary parity agreement resulted in certified CBO teachers in pre-kindergarten programs receiving the same compensation as entry level DOE pre-kindergarten teachers. This investment alleviated some of the recruitment and retention issues CBOs experienced in their UPK programs. However, some outstanding issues need to be addressed to achieve comprehensive pay parity. Since the salary increases negotiated in 2019 match the compensation entry level DOE teachers are making, teachers who have worked in CBO UPK programs for multiple years are making the same amount as a teacher who is working in their first year at a CBO. Directors and educational directors in CBO UPK programs were not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement. As a result, many are being compensated less than the teachers they supervise, resulting in directors and educational directors leaving CBOs for higher paying jobs. Additionally, non-teaching staff in CBOs, including assistants, janitors, cooks and other staff, are being compensated less than their counterparts in DOE schools.

To combat this, UJA urges the City to create comprehensive pay parity for staff in CBOs which would result in equivalent salaries and benefits for equal levels of education and experience between early

educators inside and outside DOE programs. This should also take into account the differences in school days and longer hours worked for CBO educators. Longevity increases for teachers in community based early childhood education programs must also be included. Lastly, when pay parity agreements are achieved, contracts must be promptly amended to include additional funds in order for CBOs to have the financial means to compensate their workforce according to those agreements.

**3) Allow community-based organizations to directly enroll families**

Currently, families enroll their children in 3-K and UPK programs located in CBOs through the DOE. The DOE enrolling families in CBO 3-K and UPK programs creates another unnecessary step in the enrollment process that families would not have to deal with if they could enroll through the CBOs. It also results in CBOs obtaining their list of enrollees from the DOE meaning the DOE ultimately has control over who is or is not attending CBO programs. CBOs interact directly with the families who are interested in attending their 3-K and UPK programs and should be able to enroll them in their programs.

**4) Commit to Working with Community Based Organizations in Planning Reforms to Early Childhood Education**

Often, CBOs are not involved in the development of early childhood policies and procedures that directly impact them. The DOE must allow CBOs to provide feedback on policies and procedures that will shape how they educate young children in their communities.

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

### **Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS)**

Prospective staff who are hired to work in programs located in the DOE buildings or funded through DOE contracts are required to be cleared through the DOE's Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS). When staff are undergoing the PETS background check process and a previous criminal offense is uncovered, they are required to undergo a more thorough investigation through the DOE's Office of Personnel Investigation (OPI). While they are being reviewed by OPI, employees cannot work with children or be compensated with money from DOE contracts.

Previously, OPI investigations took about two weeks to complete. In many instances, the investigations clear prospective employees to work with children. Currently, providers report that OPI investigations are taking up to three months to complete. This places strain on providers to find ways to retain prospective staff and in many cases they are unsuccessful, losing staff to places where they can get hired and paid more quickly. Unfortunately, there is not a large pool of candidates to work in early childhood education programs to draw from when prospective employees leave for other opportunities. Providers also mention having no one to follow-up with at the DOE when they have questions about the OPI process. **Providers need the OPI to complete investigations within two weeks and require a reliable contact at the DOE when they have questions about the OPI process.**

## **STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE**

### **Increase Supports for Students in Foster Care**

Students in foster care are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma. They were also impacted particularly hard by the transition to virtual learning during the pandemic. Last year only 43% of students in foster care graduated from high school in four years – by far the lowest rate of any student group in the city, and almost 40 percentage points below the city average of 81%. Despite this, there is not a single person at the DOE focused full time on meeting the needs of students in foster care. The result is that barriers to education for this population often remain unaddressed and opportunities for interagency coordination and policy change are not developed.

In the fall of 2021, the DOE announced that it would hire a small team of staff to focus on students in foster care. However, due to the DOE's current hiring freeze none of the positions have been filled. The DOE is receiving increased state and federal funding and could use these funds to lift the hiring freeze and provide staff to meet the unique needs of students in foster care. **UJA urges the Administration to lift the hiring freeze so the DOE can move forward with plans to hire a team focused on students in foster care.**

In addition, the DOE must ensure that every student in foster care can be transported to school. Federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools. However, the DOE has not guaranteed bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students. As a result, students who cannot travel to school on their own have been forced to transfer schools, or even transfer foster homes. During the 2019-20 school year, one in five NYC students had to change schools upon their initial placement in foster care. **We ask the City Council to ensure that the budget includes \$5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.**

## **NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **Supporting Non-Public Schools**

While continuing to grapple with unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, non-public schools have been able to provide safe instruction. However, non-public schools have spent millions of dollars complying with health protocols to maintain teaching and learning, whether remote or in-person. Costs, so far, have ranged between tens of thousands of dollars to upwards of millions of dollars (depending on school size) for expenses included but not limited to the hiring of additional staff, technology upgrades, ongoing school sanitizing, physical protective barriers and signage, personal protective equipment, air filtration system upgrades and the ongoing testing of students and faculty for COVID infections as well as data collection and reporting. It is critical that non-public schools be reimbursed for these expenses and provided additional current-year funding to cover ongoing COVID-related costs. As the City continues to make great strides in containing the spread of COVID-19, the Administration must ensure that the health and safety of the non-public school community is not left behind and that all schools are reimbursed for the cost of COVID-related expenses. **UJA urges the City to provide COVID relief to non-public schools in parity to the public school community, including broadband access, mental health support and other subsidized supports.**

**UJA also requests that the City consider expanding the eligibility criteria for non-public schools qualifying for the non-public school security guard reimbursement program.** Instead of the current eligibility criteria of a qualifying non-public school with more than 300 registered students, UJA requests that the criteria be expanded to enable security to be provided for additional vulnerable institutions and that the eligibility mirror the Federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program. This would allow all nonprofits to be eligible via competitive award.

## **ADULT LITERACY**

### **Increase investment in Adult Literacy programs**

There are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English proficiency or who lack a high school diploma. Many of these New Yorkers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing the essential work that has been sustaining our communities – as grocery workers, delivery workers, home care workers, and parents. Others are service workers and domestic workers who lost their jobs and incomes and have faced a harsh reality with little or no safety net. While adult literacy education is only one part of the solution, it is essential to a fair, just, and sustainable recovery.

The majority of adults in NYC with limited literacy skills are women and people of color. Over 75% are immigrants, including many who are undocumented. Others are BIPOC who were born in the US and underserved by the public school system. Adult literacy education can provide the foundation for greater security and autonomy, as well as the tools to access, navigate, analyze – and ultimately transform – social, political, and economic systems and conditions.

When it comes to city and state funding for adult literacy education, there are a number of challenges. The first is that combined city and state funding is so limited that fewer than 4% of the 2.2 million adults who could benefit from adult basic education, high school equivalency, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are able to access seats in any given year. The second is that the level of investment per student

is so low that programs are unable to provide the full range supports, services, and resources that students need and deserve. The last is that the funding places such an emphasis on increasing test scores, accruing credentials, and achieving workforce outcomes that it fails to recognize and honor the full breadth of students' goals and the myriad ways that programs work to build the collective power of individuals, families, and communities.

Last year, the Administration baselined \$8 million in year-to-year funding for adult literacy education (creating a total of \$13.5 million in baselined funds) and the NYC Council allocated an additional \$2.5 million of Council Discretionary funding in a first-of-its-kind pilot project that provided 20 programs with between \$70,000 and \$150,000 of additional funds to invest in full-time teachers, counselors, expanded student support services, professional development and planning time for staff, and upgrades to technology to support digital literacy development. The pilot also recognized and encouraged a broader range of outcomes, including support for health literacy, financial literacy, immigrant rights, workers' rights, housing advocacy, culturally responsive education, and student leadership development.

Adult literacy education is the key to economic security and social mobility. Median wages for adults with a high school diploma or its equivalent are 24% greater than for those without a diploma. Furthermore, higher levels of literacy are associated with greater health knowledge, more efficient use of healthcare services, and the ability to manage chronic health conditions and communicate with healthcare providers. Increased literacy not only benefits individuals, it also drives broader economic growth. A national study from Gallup found that "getting all U.S. adults to at least a Level 3 literacy proficiency would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion in annual income for the country," and that large cities like New York would see a 10% increase in gross domestic product.

UJA urges the Administration to **maintain the \$8 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional \$13.5 million** (for a total of \$27 million) to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP. Additionally, UJA urges the City Council to **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to \$5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources. Lastly, UJA urges the City Council to **renew the \$4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

## **FOOD SUPPORTS**

### **Addressing Food Insecurity**

Food access continues to be a concern among New Yorkers. While food insecurity in the city has subsided somewhat from the peak seen early in the pandemic, it continues to be much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic, according to Feeding America, almost 500,000 children experienced food insecurity.

UJA appreciated the City's commitment to ensuring that children had access to meals even when they were not physically attending school through the Grab&Go model, including access to Kosher and Halal meals. However, UJA agencies reported experiencing issues with the Grab&Go program Kosher meals, including with the meal quality. UJA agencies reported having to throw out food received through the Grab&Go program due to spoilage, poor quality or dietary standards not being met resulting in a significant waste of food and city funding.

Now that children are attending school in person, it is important that Kosher and Halal meals continue to be available to those students who require them. Mayor Adams has been a leading advocate for the expansion of Halal and Kosher meals. In his time as Brooklyn Borough President, he advocated for the creation of a Kosher and Halal meals pilot program at 12 schools across the city, both public and private. With nearly 1,800 schools across the DOE and 1.1 million children who rely on school meals, **UJA urges the DOE to take into account the lessons learned through the Grab&Go program, resolve the issues with food quality and adequacy,**



**and work with the Administration to ensure that access to Kosher and Halal meals is expanded to serve the public and private school children who need them.**

**Conclusion**

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1338.



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**Preliminary Budget Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education  
Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Submitted by Dante Bravo, Youth Policy Analyst  
March 22nd, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dante Bravo, and I am the Youth Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged New York City's economy and safety net and has underscored the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City's neighborhoods for decades. Just as they did through other crises our City has faced, settlement houses have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 emergency response by continuing to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more.

Settlement houses have been community hubs for education for decades, and continue to provide New York City's communities with guidance around academic instruction and enrichment, as well as navigating the Department of Education (DOE) at large. They have also served as sites for DOE programming, and as mediators between communities and the DOE to ensure that schools remain as responsive to the needs of their local communities as possible. This testimony makes recommendations about the Department of Education's FY23 budget and

how to best support New York City's children, youth, schools, and communities at large going forward.

UNH's recommendations include:

- Increasing contract rates to Community Based Organizations who work closely with the Department of Education to raise wages for CBO workers
- Investing in the Early Childhood Education system to stabilize it for intentional, targeted expansion to reach the demand across the City
- Baseline funding for Mental Health programs to support positive school climates and bolster academic achievement
- Recognize the value of CBO-school partnerships by finding sustainable funding sources for programs such as the Community Schools Initiative and the Learning to Work program
- Supporting the #JustPay campaign's three-pronged ask for investments for the human services workforce that includes:
  - Automatic COLAs for all human services contracts to help wages keep pace with inflation
  - A living wage floor for human services workers of no less than \$21 per hour
  - The creation and funding of a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule that is comparable with similarly-qualified City and State government employees.

### **The Staffing Crisis in Youth Development and Early Childhood Education**

Settlement house staff have consistently identified staffing challenges as a key issue facing their organization. In late 2021, UNH asked our membership how difficult it is to staff programs on a scale of 1 (least difficult) to 5 (extremely difficult). They answered at a 3.8, and cited youth programs as one of the most challenging positions to fill. We fear that this staffing challenge will continue into the Summer Rising program and fall without significant intervention from the City to address staff shortages. Staff to student ratios are currently 10:1 for elementary students and 15:1 for middle school students, though providers have cited that a 15:2 and 10:2 ratio are ideal for program quality and participant safety.

We are particularly concerned with staffing in Summer Rising programs. Last summer, staffing proved especially difficult given the high number of program participants (estimated at 200,000 participants when compared to previous years serving 90,000 young people). Despite this, providers made the impossible happen; they served more youth when many of their sites were at capacity or struggled with staffing. However, providers are concerned that Summer Rising might create a precedent where a rush to serve as many students as possible ignores the reality of the stark staffing crisis in the field.

To address staffing challenges last year, the DOE made a pool of paraprofessional substitute teachers available as more and more young people enrolled in Summer Rising. However, this

was only a stopgap solution as these paraprofessional substitute teachers were technically DOE employees and were often only present for the morning section of programming; this pool of talent were also not always accountable to the on-site CBO, making it difficult for CBOs to manage staff effectively. Summer programs also leaned on SYEP participants and partnerships with local universities to help fill the staffing gap.

Some CBOs also witnessed slow paraprofessional support for children with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), which put an even greater onus on CBO group leaders to support these young people without the required resources, tools, or even background knowledge of what support their participants needed. For example, one staff member spoke of a group leader who asked their supervisor for support in engaging a non-verbal student because that student had no other support aside from the understaffed CBO workers.

These challenges have continued to plague after-school programs across the city well into the 2021-2022 school year. Without any additional financial support from the City to pay competitive wages, staffing issues threaten to undermine providers' ability to even run basic summer programming, let alone quality programming. While UNH and the larger provider community will always support partnerships with local universities and SYEP participants to develop a pipeline for future full-time youth development professionals, this is at best a stop-gap strategy to the impressive talent needs of the field. At worst, this strategy actively contributes to the notion that jobs in youth work are temporary and therefore should be compensated at extremely low rates, despite the level of expertise our youth development staff have cultivated over decades in the field.

The only way to fix this staffing shortage is to take similarly unprecedented measures to raise wages in summer, school year, and year-round contracts so that CBOs can offer new and existing staff competitive wages.

Our members identified early childhood program positions as the second most challenging to fill. The main obstacle for hiring, and retaining staff in programs is low wages and salaries that are not at parity with wages and salaries for the same position in the DOE. As a result, CBOs are left dealing with staff shortages, preventing them from running at full capacity due to required children-adult ratios; and with high turnover rates which threaten the stability of care that is proven to be necessary for young children's behavioral and cognitive development.

In 2019, as a result of advocacy efforts, certified lead teachers in early childhood education working in community-based centers entered into a contract agreement with the City that brought their salaries on par with the salary of an entry level 10-month DOE teacher. The agreement did not account for regular increases or longevity bonuses; nor did it cover special education teachers. The last scheduled wage increase happened in October 2021, and we fear that in the absence of negotiations to address issues that were left out in 2019, the field will be facing a serious crisis in finding qualified, dedicated teachers to lead both general and special

education early childhood education classrooms. The only way to avoid a crisis that would negatively impact the education of our youngest, the City must invest in true pay parity for all teachers.

Additionally, in 2019, discussions of pay parity for early childhood program directors were delayed, and since then there have been no movement on negotiations. Early childhood program directors, similar to DOE principals, dedicate their time and energy into making their programs the highest quality for the children they serve, and we must finally acknowledge their hard work and dedication by showing how valuable they are through increases in their salaries on par with DOE principals. Our members shared that program directors are considering going back to teaching, since certified teacher salaries are poised to surpass director salaries. A director shortage of this magnitude in community-based organizations would destabilize the whole field.

Finally, early education support staff are in urgent need of wage increases. The 2019 contract awarded the support staff a 2% increase which brought wages up to \$15.75/h. This rate is not only significantly lower than DOE equivalent jobs, it is also lower than what some big box retail companies offer for their employees in NYC. While early education staff are individuals who engage their work with love, many make the hard choice to leave the field entirely in order to better support their own families. This exodus leaves early education programs short staffed and in crisis. The city must increase wages to a minimum of \$21 per hour in line with the demands of #JustPay campaign so that community-based organizations can retain their experienced staff by offering competitive wages.

We also must work to create a workforce pipeline through incentives and programs such as tuition support and loan forgiveness. It is crucial that in addition to assuring fair compensation for the existing staff across all positions, we must guarantee that there is talent coming into the field with the prospects of financial stability.

At a time when there is immediate need for early childhood programs for the City's pandemic recovery progress, we cannot afford to have a staffing crisis due to low wages and salaries. In order to expand the early childhood education services that New Yorkers need, we need to ensure that all providers are able to offer competitive salaries and wages to their staff and they have a continuous pool of qualified and passionate candidates to hire from. For the City to offer quality education of families' choice that is safe, accessible, and affordable, first and foremost, we need to support the workforce.

### **Stabilize the Early Childhood Education System and Invest in Targeted Expansion**

New York City's early childhood education system is one of the largest publicly contracted systems in the country, with community-based organizations offering center-based and licensed family child care that serve the majority of the city's children. Settlement houses were early leaders in New York City's child care system, and continue to offer early childhood education

services to the communities they serve. Settlement houses operate 70 DOE-contracted center-based child care programs which provide year-round, full-day programs for children 0-4 years old, and/or Pre-K for All and 3-K for All Programs; 9 DOE-contracted Family Child Care Networks; and 10 Direct Head Start or Early Head Start programs. Collectively, settlement houses serve about 12,000 children under age 5 citywide.

In order to serve NYC's families effectively and efficiently, the City must strengthen its partnership with community based providers by stabilizing the early childhood education system, and investing in expansion with an intentional, targeted approach.

### ***System Stabilization***

In order to expand its early childhood education system; the City must stabilize the existing system and take the following steps in addition to addressing the staffing issues discussed above.

- Reorganize the enrollment system to allow for community-based organizations to enroll families directly into their programs. Families should have easy access to information on all available modalities of care through DOE, and should be placed in their first choice of provider. Outreach from CBOs and the DOE should inform families on all modalities of care in an equitable manner.
- Invest in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to clear the backlog on comprehensive background checks that is slowing down the hiring process. Because it takes many months to clear staff, this has led to staffing shortages at programs. This backlog is negatively impacting the required staff to children ratios, and in some cases preventing providers from opening classrooms.
- Expedite the family income verification process at the Human Resources Administration so that families receiving subsidized care can have timely access to the childcare modality of their choice.

Additionally, we applaud the DOE for taking steps to hold providers financially harmless for FY22 in order to support the difficulties they faced this year due to pandemic related enrollment fluctuations. Linking contract reimbursement percentages to enrollment levels impact our members in a negative way, since the general costs of operating a classroom (staffing, cleaning, supplies, utilities) do not change drastically whether the class is at full capacity or less. Being reimbursed less for costs that do not change causes programs to operate at a loss as they try to serve their communities. For FY23 and beyond, we urge the City to consider taking steps to permanently unlink enrollment from reimbursement.

### ***Investing in Infants and Toddlers and Full Day/Year Care***

Simultaneous to system stabilization efforts, the City should also take a targeted approach to expanding the system. The previous administration focused on building a universal pre-school system via Pre-K for All and 3-K for All. However, this has left the City's system with a patchwork

of strengths and weaknesses. While Pre-K and 3-K for All programs have a significant impact on communities, these programs only operate from 8 am - 3 pm, and do not provide care in the summer months. For families who need a full day/year of care, they are left having to pay for wrap-around hours. This can be a strain on lower income families, and there are not enough subsidized seats available to provide that extended care to all families that need it. In order to meet the diverse needs of NYC families, the City should:

- Expand the subsidized extended day/year slots for 3 and 4 year-olds to provide a full day and year of care for working families; and
- Age down the system by increasing the number of infant and toddler slots available. This is one of the greatest needs identified by settlement houses in their communities.

Additionally, the City achieved its latest expansion on 3-K For All programs due to federal pandemic relief funds. This funding is set to expire by FY24. The City must start planning for a stable funding stream for these programs once the federal support expires. Additionally, New York State is poised to pass significant reforms to the state's child care system in its FY23 budget, which could alter the City's system and make it easier to expand care to infants and toddlers. The City must work quickly to implement any reforms from Albany so that families can access care and providers can access financial relief and support.

### **Support Youth Mental Health Needs**

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will "require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities." Beyond grief, the learning loss and isolation has had an extreme impact on our young people. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis.

### ***The Need for Funded Mandates***

Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19 pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs—this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.



Summer Rising 2022 - and subsequent programming in Fall 2022 and beyond - must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into summer 2022.

***Baseline \$5M in Funding for the Mental Health Continuum***

In FY 2022, the City allocated \$5 million in one-year funding for a promising model called the Mental Health Continuum, an integrated system of targeted, intensive supports for students with significant mental health challenges. This model includes school partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics; a call-in center to advise school staff; mobile response teams to respond to students in emotional crisis; direct mental health services; School Based Mental Health Clinicians; and wholeschool training in Collaborative Problem Solving. Funding for the Mental Health Continuum—which is expected to be piloted at the end of FY 2022 in 50 schools in the south Bronx and central Brooklyn with high rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism—should be renewed for FY 2023 and baselined so this important work can continue.

***Fund the Citywide Expansion & Implementation of Restorative Justice Practices***

The City must invest in the Citywide expansion and full implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices, which includes hiring a restorative justice coordinator for each school; training all staff and interested members of school communities; providing young people with training and stipends to lead restorative practices; and partnering with community-based organizations to support this work. By building and healing relationships, addressing the root causes of behavior, and holding students accountable, restorative practices have proven effective; their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. The City should invest \$118 million to bring this model to 500 schools in FY 2023, with the ultimate goal of investing \$225 million for full implementation in all NYC schools by FY 2028.

***Expand Inclusive School Programs for Students with Emotional or Mental Health Disabilities***

Black students and economically disadvantaged students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities are disproportionately referred to District 75 schools, where they are segregated from their peers without disabilities. The City should fund the expansion of an inclusive program for students with emotional disabilities being piloted at P.S. 88 this year. In this model, students with and without disabilities learn together in a small class with two trained teachers, one of whom is a special educator; students with disabilities receive therapy from a clinical social worker, who also collaborates with teachers and parents to infuse trauma-informed practices across settings; and a university partner provides clinical training and onsite support to school staff.

***Invest \$28.5 million in School-Based Mental Health Clinics***

The City currently has 280 school-based mental health clinics, which feature community-based providers who operate satellite sites of their licensed Article 28 or 31 clinics in schools. Providers can offer group and individual therapy, clinical treatment, diagnosis, crisis mental health services, support for teachers, family support, and more. These clinics work to improve overall school wellness. They integrate with broader community-based services to support whole families, and seek to reduce punitive measures for children experiencing mental health challenges.

The City should make a robust, \$28.5 million investment in expanding school-based mental health clinics in the FY 2023 budget. This funding would support the creation of 100 new sites over the next two years (due to the time it takes for city procurement, state licensure, and securing space and staff) costing \$150,000 per program. It would also provide increases of \$75,000 per program to the existing 280 providers. Notably, staff retention at existing school-based clinics is a challenge due in large part to a lack of pay parity between community-based providers and DOE-employed professionals, including school social workers.

While clinics receive funding by billing health insurance, this is insufficient because insurance does not cover school wellness activities like mental health education and training; Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis; and commercial insurance often does not cover the service at all, or pays a rate that is so low that it covers only half of the cost of service. Further, because school-based clinics can bill insurance, which the DOE largely cannot, an investment in clinics will result in an infusion of state & federal dollars into schools, and ultimately cost the City less than hiring a DOE school social worker.

### **Invest in Community Schools**

Students learn better when their various physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, it will only be that much harder to focus on academics. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community based organizations in holistic and innovative ways, and represent a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in youth, families, and communities.

Specifically, the success of the community schools is built on the pillars of integrated student supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. These inextricable elements work together to address socioeconomic and health disparities in schools and communities through a partnership between school staff and community based organizations to deliver wraparound services.

Given their track record of success<sup>1</sup>, the New York State Education Department recommended the community schools model as part of their reopening guidance to school districts,<sup>2</sup> and the City committed to using federal stimulus funding to expand the number of NYC community schools from 266 to 406. The community school model is the best strategy for supporting the education spectrum: academic, enrichment, student and family support, engagement/reengagement and restorative justice policies and practices, and have also served as a community centers of mental health through depression/anxiety screenings, in-house mental health services and referrals to larger networks of support outside of the school. Community schools are also an investment in conflict mediation, a pliable model for delivering mental health services to young people to meet them where they are, and can be spaces for families to begin the steps of accessing culturally competent care for their young people.

The City is poised to expand the initiative from 267 to 406 schools using American Rescue Plan federal stimulus dollars. Still, NYC has yet to develop a permanent long-term sustainable funding solution for our community schools, and while federal stimulus dollars will sustain them for now until decreasing in FY24 and then dropping off completely in FY25, the future of these neighborhood lifelines remains unclear.

UNH recommends smart and sustainable investments from the City in the Community Schools Initiative to support the long-term existence of these crucial services. Consistent and sustainable funding are critical to building community trust and authentic school-community partnerships.

The City's Community Schools Initiative should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to fill in the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars:

- A total investment of \$60.3M will be needed to baseline funding after American Rescue Plan funding drops off in FY25.
  - The funding gap left by federal aid in FY25 includes the following:
    - Community Schools Expansion: \$51.2M
    - Restoration of Community Schools Contracts: \$6M
    - Community Schools Sustainability: \$3.1M
- Additionally, in FY24, Community Schools will face a \$25.6M deficit that will need to be filled, as the community school expansion is only half-funded for that year.
- The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.
- Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of expansion to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

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<sup>1</sup> The RAND Corporation released a comprehensive report on the impact of NYC community schools [accessible here](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Guidance accessible here](#)

### **Invest in Learning to Work**

The Learning to Work (LTW) model supports every student in a Transfer School or Young Adult Borough Center (YABC) as they work towards their high school diploma and the development of a post-secondary plan. CBOs are embedded in the fabric of these schools through LTW contracts with the DOE and provide academic and socioemotional support, career and college exploration, skills development, internships, and much more.

The Learning to Work Model is available citywide in 46 Transfer Schools and 20 YABCs. In the 2019-2020 school year, LTW providers supported 16,446 students and provided 3,006 internships, which amounted to over \$9 million in revenue to students.

Throughout the pandemic, LTW providers surmounted significant obstacles to keep students engaged in both school and work. Students remained stably housed, earned income through project-based internships, and continued to participate in classes remotely, in spite of their obstacles being exacerbated by the pandemic's economic impact. CBOs were key in addressing the emotional trauma and learning loss that many students face after a year of sustained social isolation, economic stress, and the loss of family members.

After public outcry from students, CBOs, school administrators and more, LTW was funded to full pre-pandemic levels in the 2022 fiscal year budget through the DOE's federal COVID aid funds. In FY22, 30.4 million made up LTW's 42.1 million budget, or 72% of all of LTW's funding. While UNH and our colleagues at the LTW coalition is excited to have access to this level of funding, our concern is that even this amount of funding will not be enough to reach the incredible demand that will occur as the city continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic, educational, and emotional consequences. This concern is amplified with the knowledge that federal stimulus money is not a stable funding stream as these funds are set to expire after fiscal year 2024, especially when these funds make up most of LTW's budget. Because of this, UNH urges the City to ensure that these vital partnerships and supports are fully baselined at 42.1 million and remain available for students and their families well past fiscal year 2025.

Finally, LTW providers still face divestment given the initiative to cut funding for programming that also experiences low enrollment numbers. CBOs are still supporting communities reeling from the pandemic, and low enrollment numbers are a symptom of that larger problem. We understand the Mayor's desire to ensure that city tax dollars are being invested in effective ways, and at the same time, divesting from successful programs like LTW threaten to harm young people and their communities, despite having survived the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Fund a Cost of Living Adjustment and Raises for Human Service Workers**

UNH was disappointed to see that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposal failed to offer any meaningful investments in the human services workforce that has been on the frontlines of the

pandemic, which includes many community-based mental health workers. Last year, UNH and our partners advocated for \$48 million in the adopted budget to pay for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for human service workers. Instead, we received \$24 million to pay for one-time bonuses. These essential workers deserve better, and UNH supports the #JustPay campaign's three-pronged ask for investments for the human services workforce that includes: 1) Automatic COLAs for all human services contracts to help wages keep pace with inflation; 2) a living wage floor for human services workers of no less than \$21 per hour; and 3) the creation and funding of a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule that is compatible to similarly-qualified City and State government employees.

Human service workers were there for the City when we needed them most, and the City should be there for them now. Low wages for human service positions have contributed to a staffing crisis, and without increased budgets for City contracts to cover wage increases, nonprofits will be unable to recruit and train the next generation of human service workers, setting future New Yorkers up for significant barriers to accessing services. **We urge the Council to emphasize the needs of the human service workforce in budget negotiations.**

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at [dbravo@unhny.org](mailto:dbravo@unhny.org).

## Testimony of University Settlement Before the New York City Council

FY 2022 Joint Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on  
Education

Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair of the Committee on  
Education

March 21, 2022

Presented by Barbara DiGangi, Director of Families Thriving at  
University Settlement

Thank you for convening this hearing. I'm Barbara DiGangi, founding Director of Families Thriving at University Settlement. I'm writing to ask the city to strengthen the funding and support of mental health partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and the Department of Education (DOE).

For 135 years, University Settlement has partnered with New Yorkers to build community strength and promoted resilience through challenging times in history. We've collaborated with our neighbors to pioneer highly effective programs that fight poverty and systemic inequality across Manhattan and Brooklyn. University Settlement infuses a commitment to civic engagement, equity and communal action into each of our programs which include early childhood education, mental health and wellness, youth development, healthy aging, and the arts.

Families Thriving is a home and community-based, wraparound family support program offering a wide range of mental health and social emotional supports to individuals, families, and communities. Our program aims to make quality support and meaningful impact accessible, flexible, and community driven. From classrooms and school offices to family living rooms and Zoom meetings, we offer individual and family therapy, skill-building, crisis avoidance, psychoeducation and Triple P, an evidence-based model for positive parenting. To create community-level change, we partner with after-school programs, community centers, and schools to provide consultation and thought partnership, family workshops and parent support groups, crisis management and debriefing, professional development trainings, and Connection Circles, the community-care model we developed in 2020 which offers a lightly facilitated support circle.

A recent survey administered by Citizens' Committee for Children found that 35% of youth want or need mental health services from a professional yet only 42% of these youth reported receiving these services.<sup>1</sup> More than twice as many black teens did not have access to therapy when they needed it in

<sup>1</sup> [NYC Youth Agenda](#). Citizens' Committee for Children. 2021.

comparison to white teens.<sup>2</sup> No youth in our city should feel unheard, alone or underserved and yet so many do.

In our work and partnership with District 1, we've seen that a new vision of school-based mental health can be possible if given the opportunity to be scaled. Our multi-tiered, healing-centered approach supports the school community as a whole, centers antiracist practices, and fills gaps and cracks in our education system. To promote success for individual students, it's critical that we're not only looking at the student, but we're also looking at the environment -- such as school climate and culture and the impact of systemic inequity -- to ask, what are the ideal *conditions* for success? How can we take a lens beyond pathology and clinical work to provide *community*-care and empowerment? These are the approaches we take in District 1, and it is our hope that more districts can follow.

When a student is having behavioral challenges in the classroom, Families Thriving is at the table during Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings to offer consultation, connect them to our services, and then potentially provide 1:1 support in the classroom or at home – often interrupting a pathway to Special Education or further behavioral challenges.

When social workers and guidance counselors have full caseloads of mandated students and cannot take on facilitation of restorative circles, at-risk counseling and crisis interventions, implementing DESSA follow-up plans, and more – we step in.

When a family is experiencing the loss of a loved one, we provide family therapy sessions at home since satellite mental health clinics often cannot. Through attendance team meetings, we help prevent an ACS call or further academic loss by doing warm outreach, light touches or offering services on our mental health continuum to get students in the classroom.

When school staff are feeling overwhelmed or challenged, we provide psychoeducation, collaboration and Connection Circles to counter against burnout, implicit bias and compassion fatigue. Through family workshops and groups, we provide family engagement to destigmatize mental health, decrease feelings of isolation, and encourage connection to support.

According to Advocates for Children, they have received “about 25% more calls from families requesting assistance with school discipline matters” compared to the two years prior.<sup>3</sup> Especially amidst Covid-19, bridging home and school and deepening connections between the two can have a powerful impact. Who is better positioned to be a partner for strengthening relationships between home and school than CBOs? An investment into a CBO taps into a full network of resources, community trust and often decades of community-driven expertise. Funding a CBO partnership instead of one DOE social worker seems like an easy decision that can go a long way.

<sup>2</sup> [Youth Ask Youth Census Report](#). Intergenerational Change Initiative. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> [City Education Budget Priorities for FY 2023](#). Advocates for Children. Winter 2022.



We know that behaviors showing up in the classroom are often a result of trauma, complex family stressors and the impact of structural racism. If a school doesn't have the capacity to work more deeply with a student's family to address a child's well-being and challenges interfering with learning, an embedded program like Families Thriving can do home visits, build feedback loops, and work on strengthening the relationship between home and school. We've seen this result in greater understanding, empathy, academic performance, student's well-being and attendance.

Families Thriving leverages New York State Medicaid's Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS) which has designated providers across all 5 boroughs who can offer services to youth ages 0-21 with Medicaid. However, programs like Families Thriving cannot adequately operate, innovate, support their staff and reach families on just Medicaid dollars alone.

With supplemental funding to support more seamless CBO and DOE partnership, organizations providing CFTSS can offer **all** families **and** school staff a much wider, sustainable and flexible array of services than the traditional satellite clinic and school-based mental health supports. At this time, not only has there been limited funding opportunities for CBOs, the DOE Vendor process for obtaining contracts with schools for costs over \$25K is an onerous one that often takes over a year to approve. This creates a significant barrier for schools and CBOs to partner in the way their school communities need.

To make sure all NYC families and children, particularly those in our communities of color and immigrant communities, can access the mental health care they need, we must ensure best practices and sustainability for comprehensive mental health continuums in schools. This means strengthening and expanding funding allocated for community-based organizations (CBOs) to partner with schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. If you have further questions, I can be reached at [bdigangi@universitysettlement.org](mailto:bdigangi@universitysettlement.org).



**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative  
NYC Council Committee on Public Safety  
March 18, 2022**

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Good Afternoon Everyone! My name is Alex Mojica, I am a Senior at Bronx Academy for Software Engineering, I live in Council District 15. I'm a youth leader with Sistas and Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I, like many students in the Bronx, attend a school with MORE police than guidance counselors, MORE police than social workers and MORE police than Gender Neutral Bathrooms.

Every morning as I get to school, I have to empty my pockets, and hear the cops yell "BELTS, KEYS, CHANGE, WATCH, WALLETS". I have to walk through a metal detector, be stopped and be questioned about any bit of metal on my body. As I go through these metal detectors and get intimidating looks from the police I feel less than human. I feel Angry, annoyed and hurt that I am not seen as a student but as a criminal as I walk through the front doors of my school.

The 18 months of virtual classes had a major impact on MY mental health and I'm sure many of my peers can relate, WE as students also had to endure this pandemic. We have suffered the loss of friends, family members, loss of income, stability and even loss of homes. But why, when schools opened up, I was greeted by police at the front door, WHY did my school not hire a new social worker or transformative justice coordinator right away. As young people, we NEED support, we cannot attend schools that are over-policed and underresourced. The Bronx cannot continue to be OUR elected officials' playground. *We will not accept another pilot program that is not in the best interest of our people, so we will not accept Mayor Adams' new proposal to upgrade invasive surveillance equipment in our schools and communities.*

Our call for Police Free Schools is a call for an investment in all of us. So we call on elected officials to listen to our vision and to act on our behalf.

Our priorities center BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ folks. What do YOU think you are centering when you vote for a budget that CRIMINALIZES us in the streets AND in our schools?

Mayor Adams' budget continues to fund the School to Prison Pipeline, it funds Black and Latinx Youth's arrest and continues negative interaction with police in our schools and communities. His Budget is not the Budget we call for, because we would NEVER invest more than \$400 million on School Police, we would NEVER invest millions on surveillance equipment and we would NEVER fund racism!

Instead OUR budget this year calls for \$75 million to hire 500 restorative justice coordinators, \$75 million to hire 500 new social workers, \$75 million to hire 500 new counselors, \$5 million baseline funding for Mental Health Continuum and many other things that we ACTUALLY need. Today we call for a real investment in us!



**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative  
NYC Council Committee on Public Safety  
March 18, 2022**

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My name is Anthony Morales. I live in Staten Island, I am in 10th grade and I am a youth leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I am here today testifying because After years of us campaigning for Police Free schools, it is a slap in the face to return back to schools and still see school police and learn that the Mayor and Chancellor are already talking about hiring for these empty school police positions. This is all while the Mayor is allowing this year's education budget to drop by \$1 billion, instead of divesting money from policing to make up for it.

I was excited to be in high school but my freshman year was not how I imagined to be. When the pandemic hit it made me realize that my school and all the schools across New York city were not equipped to deal with a situation like this one. Coming from middle school to my first day of high school was disorganized and stressful because I was not informed by any staff about my school schedule nor emotional support that was available to deal with my anxiety from the pandemic. I became aware that there is lack of funding for social, emotional and mental health support for students. To me and probably to many students the lack of resources is a nightmare.

We have to stop spending money on policing schools. Hiring new school police is not what young people like myself want. For years we have been extremely vocal about removing police out of our schools. We have been demanding to reallocate that funding from policing students to social, emotional and mental health supports. There are more school police across New York City's schools than social workers, guidance counselors and school nurses available for one million students. Every time students of color like myself walk inside a school building we have to go through metal detectors. We get treated as the problem, but we aren't the problem. Racist policies are the problem. It's more infuriating that school police constantly watch us Black and Latinx students and are ready to punish us for any minor mistake we make. In mostly white schools, where there are fewer school police, students aren't constantly surveilled and any mistakes that are seen are treated as opportunities to learn from, not reasons to be punished for.

Now, more than ever we need everyone to listen and stand by us. We need guidance counselors that can help us be on track. We need student success centers that can make the process easy, less stressful and less scary. We need staff on our side that will make us feel safe and supported. I want to be welcomed at a school building that prioritizes students' needs and well being not that criminalizes just because of their skin color. New York City MUST spend \$75 million to hire restorative justice coordinators in 500 high schools and \$45 million to implement restorative justice practices. Unlike policing, restorative practices seek to address the root cause of the harm. It would look at youth like me as a person rather than a potential problem.



**Testimony by Urban Youth Collaborative  
NYC Council Committee on Public Safety  
March 18, 2022**

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Hello, my name is Keyanna, my pronouns are she/her and I'm a high school senior in Brooklyn. I am one of the core youth leaders at Make the Road NY and I'm a youth leader at the Urban Youth Collaborative.

This new school year after eighteen months of being at home doing remote learning, reminded me on my return how stressful it is to have to wait for an hour just to get into school. On one of the coldest days of the year, I had an AP Biology test and one of the school metal detectors broke. Five hundred students had to go through a single metal detector, many of us were left out in the cold, shivering, desperately waiting to get through the metal detector and head to our classes. Imagine how you would feel waiting outside in the midst of the winter season for more than an hour. Unfortunately for me, I didn't have hours to take that test. I had a single hour and because of a broken metal detector and a broken sense of how schools treat their students, I missed the most important test in the single most difficult and unforgiving class I have ever taken.

It also doesn't help that there are 15-20 school police on my campus. I've seen every single one of them, but I don't know where to go to see a therapist, nurse, or social worker in my school. There are so many better ways to spend the four hundred fifty million dollars the city spends on school police.

It's unjust that students of color have so many adversities they still have to overcome. School police are put in schools that have a majority of Black and Brown students. This over-policing forces more students of color to interact with police, leading them into the school-to-prison/deportation pipeline. This is not right. I am fighting for a future where my 7-year-old sister doesn't have police in her school as she does now, and she is easily able to access any support she may need.

We demand you treat students with the respect they deserve by hiring more support staff and programs, eliminating the more than four hundred million dollars on school policing budget, eliminating all current metal detectors from our schools and reinvesting the two hundred million dollars already dedicated to them over the next four years, and there should be no new funding for any new student scanning equipment that Mayor Adams wants to put in schools. Instead we should Invest seventy five million dollars to hire restorative justice coordinators, forty five million dollars to implement restorative justice practices. Invest seventy five million dollars to hire school counselors and seventy-five million dollars to hire new school social workers and that's just the start.

Now, spread the word throughout the City Council about our fight for Police Free Schools. We don't plan on giving up so take us at our word when we tell you we're going to keep on fighting until our schools are better funded and we have police free schools!



March 23, 2022

**Founders**

Vernice Miller-Travis  
Peggy M. Shepard  
Chuck Sutton

WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
1854 Amsterdam Ave, 2nd Floor  
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**Board of Directors**

*Chair*

Jeff Jones

**Testimony of Lonnie J. Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy  
Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

*Secretary*

Nancy E. Anderson,  
Ph.D.

**To the New York City Council Committee on Education**

**Regarding the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for 2023 and Financial  
Plan through 2026**

*Treasurer*

Ken P. Mak

Dear Committee Chair Rita Joseph and Committee on Education:

*Members*

Lakeisha M. Aquino  
Peter Bokor  
Dennis Derryck,  
Ph.D.  
David Evans, Ph.D.  
Abiola Fasehun, Esq.  
Eric A Goldstein, Esq.  
Neetin Gulati  
Christy Loper  
Sarangi Iyengar  
Marielle Villar  
Martiney  
Crystal Romeo  
Upperman  
Vernice Miller-Travis  
Phillip Morrow  
Dart Westphal

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need to fund green, healthy school infrastructure projects by investing **\$14.5 billion by 2030**, or an annual investment of \$1.8 billion for the next 8 years, to install solar panels and conduct deep retrofits in public schools, prioritizing those located in environmental justice communities.

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. WE ACT is a member of ALIGN's [Climate Works for All](#) (CW4A) coalition: A coalition of environmental justice advocates, community groups, and labor unions joined together to fight climate change and income inequality in NYC by demanding a Just Transition for workers and environmental justice communities. CW4A campaigns move us towards an equitable economy, a resilient, livable and healthy climate, and must prioritize justice for low income communities and communities of color across New York City.

I am Lonnie Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT. I routinely analyze New York City policies and programs for equity and climate justice and support a group of community members mobilized around environmental issues in Northern Manhattan.

*Executive Director*

Peggy M. Shepard

Installing solar panels and conducting deep retrofits in schools - starting with HVAC installation - will help the city enhance air quality, reduce

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[www.weact.org](http://www.weact.org)*



greenhouse gas emissions, create green career jobs, and foster resilient communities.

New York City public schools are among [the biggest public climate polluters and account for one-quarter of all city-owned buildings](#). Installing solar panels will reduce carbon emissions, and create opportunities for students to learn about the importance of sustainability and climate action. The City has an opportunity to lead in building decarbonization goals by ending the use of fuel oil and natural gas in public school buildings and upgrading to electric. This would have a serious impact on reducing city-owned building emissions. In addition, conducting deep retrofits will result in at least 50% reductions in energy consumption, enhance daily life and health in public schools, and support student performance, engagement, and classroom behavior.

Students of color and students from low income homes already take on a disproportionate burden of environmental health hazards due to cumulative impacts; their schools should not be one of these hazards. Evidence suggests that the installation of air control systems, like HVACs, along with reliable indoor air quality monitoring can [minimize the airborne transmission of COVID-19](#). [Green, Healthy Schools](#) will allow the city to critically address long term public health disparities concentrated in environmental justice communities, which is even more critical as the city removes school mask mandates despite [disparities in student vaccination rates](#).

**For these reasons and more, WE ACT strongly supports CW4A's [Green, Healthy Schools](#) campaign which calls on the City to invest \$14.5 billion by 2030, or an annual investment of \$1.8 billion for the next 8 years, to install solar panels and conduct deep retrofits in public schools.**

Thank you again, Chair Joseph and Committee on Education for allowing WE ACT to testify on such an important topic.

Lonnie J. Portis

Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator  
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Ciana Montero  
Dante Stewart  
Garrett Collins

March 14, 2022

Chairwoman Rita C. Joseph and Committee on Education esteemed members, good morning.

On behalf of over 6,000 WorldofMoney children and their families, I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am Sabrina Lamb, the Founder and Executive Director of WorldofMoney, a 17-year New York City-based non-profit and leading provider of 120 annual classrooms and online hours of diverse and immersive financial and entrepreneurial education for ages 7-18. America's Promise Alliance and AOL Impact awarded WorldofMoney as one of America's top 10 social good organizations.

By way of this testimony, you will learn about:

a) the need for funding to enable WorldofMoney to partner with more schools and New York City youth organizations; and,

b) our desire to be your resource and a long-term partner with the City Council in helping to eradicate financial vulnerability in historically excluded families.

Because money influences every aspect of our lives, we believe that every New York City student should receive culturally diverse financial education - from elementary to high school. Our curriculum includes: budgeting and saving, credit, investing, insurance, ethics and so much more.

We also have leveraged the power of technology with WorldofMoneyOnline.org to teach more children with our culturally relevant lessons so that children accessing this platform will see children who look like them. Four of the videos, thus far, are translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Swahili.

Maximillian Johnson, a 13-year-old Harlem resident, shared, "*World of Money has taught me how to build financial security for me and my family's life. Saving? Investing? Compound interest? Most adults don't know these things, and my learning about finance at such a young age and how money works-- puts me at a great advantage.*"

*Maximillian is correct!* Because 38% of teens report feeling unprepared to manage their personal finances and fear that, they will not experience lifelong economic well-being.

The lack or inadequate financial education may lead to poor health, lack of self-worth, predatory victimization, and low college attainment.

WorldofMoney's vision is a community of youth motivated and empowered to realize their fullest potential and achieve personal and financial success so they become savers, investors, entrepreneurs and philanthropists. Jobs for young people is important. Just imagine WorldofMoney supporting SYEP employers to provide hired youth with financial education.

There is no better time to include our curriculum in classrooms and after-school programs throughout the city. We can harness the power of our technology and deliver it to where children and youth like Maximillian, spend most of their time—in the classroom and on their mobile devices.

Remember the WorldofMoney motto: Learn. Earn. Save. Invest. Donate.

Thank you for allowing me to share the story of WorldofMoney with you.

Sincere Regards,

*Sabrina Lamb*

Founder and Executive Director

Email: [sabrina@worldofmoney.org](mailto:sabrina@worldofmoney.org)



**Preliminary Budget Hearing  
New York City Council**

Testimony of  
Beatrice Weber  
Parent Ambassador  
YAFFED

Presented to

New York City Council Committee on Education

On  
March 21, 2022

Honorable Chairwoman Joseph, City Council members, staff, and my fellow New Yorkers. My name is Beatrice Weber and I am a Parent Ambassador for the advocacy organization, YAFFED, Young Advocates for Fair Education. YAFFED was formed ten years ago because tens of thousands of New York City school children attend private schools that fail to follow New York State education law section 3204 which mandates that every school teach a substantially equivalent education as to what is taught in the local public schools. I am here as the face of the thousands of parents who cannot be here because to speak out against the ultra orthodox Yeshiva system could do irreparable harm to their connections with their families and their community. In New York City there is a system of autocratic control that exists to keep children from learning basic educational subjects like math, science, and the English language. Let me be clear, this is not an issue of religious freedom, it is an issue of community control and forced ignorance perpetuated by a few powerful men and whose design is intended to ensure that the members of a community do not have the tools they need to exist outside the community. We are talking about a group of men controlling the way that thousands of families live so that they are dependent on those men.

I am talking about so-called schools sending home “rules” that parents must obey if they wish to keep their children in the yeshiva. Rules that forbid members of the family from entering a public library. Rules that forbid families from having secular books in the house. Imagine a school forbidding a family from having copies of Shakespeare’s plays in their house? I am talking about schools promulgating rules that forbid mothers from driving cars. Let me

repeat that. Some of the ultra-orthodox yeshivas include in their school's code of conduct rules that forbid the mothers of the students from driving cars. This is happening right here in New York City. Just across the East River from this historic building that stands for democracy and free will, live thousands of families who are being told by the leaders of their community that their children should not learn math and that no one in the family should enter a public library.

I speak before you in the year two thousand and twenty two pleading for help because I want my children and my neighbor's children to be able to learn math and English. This is the twenty-first century. Can anyone on this committee give me a reasoned argument why any child in the twenty-first century should not learn math? I am a parent of ten children, six of them boys, all of whom have attended or currently attend Hasidic Yeshivas in Brooklyn and Rockland County. My sons receive less than six hours a week of academic education. The academics they do receive are taught in Yiddish by teachers who have not received any high school education themselves. Let me repeat that. My children are being taught Math, English, and History by teachers who do not have a high school education. The instruction they are given is done predominantly in Yiddish. How are my sons going to be able to find real jobs, fill out job applications, and be productive citizens of a democracy with that kind of education? On top of all that, at age thirteen, the academic education ends completely. These yeshivas focus only on religious studies after age thirteen.

Naftuli Moster, our executive director, has testified about new regulations that The New York State department of education is in the process of enacting. I urge you to work with the state education department to ensure these regulations are strong. Once enacted, I urge you to use your oversight powers to make sure that Mayor Adams directs his staff to do their job and enforce the law. The Mayor's Preliminary Budget contains no new funding for the Department of Education's office of nonpublic schools. That office is underfunded for the work they will have to do. This is not a good sign that the Mayor will take this responsibility seriously. I urge you to demand that adequate funding be included for this office so that they are equipped for the work that they must do. It is the law. Please help us make sure that the law is enforced. Parents in the Hasidic community do not have a choice. Their children must attend Hasidic Yeshivas. The law is supposed to protect these families. Let's work together to make sure that these yeshivas act like real schools and follow the law and that the Department of Education is equipped with the resources to enforce the law.

I thank you for your time and for your continued service.

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**Preliminary Budget Hearing  
New York City Council**

Testimony  
of  
Marcus Alston  
Community Outreach  
for  
YAFFED

Presented to

New York City Council Committee on Education

On  
March 21, 2022

Honorable Chairwoman Joseph, City Council members, staff, and my fellow New Yorkers. My name is Marcus Alston and I am a Community Organizer for the advocacy organization, YAFFED, Young Advocates for Fair Education. I am the product of New York's public schools. I am a Jewish New Yorker. Today, I attend college in Pennsylvania. You may know me from the work I have done while in high school with the organization Teens Take Charge.

One of my main passions is education equity. I care about equality in education. As I attended public schools, and fought for years on end for ALL students to receive a quality education – I am concerned about my fellow young New Yorkers who are at nonpublic schools that are not receiving a **fair** and **equitable** education. I am talking about the tens of thousands of New York children who are attending ultra-orthodox yeshivas that refuse to teach basic subjects such as English, Science, and History. These children are attending schools that refuse to comply with state law. I am here to plead for your help.

We ask that you look deep into the severity of this issue. Children attending ultra-orthodox schools receive little-to-no secular education. As someone who believes in equity, this is not okay. Every nonpublic school in New York City is required to teach all their students the common subjects of English, Math, Science and History, just like is done in public schools. This is the law. The New York City Department of Education is charged with overseeing

the enforcement of the law. When we turn a blind eye on a community of people who are being denied basic education, we are turning a blind eye on our future. The leaders of these communities need to be held accountable for their denial of basic education. The future of our diverse and rapidly changing communities depends on this.

In two thousand and fifteen YAFFED, along with over fifty parents, students and graduates of ultra-orthodox yeshivas filed an official complaint with the Department of Education stating that their schools were failing to provide an adequate education. Seven years later there has been no official end to this investigation and no help from the Department of Education to resolve the problem. We know that over forty thousand school children are today attending yeshivas that are likely deficient in academic compliance.

Clearly this is a problem that does and will impact every New Yorker. This is not just a problem within the Hasidic Community. This is not a problem that just impacts private school communities. This is something that every New Yorker should care about. When tens of thousands of people are denied a basic education, everyone suffers. The poverty rate in Hasidic Williamsburg is extraordinarily high. Fifty eight percent of the Hasidic residents of Williamsburg are on food stamps. And the root cause of why we are experiencing all of these systemic issues is from the lack of quality education. When we don't educate people on basic topics such as English, math, science, and even history, we isolate an entire community from the real world. The yeshiva community receives millions of dollars of taxpayer money. We are all invested in this community and its school system. We must all take responsibility to fix it.

I urge the members of this committee to use your oversight power to demand that the Department of Education adequately immediately complete the investigation and remediate the problem.

I thank you for your time and for your continued service.

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## **Preliminary Budget Hearing New York City Council**

Testimony of  
Naftuli Moster  
Executive Director of YAFFED

Presented to

New York City Council Committee on Education

On  
March 21, 2022

Honorable Chairwoman Joseph, City Council members, staff, and my fellow New Yorkers. My name is Naftuli Moster and I am the founder and Executive Director of the non-profit organization YAFFED, Young Advocates for Fair Education. I founded Yaffed because I was one of tens of thousands of students who attended Hasidic Yeshivas that are failing to provide instruction in subjects like English, math, science, and social studies, as required by New York State law. The majority of these unlawful yeshivas are operating in New York City. We estimate that there are forty five thousand school children in New York City currently attending yeshivas that fail to provide a basic education.

Seven years ago, in 2015, over fifty yeshiva graduates and yeshiva parents filed a complaint with the New York City Department of Education demanding that the Department compel these schools to follow the law. We are now in the seventh year of the city's investigation, yet nothing has happened. The de Blasio administration did nothing. Its own Department of Investigation found in 2019 that the Mayor's team interfered with the investigation at the behest of Yeshiva leaders. All we have seen in the six plus years since the complaint was filed are two letters from Chancellor Carranza to the state commissioner of education which admitted that ninety percent of the yeshivas investigated were deficient.

No remediation has been taking place.



Every year that passes the students of these schools get older, more students enter, and more students graduate. Every year that these schools are not forced to comply with the law, this cycle of educational neglect continues.

I would ask every member of this committee to take a moment and think about what it would mean today to have grown up never having learned basic English, math or science. Is there a single member of this committee who can articulate a reasoned argument why any child should not learn science in the year 2022, after two years of living through a global pandemic, not to mention the other core subjects of English, math, and history?

To date, the specifics of that investigation have not been made public. The DOE is hiding under the cloak of “an ongoing investigation” to avoid having to be more transparent with the public and with the parents whose children are being denied an education. I urge the members of this committee to use your oversight powers to demand that the department of education open its books on this investigation and reveal the truth.

The New York State department of education is in the process of enacting new regulations that lay out an enforcement system for education law section 3204 which governs the substantial equivalency of nonpublic schools. This regulatory proposal was released at the Board of Regents meeting on March 14th. It will be listed in the State Register on March 30th and a 60 day public comment period will begin on April 1st. The department intends to have the Board of Regents vote on the regulation at the September meeting. As with the previous guidelines, New York City’s department of education will be charged with enforcing substantial equivalency, including cataloging every nonpublic school in New York City, providing the state with an annual report, and conducting a compliance review of every school that does not meet one of six alternative pathways to demonstrating compliance. The New York City Department of Education’s office of nonpublic schools has, according to the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget, only five staff in total. Two of these are pedagogical and three are administrative. This office is woefully understaffed for the monumental task of overseeing hundreds of non-public schools. Note that the State Commissioner of Education will have the authority to administer significant financial penalties on the district if it does not comply with the regulation and carry out these duties.

The office of nonpublic schools does not currently have the capacity to do this work. I urge you to demand that the Chancellor make a reasonable estimate of the additional staff that need to be hired for this office and include that in the Mayor’s Budget.

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, I urge you to use your oversight power to compel the Department of Education to release the investigation that began with YAFFED's complaint in twenty fifteen that has yet to be completed. Seven years is far too long for any school investigation. Many children have graduated out of the system and even more have entered during this time. The previous administration clearly cared little about the welfare of these children. I urge you to demand that the current administration open the books on this investigation and begin the hard work of ensuring that every child in this city truly does have access to a fair and equitable education.

I thank you for your time and for your continued service.

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**Preliminary Budget Hearing  
New York City Council**

Testimony of  
Sheindy Weichman  
Parent Ambassador  
YAFFED

Presented to

New York City Council Committee on Education

On  
March 21, 2022

Honorable Chairwoman Joseph, City Council members, staff, and my fellow New Yorkers. My name is Sheindy Weichman and I am a Parent Ambassador for the advocacy organization, YAFFED, Young Advocates for Fair Education. I am here today to plead for your help. I am here today to represent the thousands of parents of Hasidic school children who cannot be here today because they are prevented from having an independent voice and from advocating for change in the Ultra-Orthodox yeshiva system.

You are hearing from several members of my organization today so I will be brief. YAFFED was formed to advocate for change to the yeshiva system in the Hasidic community. We are not trying to stop religious instruction. We are trying to safeguard the right of every child to also learn the basic skills they will need to be productive citizens of this great city and this great country. When a child does not learn Science, or math, or history and does not adequately learn the English language, that child is going to have serious trouble interacting with the larger world. It is likely that the child will have trouble finding a job. In fact, I know graduates of Hasidic yeshivas, twenty year old men, who cannot fill out a McDonalds job application because they never learned enough english to do so. These are men who were born in Brooklyn and were educated at schools in Brooklyn.

I am talking about private schools, but this system of private schools receives millions of dollars of taxpayer money. I'm talking about New York taxpayer money that is going to support religious schools that refuse to comply with the law. We cannot let this continue. This is not an

issue of religious freedom. This is a system of autocratic control intended to keep a community ignorant in order to perpetuate the power of a small group of men.

This is going on here, in New York City. This is occurring just across the Brooklyn bridge from City Hall. I grew up a member of the Hasidic Community. My son has attended a Hasidic yeshiva for the entirety of his school career. He is over thirteen now, so, today, he receives only religious instruction. I have not been able to move him to another school because of my divorce agreement. I have to keep him at this school even though the school refuses to comply with state law.

My story is not unique. There are many parents who want a better education for their children who cannot be here today. There is no choice in the Hasidic yeshiva system. If you are a member of the community you must put your child in a Hasidic yeshiva. You must put your child in a yeshiva operated by the same sect that you belong to. In New York State, private schools operate in a market that demands that they be of a certain quality because parents choose to send their children there and choose to pay the tuition. In the Hasidic community, how the schools operate, what they teach, and what rules they require of their students, are all controlled by the leaders of the community. There is no system of choice. It is a closed system.

When a few men dominate the choices of tens of thousands of people, we all suffer the consequences. This is New York. This should not be happening in New York. Schools in New York should not be requiring their families to live by draconian rules such as forbidding them from entering a public library or having literature texts at home.

I fight this on a daily basis. I fight this for my son and for every member of the community who can't because they are afraid of being ostracized by the community. We need your help. I am here today to urge you to use your oversight power to compel the Department of Education to enforce the law. I am here to urge you to demand that Mayor Adams adequately fund the office of nonpublic schools so that they are sufficiently resourced to enforce the law. We need change in the yeshiva system and that change will not occur without your help.

I thank you for your time and for your continued service.

#

My name is Khannah. I am a NYC public high school student and a member of the YA-YA network. I am writing to inspire you all to pass a budget that divests money from school safety agents and invests money into resources that we desperately need - such as guidance counselors and social workers.

As I walk up the hill towards my school, I am met with a gigantic line of students, looping across the corner as far as I can see. Everyone knows that this means metal detectors. Another dreaded day of dehumanization. I'm asked to put my phone, earbuds, keys, belt, cards, coins into my bag. For safety they say, this is for safety.

As I step through the metal detectors, I hear a sound.

"WAND," the woman says, and I am ushered into the auditorium, waiting in line with 20 more students. But why was I there? I did what they asked. I didn't have anything in my pockets. I was *safe*.

It turned out to be the metal in my jeans' zipper. This was "top-notch security". Really? Come on. We live in NYC, we can do much better.

I love going to school every day, but when I see those huge lines signaling another day of scanning, I wish that I'd stayed home.

Students need to be greeted with smiling, encouraging faces every day. Not faces that look like they'd rather be doing anything else. The \$455 *million* dollars that the City chooses to spend on the NYPD's school policing division should be redirected to fund the resources and staff the NYC schools need to promote growth and support each and every student looking to achieve their dreams.

Thank you for your time. I hope the images that my writing produced stick in your minds and aid you in creating a warmer, welcoming environment in NYC public schools.

Hi Everyone, My name is Muhammad, and I am a high school senior and a member of the YA-YA Network. Ms. Linda Lee, I am in your constituent and I am part of your district. As we all know, this year is very different from every other and many issues have arisen that need to be solved.

Did you know that every day at school I hear people saying that they talked to the new social worker? Every day I hear one of my peers say that they need to wait days in order to talk to the social worker. Students complain that we need social workers or school counselors earlier and they would have been more helpful to sustain our mental health. One social worker or school counselor for over 500 students is not enough. One social worker does not have the time or capability to meet the mental needs of 500 plus students. Also, more school safety agents do not make schools safer. Nor do more metal detectors make schools safer. My friend was telling me that he arrived early to school, but due to having to go through metal detectors, he was a period late to class. Metal detectors are annoying to students and harm the quality of education that students receive. Random metal detectors do not help protect students.

Now we need to get some things straight. During the height of the pandemic 1 in 4 school safety agents quit, but the violence in schools did not increase. This shows that more school safety agents do not correlate with increased safety for students and teachers. To improve the lives of students and teachers we need more mental health advisors that are there to listen to our needs and to have people that we can safely communicate with.

That's not all. There are still many issues that we are facing. We need school-based jobs that support students, contribute to the safety of our school communities, hire more Black and Brown community members and pay them well. Instead of more school safety agents, we need to hire more school-based Restorative Justice Coordinators until there is a Restorative Justice Coordinator in all public schools. Also, we need to hire more new social workers and school counselors. Funding for these positions needs to be to achieve at least a ratio of 1:150 across all schools. This way there are enough social workers to accommodate every student's needs. Also, we should not hire 1,363 new school cops to replace current vacancies. This funding must be redirected to fill supportive staff positions such as more social workers, school counselors, and restorative justice coordinators. We need a better school system where the students and teachers can feel safe and appreciated!

My name is Agnes Laird. I am a parent of two New York City public school children and we reside in Brooklyn. I am testifying today to urge you to push the bill for Solutions Not Suspensions. The first person that greets my children and all NYC public school students every morning as they enter their school building are school safety agents in police uniforms. My daughter who is in high school is served with metal detectors and scanners. This doesn't make them feel safe, it makes them feel like criminals that need to be watched. Currently in New York, children can be suspended for up to 180 days. That's an entire school year! I demand that we end suspensions for students in K-3 schools. I demand that we cap suspensions at no more than 20 days. I demand that students be given instruction when they are suspended. Harsh measures should be a last resort and students should be given opportunities to learn from mistakes, not pushed out of schools. We need to shift away from punitive measures when dealing with conflict. Children need transformative justice and restorative practices in schools. Children need to learn from making mistakes and be taught how to deal with conflict, they need to learn how to communicate, they need a sense of community and belonging. Please pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Bill. Thank you.



Good afternoon. My name is Amalia Schiff and I am the theater teacher at a 6-12 school for in District 16 in the Bronx. I am currently on a leave of absence as I pursue a Master's degree at Harvard Graduate School of Education in Education Policy. I plan on returning to my wonderful students and school in the Bronx in September. Thank you to Madame Chair Joseph and the Committee on Education for the opportunity to share testimony regarding arts education funding for next school year.

For the last four years, I got to witness how impactful and meaningful theater education is to students. School is often their first and only opportunity to experience and participate in theater. I have witnessed countless students overcome crippling anxiety in public speaking and interacting with their peers through ensemble building activities, productions, and playwriting. Through virtual learning, theater provided my students an escape from their reality.

Social-emotional learning is of utmost importance as students readjust to attending class in person five days a week. Through partnerships with professional theater companies such as Manhattan Theater Club and New York City Center, my students have had the opportunity to develop the 4 Social Emotional Skills—Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship skills. These are skills that support students as they navigate the world in beyond the classroom.

Additionally, theater education has been immensely valuable to my 12<sup>th</sup> graders as they write their college essays. Storytelling is at the core of the college application process. Theater helps student express themselves in a compelling and effective way.

It is imperative that arts education funding remains available so that every student in NYC public schools has access to a high-quality arts education and programming. Thank you.

**Testimony of Daniella Rufino for New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget – Preschool Special Education**

**March 21, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the proposed budget. My name is Daniella Ruffino and I live in Brooklyn. I am the parent of Isabella Jimenez, a kindergarten student with a disability.

I am here today to support calls for higher salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs). This is not just important to teachers; it's also very important for children with disabilities and their families who need good teachers in their classrooms.

Isabella was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder as a toddler. At her preschool special education IEP meeting, the DOE determined that she needed a small preschool special education class to meet her educational needs.

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic and a shortage of special class seats, Isabella missed out on months of meaningful services during her last year in preschool.

Isabella started the 2020-2021 school year in a fully remote classroom.

Unfortunately, like many children with disabilities, Isabella did not learn well with remote instruction. She was not receiving all of her special education services and could not pay attention through a device. Isabella regressed and failed to make any progress.

As more schools opened for in person instruction, I was eager for Isabella to get into the classroom. However, Isabella's preschool program was not able to offer her a seat in person. In February 2021, the school informed me that they could not offer Isabella or other students in-person services due to budget cuts and lack of seats. When I tried looking for a seat in other preschools, programs told me that they were full. I was devastated and frustrated that my daughter could not go to

school. After several weeks, I finally found a new program for Isabella in April. However, seeing how much progress Isabella made when she was in the classroom and how much she has learned in kindergarten, I worry about the skills and learning opportunities she lost because there was not a program that could offer her the services she needed.

Two years ago, the City agreed to increase the salaries of 3-K and Pre-K general education teachers at CBOs, but left out preschool special education teachers. Today, there is a shortage of preschool special education classes, and the City will not be able to open the classes we need if preschool special education teachers at CBOs are paid less than other teachers. Please ensure that the budget for Fiscal Year 2023 includes \$30 million to increase salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs so that every child can have the classroom and teacher that they need.

Thank you.

Good afternoon chair Joseph, my name is Drew Horsford. I am a 10th grade student leader at Harvest Collegiate high school in district 2; a small, Public high school that focuses on restorative justice. And I am here to discuss how underprivileged youth have been victims to the school-to-prison pipeline, when what they truly need is enrichment and quality extra curricular programming that engages them within their academic setting. So at a time when the city is seeing staggering numbers of violence on the streets, what is needed in schools are resources to hire mediators or restorative justice counselors that students can trust and feel safe to go to when they are in distress and in need of support.

I demand NYC MUST spend \$75 million to hire 500 community members. When students arrive at school, they should be greeted by community members, not police. We must prioritize hiring Black and Brown community members to greet students as they enter the building and check-in visitors. Additionally, we need Youth Advocates, Parent Coordinators, and Community Outreach Coordinators to help contribute to the safety and flourishing of our school communities.

Testimony for NYC Council Education Committee,  
Monday March 21, 2022

Dear Councilmembers,

From my first day teaching in the Bronx in Sept 2007, I have seen underfunded schools, oversized classes and a lack of art classes. Our students are being shortchanged right here in NYC, the global capital of creativity.

It was not this way when I was a student at P.S. 84 in Manhattan or Junior High School 118, Joan of Arc. For all it's issues, the school still had a full band program with all instruments, a separate orchestra, a separate chorus program, a visual arts classroom (with a sink), a full ceramics studio with a kiln, a fully equipped shop class with two instructors and a dance teacher as well as Spanish and French teachers. There was standing room only when the band played in the auditorium. At least 3 top billboard musicians came out of the music programs in the years I attended.

Fast forward to 2014, and the city's numbers were grim: 28% of schools lacked arts teachers, including 20% of all high schools, 22% of all middle schools and 38% of all elementary schools. Although there were plenty of arts classes for schools in some neighborhoods, almost half the schools in the South Bronx and central Brooklyn went without. [1]

I've taught in buildings that had multiple middle schools without arts teachers, offering no preparation for specialized art high school auditions. In the Bronx today, schools are lucky if they have an art teacher, but music, dance and theater teachers are

even rarer. Our students are missing the opportunities for expression that are so vital to whole child development.

Instead we have top-down mandates and so much standardized testing required now it displaces weeks of learning time. In my school we now have 18 testing days, or for some kids 20 days of testing - including paper tests, computerized tests and mock tests. That is almost a whole marking period that students could be developing arts skills. For many students art is the most joyful part of the day, keeping attendance high.

I'm sure Council members already know we need more arts teachers in our schools, but they need to be distributed equitably into all neighborhoods. To get there, policies are needed to make arts teacher programs affordable or free, recruiting talent right from our own schools to return as arts teachers.

Next, what about Summer Arts? This year thanks to federal stimulus funds, my school is at last offering summer art classes. In all my years teaching I have always volunteered to teach art in summer session but no school I worked in offered anything other than Math and ELA.

If an arts teacher is available, why not offer arts instruction in schools open already for summer hours? I'm sure this would lure kids in to sit for all types of other instruction and the same goes for Saturdays or long holidays when schools are already open for extra help. And what about accelerated students missing out on in-depth training? When I was a kid, I not only got time during the school day to learn how to make stop-motion animated films, I learned clarinet and baritone sax and was allowed to practice during lunch. Now that I'm a teacher, I see Bronx kids deprived of the time, space, materials and instruments I had access to.

After a nightmare last year when almost all my art classes were canceled, current teacher shortages are further reducing arts instruction this year, just when kids need hands-on enrichment time to make up for lost time.

Some say legislation is needed in Albany to designate the arts as core curriculum. But NYC is the center of the action, with the biggest creative industries looking for talent as NYC schools are still out-of-compliance with state arts education requirements [2].

As an experienced classroom teacher, I see the time spent over the last 20 years obsessing over multiple-choice tests rather than holistic education as a shameful waste of time that could have cultivated our students' creativity with memorable hands-on experiences. Please make the most of our schools and students by fully supporting arts education.

Thank you,  
Jake Jacobs,  
Art teacher, MS556

Citations:

[1] [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/State of the Arts.pdf](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/State_of_the_Arts.pdf)

[2] <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/middle-level-education-program-requirements>



We are the parents of a two year old. Under the recent mask mandate extension, our daughter will be made to conceal her bright young face until the age of five. That is four out of the first five years of her life, without the ability to show her teachers or classmates her emotions — and without being able to learn to read the emotions on their faces.

Children under 5 years of age are the least vulnerable population to Covid. Unvaccinated youngsters have an order of magnitude less likelihood of death than do vaccinated adults. Even these statistics over-represent the risk to toddlers, because the vast majority of negative Covid outcomes within this age bracket occur in infants — serious cases among toddlers are vanishingly rare.

This is why the CDC and the WHO now recommend against masking toddlers. Masking provides toddlers near-zero benefit, and since they are such a small slice of the population it makes near-zero epidemiological difference to the overall spread of the disease.

However, the costs of the masks for toddlers is massive. These innocent and vulnerable kids are in the middle of a critical development window. They are learning how to use their faces to communicate. They are learning emotional intelligence. We are at risk of raising a cohort of emotionally deprived children — a generation with something like “learned autism.” This is massive psychological experiment in what happens to kids when they are unable to use their faces to show one another (or their teachers) when they are happy, sad, or scared.

The cruelty of this policy is hard to fathom. It is matched only by its irrationality. The toddler mask mandate must go.

Sincerely,  
Joe and Lauren Grimm  
Owners, Grimm Artisanal Ales (Williamsburg)

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**From:** Tasneem - Ness Obad <tasneem.obad@harvestchs.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2022 6:35 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC SCHOOL HEARING

Good morning,

The purpose of this letter is to express my strong opposition to Mayor Adam's preliminary budget proposal of adding millions of dollars for services. Instead of funding the restorative justice and mental health supports that we truly need. Greetings, my name is Tasneem-Ness. Obad, I am a 10th grade student leader at Harvest Collegiate Highschool in District 2, a small public highschool focusing on Restorative Justice.

Hi everyone, my name is Tyra Bunn and I am a student at BMCC studying to be an educator. I've come here today to ask you to approve a budget that leans away from school policing and towards resources and programs that make young people feel comfortable in schools. Policing in schools has made me and many people who have been students of NYC public schools feel criminalized. Situations that could be easily resolved by trained counselors are often resolved by police officers that detain students for raising their voices or showing frustration or anger. Seeing my classmates arrested for having a disagreement made me feel fearful of the cops and fearful to show emotions of any kind around school officials. Hiring more paraprofessionals and counselors that can help students and parents is essential to preventing conflict and discomfort in schools. It is also important to put an emphasis on hiring black and brown counselors and professionals that can relate to these students and families. Though it was brief, hopefully the testimony of my experience as a black kid in the public school system urges you to make a change to help students in a way that is beneficial for them and their future. Thank you.

I was wondering if I could talk to you about the struggles of the youth regarding homelessness. All around me I see kids my age and even younger struggling in school and with daily tasks we take for granted like finding a stable source of food, the correct hygiene products or healthcare. What programs can be implemented to help struggling youth outside of a school environment? Are there any future plans to introduce a citywide program to teach responsible money spending?

We are young New Yorkers from NYC public schools and we have noticed the large economic inequality in our city. Economic disparities in certain communities are blinding and as the City Council, there should be some way to address this disparity. We're told to graduate high school and try to aim for college. However, not everybody can afford college or would want to take that route. Furthermore, we're not necessarily prepared for a life outside of school. This includes financial aid to jobs and economic security. We end up having to figure that out on our own. We have noticed that there is a heavy emphasis on college, yet a lack of such on jobs and life skills for highschoolers. Since afternoon extracurricular programs are necessary to explore different potential career interests, we need more funding for programs such as job fairs, exposure to more current events, and career path readiness.

Good Afternoon,

I, a high school student am advocating for [#cancelregents22](#). Although for adults and people in power this issue seems small, however being a child in the education field see how big this issue really is. After being quarantined for 1 and a half years some of my teachers have said that we are so far behind they don't know how we'll be ready for the regents. With the shorter schedules we're all learning less then we should and it's severely affecting us. I personally know at LEAST 5-10 students who have had anxiety attacks over the stress of taking the regents when feeling unprepared. This is not the best option for the students at this time. When the 2021 regents were cancelled i never felt so motivated to pass all my classes and i got the highest grades i've ever gotten. But when returning to in person learning and having the stress of the regents. i feel overwhelmed and ready to give up. This is creating my grades to drop lower and lower every semester. So I am asking you, cancel Regents of 2022 for the better of our mental health and our grades.