

Testimony of NYC Public Schools on Early Child Care Center Closures Before the NYC Council Committee on Education

February 20, 2025

Testimony of Simone Hawkins, Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education

Good morning, Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education. My name is Simone Hawkins, and I serve as Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education at New York City Public Schools. I am joined today by my colleagues from the School Construction Authority, and others from New York City Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and for your continued partnership in ensuring that all of New York City’s children have access to the high-quality early childhood education they need and deserve.

A child’s earliest experiences are foundational to their lifelong outcomes. Research has consistently shown that the way a child is nurtured in their earliest years impacts whether they will successfully complete high school or struggle throughout their school years. I know this firsthand—because the nurturing and love I received in my early years in East New York, Brooklyn set me on the path to where I am today. As a lifelong New Yorker, I have experienced this system from multiple perspectives: as a student in our city’s public schools, as a provider overseeing fourteen child care programs, and as a parent enrolling my daughter in an early childhood center. These experiences are directly tied to why I sit before you today as Deputy Chancellor.

New York City is the largest and most diverse city in the country, which is reflected in the families we serve. The early childhood system we manage must have the versatility to meet the wide-ranging needs of communities from the South Shore of Staten Island to Wakefield in the Bronx, from the Upper West Side to Brownsville. Our work must be tailored to the distinctive characteristics of different neighborhoods—establishing what communities truly need and ensuring that we are delivering on those priorities as effectively as possible.

We have the capacity to serve approximately 140,000 children in early childhood with a commitment to ensure that every single one of those children is placed in the best possible learning environment. Today, more families are accepting offers than ever, growing from 9,500 offers in 2019 to over 43,000 offers in 2024—record growth of 350 percent over five years.

Thanks to the joint efforts of Mayor Adams’s administration and the Council, our investments in early childhood are bearing fruit. As outlined in the Ten-Point Plan, with support from the Council’s \$5 million investment in outreach efforts, we are this month engaging families and communities through enrollment sprints in every borough. In addition, we are actively working to open almost 300 more special education seats over and above the 456 seats we opened at the beginning of the school year. Moreover, we have established and convened the Child Care

Advisory Group and convened biweekly meetings with the administration and City Council to ensure continued dialogue. I'd like to thank the Speaker, Chair Joseph, and Councilmember Gutiérrez for your continued support in this regard. We could not achieve these accomplishments without your collaboration, and we firmly believe we are well positioned to do so much more for our youngest learners and families.

While we are making advances to improve services to our communities, it is important to recognize the limitations of our current system and the challenges we face. When I stepped into this role, it was clear that the system needed to evolve to better meet current needs and remain adaptable for the future.

Your conversations with constituents, as well as some of your own personal experiences to find an early care and education seat, have laid bare that reality. Our current capacity challenge is one of the clearest examples. Across our early childhood system, 30,000 seats currently sit vacant, even as some neighborhoods struggle with waitlists because demand exceeds available seats. This is a legacy of the system's rapid expansion fueled by temporary stimulus dollars that are no longer available, in addition to inflexible contracts that leave us with a configuration that does not align with where families live, work, and seek care.

This challenge is further compounded by the properties we manage, many of which were transitioned to us from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) when early childhood education was consolidated under NYCPS during expansion efforts. The result? An oversaturation of seats and properties in some neighborhoods, leading to unhealthy competition, inefficient use of resources, and millions of dollars in misuse annually. Many of these properties remain underutilized or even vacant, yet they require considerable city tax-levy funding to maintain. Some have long-term leases—up to 20 years—with no provisions for early termination, meaning the city continues to make rent payments and carries the implicit costs of sustaining them.

Adding to those challenges, our contract mechanisms do not support or incentivize optimizing seat placements. While there are necessary fixed costs in operating early childhood programs, we currently subsidize too many under-enrolled programs. Whether a program serves one child or three-fourths of its full capacity, current contract terms provide for it to draw down on 75 percent of its contract value. This is not a sustainable or equitable way to manage public dollars or ensure that children and families receive the highest-quality care possible.

I want to be clear: we are committed to serving as responsible stewards of this system, and that means making difficult but necessary decisions. While our recent decisions regarding five leased properties were difficult and we were happy to work with the providers, landlords, and community members to come to a resolution for next year to sustain these contracts, even greater challenges lie ahead. We do not yet know what federal policy shifts or funding reductions may come from the federal level for programs like Head Start and other federal early childhood

education initiatives; we want to ensure that our families do not lose access to the critical and formative programs needed to give them the bright start they deserve. Unlike those recent lease decisions—where no children faced losing access to care due to available capacity in the community—potential loss of federal funding would require us to make even tougher choices in the future, including reducing seats in neighborhoods where no alternative options exist. If and when that moment comes, we will need the support of the Council to mitigate the impact on families who rely on these programs.

This underscores why we are actively working to realign resources where they are most needed—ensuring that families in every neighborhood have access to quality early childhood programs while also reducing inefficiencies that undermine the long-term health of the system. To that effect, we have made significant strides in improving transparency in invoicing and payments—reducing the average invoice approval time to under two weeks—and are working across agencies, including with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to streamline clearance background checks for program staff in partnership with the Mayor’s Chief Efficiency Officer.

I want to emphasize that we are committed to engaging this body in solutions that work best. We welcome collaboration with the Council, our provider community, and families to ensure that any shifts in our system are done thoughtfully, with children’s best interests at the center of our decision-making.

I thank the Council for the opportunity to speak today and look forward to your questions.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

Committee on Education

Oversight – Early Child Care Center Closures

February 20, 2025

Good morning, and thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the committee, for holding this hearing. It is deeply unfortunate that we find ourselves here today due to this administration's recent decision to close four childcare sites in Brooklyn, an action that disregards our families and communities. I want to be clear: this is a manufactured crisis caused by poor decision-making by the Mayor, the Department of Education (DOE), and the School Construction Authority (SCA).

Nuestros Niños, Grand Street Settlement, Friends of Crown Heights, and Fort Greene Council are pillars of their communities, providing essential childcare, vital support for parents, and jobs for local residents. As you know, it took hundreds of Brooklynites rallying on the steps of City Hall before the Mayor tasked the DOE and SCA with finding viable solutions to keep these centers open. Yet, here we are again, sounding the alarm because the administration has proposed temporary, inadequate fixes that fail to offer long-term stability for providers and families.

It is outrageous that we have even reached this point. On January 14, the DOE abruptly informed providers and elected officials that the City would not renew leases for four childcare sites—just hours before 3K/Pre-K applications opened—effectively removing these locations as options for families despite their active contracts. Only after significant community pushback did the DOE and SCA agree to a meeting, though not all affected sites were given this opportunity. The administration justified the closures based on three factors: seat utilization, leasing agreements, and community saturation. However, further investigation exposed misleading claims— Nuestros Niños, initially reported to have only four enrolled students, was in fact serving 96 children, the discrepancy due to registration system failures. Moreover, the DOE failed to engage providers in the decision-making process and ignored the broader impact of these closures, such as the loss of Nuestros Niños' Family Early Childhood Network, which supports over 250 families.

On January 17, a coalition of City Council members, State Assembly members, and State Senators sent a letter to the Mayor demanding a full reversal of the closures, guaranteed placements for affected families, and greater transparency. The Mayor's response was dismissive, and the DOE initially stood firm on its decision. Only after weeks of relentless organizing—including rallies with hundreds of parents, providers, and elected officials—did the Mayor finally commit to keeping the sites open, mere minutes before our February 6 demonstration at City Hall. Since then,

providers have been offered last-minute, inconsistent solutions such as month-to-month leases or one-year extensions, with the administration demanding responses within 24 hours.

The situation at the Grand St. Settlement site further illustrates the moving goalpost the administration has imposed on these centers. Despite the existing site facing no issues with under-enrollment or community saturation, local advocates scrambled to identify alternative locations and even successfully negotiated with the landlord to reduce lease costs. Yet, when presented with this viable compromise, the administration refused, prioritizing landlord disputes over maintaining a state-of-the-art facility for families in the heart of the community.

Given the Mayor's clear failure to meet the needs of Brooklyn families and DOE and SCA's lackluster community engagement, we must hold this administration accountable for protecting our childcare providers and the valuable services and job opportunities they provide for our communities. To rectify this injustice and move forward, I am recommending the following actions:

1. **The City Council must pass Council Member Gutierrez's Bill Intro 191** to require DCAS to give two years notice of lease expiration to tenants of City-leased properties.
2. **The DOE must adopt good-faith, transparent practices** to ensure that decisions regarding childcare leases are well-informed, options are adequately explored, and elected officials and stakeholders are brought in early and fully so they may help solve for any challenges the centers are facing as they approach the end of their lease.
3. **The DOE must actively and thoroughly partner with these four Brooklyn sites** to mitigate any recruitment challenges that have arisen from their attempted closures and exclusion from the application portal.
4. **The DOE must commit to seat reconfiguration** (extended day vs. school day seats) in alignment with community needs so that expected enrollment rates are achievable.
5. **The DOE must aggressively begin a transparent RFP process in alignment with expiring leases.** Right now, the discrepancy between the RFP's projected timeline and these centers' leases mean that a year from now we are going to be in a situation where a) these 1-year extensions are ending; b) the RFP is not ready so centers will need to be granted contract extensions; but c) if these centers no longer have locations, then when the RFP does come out they will not be able to participate.
6. **The SCA must proactively identify secure locations for new childcare centers** to ensure an abundance of options should a bad landlord stand in the way of a good program's continued operation out of their site.

Thank you again for holding this hearing today, and I look forward to working with the Council on implementing and advocating for these recommendations so that we can avoid this kind of unnecessary situation in the future, continue to provide needed services for our communities, and ultimately ensure that everyone who needs it across the city has access to free, high-quality childcare.

TESTIMONY

**NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, RITA JOSEPH**

Oversight – Early Child Care Center Closures

**Presented on
Thursday, February 20, 2024**



**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
Henry Rubio, President
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Good afternoon, Chair Joseph, and members of the City Council's Committee on Education. I am here today on behalf of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), the union representing public school leaders throughout New York City, and our President Henry D. Rubio.

As you know, our membership includes over 160 early childhood education directors who lead CBO-based ECE centers. We are here to express deep concern and frustration over the recent announcement of sudden closures of five community-based early childhood centers—Grand Street Settlement in Bushwick, Friends of Crown Heights, Fort Greene Council, All My Children in Queens, and Nuestros Niños in Williamsburg. Last month, the DOE abruptly informed these facilities that the city would not be renewing their leases, forcing them to close as soon as June. The decision understandably prompted outrage from families, childcare providers, and elected officials, given the lack of timely communication, and transition plan for families and educators. We were pleased when the city recently reversed its decision to close Nuestros Niños.

The Department of Education's approach to ECE closures contradicts the city's stated commitment to early childhood education. The city should not view early childhood education as a privilege, but an essential public good. Research has consistently demonstrated that high-quality early education programs have long-term benefits, including higher academic performance, lower rates of grade retention, and increased earnings in adulthood. These programs ensure that children develop the social, cognitive, and emotional skills necessary for long-term success in school and beyond. Removing access to these centers means that young children will experience increased instability at a crucial developmental stage.

These centers have long been a fundamental part of New York City's educational landscape, serving as an anchor for working families who depend on them. Their abrupt closure disrupts lives, upends families, and could even weaken communities. Parents—many of whom are working-class, single parents, or essential workers—depend on these early childhood centers to provide reliable and affordable childcare so they can participate in the workforce. When childcare options are taken away without a viable alternative, families are forced into impossible choices, whether that means reducing work hours, leaving their jobs, or relying on unregulated and potentially lower-quality childcare solutions. Closures disproportionately impact women, particularly mothers, whose work is more often impacted when childcare becomes unavailable.

Adding to our union's concern is the lack of transparency in how these closures were decided and the lack of timely communication regarding possible impacts. When the city announced it would not renew their leases, the Department of Education failed to provide adequate notice to the directors of these centers, many of whom did not learn about the closures until the day before the parent enrollment portal opened. Families expecting to re-enroll their children were left confused and frustrated when they discovered their centers were no longer an option. This chaotic rollout eroded public trust and caused unnecessary stress for parents who were given no clear path forward.

The DOE has cited declining enrollment, but some of these facilities have said that the DOE's numbers were wrong. As of late January, Grand St. Settlement and Nuestros Niños were both owed roughly \$1 million by the city, and, without that money, could not formally enroll children

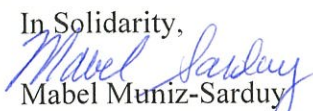
via the city's online portal. In the case of Nuestros Niños, which has been operating for over 50 years, the DOE reported that the center had only four students enrolled when it had ninety-six students. We must keep in mind that early childhood centers no longer control enrollment. The city solely controls enrollment projections and must not irresponsibly claw back resources when their projections are incorrect. In centers that truly are under-enrollment, the city must improve outreach and enrollment efforts, not shut down critical institutions that families have relied on, in some cases for generations. Lease costs have also been cited as a reason for closure, yet rising rents are nothing new in New York City. The city should work with providers to negotiate lease renewals, secure alternative locations, or develop long-term solutions to ensure stability for both families and programs.

The ramifications of these closures extend beyond individual families. The decision has not only created uncertainty for parents who rely on these centers for affordable childcare but also threatens to displace experienced educators, many of whom have dedicated years—if not decades—to serving the city's youngest learners. These educators are not just teachers; they are pillars of their communities, providing culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate education to children in some of the city's most underserved neighborhoods. Yet they have been left with no clear process and in many cases, no guarantee of employment, and further deteriorating the critical workforce in early childhood education.

The Department of Education must establish a transparent and formalized process for handling any possible ECE closures. This process must include direct engagement with CBOs, ECE leaders, educators, and parents to ensure that their voices are heard before decisions are made. The city must also be held accountable for providing accurate enrollment and funding data if this information is going to be used to make decisions that impact thousands. Instead of cutting early childhood programs, the city should be increasing funding to ensure that no family is left without access to affordable and high-quality early education. Finally, educators who risk the loss of their careers due to any closures must be given clear opportunities to continue serving students and families within the early childhood system, ensuring that their experience is not lost and that students ultimately gain from their dedication and expertise.

New York City has long prided itself on being a leader in early childhood education, but the city cannot claim to prioritize early education while simultaneously dismantling the very programs that make it accessible. After a rally at City Hall in early February, the mayor's office and DOE thankfully agreed to meet with some of the childcare centers fighting sudden closures and agreed to keep Nuestros Niños open. Our hope is that the city will listen to the other communities involved as well and commit to reopening the other four sites and accepting new registrations. On behalf of the impacted ECE leaders who dedicate their lives to serving the city's youngest learners, and the families who depend on these programs, CSA urges the City Council to take appropriate action to protect and preserve our ECE centers, push the city to reevaluate the process for ECE closures, and expand early childhood education funding in general.

In Solidarity,



Mabel Muniz-Sarduy
CSA Director of Political and External Affairs



**UNITED
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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2026 Oversight Hearing
Committee on Education
Council Member Rita C. Joseph, Chair**

**Submitted by Paula Inhargue, Policy Analyst
February 20, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education for convening today's Executive Budget hearing. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life at 770 locations. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. 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.

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 New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) at large. They have also served as sites for DOE programming, and as mediators between communities and the NYCPS to ensure that schools remain as responsive to the needs of their local communities. Many also contract with NYCPS to provide early childhood education in New York City, serving an estimated 12,000 children under the age of 5.

In early January, four Brooklyn childcare sites were informed by the Department of Education that they are being forced to close as NYCPS and the School Construction Authority (SCA) decided not to renew the leases that the City holds with landlords for these centers. These providers were notified less than 24 hours before applications opened for the upcoming school year. The shutdowns would impact approximately 250 children and 90 staffers across four sites: Grand Street Settlement, a UNH member, in Bushwick; Nuestros Niños in South Williamsburg, Friends of Crown Heights in Crown Heights, and the Fort Greene Council's Young Minds Child Care Program. There is also a fifth site in Queens slated for closure as well.

This decision, driven by real estate considerations rather than a fair review of the program's quality, threatens vital early childhood education services for hardworking families. The City has also claimed that the decision was made due to low enrollment, but providers have refuted this, making it clear that their programs have students enrolled, some at full or almost full capacity. These closures are part of a troubling trend of cuts to early childhood programs at a time when affordable child care remains out of reach for many families—despite repeated promises from Mayor Adams to make New York City the best place to raise a family. The sudden displacement of children and educators will force parents to

scramble for alternatives in an already overburdened system, and leave staff questioning what their next job will be.

This news of center closures came just one day after Mayor Adams' FY26 Preliminary Budget proposal did not include \$197 million currently allocated to the DOE for early childhood education, as well as \$25 million for Promise NYC programming at the Administration for Children's Services, a move that could put thousands of early childhood seats at risk of being eliminated by the summer. The early childhood education system in New York City has been on shaky ground for years, with budget cuts, decreased staffing at NYCPS, slow payments to providers, and a poor family outreach system all making it difficult for providers to offer quality programming to their communities.

As of last week, the City announced it is in negotiations to extend the leases for one year for these providers. However, this merely delays the issue rather than resolving it, leaving families and providers in the same precarious position in the near future. A long-term commitment is necessary to ensure continuity of care and stability for the children, families, and staff who rely on these programs. The proposed lease extensions do align with the contract dates for the Birth to Five center-based procurement, and there will be an opportunity for providers to rebid and renegotiate their contracts. However, NYCPS and SCA have to be transparent about their policies going forward around leasing space for early childhood education services.

In order to address this situation, we urge the City to:

- Take immediate action to fully extend these leases and work in partnership with providers to safeguard the future of early childhood education in these communities;
- Issue clear guidance and protocols around the City's real estate practices and preferences in advance of the next early childhood education procurement. If the City no longer wants to be a lease holder of early childhood education centers, it must make that clear and give potential providers the chance to find appropriate space and undergo a leasing and construction process. If the City is still open to leasing spaces, it must negotiate leases that cover the full life of the service contract;
- Conduct a needs assessment, and share those results publicly, about the state of the early childhood education field in New York City. If these neighborhoods are oversaturated with ECE programs and have fewer eligible children, as the City has stated, it must make that information public so that providers can understand and plan accordingly. This will be crucial ahead of the forthcoming ECE procurement from NYCPS, so that providers are proposing programs that are responsive to community needs; and
- Restore \$222 million in funding for early childhood education in the FY26 budget.

Thank you for your time. To follow up, you can contact me at pinhargue@unhny.org.



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Education
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

Oversight- Child Care Center Closures

February 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education, for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. For the early childhood education workforce and families in New York City, this is a matter of utmost urgency. The livelihoods of many hardworking educators, staff and directors are at risk and families are uncertain whether the programs they have come to depend upon will remain open.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY works towards a future where all children have access to quality early childhood education and where early childhood providers and their workforce have the tools and resources necessary to offer the highest quality early childhood education.

DCCNY supports its member organizations and New York City's early childhood field through policy research and advocacy, labor relations and mediation, professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors and staff and referral services for parents looking to find child care. DCCNY member organizations provide quality early care and education at more than 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs.

Most DCCNY member organizations operate with contracts with New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Many also work with federally funded Head Start contracts or through private funding. DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers— the majority of whom are Black and Brown women.

City-Owned Lease Sites

In mid-January of this year, parents of children enrolled in five early childhood education programs started trying to enroll their children for the next school year through the MySchools Portal. Some parents found that their centers were not listed.

After parents began reporting this to the centers, the centers learned that the City planned to close these programs and terminate the leases that it held with landlords for these sites. Some centers were unaware that the City planned to terminate their City-Owned Leases and, in

essence, close their programs until families seeking to enroll their children inquired as to why their centers were missing from the MySchools Portal.

This was surprising to families and to staff members. These centers were longstanding community institutions serving high-needs neighborhoods and they were respected for their quality. Governor Kathy Hochul had visited one of the sites, 319 Stanhope Street, which is part of Grand Street Settlement, just a week earlier on January 7th highlighting it as an example of the kind of service that needs to be expanded throughout the State.

Since this surprising revelation, providers have been engaged with parents in their community and with NYCPS to preserve their programs and ensure the continued availability of services for their communities. DCCNY is grateful for the engagement of many City, State and Federal elected officials who have met with families and spoken up on behalf of these centers.

DCCNY is excited that significant progress has been made including the Mayor's February 14th statement that the City was "heading to a positive outcome"¹. However, it currently appears that these centers may only have month-to-month leases and will be responsible for higher enrollment requirements than other centers. The families depending on these centers as well as the workforce who supports them should not face further instability.

This process has been emblematic of systems in city contracting that do not take into account the New Yorkers being served or the workforce in the programs. The way that this has been handled speaks to the devaluation of the early childhood education sector.

The City should develop better processes that treat the non-profit organizations and small business providers in the early childhood education sector with respect and humanity.

DCCNY urges the City to work with the centers and with their local elected officials to ensure that the programs remain open.

Early Childhood Education and the FY 2026 Budget

Mayor Adams stood in front of a banner that said, "Making NYC the Best Place to Raise Family" when he gave his State of the City speech. However, just days later he released a budget that will make it harder for New Yorkers to raise their families by imperiling the stability and availability of high-quality early childhood education.

The FY 2026 Budget is a dangerous moment for New York City's early childhood education system. Without major changes, this budget will force the closure of many more early childhood education centers. This will leave many New York City families without access to child care and contribute to the exodus of working families out of New York City.

DCCNY urges the City to make the following changes to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.

1. Keep the Promise of 3-K for All

¹ Cayla Bamberger. *Five NYC Child Care Centers Facing Closure will Stay Open at Least Another Year*. New York Daily News. February 14th, 2025

Mayor Adams has repeatedly promised that every family who wants a 3-K seat will get one. However, the Mayor's Budget cuts \$112 million from 3-K and the City has not provided adequate data showing how this drastic cut is justified.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Commit to current 3-K funding including the full number of seats and programs in School Year 2024-2025 in the Mayor's Executive Budget. A restoration in the Executive Budget rather than at the time of budget adoption will allow NYCPS time to work with community-based organizations to ensure that programs can open in September.
- Restore the timeline for 3-K expansion so that the City can achieve true universal access in every neighborhood

2. Improve enrollment procedures so families can more easily access early childhood education

Many families continue to struggle to access early childhood education programs leaving seats vacant and families without access to early care and education that meets their needs.

DCCNY urges the City to take the following immediate steps to improve families' access to early care and education.

- Invest in a linguistically and culturally appropriate on-the-ground and multimedia marketing, community engagement and enrollment efforts for 3-K.
- Allow community-based enrollment where families can apply for a seat at the center of their choosing. Many families are more comfortable with a trusted community-based organization.
- Implement Presumptive Eligibility which allows a family who is likely to be eligible for child care assistance to enroll in an Extended Day/ Extended Year program or receive a voucher while their eligibility is being determined. Eligibility determinations can take months and legislation enacted in December 2024 allows the City to utilize State and Federal funds to serve presumptively eligible families for the first time.

3. Restore and baseline School Day Plus

The School Day Plus pilot launched by the City Council supports a longer day and year in 77 community-based organizations working with School Day/ School Year contracts. Because School Day Plus does not utilize the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) School Day Plus does not have the strict eligibility requirements of Extended Day/ Extended Year programs.

This flexibility that School Day Plus offers empowers providers to respond to changing demographics in the neighborhoods that they serve.

DCCNY urges the City to restore and baseline \$25 million for School Day Plus.

4. Restore and baseline Promise NYC:

Promise NYC expands access to Child Care Assistance to families who continue to be denied access due to discriminatory immigration status requirements. Promise NYC funds child care for families who otherwise would be denied and partners with community-based organizations to ensure that families can access the funding.

It is not just an important investment but also a statement of the City's values showing a commitment to ending discrimination and expanding access to education.

DCCNY urges the City to restore and baseline \$25 million for Promise NYC.

5. Invest in the early childhood education workforce

DCCNY is proud to have worked with our partners in organized labor to settle collective bargaining agreements that increase salaries for the teachers, staff and directors working in many city-contracted center based early childhood education programs. However, the biggest threat to the viability of the early childhood education system remains the inadequate salaries paid to the early childhood education workforce.

In almost every type of early childhood education program, the workforce is underpaid and underappreciated. The early childhood education workforce is overwhelmingly women and here in New York City, it is overwhelmingly women of color. Yet, teachers, staff, directors and providers continue to earn significantly less than their counterparts in public schools.

The City must take further action to eliminate these salary and benefit disparities that continue to drive talented educators, directors and support staff out of early childhood education programs.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Expedite the payment of collectively bargained salary increases to child care centers so they can start paying their staff increased salaries
- Identify new resources to increase pay for the early care and education workforce.

DCCNY is grateful that the New York City Council Education Committee is having this important hearing when so much is at stake for early childhood education providers and New York City's families.

Robert Ramos
President, Local 205, DC 37
Before the City Council Education Committee
February 20th, 2025

Good morning Chair Joseph and fellow Education committee members. My name is Robert Ramos and I am President of Local 205 of DC 37 representing over 2700 day care workers in over 350 centers throughout the city.

The proposed closure of five child care centers (Nuestros Ninos, Grand Street Settlement, Friends of Crown Heights, Fort Greene Council and All My Children Daycare) announced by the administration last month was troubling and disheartening. Workers, directors, along with families, elected officials and union leaders, took to the streets to rally in support of these child care centers and the need for them in working class communities. We have had constant issues dealing with the Department of Education (DOE) and the city to ensure timely payments are made to keep child care centers open.

This has been an ongoing battle year after year with the DOE short changing day care centers, causing some centers to close and daycare workers to not get paid for months at a time. We have even heard stories of day care directors taking out bridge loans in order to continue operations until the city comes through with payment. These centers are crucial lifelines to working families by providing safe spaces for their children to learn and play.

For years, DOE has been trying to close child care centers that are under enrolled, yet the city is the cause of the under enrollment by redirecting children to public school classrooms. This results in child care centers having vacant slots. Furthermore, DOE has closed enrollment portals at these centers leaving parents no other alternative but to enroll their children into overcrowded public schools..

Most recently, the city was trying to these five close child care centers that are not under enrolled and have been in their communities for decades serving thousands of children over the years. These centers are still owed money, yet the city wants to close them to stop paying their leases in order to save money.

We were happy to learn there was a temporary reprieve until December, but we need a long term solution and not just a band aid fix. These workers and families deserve more from the city. The city needs to fulfill its commitments to working families by providing safe and affordable child care centers.

We want to thank the Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso and the various state and city Elected Officials for coming out and rallying in support of my members and the families who use these child care centers.

Enough is enough! The city needs to open the enrollment portals to allow parents to sign up for affordable child care at these centers.

As I said in a press release at the last rally, “The dedication of my members in providing services to our city’s children while forgoing the security of their next paycheck is a testament to their professionalism and commitment, but it also exposes the DOE’s irresponsibility in not providing proper, timely payments. Pay them on time!”

Thank you for holding this crucial hearing and I will take any questions you may have.



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Class Size Matters Testimony for Oversight Hearings on Early Child Care Center Closures

February 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Joseph and the members of the Education Committee for holding these important hearings today.

My name is Leonie Haimson and I am the Executive Director of Class Size Matters. In 2018, Class Size Matters released a report entitled *The Impact of PreK on School Overcrowding*. The report documented how more than half of the 25,000 students who attended PreK classes in public buildings in 2016-2017 had been assigned to 352 schools that were already overcrowded, thus contributing to worse conditions for about 236,000 students.¹ The administration under Mayor Bill de Blasio had even installed UPK programs in 30 schools that had existing waiting lists for Kindergarten.

In the process, the DOE drew students out of Community Based Organizations, which for decades had provided publicly supported PreK programs. In that report, we cited the City Council testimony of Lisa Caswell, a senior policy analyst with the Day Care Council of New York, a federation of 91 non-profits which run childcare programs. Ms. Caswell explained that with the expansion of PreK, DOE had diverted thousands of students from CBO centers to public schools in a process of “recruitment of children directly from our [CBO] settings to fill UPK seats,” which left these providers with empty seats and less funding.²

In our report, we criticized this trend and urged the DOE to maximize the use of space in CBOs for PreK programs, rather than further overcrowd our public schools, which had led to worse overcrowding and could hamper future efforts to lower class sizes.

In June 2022, the Legislature passed a new law, requiring NYC to phase in smaller class caps in all grades over five years.³ In April 2023, Chancellor Banks appointed a Working Group to develop proposals on how class size reduction could be achieved. In December 2023, the Working Group released a report offering many cost-effective and practical

¹ The report is here: <https://classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/PreK-report-12.17.18-final-final.pdf>; the Daily News covered the report here: <https://www.nydailynews.com/2018/12/17/exclusive-mayor-de-blasios-pre-kindergarten-expansion-caused-public-school-overcrowding-report-says/>

² Implementation of UPK and 3K Expansion and the Transition of EarlyLearn NYC to DOE: Testimony before the Committee on Education Jointly with Committee on General Welfare, New York City Council (2018) See statement of Lisa Caswell, Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care Council of New York), <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6390320&GUID=C136BFEB-EB9F-44A1-84F1-DB7E680BCE72>

³ <https://classsizematters.org/faq-on-ny-class-size-law-implementation-updated-for-the-2024-25-school-year/>

recommendations on how the Department of Education could phase in smaller classes in compliance with the class size law.⁴

As a member of this Working Group, I co-chaired the Space Committee. Sadly, very few of our recommendations to create space for smaller classes have yet been adopted by the DOE.

One of our recommendations was that the DOE should shift some PreK and 3K programs from overcrowded elementary schools to Community Based Organization programs, many of which were considered under-enrolled by DOE and were at risk of closure. This could free up as many as 1400 classrooms and more than 20,000 seats in elementary schools in public schools and save hundreds of millions of dollars in school construction costs in the process.⁵

In December 2024, the DOE posted a new document, entitled “Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025”. This document contains a list of 495 NYC public schools out of 1,532 that in their estimation lack the space for smaller classes.⁶ According to our analysis, these 495 schools enroll nearly half (46%) of the total students in these schools.

On this list, there are 266 elementary schools that do not have enough classroom space to meet the class size caps in the law, according to DOE. Of that figure, more than half -- or 54% -- offer PreK programs. Many of these programs could and should be shifted to nearby CBOs. Of the five CBOs now at risk of closure in June because the DOE claims they are under-enrolled, three of them are within a mile of elementary schools that offer PreK classes but are considered too overcrowded to be able to lower class size. For this analysis, see the chart in the Appendix below.⁷

Notably, the PreK programs run by CBOs are in general rated as equal in quality to those housed in public schools, according to the CLASS rating system used by DOE. According to ECERS, the other rating system used by DOE, CBO PreK programs are rated as superior in quality. This higher rating results from community based centers being more able to provide more suitable space and furnishings for young children, superior personal care routines, enhanced social interaction, and more developmentally appropriate classroom activities.⁸

Many school districts across the country now recognize that it is better for small children to have a learning environment specifically designed for their needs. These districts are investing in separate facilities for early childhood education, because they recognize the advantages of having a small scale setting that can provide a more personalized, intimate, and play-based environment. As a recent article points out:

By making the investment, school leaders are trying to avoid some of the pitfalls of placing young children in buildings designed for older students, including lost learning time when tiny feet have to meander down long

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gSiFUcuLOjJ49PLCMptkroFjXBHow2b_/view

⁵ DOE Fall 2023 New York City Public Schools Admissions Outcomes, at <https://auth-infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fall-2023-new-york-city-public-schools-admissions-outcomes.pdf>

⁶ <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2024-2025-class-size-space-analysis-publish.pdf> The document properties tab says it was created on Dec. 3, 2024.

⁷ The three CBOs that are within a mile of elementary schools with PreK programs but without the space to lower class size are: Friends of Crown Heights at 1435 Prospect Pl. in Brooklyn, Fort Greene Council at 972 Fulton Street in Brooklyn, and All My Children Daycare and Nursery School at 117-16 Sutphin Blvd, South Jamaica, Queens.

⁸ Bruce Fuller, et.al., *Equity and Institutions: Distributing Preschool Quality in New York City*, 2020 at: https://gse.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/nyc_pre-k_study_-_july_2020_update.pdf

hallways to bathrooms and cafeterias. Research suggests that when designed well, buildings can contribute to better outcomes for children. ⁹

Another significant benefit offered by the 3Ks and PreK programs operated by CBOs is the fact that they are able to offer extended day and extended year programs to eligible families, which can be an invaluable option for working parents.

By transferring PreK and 3K programs to underutilized CBOs, the city would not only save on hundreds of millions in dollars in school construction costs, but also be better able to provide more sustainable budgets to CBOs, which are reimbursed by DOE based purely on their per-student enrollment, rather than the number of classes they offer, unlike the funding of PreK programs in public schools.

In short, shifting more programs and students to neighborhood-based centers would be a win-win-win solution for our youngest students, as well as for CBOs and our public schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Appendix: *List of CBOs threatened with closure that are located within one mile of public elementary schools that have PreK classes but no space to meet the caps in the class size law*

3 CBOs threatened with closure within one mile of schools that offer PreK classes but have insufficient space for class size reduction, according to DOE					
CBO	School w/ PreK and not enough space nearby	Name of School	School Address	Miles from CBO by walking via Google map	Walking time
Fort Greene Council 972 Fulton Street Brooklyn	13K011	P.S. 011 Purvis J. Behan	419 WAVERLY AVENUE	0.41	9 minutes
Friends of Crown Heights 1435 Prospect Pl Brooklyn	23K178	P.S. 178 Saint Clair Mckelway	2163 DEAN STREET	0.97	19 minutes
All My Children Daycare and Nursery School 117-16 Sutphin Blvd S. Jamaica, Queens	28Q160	P.S. 160 Walter Francis Bishop	109-59 INWOOD STREET	0.91	20 minutes

⁹ Fast Company, Feb. 18, 2025, *Why some school districts are spending big on schools tailor-made for 4-year-olds*, <https://www.fastcompany.com/91278644/why-school-districts-are-investing-in-pre-k>



Testimony of Grand St. Settlement
To the New York City Council Committee on Education
Regarding Child Care Site Closures

February 20, 2025
Aaron M. Sanders

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education for convening this important hearing, and for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the pending site closure of Bushwick Child and Family Center, operated by Grand St. Settlement (Grand Street).

In this hearing, we are calling on the Adams administration and the New York City Department of Education to extend our lease at the Bushwick Child & Family Center, located at 319 Stanhope Street, or find an alternative space in Bushwick to ensure uninterrupted services for our preschoolers.

Grand St. Settlement is a 109-year-old multi-service Settlement House that operates a network of center-based childcare and education programs across Manhattan and Brooklyn. Our programs serve working families and their children, many of whom live in NYCHA housing and face multiple obstacles to education, health, and economic prosperity. Grand Street focuses on early childhood education because it is an early-life investment that improves children's opportunity to achieve optimal health, educational, and social development, and it equips parents to support life-long learning, continuing to guide their children's success through school and beyond.

Grand Street excels at meeting rigorous quality standards for hundreds of New York children and families, but we are at risk of losing a much-needed childcare facility. The administration's decision to close Bushwick Child & Family Center, along with Nuestros Ninos, Friends of Crown Heights, and Fort Green Council, adversely impacts early childhood education in historically underserved communities like Bushwick. We recently hosted Governor Kathy Hochul, and she noted the positive impact our center has on children and families in the community.

Since its inception in 2012, the Bushwick Child & Family Center has been a respected community pillar. The site is fully enrolled with 69 out of 70 children in seats, and one child stuck in the Department of Education's enrollment portal.

These planned closures will have devastating ramifications for working families in Brooklyn who rely on affordable childcare options. 70 children and their families in our program will have to scramble to find new childcare. Some will be unable to find affordable options, potentially impacting their employment or forcing them to pay thousands of dollars in child care. The city's median tuition expense for child care is \$24,000 per year. This is an untenable alternative for families as nearly [20 percent](#) of all Brooklyn residents in Brooklyn live in poverty according to Census data.

According to a recent [report](#) from Robin Hood, families in which a parent faced childcare-related work barriers were 1.5 times more likely than other families to experience material hardships a year later. The data underscores the need for subsidized child care options in communities like Bushwick. Research also suggests that we should develop additional childcare centers rather than dissolve brick-and-mortar sites that are safe havens for our families.

Site closures will also have a financial impact on community members: if our child care site closes, 20 of our dedicated staff members may lose their careers. These are dedicated early childhood educators who provide robust care for children.

In closing, we encourage the Adams administration to work with us to find a solution that maintains the vital child care services that we provide for our families in Bushwick.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

**Testimony Before the New York City Council Education Committee
Presented by Ingrid Matias Chungata, Executive Director, Nuestros Niños Child
Development Center**

Thursday, February 20th, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairperson [Council Member's Name], members of the Education Committee, and esteemed guests. My name is **Ingrid Matias Chungata**, and I stand before you as the **Executive Director of Nuestros Niños Child Development Center**, a beloved institution that has been a pillar of the **Williamsburg community for over 51 years**.

Today, I am not just speaking as a leader in early childhood education—I am speaking as an advocate for the **nearly 90 children and families who now face the devastating loss of their early learning program**, due to a sudden and unjust decision made **without any prior notice or opportunity for dialogue**.

With **less than 24 hours' notice** before families were set to register their children for the next school year through the **MySchools portal**, we were blindsided with the news that our lease would not be renewed. **No conversation. No due process. No regard for the impact on our children, families, and staff.**

This decision was made based on **three key points that we were never given the chance to discuss or address**. When we finally did have a conversation, we were told **this was not about the quality of the early childhood programming at Nuestros Niños, but rather about the cost to taxpayers**.

Let me be clear—**reducing the future of our children to a financial equation is deeply offensive** and sends the wrong message to both educators and families. If quality early childhood education is not a priority, what does that say about the city's commitment to preparing our children for a **bright and successful academic future**? If quality is not a factor in these decisions, what does that say about our values as a city?

We should be **expanding and improving** early childhood programming across New York City, not shutting down schools that have been doing the work for over five decades. **If we were truly investing in quality early education, we wouldn't see the persistent achievement gaps that leave so many of our Black and Brown children struggling in State Math and English Language Arts exams.**

Nuestros Niños is not just another program. **We are one of the last remaining Latino-led early childhood education centers in Williamsburg, serving children and families who have historically been marginalized and underserved.**

If we are forced to close:

- **Nearly 90 children will be displaced.**
- **Educators—who have dedicated their lives to fostering early learning—will lose their jobs.**
- **Families—many of whom rely on our culturally responsive programming—will be left with limited or no viable options for their children.**

The consequences of this decision are **severe, unnecessary, and avoidable.**

We need the City Council, the Department of Education, and the Mayor's Office to **reverse this decision and renew our lease immediately.** Our children deserve better. **Black and Brown children deserve better.** They deserve a city that prioritizes their education and values the programs that help set them on the path to success.

I ask you: **Will you stand by and watch another trusted, community-rooted, Latino-led institution disappear? Or will you take action to protect our children's future?**

We are calling on you to do what is right. **Renew our lease. Save Nuestros Niños. Protect our children's future.**

Thank you. Gracias, And can have Generation impact



**NYC Council Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing: Early Child Care Center Closures
Thursday, February 20th, 2025**

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you, Chair Joseph and the Committee on Education for holding a hearing on this matter and elevating the importance of safeguarding existing high-quality early care and learning centers, which are cherished spaces and resources for our communities and families with young children. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, is a non-profit organization with a 43-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 continues to uplift, and deliver services through, a holistic approach, supporting high quality, culturally responsive and sustaining early learning and school-aged education, and addressing the comprehensive needs of families and the wider communities we serve across NYC.

Overview of Our Early Care and Learning Services

CHCF's Early Care and Education team supports childcare and early learning programs, and family access to childcare (birth through school-age) in our work as a Child Care Resource Center (CCRC). CHCF additionally holds a Family Child Care Network under NYCPS DECE, supporting 40 affiliated providers – most of whom speak Spanish as their primary language – to deliver high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive programming to 180 children. Knowing how important ECE programming is for the healthy development of NYC's children, particularly those who are from communities that have been historically under-resourced; and for the stability of parents trying to navigate work and family needs, we have been alarmed to see the administration's shifts away from growing access to these essential programs. While there has been a palpable shift in public awareness of and support for expanding access to high-quality early care and learning programs towards universal childcare and pre-K, we continue to see alarming system practices that work counter to that goal.

We understand that universal childcare would take years to establish throughout the city and state, it remains critical that city and state leaders are taking intentional and timely steps to sustain existing programs and childcare capacity, and to make necessary investments to stop loss of programs and loss of the skilled workforce that has been carrying the system on their shoulders for far too long. With recent reports by the State and City Comptrollers reiterating with evidence the severity of the childcare workforce and childcare availability crises across the city and state, the childcare sector and families with children are looking to our leaders to act in good faith and with honest commitment. We look to our leaders to make investments and policies that reflect their acknowledgement of how important childcare is to the overall wellbeing of our communities and economies; and we expect them to offer transparency and stakeholder involvement in their decisions and long-term planning.





As a longstanding partner of Nuestros Niños in Brooklyn, we were made aware of intentions to end the lease for the flagship center on South 4th Street. This center has been a cherished program in the community for over 50 years, serving low-income communities and communities of color, with a particular focus on uplifting culture and language of the children and families served, since 1973. Even as Williamsburg has faced gentrification and efforts to price out multi-generation families (overwhelmingly of color) with longstanding roots in the community, the center has persisted in ensuring consistent delivery of high-quality, culturally responsive, holistic early care and learning. The program has worked in good faith with city agencies over the years and was shocked to be notified by elected representatives – not partners in NYCPS – that the city was ending the lease for its historic location.

When Nuestros Niños immediately reached out to figure out what error must have occurred, they were informed that there was no error, that the program was under-enrolled with only 4 children, and as a result the city had decided to end the center's lease. Nuestros Niños has 96 children enrollment and had, in fact, welcomed the DECE to the program recently to observe. They alerted the agency to the error in the system, stating that they were severely under-enrolled and even after DECE went back to review their numbers and recognized the inaccurate systems reporting, they were told that the city was still moving forward with the decision.

Nuestros Niños has consistently been upheld as an exemplary childcare program for the city by DOE/NYCPS. It was disappointing that such a decision was made without discussion, or address of their erroneous justifications for terminating the lease, mere hours before registration was to open for the next academic year. Families who have entrusted Nuestros Niños with their children – across generations in many instances – were caught off guard when they went to register their children and the program that they had relied upon was no longer listed as an option. This is not how program partners should be treated, nor should it be a practice to sweep away critical resources like this out of communities without the engagement of the community.

CHCF is aware that this devastating decision by NYCPS and the Administration impacts additional programs and organizational partners who have consistently showed up in good faith to serve in partnership with the city. CHCF has consistently joined collective advocate voice to raise concerns with the centralized enrollment structure that NYCPS/DECE instituted in developing their Birth-to-Five system, particularly that community partners working to deliver programs and serve families across the city could work in tandem with the city to enroll families, monitor program enrollment, and serve as a sounding board when issues arose with family enrollment or systems reporting. Again and again, the city has denied support from community-based organizations and childcare programs who are on the ground in communities, fighting so hard to keep the sector and the programs in our communities alive, and these resources available for families. What is happening with these childcare centers having their city leases terminated is a result of city systems holding their community partners out of decisions that are made by the city to “improve, expand, and invest in the city’s early childhood education system.”



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While we are happy to hear that city officials are in conversations to extend the leases at the impacted early education centers, this is only one small piece of the devastation that the entire childcare sector has been facing. It is critical that city leaders be held accountable and required to transparently engage with stakeholders and partners as they are determining steps towards supporting childcare programs and expanding access to care. Our families are already facing tremendous stress and uncertainty – their ability to find safe, high-quality childcare programs to establish relationships with and entrust their children to while they work to maintain family stability should not be one of them.



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Name: Ingrid Matias Chuagata

Address: 384 South 4th St.

I represent: Nuestros Niños Child Care Center

Address: 384 South 4th St Bk Ny 11211

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Name: Estephania Garcia

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I represent: Nuestros Niños

Address: 384 54th Street BK, 11211

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