



**Jess Dannhauser
Commissioner**

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Children and Youth Committee and Finance Committee
May 19, 2025**

Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning. I am Jess Dannhauser, the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders and our Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services, Margaret Pletnikoff. Thank you Chair Stevens and Chair Brannan, and members of the Children and Youth and Finance Committees, for holding today's hearing to give us an opportunity to update you on our Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget and the work that we are doing to protect children and support families.

I believe that there is no greater mission than ours--to keep children safe, and help families thrive. Our North Star is what is focused on what is best for children, youth and families. We listen to national and local experts; we use data to guide us; and we learn from the firsthand experiences of families. Since I have been Commissioner, we have focused on hiring more front-line staff, including child protective specialists, youth development specialists in detention and family court attorneys. We have reduced caseloads for child protective specialists, expanded supports for families and young people in foster care and throughout the juvenile justice system, and launched new quality assurance initiatives that help us to continuously assess and improve our work.

We are seeing results: children are safer; there are fewer children in foster care; there are fewer children maltreated after we have intervened; more youth in our care are succeeding in school, work and housing stability; and more parents are accessing supports to help their families thrive. We provide free college tuition to hundreds of young people in foster care; dedicated one-on-one coaches for thousands of teens and young adults in foster care and the justice system; and training in trauma-based care for

all of our foster parents. We are giving young people the tools they need to be successful and independent New Yorkers.

Our Progress

Our Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 builds upon our progress, so I am going to first share some of that important work with you.

We have made important progress in our efforts to keep children safe.

Throughout the Adams Administration, ACS has been laser-focused on ensuring that the agency has enough child protection specialists to be able to be thorough, thoughtful, timely and responsive. As a result, we have seen caseloads drop from an average of 9.9 in April 2022 to just 7.7 in April 2025, well below the recommended national standard of 12 families.

Our frontline child protective specialists come into contact with over thousands of children and families each year. Each response is conducted with the utmost compassion and care, and each child is carefully assessed by our highly trained workers. If an investigation determines that a child is not safe, our frontline workers take action – working closely with law enforcement, Child Advocacy Centers, the court system and other stakeholders to protect the safety of the child.

To equip our staff with the skills they need to perform this difficult work, we have enhanced our training and added an extended period of on-the-job learning that allows new child protective specialists to deepen their skills, gain practical casework knowledge, and fully experience the day-to-day job of child protection before assuming a full caseload. During this extended period, new child protective specialists are assigned cases of their own through a structured process with close and intensive

guidance provided by the unit supervisor, managers, and senior workers who serve as mentors.

Additionally, ACS continues to build career-long learning into the lives of its child protection teams. We have added training and support on maternal mental health for all of our frontline staff. And we have instituted new courses on the skillful engagement of young people and parents, while we enroll thousands of staff in training programs on the skillful assessment of child safety; effective investigative practices; and how to identify and assess substance misuse.

We have seen child fatalities in families involved with ACS in the last ten years decline by 18 percent during this Administration, compared to the average over the prior decade. As we continue to evaluate and review this work, we recently began convening a Multidisciplinary Panel of experts external to ACS to review fatality cases, so that their outside expertise can further enhance our work.

Protecting children also requires us to go upstream and build trust in communities so that families seek support and get what they need before their circumstances become potentially unsafe. In 2023, ACS established the ACS Support Line to connect families to services without a child protection response. There has been a 500 percent increase in calls to the ACS Support Line for families seeking connections to prevention services in the last year. We cannot allow fear to isolate families and place children at risk. This is why we have worked with schools, shelters and hospitals to connect families to appropriate help before a crisis occurs. It is also why we have been working to open 30 Family Enrichment Centers where any family can walk in for help and connections to a supportive community.

While ACS and our providers make efforts to enable children to remain safely in their homes, some children are in such unsafe situations that we must place them into foster care. Nearly half of those children and youth are placed in homes with people that they know, as we know that kinship care helps to reduce trauma to children and to reunify families more quickly.

We are committed to the success of the young people in foster care. Through Enhanced Family Foster Care, we have successfully trained over 98% of non-kin foster parents have been trained ACS' specially designed Trauma-Responsive Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP). We have continued to expand the Fair Futures program and this past year more than 4,300 young people aged 11 to 26 who are currently in or have been in our foster and juvenile justice programs received coaching and/or tutoring. ACS's College Choice program supports young people in foster care to attend college. This year more than 400 young people participated in College Choice. Given the success of these programs, the budget includes additional funding for both Fair Futures, College Choice, and a new program called Career Choice.

This summer will be full for the children and youth in foster care, Close to Home and detention. Nearly 1,300 students in foster care are enrolled in Summer Rising, which is up 25% from last year. Over 1,800 youth in foster care, Close to Home and detention have applied for SYEP. We anticipate that over 150 students will participate in College Choice summer programming, with five of those students studying abroad this summer in Japan, Costa Rica, Haiti and Spain. In addition, ACS will host 40 students with child welfare experience in the Commissioner's College Internship Program.

We are also proud of the successes for youth in detention. Fifty students graduated during the last school year and 12 youth have already attained either a Regents Diploma or GED in the current academic year. Many of these youth are now enrolled at either Hostos Community College or Borough of Manhattan Community College, completing live college courses while in the secure detention facilities, and earning transferable college credits. During the 2024-2025 school year, ACS c has continued to prioritize school attendance and success through the consistent integration of academic intervention and post-secondary opportunities, including academic tutoring, assistance preparing students for the Regents and high school equivalency exam, offering of credit-bearing college courses, and career and college coaching. Facility-based school support teams have been expanded to include dedicated youth development specialists who serve as school liaisons and non-uniformed staff who work closely with Passages to support attendance and engagement, which has significantly improved, exam completion and graduation rates across both facilities. This summer, we will be introducing a literacy initiative in detention as an expansion of our current partnership with public libraries, and literacy-focused non-profits engaging young people in film, book club and creative writing opportunities.

CFY 2026 Executive Budget

ACS's CFY 2026 Executive Budget is \$2.9 billion, including \$1.05 billion City Tax Levy. Despite the state's failure to fully fund its child care assistance program, which

will be discussed in more detail, we believe that this budget enables ACS to build upon our progress.

ACS has made a particularly robust effort to expand access to child care assistance for families with limited income who are engaged in work, school, training, job-search or that are unhoused. Compared with October 2022, when ACS opened applications city-wide, the number of children enrolled in child care with costs offset by a low-income voucher has climbed from 10,683 to 68,783 as of April 29, 2025. We are very disappointed with the outcome of the State Budget. Despite NYC's success in implementing the Governor and Mayor's joint vision to expand child care assistance to thousands more families through the State's Child Care Assistance Program, the recent State Budget creates an undue financial burden on the City to maintain these gains. The State Budget imposes a 518% increase to NYC's annual maintenance of effort requirement, from \$53M to \$328M, while leaving the MOE of every other county unchanged. While the State has included the potential for NYC to access up to \$350M by the end of federal fiscal year 2026, this is one time funding that will require the City to spend significantly more CTL. The solution fails to solve the long-term issue that this program is not fully funded.

ACS had to stop issuing new low income child care vouchers starting May 5, 2025. Children that meet the income and programmatic requirements will be placed on a waiting list. ACS is hoping to maintain continuity of care for as many families currently receiving assistance as possible; and we are in discussions with the state and OMB about this. We have submitted a plan to the State that would allow us to continue

serving the vast majority of children that currently have vouchers, which they just approved.

Despite the challenges presented by the state budget, ACS's FY26 Executive Budget includes critical investments to enhance our work. This includes \$25 million to continue to provide community-based child care assistance for approximately 1,000 children through Promise NYC. The budget also includes a \$40 million annual investment for the Youth Safety and Success initiative that expands and creates five programs for youth who are either in foster care or justice involved, including Fair Futures, College Choice, Girls JustUs, ACES and the creation of Career Choice/Workforce ready for youth in foster care who choose not to go to college.

The budget also includes the \$102.8 million in funding needed to address the annual structural federal foster care deficit and funding for the state child care market rate increase in FY25 and FY26. We are also going to be reinvesting \$8 million into our prevention programs to both address the needs of the workforce and provide more concrete goods and supports for families.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ACS's FY2026 Executive Budget, along with the tenacity, commitment and compassion of both ACS and our provider agency staff, will enable us to keep children safe, while providing youth and families with the supports and resources they need to thrive.

TESTIMONY

**Before the Council of the City of New York
Committees on Finance and Children and Youth
Hearing on
Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget**

Presented by

Commissioner Keith Howard

May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairs Brannan and Stevens, and members of the Finance and Children and Youth Committees. I am DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Alan Cheng, Deputy Commissioner for Administration Jeremy Halbridge, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services Susan Haskell, and Deputy Chief Financial Officer Christopher Lewis. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget.

The Mayor's Executive Budget significantly increases investments in programs that fulfill DYCD's mission to alleviate the effects of poverty and provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.

DYCD's budget stands at a record \$1.3 billion.

- \$1.18 billion, about 91%, in city tax levy funds;
- \$76.4 million, about 6%, in federal funds;
- \$43.2 million, about 3%, in state funding; and
- \$2 million, less than 1%, in intracity funds.

Since we met in March to discuss the Preliminary Budget, Mayor Adams has announced unprecedented investments in young people.

The COMPASS afterschool program, which started off 20 years ago with an initial investment of \$47 million, will grow to a record \$755 million program serving about 132,000 youth by Fiscal Year 2028. With this investment, 184,000 youth will be served through our afterschool portfolio. DYCD anticipates releasing a concept paper shortly, with the release of the long-awaited request for proposals in the fall. This expansion plan begins with an immediate \$21 million investment in FY2026 that will bring 5,000 additional K-5 seats online for the upcoming fall semester. That funding will grow to \$102 million in Fiscal Year 2027 and \$136 million by 2028. The plan will also raise provider rates starting in Fiscal Year 2027, with the new RFP awards, to stabilize the non-profit organizations leading these programs and to better support the workforce that serves New York City's children.

The Mayor also announced \$11 million in Fiscal 2026 to provide OMNY Tap and Go cards to this summer's Summer Youth Employment participants. SYEP is on track to enroll 100,000 young people for the fourth consecutive summer. We appreciate the Council's consistently strong support of the program. We are pleased to share that, to date, 30 Council Members have agreed to host SYEP workers.

Finally, the Executive Budget includes an additional \$10 million for the Adult Literacy Initiative, bringing the total to \$22.2 million.

These enhancements build upon the other new investments that were announced earlier and included in the preliminary budget.

The budget includes \$6 million in FY26 to add 100 Runaway and Homeless Youth beds to serve homeless young adults, bringing the total number of beds to 913. This is a big win for Chair Stevens, the Council, advocates and above all young people. We expect to roll out the new beds over the course of next year.



The Department of Youth & Community Development

The budget will double the size of the Fatherhood Initiative to reach 3,000 fathers. The program helps fathers reconnect and build stronger relationships with their children through counseling, conflict resolution training, mediation, and mentoring.

This is in addition to the new workforce program Community Resources for Employment and Development (CRED). Extending DYCD's portfolio of workforce programs up to age 40, CRED provides tailored support services, occupational training and paid work opportunities to underserved New Yorkers. Programming has begun and there are 8 CRED programs operating. Programs have enrolled over 315 participants to date. DYCD plans to serve up to 500 participants in Fiscal 2025, with a goal of expanding to 1,000 in Fiscal 2026 and up to 2,000 per year by Fiscal 2028.

We are in the home stretch of planning Summer Rising which is funded to serve 110,000 elementary and middle school youth this summer. The program, which will begin on July 2nd connects youth with fun, hands-on enrichment experiences to strengthen skills, develop interests and cultivate curiosity. Some examples of the programming that will be offered include drama, yoga, community service, visual art, sports, and cooperative games.

In keeping with our summer investments to keep young people engaged and safe in the summer, we intend to extend the hours of community center programming. We will share more specific details in the future.

While we move ahead with our plans for Fiscal 2026, we will continue to monitor the potential for cuts to Federal support to the City and will work with OMB, our providers and of course the City Council.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to discuss the Executive Budget. We are pleased to answer your questions.



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Mark Levine, Borough President

May 19, 2025

Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine

NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Stevens and members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Children and Youth for the opportunity to testify. My testimony today focuses on a glaring issue for working families in our City, stable funding for Administration for Children's Services (ACS) child care vouchers.

Child care is essential for New York's families and our economy. Access to child care is a necessity for parents because it allows them to go to work, school, and take care of their daily responsibilities knowing their children are safe and well cared for. High quality child care also helps children learn, grow, and build skills that they will use throughout their lives. But with costs above \$20,000 per child for infants and toddlers, child care is increasingly out of reach for many working parents, which puts our economy and our families at risk.

That is why this year's budget must fully fund ACS child care vouchers, which every year help thousands of working families with young children pay for their child care.

I am deeply concerned that insufficient funding and State level policy changes have forced ACS to suspend voucher enrollment and to potentially remove 4,000-7,000 children per month from the voucher system. While I am pleased that the State budget included some increased funding for child care vouchers, it did not close the full funding gap. The City must do everything in its power to ensure no child or family loses access to the child care they rely on. The City should meet the new maintenance of effort requirement for child care vouchers. The City must also ensure that we make full use of all available State matching funds.

These crucial investments will help ensure that no eligible child loses their child care so that children continue to get the care they need and working-class families can continue to raise their families in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Dear Committee Chair Stevens and Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Angelee Almonte, and I serve as the Senior Program Manager of LGBTQIA+ Programming at Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC). I write to you today not only as a professional with a decade of experience in youth development, but also as a proud native New Yorker. I was raised in public housing by an immigrant single parent, and I personally understand how tough it can be to grow up searching for a sense of belonging.

For over 100 years, BBBS of NYC has been building life-changing relationships between youth (Littles) and adult mentors (Bigs). And now, more than ever, we need your help to continue doing that.

Some of our Littles dream of becoming chefs, artists, or athletes. Our Bigs strive to connect them to opportunities that support those dreams through targeted and intentional outings. While New York City offers a vast array of opportunities, many of those opportunities come with a large price tag. We encourage low-cost and meaningful outings between Littles and Bigs. However, the reality is that the costs of outings in New York City can make even simple plans tough to maintain. And when a Big experiences a financial setback, they may have to cut back on outings or, in some cases, close their match altogether—not for lack of desire to mentor, but because of a lack of resources.

To prevent this, BBBS of NYC provides a wide variety of free events, to allow Littles and Bigs to connect, without putting unnecessary financial burden on the Bigs. I've had Littles come up to me, while going through hard times, and say how much they look forward to our events. Some have told me that they're grateful someone thought of them, or that these events helped them meet others and feel more connected.

Sometimes it's something as simple as giving our Littles a backpack for the school year, a notebook to journal their thoughts, or a football that helps them chase a dream. These are small things that mean a lot. These moments-- the smiles, the laughs, the photos--that's real success. That's what makes this work meaningful. When our Littles feel supported, excited, and cared for, it makes a lasting impact.

As someone who didn't have access to mentorship growing up, I understand how important it is. And as a Bronx native who works closely with Spanish-speaking and LGBTQIA+ families, I see firsthand how access to resources can change lives. Our LGBTQIA+ programming, in particular, needs increased funding so we can offer events and spaces throughout the year, not just during Pride Month. Every young person deserves consistent support, safety, and opportunities to thrive.

We've seen that, when BBBS of NYC hosts events centered around shared interests or goals, Littles are more likely to feel encouraged, build connections, and follow through on their aspirations. What makes the biggest difference is the sense of belonging and support they experience when the programming comes from within BBBS of NYC.

By investing in Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City, you're not just funding programs, you're showing our city's youth that they and their dreams matter. That someone is looking out for them. That they don't have to face life alone. We are building a generation that is confident, connected, and ready to give back, and we can't do it without your continued support.

Thank you for your time and commitment to New York City's youth,

Angelee Almonte

Senior Program Manager of LGBTQIA+ Programming

**BRONXNET TESTIMONY TO NYC COUNCIL FINANCE & CHILDREN & YOUTH
COMMITTEES**

Monday, May 19, 2025

Presented By: Michael Max Knobbe, BronxNet Executive Director

- Thank you to all the members of the New York City Council Finance Committee, the Committee on Children and Youth, and the entire City Council for giving BronxNet this opportunity to present our request for discretionary support.
- My name is Michael Max Knobbe and I am the Executive Director of BronxNet, the public access and community media network of the people of the Bronx with innovative media technology, media education, content that encourages civic engagement, with experiential learning and workforce development internships for high school students, college students and young adults.
- We are requesting support from the New York City Council in the amount of one-hundred-thousand dollars. The bulk of that - ninety-thousand dollars would support experiential learning and workforce development for youth, and the other ten-thousand dollars would support the production of a special series of anti-violence forums titled Our Home, Our Haven: Bronx Forums for Neighborhood Peace broadcast on BronxNet.
- BronxNet has provided public services contributing to the uplifting of the Bronx community for over thirty years.
- We have a strong media workforce development internship program that has helped thousands of Bronx students build successful careers including many in media, communications and related industries. Participants of our workforce development program work alongside professionals and gain hands-on experience in journalism, hosting/reporting, videography, post production, technical directing, studio operations, producing, animation, and much more. A NYC Council allocation would allow us to provide dozens of youth with those same skills as well as with training in virtual sets, augmented reality, and immersive technologies made possible through our new immersive media studio in the South Bronx.
- Discretionary funding will also allow us to provide more experiential learning opportunities for high school, middle school and elementary school students in all

aspects of media production. Experience has shown that the hands-on media training that we provide to these students results in improved academic performance and greater confidence about future career possibilities.

- We provide access services from our state-of-the-art studios in the Bronx including the BronxNet Network Operations + Studios at Lehman College, and the BronxNet Media + Technology Studios in the South Bronx.
- The support we are seeking would help us provide our vital workforce development and experiential learning services to more students, as we work towards long-term sustainability.
- With disruptions in the media landscape, including “cord cutting” and long overdue community benefits agreements between BronxNet and cable companies, we’re working with our elected leaders as we diversify funding and continue to provide the local content, media production access, and workforce development and experiential learning opportunities that our Bronx residents, schools, organizations and leaders have come to rely upon.
- Thank you again for this opportunity to present our request.



**New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth Hearing
DYCD's Family Support Services**

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Althea Stevens
From: Ursula Cooper-Hunter, Department Director-BronxWorks Children & Youth Programs
Date: May 19, 2025

Dear Councilmember Stevens,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee on Children and Youth. Founded in 1972, BronxWorks mission is to improve the economic and social wellbeing of low-income individuals and families. We feed, shelter, teach, and support our neighbors to build a stronger community. BronxWorks currently has the following DYCD Children & Youth Programs:

- 5- COMPASS Afterschool Programs- Kindergarten -fifth grades
- 3-SONYC Afterschool Programs- sixth-eighth grades
- 2-High School Afterschool Programs
 - 1- NDA-Adlai Stevenson Campus -YABC Program
 - 1-WIOA-FDA III High School
- 3-Cornerstones and one satellite.
 - Betances Community Center
 - Classic/Melrose Community Center
 - St. Mary's Park Community Center
 - Pyramid Community Service Program (satellite of Classic Community Center)
- Summer Youth Employment Contract- 1300 young people

The DYCD children and youth funding is in alignment with BronxWorks mission to teach and support our neighbors.

During the post-pandemic era it has become increasingly apparent that a higher participant reimbursement rate is necessary. As the City has revealed a plan for a new RFP in FY27 with increased rates, the City must begin a phase-in process for higher rates now, committing to a halfway increase of base rates for COMPASS Elementary to \$4900, and to SONYC middle school programs to \$4150 in FY26. The end goal must be fully funding elementary and middle school programs in the FY27 procurement. Below is a list of program enhancements which additional funding could support:

- Swimming Programs
- Literacy and STEAM Programming
- Social Worker to address social emotional needs of youth.



Children and Youth Department

Carolyn McLaughlin Community
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- Budgets which can accommodate a floor salary of \$22/hr. and \$25/hr. during the summer-for Group Leaders/Youth Workers and increased salary rates for Instructors and Program Leaders.
- 12-month contracts as opposed to a separate summer contract- will allow organizations to plan and budget more effectively.
- NDA -shifting of Priority Areas- As a result of the most recent NDA RFP meant we were no longer able to offer programming to some of the programs-many of the high schools where we had previously offered services were very disappointed, because the need for Academic Support at their respective high schools remained, even though the priority shifted. Also, more funding needed for incentives High School Academic Support programs - particularly needed to engage high school students- creating challenges for organizations to meet goals such as participants meeting contractual requirements.

A recent Forbes January 2024 magazine article confirms that the need for afterschool programming is most needed in communities such as the Bronx. Instead of cutting funding for children and youth programming we call on DYCD (city) to find ways to prioritize the evolving needs of the City's children and youth populations.

Respectfully submitted,

Ursula Cooper-Hunter

Ursula Cooper-Hunter
Vice President for Children & Youth Programs, BronxWorks



**NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth
FY 26 Executive Budget Hearing
Monday, May 19, 2025**

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

Thank you, Chair Stevens and Chair Brannon, and the Committees on Finance and Children & Youth, for offering an opportunity for social service partners and community stakeholders to present testimony on the city budget in relation to the programming and services that are delivered across NYC in service of families and children. We appreciate the collective work on the ACS and DYCD budgets to ensure maximum reach and impact of funding and services, and particularly ensuring continuation, baselining, and growth of programs where possible. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, works in partnership with the city and state to deliver holistically responsive services within schools, early care and learning programs, and the wider communities that we serve across NYC, through and beyond our contracted programs and services. Our continued mission is to combine education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

School-Based Youth Development Programming

Our Youth Development team delivers after-school programming in partnership with three schools in the Bronx and career and college readiness programming to high school juniors and seniors at four schools in Manhattan and the Bronx. During a school year, CHCF's after-school programs have a typical capacity to reach 550 students, and by extension their families. Above and beyond culturally and linguistically responsive academic instruction, CHCF programs provide comprehensive support that promote students' mental health and social emotional development, and foster student interest and career exploration. Our academic enrichment curriculum expands upon day-school learning, allowing students to engage in robotics, esports, and health and fitness – ensuring that students are inspired and equipped with 21st century skills. Our commitment extends beyond the classroom as we connect students and families with vital resources and community partnerships that strengthen their overall well-being and prospects.

Two of our programs were primarily funded by the state through the previous Advantage and Empire State After School contracts. While the state listened to advocates about the need to merge the funding streams and create equitable funding for all seats, the state failed to increase the budget allocation in FY25 to ensure that program capacity was sustained. CHCF was one of over 200 organizational programs statewide that were approved to deliver services by OCFS through the new NYS Learning and Enrichment After-School Program Supports (LEAPS) but were *not* funded to deliver those services. CHCF, who has been delivering these services for over 25 years, was forced to reduce its enrollment capacity





by about 50% for the 2024-2025 school year. We know that the harm of this was felt far beyond CHCF and the students and families we serve, reaching across NYC school districts and communities.

We appreciate the executive budget response to the harmful impact of the LEAPS' funding shortfall to restore and continuously sustain afterschool programming, with a proposed increase in funding for NYC after-school programs by \$331 million in FY 26, on a path towards universal after-school by FY28. By investing in CBO-led programs like afterschool, the city is investing not only in the children directly served in programs but also in expanded access to resources and wrap around services for families, partnering schools, and communities.

CHCF additionally delivers college and career readiness programming to high school students in four schools in Manhattan and the Bronx, through our Opening Doors to the Future (ODF) program. Through a coordination of city funding and non-government funder support, we have built a comprehensive program that cultivates student interests, provides meaningful exposure to professional environments, and prepares young people for entry into the workforce. Our approach is designed to ensure that students leave high school ready for their next chapter, whether that's enrolling in college, serving in the armed forces, or stepping directly into career pathways. Participation in our ODF has led to a 100% promotion or graduation rate, with nearly all students successfully transitioning to postsecondary education, military service, or the professional workforce.

We continue to uplift the proven impact of college and career readiness programs, with ODF as a clear example of the successes of these investments in youth. It is with this critical and impactful CHCF programming in mind, that we stand in solidarity with all programs focused on building college and career readiness for high schoolers. Whether it is SYEP, WLG, or Learning to Work – these programs *all* demonstrably uplift student academic growth, open opportunities to connect with professional workplace experiences, and in many cases contribute to the financial stability of their families through paid internships. We support the proposed continuation of Learning to Work in the FY26 executive budget and call on city leaders to demonstrate their continued commitment to and prioritization of college and career readiness programming by baselining the funds.

Lastly, regarding youth development programming, CHCF has partnered with the city for the past 3 years to deliver Summer Rising programming at one of our partner schools in the Bronx. During the summer of 2024, we were able to provide safe care and academic enrichment to 160 elementary and 80 middle school students. While we continue to stress the importance of open communication and feedback between CBOs and city agencies, and look towards continued improvement in the program model, we support sustained and growing investments in summer programming for NYC students and families for FY26 and beyond. We do, of course, recognize that New York City Public Schools must jointly invest in these programs, and maintain a partnership with DYCD to deliver both academic and enrichment programming for students.





Early Care & Education Services

As one of four Child Care Resource & Referral agencies in the NYC CCR&R Consortium, we are funded by New York State through Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds to support childcare providers with linguistically responsive technical assistance and intensive coaching. CHCF predominantly (but not exclusively) delivers supports to childcare 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.

Additionally, through our work as a NYC CCR&R, CHCF supports families in accessing childcare that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule, and particular child needs. CHCF's multi-lingual staff support families as they navigate often complex bureaucratic systems to access free/affordable childcare. So far in the current fiscal year, we have referred nearly 900 families for childcare services; 95% of the families we have referred are below the poverty threshold, and 68% of the children referred are between the ages of 0-4 years. Of these families, 30% were specifically referred for ACS vouchers, with 98% percent of the children served by ACS vouchers in families that live below the poverty threshold; nearly half of the families referred for ACS voucher (44%) are single-parent households.

CHCF continues to identify barriers faced by providers and families that are jeopardizing the stability of the childcare sector as well as family and community stability. There have been continued difficulties in accessing CCAP vouchers for families and timely payments to providers. At a time when the childcare sector is dangerously close to collapse after a long history of being under-funded and under-supported, any investments made towards expanding family eligibility and access to subsidy *must* be followed with investments in the sector, ensuring equitable resourcing and sustainable funding to meet growing capacity needs.

Further impacts to childcare sustainability are under-enrollment because of solely centralized enrollment processes, which exclude community-based family supports, and system barriers for families to be approved for subsidy and be quickly connected to programs that would best meet their family and child's needs. Providers also continue to report challenges with reimbursement for care, which stagnates the flow of funds needed to keep programs up and running. Advocates statewide have called in the state OCFS to implement prospective payments based on enrollment. During the pandemic, NYC adopted pay by enrollment, which provided some semblance of stability at a time when enrollment and attendance were uncertain. Prospective payments based on enrollment would ensure that providers receive the necessary funds to deliver programs for the month, rather than being left to the uncertainty of the reimbursement process. CHCF supports a move towards a more stable funding model for childcare programs that serve children with subsidies, as one step towards stabilizing the sector.

Delays in reimbursement may stem from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) deficit that ACS reported in February. Advocates and ACS pushed hard on the state to increase its investment in CCAP to cover the current (FY25) deficit and ensure the city can continue enrolling families going forward (FY26 and beyond). With ACS closing down new applications for child care vouchers, and an anticipation of families being removed once they come up for recertification, it is critical that this committee and the administration make the necessary investment to draw all possible funds down from the state to address the crisis and minimize the harm on families, children, and childcare providers.





The disruption in the flow and growth of enrollment of families into programs will be particularly felt in communities with higher rates of low-income families, as the families who enroll in those community programs are more likely to utilize vouchers to afford the high costs of care. While some programs are able to enroll private pay families to offset the inadequate funding of the vouchers, there are a significant number of programs – and disproportionately licensed programs in residential settings (FDC & GFDC) in low-income communities – who almost entirely serve families with vouchers. NYC cannot afford to see this level of disruption and harm on families, children, and the vulnerable yet essential childcare workforce.

CHCF calls on city leaders to match the New York State funding increase for CCAP, so that the much needed \$350 million can be drawn down and not be left on the table in the midst of this crisis.

It is also essential that NYC continue to support *all* NYC children in accessing early care and learning, regardless of their eligibility for federal funding-backed subsidies. We continue to celebrate Promise NYC and its success in supporting the care of over 600 children who are deemed ineligible for federally funded childcare solely due to their immigration status. We join many in supporting Promise NYC being baselined at \$25 million. As the need continues to be far greater than that current funding allows, CHCF additionally supports continued increases in funding to grow the reach and impact of Promise NYC. Especially at a time when the nation climate instills fear and isolation in immigrant communities, NYC must continue to step up and demonstrate its commitment to supporting immigrant New Yorkers.

Additional Early Literacy Work

Finally, CHCF continues to partner with 16 other community-based organizations under the City's First Readers Initiative. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, **CFR** is its *only* investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its 17 member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or





co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile these essential programs remain. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers (CFR) is more critical than ever. Together, we deliver early literacy resources and curriculum across every Council district, ensuring that care programs and families have access to critical early learning opportunities. Our work is not just about books— many programs are intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities, equitably building strong foundations for children's academic success, emotional well-being, and long-term stability.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to continue expanding our reach —so we can impact even more families and children in FY26.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony; and if there are any questions about our work or what is presented in our testimony, please reach out to Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy, at: ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (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.





**Testimony for New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth and Committee on Finance
Re: Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget
Submitted by: Michelle Avila, Director of Public Policy**

May 19, 2025

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Brannan, Stevens, members of the Finance and Children and Youth Committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on the fiscal year 2026 executive budget.

With a mission to help children living in poverty to succeed and thrive, Children's Aid provides comprehensive supports 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 nearly 2,000 full and part-time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth, and their families through our citywide child welfare and family services and our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

As an organization dedicated to eradicating poverty in our neighborhoods, we are committed to advocating for, protecting, and increasing funding for the most under-resourced youth and families in New York City. Children's Aid is a proud member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, the New York City Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, the Human Services Council, the



Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), and Fair Futures. Through these networks and alliances, we fully support their policy agendas.

A thriving New York City requires a strong and dynamic ecosystem of programs that support children, youth, and families. The human services sector is essential to the city's social safety net, and organizations like Children's Aid are on the frontlines, partnering with government to ensure that communities remain resilient and empowered. As the city navigates economic and social instability, we remain committed to caring for children and supporting families. Our work is critical, not just for today, but for building a stronger future for all New Yorkers.

We commend the FY 2026 Executive Budget for including critical investments in child care, Summer Rising, essential youth programs like SYEP and Saturday Night Lights, and for expanding afterschool capacity. These are meaningful commitments to New York City's greatest asset: our youth.

However, there remain vital programs that must be fully funded and baselined in the final FY 2026 budget. We urge adoption of the following priorities:

Fund the Child Care and Youth Services Continuum

- **Child Care Assistance Program:** Invest at least \$350 million—an increase of approximately \$297 million—to maintain eligibility for, and fully leverage, available state and federal child care funding. Additionally, partner with the Office of Children and Family Services to establish a long-term solution that ensures continued access to child care vouchers for low-income families.
- **Early Childhood Education:** Baseline \$5 million for outreach for early childhood and education programs, and \$70 million for Special Education Pre-K evaluations and services.



- **Promise NYC:** Increase and baseline \$60 million to expand access to child care for infants and toddlers (ages 0–2), regardless of eligibility restrictions.

Strengthen the Afterschool System

We thank the Administration for making a meaningful investment in New York City's afterschool programs and look forward to collaborating on a long-term, sustainable plan to expand access. We share the goal of making these programs more available to children and families—but expansion must not come at the expense of existing programs that are already stretched thin.

For too long, afterschool providers have operated under immense strain, delivering essential services despite chronic underfunding. The system is in crisis and cannot wait for investments in future fiscal years. Providers—such as Children's Aid—need a meaningful infusion of funding by July 1, 2025, to continue serving children and families. This need is especially urgent given the instability of federal funding streams and recent threats to eliminate the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the only federally funded afterschool initiative.

Nonprofit providers cannot continue to subsidize these programs. To stabilize and strengthen the current afterschool system—and to prepare agencies for eventual expansion—the City must adopt the following recommendations:

- Invest \$160 million in FY 2026 to begin phasing in higher per-participant rates in COMPASS and SONYC contract extensions. This includes the additional 5,000 COMPASS slots and brings per-participant rates to:
 - \$4,900 for COMPASS Elementary
 - \$4,150 for SONYC Middle School
- Commit to significant investment in SONYC Middle School programs, which have not seen a new RFP or updated funding in over a decade and are financially unsustainable at current rates.



- Address administrative and operational barriers that place unnecessary financial and staffing burdens on afterschool providers and hinder program effectiveness.

A strong, well-funded afterschool infrastructure is foundational to equity and opportunity in our city. Without immediate action, we risk losing critical programs and the trusted community-based organizations that deliver them.

Support Mandated Services and Community-Based Prevention

As part of COFCCA, we echo the call to value and support the child welfare workforce:

- Invest in salary increases, scholarships, and tuition assistance for the workforce.
- Ensure contracts reflect the true cost of services and pay competitive wages to attract and retain skilled professionals.

Sustain Wraparound Support for Foster Youth

Transitional-Aged Youth: Maintain and strengthen funding for Life Coaching case management through the Young Women’s Initiative to support former foster youth ages 18–26.

Address Nonprofit Contracting Infrastructure

We commend the City for the recent FY26 Executive Budget announcements that signal progress toward addressing long-standing challenges in the nonprofit contracting system. These include: funding indirect cost rate growth for human services providers contracting with NYC Aging, the Department of Education, and HRA; a \$5 billion investment to provide advance payments for nonprofit providers; and the addition of 20 new positions at the Mayor’s Office of Contract Services



(MOCS) to bolster help desk support and implement critical system improvements. These are meaningful steps toward stabilizing the sector, making providers whole, and alleviating the chronic delays that have jeopardized the financial health of community-based organizations for years.

However, these measures must be paired with stronger, enforceable accountability across City agencies. While the City previously cleared a historic \$4 billion backlog in unpaid contracts and amendments, significant delays and outstanding payments persist. Nonprofits continue to be asked to operate programs without registered contracts or timely reimbursements, forcing many to borrow money, delay payroll, or reduce services.

Within Children's Aid, government grants (city, state, and federal) represented 64% of our annual budget in FY25, and City contracts, in particular, were 53% of our total budget. We currently hold contracts with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), New York City Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department for Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the Human Resources Administration (HRA), New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Safe Horizon. Through these contracts, we operate programs like foster care and prevention services, Birth-to-Five early childhood education, Community Schools, School-based health centers, afterschool and summer programs, summer youth employment (SYEP), and more.

In FY25, these services were funded primarily by 76 contracts with the City, totaling \$96,346,456. Of those contracts, 13 contracts totaling \$5,888,745 are currently unregistered. For FY24 and FY25, we are owed \$7,726,513 in outstanding payments. We currently have 78 invoices totaling \$3,089,354 pending approval in PASSPort.

We cannot overstate the impact of delayed contracts and payments on our day-to-day operations—particularly our capacity to hire and retain qualified staff and to consistently deliver high-quality services to the communities that depend on us. To fully resolve this crisis, the City must ensure that every agency registers contracts



promptly, pays invoices without delay, and eliminates the remaining backlog. Accountability and transparency must become the norm—not the exception—in the nonprofit contracting process.

Closing

The City's investments in youth and human services are essential—but they must be stabilized, expanded, and equitably implemented. We urge the Council and Administration to adopt these recommendations in the FY 2026 enacted budget to ensure every child, family, and provider has the support they need to thrive. Please feel free to contact Michelle Avila at mavila@childrensaidnyc.org with any questions regarding this testimony.



**Chinese-American Planning Council
Testimony Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on Children and Youth
Chair, Council Member Justin Brannan
Chair, Council Member Althea Stevens
May 19th, 2025**

Thank you Chairs Brannan, Stevens, and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council (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 80,000 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.

Last year, 1,003 students participated in our programs—and every single high school senior graduated. This isn't just a number; it's proof of what community-based programs can accomplish. For low-income and first-generation college students, these programs are more than academic support—they are a critical bridge to personal growth and opportunity.

We're encouraged to see the FY26 Executive Budget allocate \$331 million to support 20,000 new afterschool student enrollees over the next three years, along with \$25 million for Promise NYC, expanding access to child care for low-income families who are otherwise ineligible. We're also pleased to see baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and \$11 million dedicated to SYEP metrocards.

Afterschool and youth development programs do more than extend the school day. They empower students with the skills, confidence, and networks needed to thrive, not just in the classroom, but in their careers and communities. These programs help young people see themselves as future leaders and changemakers.

Sustained and expanded investment in community-based programs is not optional, it's essential. Our programs don't just fill gaps in education; they provide mentorship, resources, and a supportive environment that fosters academic and personal success. For many youth, especially those from immigrant families or low-income communities, these programs are a lifeline to economic mobility and a brighter future.



We are urging that the final adopted budget continues to center young people, children, and families in the process.

Thank you so much for your time and if there are any questions, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.



**Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti, Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Submitted to the New York City Council FY'2026 Executive Budget Oversight Hearing
Children and Youth Services Committee
May 19th, 2025**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Stevens and all the members of the City Council Children and Youth Committee for holding today's important hearing on the Mayor's FY26 Executive Budget. Below we include recommendations for how our City can improve access to youth programming and family services that are essential for supporting youth development and professional opportunities, economic security and community networks.

Invest in Youth Opportunity, Youth Services, and Workforce Development

We believe every New York child deserves access to enriching, engaging, and high-quality afterschool programming. COMPASS and SONYC programs can offer art and culture, sports, experiential learning and academic support essential to children's social-emotional development, health and wellness, and academic success across age ranges. These programs are also a lifeline for working parents who deeply value having their children engaged in programming while they are at work.

We were pleased that the Administration included \$21 million in FY26 to add 5,000 new K-5 afterschool seats, and commits to increase funding to \$331 million by FY27 to enable the system to serve over 20,000 more K-5 students by FY28. Though these investments are a crucial step towards achieving universal afterschool, we remain concerned that this funding does not address the staffing crisis afterschool programs are experiencing due to low wages. SONYC and COMPASS have both been deeply underfunded for years. Providers are being asked by the Department of Youth and Community Development to sign contract extensions that continue to perpetuate deeply inadequate rates that undervalue the workforce and further destabilize the afterschool system.

CCC, in partnership with the Campaign for Children, urges the City to raise rates for COMPASS and SONYC providers, beginning with a phase in process of a halfway increase of base rates for COMPASS Elementary to \$4900, and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4150. The end goal must be fully funding elementary and middle school programs in a new procurement in FY27. This change would greatly improve the lives of providers and will also ensure programs are well resourced and robust for youth. The rates must be raised in FY 26 to support an increase in 5000 youth in programs and to ensure providers can offer robust programs.

The Mayor also promised an RFP and concept paper for COMPASS in his recent announcement, and we urge the City Council to work with the Administration to ensure it is released timely. Moreover, that concept paper must include a model budget reflecting the rates referenced above, allowing the RFP process to begin on an equitable foundation.

CCC believes it is essential to provide families with free and affordable, high-quality afterschool options for their children. These options can only be available and sustainable if the City commits to funding COMPASS and SONYC with adequate base rates.

Enhance Summer Programming Efficiency

We are pleased to see the one-year \$19.6 million investment in the Preliminary Budget for Summer Rising. Restoring Summer Rising funding early in the budget cycle allows the City, agencies, and providers to address persistent issues that have plagued the Summer Rising programs. In addition to requesting that this funding be baselined, we urge the City to address the following operational issues to ensure summer programming serves families and youth as effectively as possible:

- **Allow CBOs to control enrollment instead of New York City Public Schools:** Currently, NYCPS's system does not successfully integrate with the program used by DYCD, making it challenging for CBOs to manage enrollment or update waitlists. Returning enrollment control to CBOs will allow them to enroll on-site and manage waitlists directly, thus ensuring available spots are utilized effectively.
- **Inconsistent Paraprofessional Staffing:** The availability of paraprofessionals for the full duration of summer programming remains inconsistent, preventing students with disabilities from having the fun and fulfilling summer with their peers that they deserve.
- **Lack of Clear Communication:** Communication between NYC Public Schools, the Department of Health, and CBOs remains unclear, especially regarding critical staffing needs, background checks, enrollment, and updated regulations. Improved coordination is essential to the smooth operation of summer programs.
- **Relocation of Programs:** Relocating programs to new buildings, especially when CBO staff lack prior relationships, disrupts years of trust and collaboration between CBOs and schools, and can often lead to competition for space with other co-located CBOs. We recommend minimizing relocations and ensuring that adequate time and support are given to both CBOs and NYCPS staff to plan and acclimate to new settings.
- **Flexibility in Scheduling Field Trips:** A key request from our programs is the ability to schedule field trips on days other than Fridays. Allowing Summer Rising programs, the flexibility to schedule trips on various days would enhance the overall summer experience for participants, providing a more dynamic and engaging program.

Finally, we urge the City to implement summer programs that provide greater choice to families. It is inequitable that the only free option available for low-income families requires a summer school model, while many youth and families prefer full-time camp options with more flexible programming. We look forward to collaborating with city leaders to support and expand models that meet the needs of families and provide enriching programming for youth.

Enhance Services for Systems-Involved Youth and Families

Restore Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Supportive Programming for Youth and Young Adults

Extensive research demonstrates the positive impacts of ATI and reentry programs, including lowering recidivism and crime.¹ Moreover, for every dollar invested in ATI programs, studies estimate between \$3.46-\$5.54 in returns, in addition to reduced costs for the criminal justice system and better community health outcomes.²

We are glad that the Executive Budget restored and baselined \$7.6 million for Alternatives to Incarceration and \$4.7 million for re-entry services. These restorations will ensure these programs can support New Yorkers through case management, therapy, housing, employment training and more.

However, a number of critical prevention programs failed to receive restorations in the Executive Budget. We therefore urge City leaders to support the following investments in the FY26 budget:

- **Restore and baseline** \$3.3 million to the IMPACT program, an alternative to placement program for young people who would otherwise be sent to Horizons or Crossroads
- **Restore and baseline** \$2.6 million for Next STEPS (cut August 2023), which offered one-on-one and group mentoring within a cognitive behavioral therapy-based curriculum designed to help young adults make the attitudinal and behavioral changes necessary to avoid criminal activity and re-engage with education, work and community

Deepen Investments in the Runaway and Homeless Youth System

Numerous challenges currently face Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) in New York. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is mainly responsible for supporting this population; however, it is not uncommon for RHY to also be involved with ACS, DHS, and HRA in the efforts to find housing or social services. We must ensure that Runaway and Homeless Youth have access to more beds and more support. Since youth do not have a right to shelter and DYCD does not have enough beds for young people (especially older youth), many young people are driven onto the streets or into dangerous living situations. **We therefore urge the City to increase the rates for providers, which have not been updated since 2017, to \$70,000 per bed.** This investment will provide safe, temporary housing for youth who otherwise would be without a stable option.

Furthermore, we also urge the city to **restore and baseline \$1.62 million to maintain funding for the Peer Navigator positions and \$1.5 million for the 16 housing specialists in the DYCD-RHY System.** The housing and youth services systems are complex and convoluted, and it is critical to have a trusted support person to offer advice, resources, and answers for young people.

Additionally, we echo the calls of the Runaway and Homeless Youth providers on the following investments to support this population of young people:

- Baseline \$1.03 million for Street Outreach and Drop-in Centers
- Invest \$1.63 million to support services for newly arriving youth and unaccompanied minors
- Invest \$625,000 for Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services
- Invest \$2.6 million for two Mental Health-Focused Transitional Independent Living Pilots. To address the significant mental health needs of RHY, we propose funding two pilot programs that

include on-site clinical services and intensive case management. These programs will offer the specialized care necessary to stabilize youth with complex mental health challenges.

Invest in Child Welfare Primary Prevention and Workforce Stability

Fundamental to preventing child welfare involvement is investing in the primary prevention supports families need to be safe and secure, including housing, child care, healthy food, and economic supports. At the same time, families currently in the system struggle to access the services they need because the prevention workforce is in crisis.

CCC and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) embarked on a survey project to understand the impact of the change from the 2020 ACS child welfare prevention contracts, the sustainability of the workforce, and the needs of families. Over 300 survey responses from child welfare prevention workers were collected. Based on preliminary review, we have found that:



Survey respondents also had the opportunity to expand on their experiences:

- “...staff morale seems to be impacted by the delayed COLA hikes.”
- “Many staff feel unappreciated for the hard work they do and not getting paid for it. Can cause staff to start looking elsewhere.”
- “Delayed payments can lead to interruptions in service delivery, making it difficult to maintain consistency in family engagement and case management”

To help ensure that prevention services can best serve children and families, we recommend the following:

- Enhance child welfare prevention contract flexibility to allow providers the ability to aptly respond to different family circumstances
- Invest in salary increases, scholarships and tuition assistance to help agencies sustain a highly trained and credentialed child welfare workforce.
- Ensure that child welfare staff are paid competitive salaries and agencies are paid the true cost of services on prevention contracts.
- Reform the current NYC procurement system to ensure timely payments to contracted agencies.

Support Families in Need of Child Care

Promise NYC provides childcare assistance to low-income families who may be ineligible for other, federally funded subsidized childcare. While we are grateful that funding was restored in the Executive Budget, it was only one year funding. All parents want a safe, high-quality, and culturally responsive place for their children to learn, and Promise NYC provides this option. **We strongly support the City Council’s proposal increasing and baselining \$60 million for Promise NYC to ensure that all families can access child care, while also expanding access to infants and toddlers ages 0-2 without eligibility requirements.**

Supporting Critical State Investments

Address the CCAP Funding Cliff That Threatens Child Care Assistance for Thousands of New York City Families

In recent years, New York City and other counties have significantly expanded the number of children receiving child care assistance, and have used the Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) to fund this enhanced access. CCBG funds are used to provide child care assistance to families on cash assistance; contracted child care for children 0-2 years old and 3-and 4-year-olds in extended day/year; and child care vouchers for low-income families engaged in work, training or other qualified activities.

In February 2025, New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) shared that the state Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funds will be exhausted as early as summer 2025. This is due to a combination of significant and targeted increases in child care assistance uptake; increased market rates; and the re-institution of engagement requirements for families on cash assistance, which will increase the demand for child care assistance as parents return to work and training activities. Between June 2022 and February 2025, the number of children using low-income child care vouchers in NYC increased by over 700%.

The City estimated that without additional funding, thousands of families would lose child care access. The city has already paused enrollment and set up a waitlist for vouchers for low-income families.

The FY26 State Budget included \$350 million for New York City’s Child Care Assistance Program. However, the state is statutorily requiring the city to spend at least \$328 million on CCAP in order to draw down state funding (the city currently contributes approximately \$53 million to the program). The City’s own estimates indicate that closer to \$900 million is needed to meet the full need. It is therefore imperative that New York City not only meet the \$328 million statutory requirement, but also provide at least \$350 million to match the state’s investment.

We urge City leaders invest at least \$350 million in the Child Care Assistance Program to enable the City to pull down the maximum amount of state and federal funding that supports child care vouchers for tens of thousands of low-income families. We also urge city leaders to work with OCFS to locate a permanent remedy for maintaining access to child care vouchers for families going forward.

Raise the Age Waiver of Hardship

Last fall marked six years since Raise the Age was first implemented across New York State, ending a shameful chapter in our history of prosecuting 16- and 17-year olds as adults regardless of the offense. Prior to the passing of this legislation, thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds were held in dangerous conditions on Rikers Island and other adult jails across the state. Moreover, these youth were systematically locked-out of age-appropriate services in family court programs designed to meet the needs of adolescents and avoid the barriers of an adult criminal record.

Youth crime has consistently decreased since Raise the Age implementation in 2018. In New York City alone, since 2013 there has been a 48% decrease in adolescent arrests for serious offenses.¹ Evidence from implementation across the State clearly shows how the law has improved community safety and youth well-being.

Despite making up half of the state's youth justice system population, New York City is currently excluded from accessing the Raise the Age funding because the City exceeds the tax cap prescribed by state law. However, it is possible to access this funding by submitting a waiver of hardship, indicating that our city and our programs need the resources that are available through the Raise the Age law. New York City accounts for half of the state's youth justice system population and should be able to access more funding. However, Mayor Adams has yet to apply for the waiver of hardship, despite the administration's claim that the current fiscal cliff necessitates drastic cuts to many of the supportive services and programs that are vital to New York City's youth and families.

It is critical to invest in programs and organizations that are serving our communities through youth development, violence-prevention services, and other alternatives to incarceration to prevent the necessity of further investment in the carceral system. We therefore urge the Council to work with the Mayor and the Administration to submit a letter with the waiver of hardship to allow NYC to be considered for the funding. This would be beneficial for young people and community-based organizations offering these services alike.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

¹ In NYC, there was a decline of 77% in total arrests, and a decline of 48% in Index Crimes for youth under the age of 18. Data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services: Juvenile Arrests (Non-NYC) 2013-2022; Analysis of New York City Police Department data by Citizens Committee for Children of New York for 2013-2022. On file with the author.



Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

**Written Testimony Submitted by:
Dr. Sophine Charles
Associate Executive Director, Downstate**

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearings
Jointly with the Committee on Finance and Committee on Children and Youth,**

Monday, May 19, 2025

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) serves as the principal representative for nearly all not-for-profit organizations that provide foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. COFCCA is comprised of over 100-member organizations, varying in size from small community-based programs to the nation's largest multi-service agencies, all united by the mission of serving children and families. More than 50 of our member agencies work with various city agencies to support children and their families, including contracting with the NYC Administration for Children's Services to deliver child welfare services across the five boroughs of New York City.

We thank this Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony. The Council's leadership and ongoing support of nonprofit Human Services organizations is instrumental in helping to keep children and families safe in New York City. In this testimony, we will highlight:

1. A few funding contributions in the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget that will provide some level of fiscal relief to Human Services organizations.
2. Financial Health of NYC Nonprofits.
3. Several ways in which nonpayment for City services drastically impact the ability of NYC nonprofits to remain viable, serve families, and maintain a workforce of over 80,000 residents.
4. Several recommendations that are necessary to address backlogged and delayed payments to Human Services Providers.

FY 2026 Executive Budget

Nonprofit Human Services Providers are critical partners strengthening the city and delivering vital services every day, and must be supported by the city providing timely payment. They are the lifelines to New Yorkers in need of food, clothing, shelter, child care, mental health counseling, and educational and employment supports for youth. All of these services are in jeopardy and at risk of disruption when agencies are not paid on time. The City's FY 2026 funding contributions outlined below in the Executive Budget, is expected to provide some fiscal relief for nonprofits.

- **Indirect Cost Rate Investment**

We thank the City for funding indirect rate growth for human services providers that contract with NYC Aging, NYC Public Schools, and HRA (\$45.1 million.) Indirect expenses like information technology, building maintenance, program evaluation, accounting, human resources, and employee training are vitally important to service delivery. Without adequate indirect funding, it could lead to inadequate and obsolete facilities, equipment and technology, understaffed and under skilled accounting, human resources, and administrative offices that reduce organizational ability to deliver programs, document results, and diminish accountability, oversight, and compliance.

- **\$5 Billion in Advances**

We appreciate the over \$5 billion investment in advance payments for nonprofit providers. This could ease the financial burden suffered by nonprofits and allow the sector to provide critical resources to better serve our communities. However, most City contracts with nonprofit human services providers are registered months or even years after the nonprofits have begun providing services.

- **MOCS Investment**

We thank the City for including 20 additional positions to the Mayor’s Office of Contract Services (MOCS) help desk and making system improvements (\$8.9 million.) MOCS is responsible for overseeing the City procurement process and leading reform initiatives to make it more equitable, transparent, and efficient. However, there are a significant amount of pending contract actions that are preventing providers from getting paid for the services they provided. By investing in 20 additional positions to MOCS, this will help the sector especially as they continuously deal with delayed procurement processes, which further exacerbates the cash flow challenges that countless human services nonprofits face.

Fiscal Health of NYC Nonprofits

The FY 2026 fiscal supports are needed and appreciated by NYC nonprofits. Moreover, it is also imperative for the City’s leadership to understand that the FY 26 investments in the Executive Budget will not fully address the mounting pressures facing the agencies (high staff turnover, increased concrete needs of families, federal budget cuts, and a decline in their overall fiscal health).

NYC is significantly behind in compensating NYC nonprofits for their services. ¹ It is very simple: without timely payment for their services, NYC nonprofits cannot help families, pay their staff, pay their bills, and keep the lights on. A recent sector-wide analysis issued by Pace University and COFCCA, “The Financial Health of Child Welfare Nonprofits in New York State,” looked at the state of the sector from fiscal year 2019-2022. ² The report reveals an alarming fragility in their fiscal health:

- 40% of NYC organizations had 15 days or less of cash on hand in 2022, compared to 24% of Rest of State organizations.
- 47% of all child welfare nonprofits studied had less than one month of cash reserves.

We must note that while we primarily work with NYC ACS, a survey of our membership shows that our member agencies contract with 11 NYC departments and agencies, including DYCD, DOHMH, DOE, and MOCJ. We experience a great partnership and approach with the NYC ACS leadership and fiscal team—they are incredibly responsive, proactive and supportive in assisting providers with these challenges. Given payment challenges extending across other city agencies, NYC nonprofits are not fiscally positioned to continue serving children and families without being paid by the City.

¹ <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/11/26/nonprofit-debt-layoffs-passport/>

² Scutelnicu Todoran, G., & Tekula, R. (2025). The Financial Health of Child Welfare Nonprofits in New York State. Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) and Pace University. Retrieved from www.cofcca.org

Late Contracting Issues

COFCCA expresses gratitude to the City Council for recognizing that human services providers continue to encounter delays in contracting, which adversely affect both the organizations and the communities they serve. While the City has previously addressed a backlog of over \$4 billion in unpaid contracts and amendments, further action is necessary to support the sector. The City must ensure that each agency is held accountable for timely invoice payments and for resolving the backlog of indirect and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) contracting actions.

Nonpayment for Nonprofit Services

COFCCA supports New York City's efforts to keep children safe and to keep families together whenever possible. Our member agencies work in close partnership with Administration for Children's Services on a daily basis to support thousands of families each year.³ As mentioned earlier in our testimony, COFCCA would like to acknowledge the exceptional collaborative efforts of ACS in partnering with contracted child welfare providers to overcome fiscal barriers and ongoing challenges. The ACS Division of Finance works together with COFCCA and providers by hosting monthly office hours, participating in provider workgroups, and working together to resolve issues related to late payments and delays.

Unfortunately, COFCCA member agencies face significant challenges in their interactions with other city agencies, particularly regarding a pressing issue that affects contracted service providers: delayed and overdue payments for services already rendered. It is both unacceptable and unsustainable for the City to fail to make timely payments to nonprofits.

COFCCA member agencies consistently encounter procurement and contract issues that disrupt program operations. Several of these concerns are highlighted below.

Delayed and Delinquent Payments

- Late payments to contracted agencies significantly impact service delivery and create major challenges for human services organizations. Delayed payments result in difficulties in keeping agency doors open, operating programs, and meeting payroll obligations.
- According to the Human Services Council, 90% of nonprofits responding to a recent survey report experiencing delayed payments amounting in total to \$365 million, which makes it nearly impossible to maintain fully operational programs.⁴
- Providers are often compelled to obtain and utilize lines of credit to sustain program operations, incurring interest on the loans without a means to recover the associated fees. Consequently, they end up subsidizing City contracts.

³ <https://www.amny.com/opinion/new-yorks-child-welfare-system-capable-hands-jess-dannhauser/>

⁴ https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/111924_HSC-City-Procurement-Survey-Results.pdf

Administrative Reviews

- Contracted nonprofits report invoices being returned due to minor administrative errors. In some instances, this may result in a significant invoice being rejected due to a small dollar amount (as an example, a \$30,000 invoice sent back due to an accounting error of less than \$5 on the provider's side).
- Nonprofits need access to and timely responses from City agency representatives to address contract and invoicing issues. A lack of timely access to City agency representatives presents an ongoing challenge for nonprofits. The availability of speedy customer service and technical assistance to respond to questions and concerns could benefit both the sector and the City.

Recommendations:

- **Streamline NYC Government Contract Processes:** There is a clear need for reforming the government contract registration and payment systems to reduce delays and improve cash flow. Faster and more efficient payment mechanisms would enable organizations to better manage their financial operations. Also, government could better forecast future rates by keeping up with the CPI inflation rate.
- **NYC Government Should Invest in Workforce Development:** There is a real need to invest in workforce development initiatives to address the sector's recruitment and retention challenges. This includes offering competitive wages, providing mental health and well-being support for employees, and implementing flexible work schedules to reduce burnout. Also, alternative pension systems for nonprofits should be developed across New York to allow nonprofits to be more competitive employers.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony highlighting the unaddressed contract and payment needs of the nonprofit Human Services sector. COFCCA welcomes the opportunity to engage the Council in a conversation to discuss our testimony. We are available to answer any questions or concerns that you may have about the financial health of child welfare agencies and the ongoing impact of late contract registrations and delayed payments on COFCCA's member agencies.

⁴ https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/111924_HSC-City-Procurement-Survey-Results.pdf

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Testimony of the Article 10 Family Defense Organizations:

**Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Center for Family Representation, and
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**

Presented Before

The New York City Council Committees on Children and Youth and Finance

Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing

May 19, 2025

This testimony is submitted jointly by the Bronx Defenders (BxD), Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS), Center for Family Representation (CFR) and the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS). Our offices are the primary providers of mandated legal representation to parents who are eligible for free representation in Article 10 cases filed in family court in New York City. We are grateful to the Committee on Children and Youth and Finance, and Chairs Stevens and Brannan, for the opportunity to submit written testimony about the critical services our agencies provide to low income New Yorkers who are entangled in the family policing system. With these funds our offices ensure that these New Yorkers have access to information about their rights and to advocacy services to help them navigate the system, avoid family court involvement and family separation, and clear their names so they can work and provide for their families.

Our offices provide high quality legal representation to parents and caretakers facing allegations of neglect or abuse in family court. Our interdisciplinary approach to representing parents has been replicated nationally. Our teams of attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates collaborate with parents facing the removal of their children to the foster system or termination of parental rights. This model works. Supporting parents and families through legal representation and social support to ameliorate the challenges that brought them into contact with the family regulation system, we have helped more children stay in their homes, reduced length of foster system placements, and prevented family separation.

Our offices also help families during ACS investigations, which are traumatic and disproportionately target low-income, Black and Latine families. In New York City, when ACS decides to formally file a case against a parent in family court, 41 percent of the time it is against a Black parent. Only 6 percent of the cases ACS files are against white parents.¹ Black children are 10 times as likely to enter the foster system than white or Asian children and twice as likely

¹NYCLU, Racism at Every Stage: Data Shows How NYC's Administration for Children's Services Discriminates Against Black and Brown Families, (June 30, 2023) at <https://www.nyclu.org/report/racism-every-stage-data-shows-how-nycs-administration-childrens-services-discriminates>

as Latine children.² Approximately 90 percent of our clients face allegations of neglect, not abuse. These cases typically stem from poverty-related issues, with allegations often including poor or unstable housing conditions, food insecurity, income instability, concerns about children’s education attendance, domestic violence, excessive discipline, or inadequate childcare. Our offices work to build trusting relationships with parents to help identify goals and develop service plans tailored to the family’s needs, emphasizing support over family separation.

Right to Family Advocacy Project

Funded by the City Council since 2019, the Right to Family Advocacy Project is a crucial and groundbreaking initiative to support families and caregivers targeted by the family policing system. This initiative is a lifeline to families in need, providing vital legal and social work representation at two pivotal stages: during an ACS investigation and in administrative proceedings following an indicated investigation. Through the Right to Family Advocacy Project, low-income parents in New York City gain access to attorneys via hotlines, emails, and walk-in hours when confronted with an ACS investigation and when employment opportunities are denied due to an indicated case on the SCR. During ACS investigations, teams comprising attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents regarding their rights, choices, and the consequences of decisions. This proactive, client-centered engagement results in ACS having a better-informed and a more nuanced understanding of family circumstances. Our teams aid parents by providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance, and addressing underlying issues that led to system involvement. Our advocates accompany clients to conferences and meetings or appointments with ACS, schools, and medical providers, often leading to resolution without the need for court involvement.

Critical Advocacy During ACS Investigations

During an ACS investigation, the project strengthens family stability, avoids unnecessary family court intervention, and crucially prevents family separation. This early intervention allows our offices to address underlying issues without court involvement:

When ACS contacted Ms. H they refused to tell her the allegations made against her which precipitated the investigation. Ms. H sought support by contacting one of the Right to Family Advocacy Project offices. Her early defense social worker contacted ACS and learned that her child’s school had made a report of child maltreatment because Ms. H’s 7 year old daughter was excessively absent. In speaking with Ms. H, her legal team learned that the school was mistreating her daughter—going as far as inflicting corporal punishment on her—and her daughter was traumatized and resisting attending school. Ms. H’s legal team advocated with ACS and the school to ensure that her daughter was

²NYC Family Policing Project, Racial Disparities, (n.d.), at <https://familypolicynyc.org/data-brief/racial-disparities/>

being treated appropriately. When ACS ended their investigation, Ms. H's case was marked as indicated, causing her to lose her job as a home health aide. Her legal team immediately appealed the indicated case. ACS settled the appeal and agreed to amend the report so that Ms. H is able to work as a home health aide again and support her family.

Access to Counsel in SCR Administrative Hearings

In administrative proceedings to amend and seal parents' and caregivers' records with the State Central Register, our advocacy is able to expand employment opportunities and economic stability for families who are already vulnerable and marginalized. Preventing and removing barriers to employment helps provide financial security to parents and supports the employment of essential workers in our communities:

Ms. C was represented by a family defense office in an Article 10 case. After that case was closed Ms. C was eager to pursue her nursing degree, however with an indicated report with the SCR, she had to put her dream on hold. Ms. C's defense team initiated her administrative appeal. Her appeal was delayed due to OCFS's failure to provide an interpreter and other administrative errors. After over a year of advocacy, OCFS finally issued a decision sealing Ms. C's indicated reports in the SCR. Since then, Ms. C has been able to continue to pursue her dream, progress in her career and apply for advanced positions in the medical field. She currently works at a hospital and intends to go back to nursing school in New York.

Another example of the benefits of having access to counsel in the SCR administrative process involves a parent who was working toward her Master's in Education when a report to the SCR was made about her family. ACS indicated the case against Ms. H, and she was placed on the SCR, limiting her ability to work in the education field. An advocate from the Right to Family Advocacy Project represented Ms. H in a contested hearing, after which the administrative law judge reviewed the evidence and ruled to unfind, amend, and seal the SCR report. Because of this, Ms. H was able to apply for work in her professional field. When a prospective employer conducted a background check and found that her name was still erroneously on the SCR, her legal team was able to work with Ms. H to address the error and ensure she could proceed with her application.

Community Outreach and Education about Rights

Central to our advocacy work is doing outreach to the communities most impacted by the family policing system about their rights when they are being investigated by ACS and the availability of our services to support them through this grueling process. Our outreach also involves educating impacting communities about the right to challenge indicated reports through the State Central Register. An important tool available to parents across the city is the Know-Your-Rights, website, "Your Family, Your Rights" (www.yourfamilyyourrights.org), which was launched in

2021, and continues to be a valuable resource for families to increase knowledge about their rights and how to access legal support.

In the communities we serve, we provide Know-Your-Rights workshops and educational campaigns to empower parents to exercise their rights during investigations and get legal support as soon as an investigation begins.

These informational sessions are a key component of our work, as they serve to not just educate families on their rights, but also to deepen their understanding of our organizations and build a level of trust that is critical to ensuring these families know how to contact us when they're in need of services but have yet to be assigned counsel via the courts. ACS involvement can be overwhelming, so to better familiarize ourselves with our clients, we also partner with other community based organizations to set-up outreach events in spaces that potential clients trust to be safe. We continue to look for ways to deepen our bonds with the communities we serve, and would be thrilled to partner with members of the council more to continue this work.

Support Right to Family Advocacy

Parents facing ACS investigations are not provided an attorney until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in court. Our project provides critical support to families during investigations, often preventing court filings and child removals. For families with indicated reports, we can help prevent lasting harm by challenging records in administrative hearings.

Our organizations are requesting \$3.3 million (\$825,000 each) to support the Right to Family Advocacy project in FY26. City Council funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Project is paramount. While demand for our services has increased, our funding has remained flat for five years. This very modest increase, from the current \$650,000 per organization, will enable us to meet the needs of a greater number of impacted families while also accommodating rising costs, including salaries, OTPS, health insurance, and space expenses. This support is not only an investment in families—it is an investment in justice, equity, and the future well-being of the communities we serve.

Conclusion

We are grateful to the City Council for your ongoing investment in keeping families together. We urge the Council to continue supporting the Right to Family Advocacy Project and increase the funding from \$2.6 million to \$3.3 million. This increase is imperative to enhance our capacity and address the mounting costs associated with providing indispensable, high-quality legal services to vulnerable families navigating ACS investigations and scrutiny from the family regulation system.

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Good afternoon Chair Stevens and members of the Youth Committee.

My name is **Jazz Reed**, and I'm the **Development and Communications Manager at Figure Skating in Harlem**, where we empower young women from Harlem and the Bronx through a unique combination of education, leadership development, and the artistry and discipline of figure skating.

We are incredibly grateful for the Council's support through the STARS CGI initiative. But today, I'm here to ask for **equity**—both for Figure Skating in Harlem and for all organizations doing this critical work. We are currently funded at **\$79,000**, while similar organizations receive as much as **\$179,000**. We're respectfully requesting **parity**, so we can meet the rising demand and expand our impact.

Figure Skating in Harlem currently serves over **350 girls each year**, providing not only athletic training but also academic support, leadership development, and mental health resources. Our program gives young women the tools they need to thrive both on and off the ice.

One of our students recently said:

"Figure Skating in Harlem has taught me to speak my mind, speak my truth, and let people know what I feel. Being on the Aspire 2 Synchro team has helped me overcome challenges and build relationships. We didn't bring home first place medals, but we brought home perseverance, confidence, and most importantly, we had fun doing our best. FSH has shown me that my voice matters, that I can do hard things—and that I matter."

This is the kind of transformation your investment makes possible.

We are also urging the Council to consider **increasing the overall STARS funding**, given the critical and growing need for programs like ours—so that every young person who needs a space like this can access one.

Thank you, Chair Stevens, and thank you to the Committee in advance for making a difference.

Best,

Jazz Reed
Development and Communications Manager
Figure Skating in Harlem

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services
Before the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth

Submitted by
Jibal Ahmed, Senior Program Director
Good Shepherd Services

May 19, 2025

Thank you, Chair Brennan and Chair Stevens and the Members of the Children and Youth Committee for the opportunity to testify on the Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 related for the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Administration of Children Services (ACS).

My name is Jibal Ahmed. I am the Senior Program Director of the Beacon MS 45 Community Center, operated under Good Shepherd Services and located in the Bronx.

Good Shepherd operates 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Guided by our values, 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.

Our community center has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for 30+ years, fostering learning, development, and personal growth for countless children, teenagers, and adult in our community.

My testimony will focus on the critical challenges we face in sustaining our programs due to the lack of competitive pay and incentives for our staff.

At Beacon MS 45, we strive to create a nurturing environment where young people are not only encouraged to succeed academically but are also supported socially and emotionally. Our programs prioritize holistic development—offering academic support, sports and fitness activities, leadership opportunities, and emotional guidance. Every day, I witness firsthand the transformative impact these programs have on the lives of our youth.

The dedication of our team has been the backbone of this success. From mentoring at-risk youth to creating innovative programming that inspires learning and growth, our staff work tirelessly with the goal of building a stronger, more united community. Personally, I find immense gratification in seeing the positive changes these efforts bring about—whether it's a student achieving their academic goals, developing leadership skills, or simply finding a safe space where they feel supported and valued.

Despite the incredible work being done, we face significant challenges in attracting, hiring, and retaining skilled and passionate professionals due to the low base pay and lack of incentives for our staff. The individuals who dedicate their time and energy to our programs are motivated by their desire to serve the community, but this dedication alone cannot sustain them in the face of financial insecurity.

The reality is that low wages create a culture of instability and low commitment. Many talented staff members are forced to leave for better-paying opportunities elsewhere, leaving us with a revolving door of employees. This high turnover rate disrupts the continuity and quality of our programs, making it harder to provide the consistent, long-term support our youth deserve.

Without addressing the issue of inadequate pay, we risk losing not only our most dedicated professionals but also the trust and engagement of the young people and families who rely on us. To address the staff turnover rate, we need a comprehensive streamlined clearance process that reduces time and ensures staff are placed in programs promptly, as the right staff-to-service ratio is essential for delivering quality services.

Quality programming requires quality staff, and quality staff requires adequate compensation. I urge you to consider the critical role that centers like Beacon MS 45 play in the lives of our children, their families, and the broader community and to invest in the afterschool system now. The sector cannot wait until an RFP is released.

Investing in higher pay and better incentives for our staff is not just an investment in the individuals working on the front lines—it is an investment in the future of our city. By providing competitive pay, we can build a culture of commitment, foster professional growth, and ensure the longevity of the programs that so many depend on.

Send to: testimony@council.nyc.gov

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services
Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services

Submitted by
Nickesha Francis Policy and Advocacy Manager
Good Shepherd Services

May 19, 2025

Thank you, Chair Althea Stevens and the Members of the Committee on Children and Youth for hosting this hearing to examine the Mayor's Executive Budget for ACS and DYCD.

My name is Nickesha Francis, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at Good Shepherd Services. Good Shepherd supports the priorities set forth by the Campaign for Children, Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies and the Runaway Homeless Youth Coalition.

Good Shepherd operates 94 programs that support 33,860 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Guided by our values, 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.

Good Shepherd Services operates Foster Care, Prevention, Juvenile Justice, Parent Support, Alternative to Detention, Summer Rising, Saturday Night Lights, the Summer Youth Employment Program, After School, Cure Violence, Cornerstone, Beacon and Runaway and Homeless Youth programs.

My testimony will focus on the ongoing workforce and budget needs of the Children and Youth programs.

ACS

Workforce and Staffing

- **Pay Parity** - Child welfare staff and case managers are essential workers who form the safety net that keep children safe, they must be paid a living wage to continue to drive positive outcomes for children and families. Without the ability to recruit and pay staff market rates with government dollars, agencies are not able to maintain program utilization or attain service targets by the very agencies they contract with. For example [ACS - Youth Development Specialist](#) job posting has a starting salary of \$53,341 and after 5 years that increases up to \$67,566 along with longevity bonuses and many other benefits. The Non-Profits cannot compete with these offers because our contracts will not allow us to pay annual increases or bonuses.
- **Staff Turnover** – Agencies continue to experience high staff turnover and carry unusually high vacancy rates. For example, according to data gathered by COFCCA Workforce Compensation Report, in 2022, there was a 47% average turnover for NYC prevention caseworkers and a 22% average vacancy rate.¹ Current prevention budgets bound providers to pay very low salaries. Agencies invest a huge amount of money into onboarding, training and developing new workers to prepare staff to work with children and families. Too often, newly trained staff leave after 2 years for higher paying government jobs. Nonprofit

child welfare organizations become training grounds as they watch their investments walk out the door. Providers need additional resources to recruit, hire, and retain a highly qualified workforce.

- **Career Development Support** – Child welfare staff need workforce supports to increase career development opportunities. Child welfare staff tell us that in addition to salary increases, they need support with scholarships, tuition assistance and loan forgiveness to achieve higher educational goals. The low salaries make it impossible for licensed mental health staff to continue their education and pay off student loans.

Delayed and Delinquent Payments

Late payments to contracted agencies significantly impact the delivery of services and cause major problems for human services organizations. Delayed payments result in struggles to keep agency doors open, operate programs, and to meet payroll. According to the Human Services Coalition, 90% of nonprofits report delayed payments totaling \$365 million dollars, making it almost impossible to sustain fully operational programs. Providers are often forced to obtain and use lines of credit to maintain program operations, only to pay interest on the loan without a way to recoup fees for interests, thereby, subsidizing city contracts. The current procurement process must be reformed to urgently address delayed and delinquent payments to human services providers.

Underfunded Prevention Contracts

The successful reduction in foster care placements in NYC would not be possible without prevention services. Prevention programs make it possible for more children to remain safely in their homes and out of foster care placement. In 2025, an ACS prevention family survey showed positive experiences and strong satisfactions with prevention services. Unfortunately, the resources and funding from the reduced foster care census have not resulted in additional dollars to support the wide range of services offered by prevention programs.

Contracted prevention services agencies are almost 5 years into a 9-year prevention contract, and they do not see a clear pathway to continued efficient and effective service delivery with the current fiscal deficits that are expected to become even more unmanageable over the life of the contract. Large and small agencies have the same fixed costs, and they need to be able to maintain staffing levels, serve families, and sustain slot utilization. Without an increase in baseline salaries of BA level staff and the ability to address compression matters - prevention programs will continually have trouble in hiring staff and having adequate capacity to serve families.

The ACS prevention budgets (and the underlying budget approval, invoice and modification processes) do not allow agencies to respond to drastic changes in the labor market over the last few years. Human Services Workers are in direct competition not only with public sector employers like ACS and DOE, but also with private sector employers offering greater flexibility around remote work, telehealth, and scheduling. The salaries providers are offering are too low to consistently fill positions, so those slots go vacant, and the dollars go unspent. **We are asking for fully funded prevention contracts.**

Obtaining and Affording Liability Insurance for Foster Care Programs

Nonprofit child welfare organizations must be able to access, obtain, and pay for liability insurance to provide foster care services. Foster care agencies are required per their contracts to carry certain levels of commercial general liability insurance, professional liability insurance, and, depending on the county requirements—potentially excess umbrella liability coverage. Due to social inflation and increasing pressures in the insurance market specifically related to foster care, agencies in NYS and nationwide are experiencing significant challenges in accessing coverage. If nonprofit providers (which currently provide care for all the children and youth in foster care in New York City) cannot provide foster care, the responsibility for the provision of foster care services will shift to the city. Children and youth in foster care are in the care and custody of New York State, and the voluntary foster care agencies are the primary provider of care for children and youth in foster care. **This is becoming an increasingly urgent issue. There are very few insurance providers in this sector**

already, and we have seen the field become smaller in recent months. Providers will not be able to continue providing foster care services without appropriate insurance coverage.

Promise NYC- Increase and Baseline \$60 million for Promise NYC to provide additional seats for infants and toddlers ages 0-2 without eligibility requirements.

Juvenile Justice – Crossroads/Horizon/ Close to Home

- Fund more community-based Aftercare supports (Youth developmental supports- vocational/career opportunities, GED Classes, Counseling, job development).
- Youth Justice Fund- advocate for a NYC share of the \$960 million dollar of the State Raise the Age Money

DYCD

After school- COMPASS/SONYC

COMPASS/SONYC programs have struggled in recent years with low staff wages leading to recruitment and retention challenges, vacancies due to delays in the DOHMH Comprehensive Background Check process. Furthermore, COMPASS/SONYC programs have not been re-procured in many years, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation or changes in the labor market. DYCD must reissue an RFP that reflects the true cost of providing high quality after-school programming.

Good Shepherd Services supports the Campaign for Children ask for the following investments must be included in New York City's FY 2026 enacted budget to get the city on the path to ensuring that all children and youth can access reliable, affordable, and enriching services that help support parents' participation in the workforce:

Invest \$160 million to begin a phase-in process for higher per participant rates in the FY 2026 COMPASS and SONYC afterschool contract extensions (including the additional 5,000 slots added to COMPASS), committing to a halfway increase of all base rates in FY 2026 to:

- **\$4,900 per participant** for COMPASS Elementary and
- **\$4,150 per participant** for SONYC Middle School Programs.

Runaway Homeless Youth

- Fund 100 additional DYCD RHY beds - \$5.6M
- One-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts - \$1.63
- “Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Residential Contracts - \$5.5M
- Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services - \$625,000
- Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System - \$1.5M
- Restore and baseline funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System - \$1.6M

In conclusion, we urge the council to continue to demand that the administration respond to and address the needs of children, youth and families and fully support the nonprofit human services sector which is the backbone of social services in this city.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY

The New York City Council
Committee on Children & Families

Re: Executive Budget

Grand St. Settlement
80 Pitt Street
New York, New York

May 19, 2025



Testimony of Grand St. Settlement
To the New York City Council Committee on Education
Regarding The Executive Budget

May 19, 2025

Aaron Sanders, Deputy Director of Government & Community Relations

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council Committee on Children and Families, for convening this important Executive Budget hearing and for the opportunity to testify.

Grand St. Settlement (Grand Street) is a 109-year-old multi-service Settlement House. We serve over 18,000 New Yorkers through vital early childhood, youth, and older adult programs infused with impactful benefits assistance on the Lower East Side, Manhattan, and the Bronx.

Today, we commend the City of New York for investing \$ 331 million in new funding for afterschool across the next three years. This new investment includes a gradual expansion of 20,000 new slots and future rate increases through a new Request for Proposals (RFP) projected for FY27. This investment indicates a true commitment to supporting our youth.

However, additional investments are needed now to stabilize the after-school system. Under this proposal, the only investment in FY26 would be funding for 5,000 new elementary school slots at the provider's current rate. Currently, there is no commitment to raising rates for SONYC Middle School programs. As the City has announced a plan for a new RFP in FY27 with increased rates, the City must begin a phase-in process for higher rates now, committing to a halfway increase of base rates for COMPASS Elementary to \$4900, and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4150 in FY26. Effectively, the city's goal should be to fully fund elementary and middle school programs in the FY27 procurement. These rates are informed by a November 2023 report by United Neighborhood Houses that detailed the actual cost of running an afterschool program, including a sample budget - [Assessing the True Cost of Implementing High-Quality Afterschool Programming in New York City](#).

As a nonprofit entity with over a century of experience supporting youth, we partner with several community schools to support the physical, emotional, and social development of children and youth who rely on our services. Our engagement is correlated with positive outcomes for youth and the reduction of neighborhood violence and crime. However, soaring costs and inflation will hinder our ability to meet youth needs if we don't adequately address the true cost of afterschool programming. To continue our services effectively, funding allocations must reflect the true cost of programs as providers are saddled with expensive operational costs.

As an afterschool provider, we know firsthand that the costs of running afterschool programs are not sustainable at the currently funded base rates. In my testimony, I want to highlight some of the challenges that many CBO's including Grand Street, are facing as a result of lagging investments:

- Costs for Other than Personnel Services (OTPS) have surged since 2019.
 - Bus transportation costs for field trips have nearly doubled, causing many programs to take fewer trips to manage this expense.
 - Liability insurance costs have surged in recent years. At one program site, insurance costs have more than doubled since 2019.
- Stagnant contract rates have made it difficult to recruit and retain staff.
 - Multiple providers reported that staff training costs have more than doubled since 2019.
- Cuts to federal programs such as AmeriCorps and 21st Century Community Learning Centers further threaten program stability, as we have partially relied on that source of funding to supplement our staffing structure and youth services.
- The minimum wage has increased from \$8.75/hr in 2014 to \$16.50/hr now, and will further increase to \$17/hr in January 2026, putting a further strain on program budgets and decreasing the amount of OTPS funding available.

Given these fiscal constraints and years of disinvestment, the City must act now and increase its investment in after-school programs to preserve the integrity of these programs. The City should increase funding to the COMPASS system by \$159,794,100 in this year's budget to bring both COMPASS Elementary and SONYC Middle School programs halfway to full funding. These investments will stabilize the sector and enable providers to support our youth. If we want our youth to excel in life, the city budget should be reflective of their needs.

For 109 years, youth have relied on Grand Street to support them in development and maturation. Continual disinvestment threatens our ability to continue our efforts. In closing, we urge the City Council and the Administration to fully fund after-school programs.



Executive Budget Hearing Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Finance and Children and Youth

Delivered by: Sierra Kraft

Executive Director, Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE)

May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, Chair Stevens, and members of the Committees on Finance and Children and Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sierra Kraft, and I'm the Executive Director of the ICARE Coalition, a coalition of seven legal service providers that has, for over a decade, ensured unaccompanied immigrant children in New York City have access to free, high-quality legal representation.

Our members, Catholic Charities Community Services, Central American Legal Assistance (CALA), Human Rights First, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Legal Aid Society, The Door, and Safe Passage Project, are on the frontlines of this work every day, fighting to ensure that no child has to face the immigration system alone. Collectively, we have served over 14,000 children and families across the city providing access to critical legal and social services, ensuring young immigrants can build a bright future here in New York.

But right now, we are in a moment of urgent crisis. On March 21st, the federal government abruptly terminated the Unaccompanied Children Program (UCP) contract, eliminating nearly \$14 million in funding for New York City providers. Overnight, 1,300 children lost their attorneys. Some of these children had court hearings the very next day. Their cases are still moving forward, despite having no understanding of their rights, no voice in the



courtroom, and no protection.

These are kids, some just toddlers, who fled unimaginable violence, trafficking, and separation from their families. They arrived here hoping for safety. Instead, they're being pushed through a legal system even trained professionals struggle to navigate, without counsel, without support, and without a fair shot.

One of those children is a young mother, still a child herself, who gave birth the morning of her scheduled hearing. She missed it. And the judge ordered her deported in absentia. No consideration for her circumstances. No room for compassion. She now has to try to reopen her case, and yet we are at capacity and cannot promise her the full representation she deserves. This is what the system looks like right now, when due process is treated as optional.

At a time of rising threats of mass deportations and political attacks on immigrant communities, New York must step in. Legal representation is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent deportation, homelessness, and exploitation. Without an attorney, a child's chance of remaining safely in the U.S. drops to less than 15%. With an ICARE attorney, that number rises above 90%.

This is about legal services, but it's also about protecting our values. It's about keeping families together, protecting children from harm, and ensuring that our city doesn't abandon them when federal systems fail.

This federal collapse has destabilized the legal ecosystem we've spent the last decade building. Several providers have already had to issue layoffs, freeze intakes, and lose expert



attorneys. These are attorneys who have built trusted, culturally responsive relationships with the communities they serve, particularly in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, where most unaccompanied children in NYC now live.

For over six years, city funding through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative (UMFI) has remained stagnant, even as demand has grown, and costs have risen. And while UMFI has allowed providers to shift cases and respond quickly during this crisis, it is not enough to meet the scale of need or offset the federal cuts.

That's why we're respectfully requesting:

- **\$6.297 million in FY26 discretionary funding through UMFI** to sustain and stabilize legal services for 2,013 children and families; and
- **\$5.4 million in emergency funding** to address the immediate fallout from the UCP contract termination and prevent further erosion of services.

These children are already here. They're attending our schools, rebuilding their lives in our neighborhoods, and trying to survive. When the federal government failed to protect them, and the State failed to act, but New York City has a chance to lead. To stand with these kids.

We ask you to meet this moment, not just with words, but with City investment. These young people need more than sympathy. They need representation. They need protection. And they need a city that's willing to fight for them. Please find attached our 1-pagers that further outline our requests and the devastating impacts of this funding loss.



Thank you for your time, and for your continued commitment to immigrant youth in New York.

In Community,

Sierra Kraft

Executive Director, ICARE Coalition

skraft@icarecoalition.org

www.icarecoalition.org



Defend Their Future: Fund Legal Services for Immigrant Children

Who We Are: ICARE is a coalition of legal service organizations dedicated to expanding access to legal representation for immigrant children facing deportation in New York City, while advocating for universal access to counsel.

The Challenge: Every year, thousands of children—some as young as infants - appear in NYC immigration courts without an attorney. New York ranks 4th nationwide in unaccompanied arrivals released to sponsors, yet many must face the system alone.

Most of the children and families we represent are fleeing extreme violence, trafficking, and persecution, seeking safety in the U.S. Without an attorney, they have only a 15% chance of winning their case. With ICARE representation, their success rate jumps to over 90%.

At the same time, immigration court backlogs have hit record highs, leaving children and families in legal limbo for years. Federal policy shifts have created new legal hurdles, requiring providers to expand services to meet emerging needs. Without City Council’s continued investment, thousands of children will be left to represent themselves, leading to deportation and life-threatening consequences.

What We Do: With City Council’s help, ICARE provides **free legal services** for immigrant children and families fighting deportation in NYC. Our services include: **Know-Your-Rights trainings, legal screenings, direct representation** and **connections to city & social services**, ensuring vulnerable New Yorkers don’t face the immigration system alone.

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Our Impact (Since 2014) | Screened over 14,000 children for relief | Represented over 3,000 children | Obtained relief for 1,500 children | Secured over \$24M in public funding for legal services |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|

ICARE FY26 Discretionary Funding Request: \$6,297,250

Despite overwhelming demand, ICARE providers have not received a funding increase in six years. This year’s funding request is the difference between safety and deportation for 2,013 children and families.



No child should face the immigration process alone



In partnership with:



Impact of UCP Contract Termination on Legal Services for Unaccompanied Children in NYC

On March 21, 2025, the federal government issued a near-total termination of the Unaccompanied Children Program (UCP) contract, eliminating nearly all federal support for unaccompanied minors in immigration proceedings. This decision dismantles protections outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) and destabilizes a decades long infrastructure that safeguarded children's rights.

Overview of What Was Lost

- 1,300+ children with open immigration cases were left without legal representation overnight
- Nearly \$14M in federal funding for NYC legal service providers, including 4 ICARE members
- Detained & Post Release full representation in immigration court, legal screenings, KYRs, Friend of Court advocacy, case management, and referrals to social services

Provider-Level Impact in NYC

- Catholic Charities Community Services: \$5.2M lost in FY25, with \$5.9M approved for FY26; 43 staff impacted; 550 cases affected. Lost services include: Detained & Post Release full representation; case management; follow-on services for detained children (Friend of Court (FOC) appearances, follow-up screenings, referrals and advocacy)
- The Door: \$4.7M lost, 38 staff impacted; 300 open representation cases. Lost services include: Detained services for two short-term shelters and two long-term foster care centers. Services include KYRs, legal screenings, monitoring and advocacy, FOC appearances, and full representation including screening, application filing and immigration court representation.
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND): \$3M lost, 580 cases affected; 43 staff impacted. Lost services include: Detained & Post release full representation, KYRs, legal screenings, and social services
- Safe Passage Project: \$251K lost in FY25, with \$350k approved for FY26; 9 partially funded staff impacted; 39 cases affected. Lost services include: Post Release full representation

Consequences for New York City

- Staff layoffs, loss of experienced attorneys, intake freezes, programs paused or downsized
- Cases are moving forward without children understanding their rights
- Children at risk of in absentia removal because they never receive guidance or representation
- Chilling effect on sponsor participation due to fear of enforcement
- Schools, shelters, and hospitals report confusion and fear, as referrals are turned away
- Without a lawyer, a child is nearly guaranteed to be deported back to dangerous conditions, but with an attorney by their side, they have over a 90% chance of remaining safely in the U.S.

Why New York Must Act

These young people are already here, attending NYC schools, living in our communities, and in our courtrooms. They are New York's responsibility. When the federal government pulled support, these kids were left defenseless. We cannot do the same.

What ICARE is requesting:

- **\$5.4M in emergency funds** to prevent further case loss
- **\$6.29M through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative** to sustain a citywide safety net for immigrant children
- Long-term investment in a statewide legal defense infrastructure that protects immigrant children



Contact: Sierra Kraft, Executive Director | skraft@icarecoalition.org | www.icarecoalition.org



Committee on Children and Youth

TOPIC: Executive Budget Hearing

Monday, May 19, 2025

Testimony by

Katrina Armstead

Director of Child Parent Psychotherapy

JCCA

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Committee on Children and Youth. Thank you for calling this hearing and inviting JCCA to testify on behalf of the children and families we serve.

My name is Katrina Armstead, Director of JCCA's Child Parent Psychotherapy program in the Bronx, which is part of our Child Welfare Prevention Division. I have been with JCCA since 2012, first as a Case Planner, then as a Supervisor, and now as a Director in our Child-Parent Psychotherapy program.

A. Relevant Services provided by JCCA

JCCA proudly serves children and families through various programs administered by ACS and DYCD. Some of these programs include City Council Initiatives such as:

- Wraparound Services for Transitional Aged Foster Youth, in which we provide career and supports to youth aging out of foster care.
 - City's First Readers, an early childhood literacy initiative targeted to children aged 0-5
- Thank you for your on-going support of these critical programs for young people. In addition, JCCA has additional programs through ACS which include:
- Family Foster Care and Residential Foster Care for New York City youth, including specialized services for those with Intellectual and Development Disabilities, as well as Special Medical needs.
 - Community Partnership Programs, where we coordinate community coalition to connect families to resources and events in East Flatbush and Mott Haven; and
 - Preventive programs, where we provide clinical supports and treatment to help families in Brooklyn and the Bronx keep their children safely at home.

B. Preventive Services

Today, I would like to highlight our Prevention programs. We serve families struggling with family conflict, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, behavior problems, and children who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Our services support and strengthen families to prevent out-of-home placement and to reunite families after such placements. These programs include: Child Parent Psychotherapy (an evidence-based model that works with families with children up to age five); Solution-Based Casework (a family support that builds on the strengths of families in the child welfare system); and Family Treatment Rehabilitation (an intensive program for families at risk of foster care placement due to substance abuse and/or mental health issues).

These services provide a life-changing impact on families' well-being. We help families obtain childcare vouchers, connect parents to employment programs, and help them develop stronger bonds with their children. One family that comes to mind consisted of an autistic child and a mother with mental health challenges. Struggling with these challenges, the mother was unable to take her child to the doctor or follow-up appointments. We connected the mother to an adult Health Homes caseworker, who is assisting her with enrolling her child in school and has referred her to mental health services. While the mother was initially resistant, she eventually embraced the mental health supports. Since then, we have observed positive changes in her behavior and in her relationship with her child, thanks to the linkages to community resources.

The challenges our Preventive families face in having tangible, basic needs met are all too familiar. Many families in New York City struggle with purchasing groceries, doing laundry, and purchasing clothes for their children. Parents in these vulnerable communities are too often unemployed or are paid wages that do not keep up with the cost of living. Additionally, many of the families we serve are undocumented immigrants, experiencing additional fear and anxiety in this current political climate. Such challenges hinder a child's academic performance and poses risks to their physical and mental health.

While we aim to provide youth and families with transformative services, we often struggle to provide enough supports due to limited funding. As you know, human service staff are paid lower wages compared to the government and private sector. Thank you for the three-year COLA last year. We, at JCCA, are very appreciative, but sadly it is not enough, and we continue to face staff turnover in our programs, causing families to lose continuity of care.

C. What can City Council do?

I ask that the City provide additional funding to City Council Initiatives as well as ACS and DYCD programs, including the programs highlighted in this testimony. With more funding, we will be able to enhance our services so that more of the families' needs are met, such as diapers, formula, school clothes, and laundry detergent. We will also be able to increase salaries so our workers can be paid fair wages and both prevent delays in services for families and also maintain continuity of care over time. We are proud that New York City's officials strive to prevent family separation, further reduce the foster care census, and provide children and adolescents with opportunities to succeed in the classroom. We are committed to this mission, but this requires sufficient funding that reflects true program costs, to retain staff and provide families with timely services.

Conclusion

Thank you for your time. We hope that the Mayor and City Council can work together to pass a fair and equitable budget for our children and families.



**New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
RE: Junior Achievement of New York Budget & Policy Priorities
Monday, May 19, 2025**

Chair Brannan, Chair Stevens, and Members of the Committee on Children and Youth:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. First, we would like to thank you and the City Council for your continued advocacy on behalf of New York City's vulnerable populations and your unwavering commitment to quality of life.

Over the last few months, we have seen an increasingly troubling pattern of federal funding cuts to critical services provided by state and city agencies throughout the country, along with direct cuts and rescinding of federal grants to the nonprofit sector.

In New York City, nonprofit providers fill in the gaps where the agencies cannot, providing essential services and working on the frontlines. Now more than ever, Junior Achievement of New York calls upon the City Council to advocate for increased funding for critical initiatives, especially those related to workforce development, career readiness, and financial literacy.

Junior Achievement of New York (JA New York) is the leading nonprofit in the region dedicated to preparing young people, kindergarten through 12th grade, for economic success through free, high-impact programming in financial literacy, career readiness, and entrepreneurship.

Today, students across New York City face increasing economic pressure, rising cost-of-living burdens, and widening inequality in access to opportunity. Yet, financial literacy and workforce readiness remain absent from New York State's required curriculum. Without these foundational skills, our students are at risk of entering adulthood unprepared to manage money, plan for their futures, or navigate the workforce.

JA New York fills that gap. We reach tens of thousands of students annually, with a focus on historically underserved and under-resourced communities. Nearly 75% of our students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and many are first-generation high school graduates. Our programs are designed to help them build personal finance skills, develop soft skills, and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset—equipping them not only to survive, but to thrive.

Through partnerships with over 300 local schools and hundreds of business and community volunteers, we deliver both in-person and virtual programming tailored to meet students where they are, including hard-to-reach neighborhoods. Initiatives like JA Finance Park and JA Inspire Virtual demonstrate how flexible, tech-integrated models can expand access and deepen impact.

As the city works to advance equity, improve youth outcomes, and build a pipeline of local talent, JA New York is a ready and proven partner. We respectfully urge the City Council to expand support for critical initiatives, including Digital Inclusion and Literacy, College and Career Readiness, Afterschool Enrichment, and the Young Women's Leadership Initiative.

Thank you for your continued partnership and investment in the future of New York City's young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty A. Garger".

Betty Garger

President and CEO

**New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair
FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 19, 2025**

**Testimony of Danae Silkiss, Senior Program Coordinator, Korean Community Services of
Metropolitan New York (KCS)**

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and members of the committee. My name is Danae Silkiss, Senior Program Coordinator at KCS, which has served New York's Korean-American and immigrant communities since 1973. Our adult education programs provide free ESOL and citizenship preparation classes that help thousands of New Yorkers build skills for work, community, and daily life.

There are over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English proficiency or without a high school diploma, yet fewer than 3% can access adult literacy classes each year. In FY25, funding for DYCD's adult literacy contracts was cut from \$17 million to \$12 million, leaving fewer than half as many adults able to enroll. City Council discretionary funding helped fill some of the gap, but this support is not guaranteed year to year.

Now, with proposed federal cuts that could eliminate \$24.6 million for New York's adult literacy programs, the risk is even greater—more than 20,000 adults could lose their chance to learn and advance.

We urge the administration to double baseline DYCD adult literacy funding from \$12 million to \$24 million and the Council to maintain discretionary funding at \$16.5 million. We also support combining the Adult Literacy Initiative and Pilot Project into a single, reliable funding stream so these essential classes can continue without interruption.

Adult literacy education is foundational for opportunity, equity, and inclusion in our city. KCS urges you to make this investment and keep the door open for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your attention.



New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth

Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair

FY26 Executive Budget Hearing

May 19, 2025

Testimony of Nicholas Kim, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS)

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and members of the committee. My name is Nicholas Kim, and I serve as Program Coordinator at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS). For over five decades, KCS has provided critical services to immigrant and low-income communities across New York City, including adult education, youth leadership programs, workforce development, mental health services, and immigration assistance.

As a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL), we stand in solidarity with over 40 organizations to ensure that adult learners, particularly immigrant New Yorkers, have access to high-quality, community-based education. Every year, KCS serves hundreds of students through our ESOL and workforce development programs, many of whom are parents striving to support their children's education and long-term success.

HEADQUARTERS
(ADULT DAYCARE
EDUCATION | HR
IMMIGRATION &
LEGAL SERVICES |
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
RESEARCH CENTER |
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT)

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**OLDER ADULT
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42-15 166th St,
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37-06 111th St,
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New York, NY 10025
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Yet despite the urgent need, funding for adult literacy continues to fall short. Our ESOL classes are consistently oversubscribed, with long waitlists and limited capacity due to ongoing budget constraints. These constraints are not abstract—they impact real families and real futures. In FY25, the administration cut DYCD adult literacy funding from \$17 million to \$12 million, and that reduction remains in the FY26 Executive Budget.

Meanwhile, our students are being asked to do more with less. Many are working multiple jobs, caring for children, and navigating systems in a language they are still trying to learn. Access to English classes and GED prep isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. Without it, families remain locked out of educational, economic, and civic opportunities.

NYCCAL is calling on the administration to **double the baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million**, restoring the cuts from last year and enabling programs to bolster and stabilize their services in a time of increased need and continuous threats to our communities. In addition, NYCCAL is **calling on the Council to maintain total discretionary funding for adult literacy education at \$16.5 million and to fold City Council Adult Literacy Initiative funding – and the Initiative-funded programs – into the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project**, creating one, single funding stream for all City Council adult literacy discretionary dollars.

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At KCS, we know firsthand that when you uplift adult learners, you uplift entire families. Children do better in school when their parents can help with homework or communicate with teachers. Families become more financially secure when adults can access training and stable employment. We urge the Council to see adult literacy not just as an education issue but as a children's issue, a family issue, and a future-of-New York issue.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring no family is left behind in this year's budget.

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IMMIGRATION &
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**New York City Council Committee on Children & Youth
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair**

**FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 19th, 2025**

Testimony of Teresa Baik, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc.

Good afternoon Chair Stevens and members of the committee. My name is Teresa Baik and I am the Director of Education at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). KCS is a 52-year old social service nonprofit organization whose mission is to be a bridge for Korean immigrants and the wider Asian community to fully integrate into society and overcome any economic, health and linguistic barriers so that they become independent and thriving members of the community. We accomplish this mission by providing culturally competent programs in the areas of Aging, Education, Immigration, Workforce Development, Public Health and Mental Health. In addition, KCS is a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL), a coalition of adult literacy teachers, program managers, students, and allies from over 40 community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs across the five boroughs.

For over 20 years, KCS has provided adult literacy classes through city funding. Each year, the number of students and the number of classes have increased and is evidence of the success for our ESOL program and the constant need for adult literacy programming in our

| HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE) | OLDER ADULT CENTER | PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (1) | PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (2) | WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT | MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC |
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communities. We operate our in-person and virtual classes from Monday - Saturday with flexible class times in the morning, afternoon, and evening to best accommodate our students and their busy schedules.

In FY25 the Adams administration cut funding for community based adult literacy programs funded through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17 million to \$12 million. According to January’s Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report (PMMR), there were over 18,000 adults served in DYCD-funded adult literacy programs in FY24. Yet the \$12M in funding for FY25 is slated to serve only 9,118 students, just half the number of those served last year. Fortunately, this year, the Council restored the administration’s cuts to services through its discretionary funding. However, it is not the responsibility of the Council to subsidize the administration and cover for its failure to invest in core community needs.

Most importantly, the Trump administration’s proposed budget for FY26 calls for the complete elimination of federal funding for adult literacy education. The loss of funding would cost NYC approximately \$24.6 million and would eliminate seats for well over 20,000 adult students.

As a result, NYCCAL calls on the administration to **double its baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million**, restoring the cuts from last year and enabling programs to bolster and stabilize their services in a time of

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| <p>HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE EDUCATION HR IMMIGRATION PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)</p> <p>203-05 32nd Ave, Bayside, NY 11361 Tel: 718-939-6137</p> | <p>OLDER ADULT CENTER</p> <p>42-15 166th St, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-886-8203</p> <p>37-06 111th St, Corona, NY 11368 Tel: 718-651-9220</p> <p>633 W 115th St, New York, NY 10025 Tel: 718-886-8203, 347-923-0124</p> | <p>PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (1)</p> <p>315 5th Ave, #705, New York, NY 10016 Tel: 212-463-9685</p> <p>2460 Lemoine Ave, #400P, Fort Lee, NJ 07024 Tel: 201-364-8375</p> <p>103-04 39th Ave, #103, Corona, NY 11368 Tel: 917-396-4149</p> | <p>PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (2)</p> <p>410 Broad Ave, #201, Palisades Park, NJ 07650 Tel: 201-429-2866</p> <p>3556 159th St. #2nd Floor, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-939-6137</p> | <p>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>325 West 38th St, #1107, New York, NY 10018 Tel: 929-300-8630, 929-341-8302</p> | <p>MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC</p> <p>42-16 162nd St, 2FL, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-366-9540</p> |
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increased need and continuous threats to our communities. In addition, NYCCAL is calling on the Council to maintain total discretionary funding for adult literacy education at \$16.5 million and to fold City Council Adult Literacy Initiative funding - and the Initiative-funded programs - into the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project, creating one, single funding stream for all City Council adult literacy discretionary dollars. This would be extremely beneficial for all non-profit organizations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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| <p>HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE)</p> <p>EDUCATION HR IMMIGRATION PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>203-05 32nd Ave, Bayside, NY 11361 Tel: 718-939-6137</p> | <p>OLDER ADULT CENTER</p> <p>42-15 166th St, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-886-8203</p> <p>37-06 111th St, Corona, NY 11368 Tel: 718-651-9220</p> <p>633 W 115th St, New York, NY 10025 Tel: 718-886-8203, 347-923-0124</p> | <p>PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (1)</p> <p>315 5th Ave, #705, New York, NY 10016 Tel: 212-463-9685</p> <p>2460 Lemoine Ave, #400P, Fort Lee, NJ 07024 Tel: 201-364-8375</p> <p>103-04 39th Ave, #103, Corona, NY 11368 Tel: 917-396-4149</p> | <p>PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (2)</p> <p>410 Broad Ave, #201, Palisades Park, NJ 07650 Tel: 201-429-2866</p> <p>3556 159th St, #2nd Floor, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-939-6137</p> | <p>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>325 West 38th St, #1107, New York, NY 10018 Tel: 929-300-8630, 929-341-8302</p> | <p>MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC</p> <p>42-16 162nd St, 2FL, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-366-9540</p> |
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Literacy Assistance Center

**New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair**

**FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 19, 2025**

Testimony of Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center

Good afternoon Chair Stevens and members of the committee. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), a 42-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the adult education system and to advancing adult literacy as a foundation for equal opportunity and social justice. I am also 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.

As you know, there are currently over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma. Yet combined city and state funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 3% of these New Yorkers are able to access adult basic education (ABE), GED, or ESOL classes in any given year.

The overwhelming majority of the New Yorkers in need of adult literacy classes are poor and working-class immigrants, women, and people of color; and while the need for adult education classes has only *grown* over the past two years, in FY25 the Adams administration inexplicably cut funding for community-based adult literacy programs funded through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17 million to \$12 million.

According to January's Preliminary Mayor's Management Report (PMMR), there were over 18,000 adults served in DYCD-funded adult literacy programs in FY24. Yet the \$12M in funding for FY25 is slated to serve only 9,118 students, just half the number of those served last year. Fortunately, this year, the Council restored the administration's cuts to services through its discretionary funding. But discretionary funding is never guaranteed, and it shouldn't be incumbent upon the Council to subsidize the administration and cover for its failure to invest in core community needs.

The Trump administration's proposed budget for FY26 calls for the complete elimination of federal funding for adult literacy education – funding that dates back to 1966 and the War on Poverty. The loss of this funding would cost NYC approximately \$24.6 million and would eliminate seats for well over 20,000 adult students.

NYCCAL is calling on the administration to **double the baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million**, restoring the cuts from last year and enabling programs to bolster and stabilize their services in a time of increased need and continuous threats to our communities. In addition, NYCCAL is **calling on the Council to maintain total discretionary funding for adult literacy education at \$16.5 million and to fold City Council Adult Literacy Initiative funding - and the Initiative-funded programs - into the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project**, creating one, single funding stream for all City Council adult literacy discretionary dollars.

Adult literacy education provides immigrants with greater opportunities, furthers gender equity, and advances educational and racial justice. Let's demonstrate our city's steadfast commitment to these principles and refuse to leave any of our communities behind.

Thank you for your attention.



**The New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
May 2025**

Literacy in Community, or LINC, has been the facilitating partner for City's First Readers (CFR) since 2014. We have enthusiastically coordinated and participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, CFR is its only investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its seventeen member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile the funding for these essential programs remains. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers is more critical than ever. CFR partners operate in every Council district, with many programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

In Community,
Karen Rogel
Director of Strategic Initiatives

[Visit our programs!](http://www.lincnyc.org) | www.lincnyc.org

5030 Broadway, Suite 641
New York, NY 10034
212-620-5462 ext. 122



**NORTHERN MANHATTAN
IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
(NMIC)**

TESTIMONY

Regarding

General Funding Support

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Children and Youth

May 19, 2025

NMIC is a community-based settlement house founded in 1979, which has grown into a leading multi-service agency with a staff of over 120 employees, serving all of New York City. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our community on their paths to secure and prosperous futures. We serve approximately 14,000 clients each year through a variety of programs addressing housing, immigration, education/career development, finance/benefits, health, and holistic needs. Our education and career services provide over 500 community members with foundational tools—including High School Equivalency exam preparation, English language skills, and wraparound services—necessary to establish secure and prosperous futures.

NMIC does not charge any fees for services to our primarily low-income, immigrant communities. Our core catchment area includes Upper Manhattan (Community Districts 9–12) and adjacent Bronx neighborhoods (Community Districts 1–7). These communities represent some of the highest levels of socioeconomic need in New York City and include 9 of the top 10 (out of 59 total) community districts with the highest percentage of residents living below the federal poverty level. Dropout rates in these areas are significantly higher than the citywide average; the Bronx districts we serve report that over 12% of young people have left school—more than double the citywide average of 5.9%.

Nearly 100% of our clients are low income, 70% are foreign-born, and 58% speak Spanish as their primary language. As low-income immigrants, many face multiple and compounding barriers to success, making single-focus programs ineffective. That's why NMIC prioritizes the provision of wraparound services and high-quality case management. Our goal is to address both short- and long-term needs, enabling our community to thrive.

NMIC's YouthBuild Program is a high school equivalency and vocational training initiative for young adults (ages 17–24) interested in business and technology skills. NMIC has partnered with the NYC Department of Education's Pathways to Graduation Program (P2G) to offer morning instruction aimed at earning high school equivalency diplomas. Afternoon sessions focus on employment readiness, customer service training, and digital literacy. Students learn to use Microsoft Office applications that are an

essential part of most business environments. Students are mentored by volunteers from PGIM to develop soft skills such as communication and networking, and to introduce them to professional environments to build their social capital. Participants receive a monthly stipend of up to \$500 based on attendance and participation throughout the program.

NMIC is proud of our accomplishments in FY25:

- 30 students enrolled in programming
- 10 students earned their high school diploma
- 5 additional students completed at least one portion of the GED exam
- 8 students earned Customer Service certificates from the National Retail Federation
- 25 students were connected with wraparound services to address needs such as childcare, housing, and mental health

NMIC's case managers are currently working with students to plan their next steps. Student who have earned a high school equivalency diploma are preparing to enter technical training programs, pursue post-secondary education, or join the workforce. The remaining students are on track to complete their diplomas by the end of the year or over the summer. This success is largely due to small class sizes and the intensive case management that allows NMIC to help clients identify and address barriers as they arise.

The need for City Council support is especially urgent now, as recent federal policy shifts have created new challenges for youth career development programs nationwide. In 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor significantly reduced funding for YouthBuild and other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I youth programs, citing a reallocation of resources toward apprenticeship expansion and short-term workforce pipelines. These changes have resulted in fewer opportunities for vulnerable young adults—particularly those without high school diplomas—to access comprehensive, long-term education and training services. Additionally, proposed eligibility changes and increased performance benchmarks

have placed greater administrative burdens on providers without increasing support, threatening the viability of many existing youth-serving programs.

For young adults in communities like ours, these federal shifts mean fewer pathways to gain the education, credentials, and support needed to achieve sustainable employment. At the same time, demand for these services is growing, particularly among immigrant youth and those disconnected from school and work. City-funded programs like NMIC's YouthBuild are uniquely positioned to fill these widening gaps with culturally responsive, locally grounded services. In this climate of federal disinvestment, your continued support sends a powerful message that New York City will not abandon its young people. On the contrary, we will double down on our commitment to equity, opportunity, and the future of our workforce.

While we are proud of these accomplishments, the need in our community remains great. Our ability to meet the educational and basic needs of our clients can only be sustained through stable and adequate city funding. NMIC respectfully requests a renewal of our FY25 \$350,000 YouthBuild allocation for FY26.

Thank you for your time and continued support. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City Council to ensure our communities are welcomed and supported.

Oversight - Preparing NYC for changes in federal funding

Committee on Finance - Justin Brannan, Chairperson

Committee on Children and Youth - Althea V. Stevens, Chairperson

Monday, May 19, 2025 - Council Chambers - City Hall

TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY NORTHSIDE CENTER FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Chairpersons Brannan and Stevens, and esteemed members of the Council, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the great value ACS and DYCD provide to the City through their contracts with the City's human service providers. I'm Paula Magnus, Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child Development, a 79-year-old behavioral health clinic serving over 4,000 children and families annually across three boroughs.

At Northside, we have found that the City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) manages its contracts and performance data collection with efficiency and professionalism. Through our ACS-contracted **Family Connections** program, we provide home-based support for families affected by domestic violence, abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect—serving an average of 73 children each year. The program is rooted in the goal of keeping families safely together by improving each family member's mental health and strengthening the ways they relate to one another. The performance data collected by ACS supports what we see in our daily work: that these services are effective in promoting family stability and child safety, often preventing the trauma of family separation. And see <https://stateniscountry.org/2024/01/04/nyc-acsc-announces-majority-of-families-say-preventive-services-help-them-achieve-goals/>

Similarly, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) demonstrates strong contract management and oversight of our **After School and Summer Day Camp Program**. Annually, this program serves an average of **64 children (aged five to twelve)** including those with special needs. The performance data collected by DYCD allows us to demonstrate the positive impact of these out-of-school time programs on children's development and support for families. Research on Out of School time programs consistently demonstrates that youth involved in after-school programs exhibit improved academic performance, lower rates of drug use and sexual activity, and reduced dropout rates. And see: <https://www.nasbe.org/expanding-afterschool-and-summer-learning-to-boost-student-success/>

We find that the contracting and data collection processes of both ACS and DYCD contribute to responsible stewardship of City funds and provide valuable insights into the impact of our vital mental health services for the City's at risk children and families.

Given the demonstrated effectiveness of ACS and DYCD in managing social service contracts with the City's Social Service Providers, the City is well positioned to address the urgent shortfall in mental health resources resulting from the elimination of \$1 billion in school mental health grants under the Trump administration. This funding gap poses

a serious threat to the well-being of children and families across New York City. We respectfully encourage the City Council to consider increasing the City's investment in ACS and DYCD Social Service Contracts—not only to offset the loss of federal funding, but to strengthen the vital work of the City's nonprofit social service providers. These community-based organizations are on the front lines, delivering essential mental health services to at-risk children and families. By investing in the infrastructure and oversight that supports them, the City can help ensure these critical services remain available to those who need them most.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on behalf of Northside Center and the at risk Children and Families we serve.



newyorkedge.org

**NYC Council FY 26
Executive Budget Hearings –**

**Education Committee
Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Children & Youth Committee
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Health Committee
Hon. Lynn Schulman Chair**

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

On behalf of the Board and Staff of New York Edge (NYE), I thank you again for the Council's long standing support of our mission of bridging the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities.

With the Council as our partner for over three decades, New York Edge has grown into the LARGEST provider of afterschool and summer programming in New York City, serving 33,000 students across more than 130 schools throughout the five boroughs including 4 Beacon Centers, 21 Community Schols and 4 food pantries in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. We proudly offer culturally responsive programming rooted in academic enrichment, sports, health & wellness, visual and performing arts, STEM, leadership and college & career readiness – with social emotional learning intentionally woven throughout everything we do.

New York Edge school-based programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods). Council citywide funding under the ***After-School Enrichment Initiative*** enables us to enrich and expand our programming throughout the city and has allowed us to develop and implement unique and engaging programs that allow us to continue to guide students so that they grow up healthy, happy and empowered.

As stated in our Preliminary Budget Hearing testimony, New York Edge's Council Citywide funding has remained at \$1M for the past 15 years despite the fact that we have tripled in size and have significantly increased the number of children served. To continue providing this level of service and to meet the growing demands placed on us, especially as we are often asked to step in to provide programming and services when other organizations are struggling, I ask that that our Council Citywide funding reflect this expansion and that you support our FY 26 funding requests:

- **\$1.2M under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative - an increase of approximately \$200,000 over our FY 25 allocation.**

- **\$250,000 under the Council’s Social & Emotional Supports for Students Initiative. We are, as identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest after-school provider in the nation providing SEL supports.**

We are honored to work with the City of New York, including DYCD and DOE and we deeply value our shared commitment to supporting children and families. We understand that the PASSPort system was created to improve efficiency, but the reality has been very different for not for profit organizations. It is becoming increasingly untenable to navigate the city’s contracting process. We employ 1600+ staff each year, and fixed costs like salaries, rent, fringe, indirect rate and supplies must be met regardless of contract delays. **These costs are fixed and non-negotiable and must be paid regardless of the status of our 106 city contracts.**

At New York Edge we had to expand our credit line from 10 million to 15 million dollars just to stay operational. Today, we are carrying a 15 million dollar balance – along with one million in accrued interest and that number continues to grow. **No nonprofit should be forced to into this level of debt simply to deliver services the city has contracted us to provide.**

On behalf of the 33,000 00 students served by New York Edge, I ask for your help as we seek increased funding in the upcoming budget in alignment with our impact and scale. Increased funding will also help mitigate some of the challenges which have occurred as a result of the city’s Passport System and the resulting contract registration and payment delays.

Through its partnership and support, the Council is helping young New Yorkers discover their interests, their passions, and their joys, building pathways to careers and trades that will provide financial security throughout their lives – and in the process creating connections to each other, to teachers, mentors, and their communities. **TOGETHER, we are guiding students so that they grow up healthy, happy and empowered. TOGETHER, we are creating the next generation of active and productive community members and problem solvers. TOGETHER, we are creating New York City’s next generation of doctors, mechanics, chefs, writers, engineers, entrepreneurs and SO MUCH MORE.**

The proof of our success and impact is in our numbers:

- **98%** of New York Edge parents agree that their child feels a sense of belonging;
- **98%** of New York Edge parents agree that their child feels able to approach program staff for help with academics or social matters;
- **94.4%** of New York Edge parents would recommend New York Edge to other parents;
- **18%** improvement was made in ELA and Math scores after New York Edge tutoring;
- **96.8%** of New York Edge parents agree that New York Edge is helping to prepare their child for future success

It is also found in the voices of the students we serve:

*"I've been part of **New York Edge's** afterschool program for the past three years and have participated in a number of its different activities. One thing they all have in common is that they teach life lessons that will definitely be useful when you least expect it. **New York Edge** is definitely an important part of my life and many students just like me. **Please continue to fund New York Edge for my sake and for the sake of students all over New York City!!**"*

Isabella Navarro

Eugenio Maria de Hostos IS 318

*"**New York Edge** has made a significant impact on my life by offering me valuable opportunities that have shaped my future. They provided post-secondary opportunities like college trips including a trip to the University of Connecticut, which is a school I otherwise would have never been able to visit on my own. And thanks to the trip to UConn, I gained the confidence to apply and was accepted. **I cried when I was accepted because it felt like my hard work was manifesting and was paying off.** **New York Edge** has played a huge role in preparing me for what comes next, and I feel ready to take on the challenges ahead. Even though **New York Edge** has only been a part of my journey for the last two years, their impact has felt longer. **I believe New York Edge deserves all the funding in the world, because they are affording marginalized and low income kids opportunities they would have never had.**"*

Cheikhou Diouf

Community School for Social Justice

*"**New York Edge** is more than just a partner – they are a lifeline for our community. They provide extensive support that touches EVERY aspect of our school life. Given the wide-ranging benefits that **New York Edge** brings to our school community, I truly believe that maintaining and in increasing funding for their programs is absolutely necessary."*

Aaliya Clark

Brownsville Academy High School

*"Afterschool programs are not just extra activities, they are necessary. They give students like me a place to feel safe, stay motivated and discover what we are capable of. One of my proudest moments happened because of my **New York Edge** afterschool program. I know funding isn't always easy, but investing in **New York Edge** afterschool programs means investing in students like me. **We are the future of this city and the support we get now will shape the kind of people we become.**"*

Trinity Williams

Brooklyn Environmental Exploration School

*"Afterschool isn't just a place to go when class is over, it's a space where I've learned, had fun, and made some of my best memories. Being part of **New York Edge** has given me so many opportunities to try new things, meet new people, and discover what I'm really good at. If I had to describe **New York Edge** in one word, I would say "creativity." Whether we're drawing, writing, or working on projects, we always get to express ourselves and share our ideas. **New York Edge** has helped me build confidence and feel proud of what I can do. I know that I'll carry the lessons and memories from **New York Edge** with me as I move on to middle school and beyond."*

Valentina Ragusano

PS 193 Alfred J. Kennedy

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past 33 years of support from the New York City Council. **The time has come, however, where increased funding is VITALLY needed.** Unlike contracts with DYCD and other agencies, Council discretionary contracts are not (and have never been) eligible for COLA increases. This is making it increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract and maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the wide array of STEM, SEL, Visual & Performing Arts, Sports, Health & Wellness and College & Career Readiness programs that we are known for.

We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 26 citywide funding requests. **These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!**

Thank you.

**New York City Council
FY 2026 Executive Budget Hearing
Children and Youth Services Committee
Monday - May 19, 2025**

**Submitted on behalf of:
New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL)
36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504
Long Island City, NY 11106**

**Udai Tambar
President and CEO**

**Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director
Community Tennis**

On behalf of New York Junior Tennis and Learning (NYJTL), I would like to thank Chair Althea Stevens, Chair Justin Brannan, and the members of both the Children and Youth Services Committee and the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify and submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive City Budget.

As you know, for the past 50 years, the mission of New York Junior Tennis & Learning is to develop the character of young people through tennis and education for a lifetime of success on and off the court. The City of New York and the New York City Council have been close partners in accomplishing that mission and we are grateful for that support. Thank you.

With your help, today, NYJTL is the largest nonprofit youth tennis and education program in the nation, serving 90,000 K-12 NYC youth. **Funded under the Council's *Physical Education and Fitness Initiative*, NYJTL provides quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY borough throughout the city:**

Community Tennis Program (CTP) - Reaches children ages 5-18 throughout all FIVE boroughs year round; Provides trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, & special events; Provides FREE tennis equipment and instruction to over 1,000 Special Population/District 75 children during the Summer; Offers educational supports, including FREE SAT Prep & FREE SHSAT Prep, as well as special Tournaments and Events, including trips to the US Open Qualifiers and to Arthur Ashe Kids Day and various pro events and tournaments.

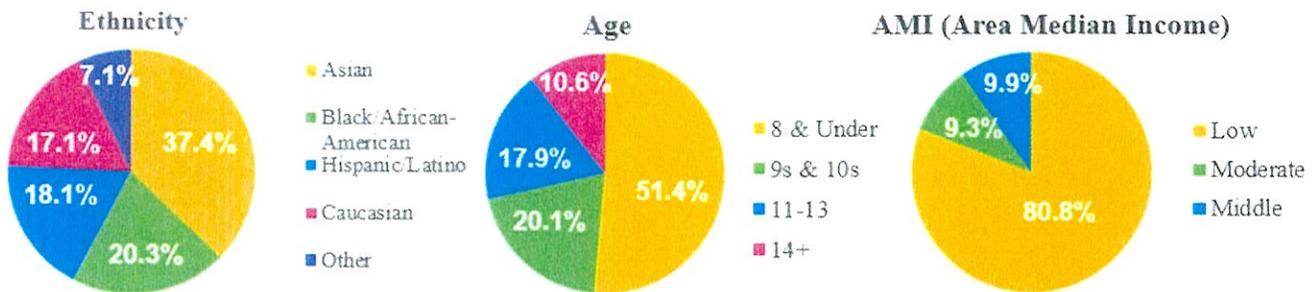
School-Time Tennis Program (STP) - Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 200 teachers/schools. All teachers and school-based staff are given a tennis curriculum, lesson plans, tennis equipment (rackets & balls) and ongoing onsite support if needed and requested. NYJTL is a NYSED Approved provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit. Training participants each receive for FREE 6.5 CTLE hours.

NYJTL also looks to expand upon our previously created CTP+ program, to relabel into two new pathway programs, the Accelerated Tennis Program and Varsity Tennis Program. These programs would allow participants who have expressed a desire for more training to get a higher level of tennis instruction.

Impact through CTP

- Over 10,000 unique kids enrolled every year
- Over 70% of our participants are ages 10 years and younger
- 75% of youth served are Black, African-American, Latino and/or Asian
- 80% of our families report as low-income based on NYC Area Median Income
- More than 75% of our coaches are alumni of the program
- 50% of coaches are in High School or College

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS



¹ – Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 90,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually including its 30+ DYCD funded SONYC and Compass sites.

This year we are seeking **\$1M** under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness Initiative* – an increase of \$200,000. **If allocated, it would be our first increase in 17 years.** In 2008 our citywide funding was reduced by 1/3 from \$1.2M to \$800,000 to fill a Mayoral created budget hole at DOE.

Funding of **\$1M** will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising staffing costs due to NYJTL's **minimum wage of \$18 (above NYC minimum)**
- Allow us to purchase sufficient equipment and cover additional site costs (permits/indoor court time)
- Allow us to bring programming to **NEW LOCATIONS** throughout the city
- Allow us to bring **ADDITIONAL HOURS** of free tennis instruction at existing sites
- **INCREASE SATURDAY** programming to increase access for kids who cannot attend during the weekdays
- **INCREASE ENROLLMENT** throughout the city as a result of additional program hours and new locations

The City of New York and the New York City Council have been close partners in helping us accomplish our mission to and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe, who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life.

We could not do what we do without the strong funding support of the New York City Council. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families. On behalf of the youngsters and parents served by NYJTL, I thank you for the Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.



**The New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony
May 2025**

PlayReadVIP at NYU Grossman School of Medicine (New York University) has been a City's First Readers partner since 2014. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, CFR is its only investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its 17 member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile these essential programs remain. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers (CFR) is more critical than ever. CFR partners operate in every Council district, with many programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to reach —so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

On behalf of PlayReadVIP (formerly Video Interaction Project) and the families we serve, thank you for your unwavering dedication to New York City's youngest learners. We have seen firsthand how the Council's investment in early literacy changes lives - not only preparing children for school, but also strengthening family bonds and laying the foundation for lifelong success. We look forward to continuing this vital work together and urge you to consider a funding enhancement for FY26 so we can reach even more children during their most formative years.

Submitted by
Nicole Kesoglides
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May 22nd, 2025

To Our Elected Officials,

We, the families, educators, and concerned community members of Sunset Park Avenues Elementary School (P.S. 516), urgently call on you to support our beloved afterschool and summer camp provider, the Center for Family Life (CFL). Recent federal budget cuts, prioritizing tax breaks for the wealthiest over essential social services and early childhood education, are having a devastating and immediate impact on our school and the 160 children and families who rely on CFL.

This crisis is compounded by years of neglect and underinvestment in public education and caregiver support at the local level. Despite tireless efforts dating back to 2013, P.S. 516 and CFL have been denied COMPASS funding from the city, forcing our community to depend on precarious federal grants that have now disappeared. As a direct consequence, 160 children in our community face a childcare cliff this summer, with no guarantee of the free, reliable afterschool and summer care they desperately need. Furthermore, dedicated CFL staff, including young people serving our community through Americorps, are now facing job loss.

The loss of this vital program will trigger a cascade of negative consequences for our families and our community. As the Afterschool Alliance highlights, 74% of New York parents surveyed reported that afterschool programs help them keep their jobs.¹ In a neighborhood like Sunset Park, which has historically faced high rates of unemployment and poverty, CFL's program is more than just childcare – it's a lifeline that enables parents to work, secure in the knowledge that their children are safe, engaged, and supported. Without this care, parents will be forced to make impossible choices between their livelihoods and their children's well-being. This can lead to decreased family income, increased stress, and instability within our community.

P.S. 516 is a Title 1 school serving a diverse and often marginalized community in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. 80% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch and 26% of our students are living in temporary housing.

¹ Afterschool Alliance, "Afterschool: Supporting New York Families," 2024

For these families, free and reliable afterschool care is not a luxury, but a necessity.

The Center for Family Life is a proven and trusted provider with years of experience and a network of 11 programs across the neighborhood. Their dedicated staff provides high-quality programming that supports our children's academic, social, and emotional growth. To lose their services at P.S. 516 would be an irreparable loss for our community.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, urge our elected officials and community leaders to take immediate action and support P.S. 516 and the Center for Family Life by:

1. Prioritizing P.S. 516 for COMPASS funding. We are requesting just 200 of the 5,000 new seats proposed in the Mayor's budget expansion to meet our community's long-term needs.
2. Allocating emergency funding for the next two years to stabilize the program while CFL actively seeks alternative funding sources.
3. Ensuring transparency in the allocation process for the expanded COMPASS funding and providing a clear timeline for when funds will be disbursed.

Our children deserve stability and opportunity. Our families deserve the peace of mind that comes with reliable childcare. Our community deserves to thrive. We implore you to stand with P.S. 516 and the Center for Family Life and ensure that this vital lifeline is not severed.

Together, we can make a difference and ensure a brighter future for the children and families of Sunset Park.

Sincerely,

The Concerned Community of Sunset Park Avenues Elementary School and Supporters of the Center for Family Life

Aileen Campuzano
Alejandra Figueroa
Alexandra Del Valle
Amanda Rosa
Ámbar Aybar
Andrea Knox
Andrés Marín

Anna Jasch
Antonio Brand
Brianna Flores
Caitlin Hersey
Camelia Contla
Caroline Nguyen
Cesar Carabajo
Christian Cortes Miranda
Christian Reigstad
Courtney Epton
Dan Agu
Daniel Aguilar
Doris Tacuri
Eliza Clark
Elizabeth Tully
Elvia Agu
Emerson Leon
Emma Dzula
Erik Steyn
Esteban Rodriguez
Estibaili Lugo
Fanny Manzo-Luna
Francisco Agu
Gael Yupangui
Garrett Albistegui Adler
Gillian Jakob
Greg Pearce
Guilherme Pedroso
Hazuki Matsushita
Isabel Martinez
Jacqueline Aybar
Jacqueline Garcia
Jaqueline Liriano
Jennifer Croo
Jennifer Flores
Jeremy Kaplan
Jessica Sanchez
Jessica Tacuri
Joanna Tinta
Jody Avirgan
John McKoll
John Tinta

Jose Santiago
Julia Kenny
Karina Albistegui Adler
Karina Hernández
Katherine Tronilo
Katie Clark
Kay Cid
Kei Hayashi
Krystal Santiago
Kyla McKoll
Laura Rubin
Leonard White
Liana Vazquez
Lorenzo Tijerina
Luciana Mosquera Balanta
Luis Gomez
Mayelin Cruz
Mayra Suarez
Melissa Torres
Michelle Giambo
Mirabela Tinta
Mo Agu
Mutsumi Hayashi
Nancy Landau
Natalie Espitia Sarabia
Nate Adler
Nathan Wessler
Pedro Liriano
Peter Knox
Phoebe Gilpin
Pia Bravo
Queenie Zhu
Ramsy Safadi
Randy Lee
Rebecca Anderson
Rita Doyle
Robin Aronow
Robin Kilmer
Rosamaria Noel
Ruben Vasquez
Ryan Price
Samantha Santiago

Sandra Santamaria
Sarah Brooks
Sharyn Korey
Sheila Medina
Sheila Reyes
Simone Kung
Steve Whipple
Sthephnay Leon
Susan Nieves
Susana Cortes
Tania Barnes
Tanya Cruz
Tara Rodriguez
Tatiana Salto
Thalia Suarez-Montalvo
Thikra Esa
Tirtzah Bassel
Tristan Jean
Vanessa Villalta
Veto Agu
Xitlali Galicia
Yashira Bega
Yeslie Maldonado
Zainab Akbar
Zoe Unger
Zoyla Lema

May 19th, 2025

TESTIMONY FOR: Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

REGARDING: COMPASS Funding for the Center For Family Life at P.S. 516

We are the co-presidents of the P.T.A. at Sunset Park Avenues (P.S. 516), writing on behalf of our parent community to express how vital the Center for Family Life (CFL) after school program is to our school—and how devastating its loss would be for families and for Sunset Park as a whole.

P.S. 516 is a Title 1 school. Our parents are working New Yorkers—teachers, firefighters, restaurant employees, domestic workers, and more. They speak English, Spanish, and Mandarin. They work hard, raise families, and still find time to give back through the PTA—organizing multilingual events, raising funds for enrichment programs, and improving our shared spaces.

None of that would be possible without CFL.

The afterschool program is the backbone that allows parents to engage—not only with their children's education but with the broader community. Our monthly PTA meetings begin just after CFL lets out, and every month we see parents pick up their kids and head straight to the meeting, ready to contribute.

CFL enables a virtuous circle of community involvement. When we give school tours to prospective parents and talk about CFL's programs, we see the parent's eyes light up.

Without it, many parents wouldn't have the time or bandwidth to participate—or might have to leave P.S. 516 altogether.

CFL also plays a crucial role in sustaining the school's identity. P.S. 516 is home to a thriving dual-language program and a diverse population of multilingual learners—something that is deeply valued by our community. Reduced enrollment due to lack of afterschool support would put that entire ecosystem at risk.

Of course, we also see the role CFL plays in our children's lives. CFL programs make them happy, give them confidence, and bond them to the community. CFL has been part of Sunset Park for generations. Some P.S. 516 students who went to CFL after school are now counselors. They have been given a love of this community, and are just as eager to give back as we are.

In light of federal cuts, we are encouraged to see New York City expanding Compass afterschool funding. P.S. 516 and CFL should be awarded 200 of these expanded seats. That investment will ripple outward—strengthening families, schools, and the entire Sunset Park community.

Thank you for your time. We'd love to share more about our school if you'd ever like to visit. Don't hesitate to reach out.

Jody Avirgan and Fanny Manzo-Luna

co-Presidents, Sunset Park Avenues (P.S. 516) PTA

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May 19th, 2025

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

**Testimony of Sebastien Vante, Associate Vice President
Streetwork Project, Safe Horizon**

On the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Sebastien Vante, and I am Associate Vice President of Streetwork Project at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim assistance organization. Safe Horizon offers a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. We use a lens of racial equity and justice to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the positions we hold. Streetwork Project

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are proud to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping survivors of all ages access desperately-needed shelter, support services, legal assistance, and counseling.

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your continued help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need. To be frank – our sector is in crisis. Nonprofit human services organizations are shuttering as a result of delayed contracts and payments – preventable and solvable problems.

Initiative and Discretionary Funding

City Council initiative and discretionary funding contracted through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) supports the following Safe Horizon programs:

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)

Child abuse cases grab at the heartstrings of every New Yorker. We recoil at the very thought of someone knowingly harming a child, and we entrust a number of different agencies - the police, prosecutors, child welfare specialists, doctors - to investigate and respond to these cases and help ensure the safety of children placed in harm's way. For many years, these agencies worked almost entirely in silos, focusing on their specific roles in uncovering what took place, or responding to the child, or holding the offender accountable. Such a disconnected approach required that children disclose repeatedly the painful details of the harm they endured in a variety of settings not commonly thought of as "child-friendly" – police precincts, district attorneys' office, and hospital emergency rooms. Over and over, children would be asked to talk about the violence they suffered, only to have to repeat their story yet again every time a new investigator stepped into the picture. Each time, the child wondered how many more times they would have to relive this pain so that another adult could write down some notes and ask yet another round of probing, deeply personal questions. Many child victims were left feeling as if no one believed them and felt to blame for causing disruption to their families. And many would recant their story. This method of investigating incidents of abuse was traumatizing, stigmatizing, and unjust.

For many years now, child victims in New York City who experience severe physical or sexual abuse are brought to Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which are at the forefront of the city's response to child abuse. At our CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers are all under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response that significantly reduces the number of times children must disclose details of their abuse. This coordinated, trauma-informed response to abuse helps to prevent the re-traumatization of the child during each re-telling of the violence that took place. And we are able to connect children and their families to the mental healthcare and services they need to heal. In FY24, our CACs provided services to over 8,800 children and nearly 3,500 caregivers throughout the five boroughs. The City Council supports our CACs through the **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault**, contracted through ACS.

We are requesting a **restoration and an enhancement to \$1,000,000** in FY26 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs so we can continue to provide healing and support to child victims. Additionally, we are seeking for this core funding to be baselined to ensure the City's continued investment in the CAC model.

Streetwork Project

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and so much more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have

experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Streetwork has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed. Over the past several years, Streetwork has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of migrant young people seeking help and having nowhere else to go.

In FY24, our Streetwork Project provided services to about 1,400 clients across our drop-in centers and overnight shelter, while our overnight street outreach team engaged in over 12,000 contacts with homeless and at-risk young people. The City Council currently supports Streetwork Project's work through the **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** (contracted through DYCD) and the **Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative** (contracted through DOHMH).

The **Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** bolsters Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. Safe Horizon is seeking a **restoration and enhancement to \$750,000** to continue to bolster our response and offer critical services to this vulnerable population navigating homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

Streetwork Project has experienced an increase in the number of undocumented and migrant young people seeking our support and our assistance. We believe that when young people are connected to legal assistance, longterm representation, and wraparound services, we help to prevent them from experiencing further exploitation, trafficking, and violence. **We are seeking \$250,000 in new Speaker's Initiative funding to enhance Streetwork's ability to address the complex immigration and social services needs of this population.**

Here are some other Safe Horizon programs supported by DYCD that serve survivors of all ages:

Immigration Law Project

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) provides expert legal advice and representation to victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist them in VAWA self-petitions, petitions for U nonimmigrant status and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), applications for asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. ILP receives referrals internally from Safe Horizon's other programs, such as our domestic violence shelters and our Crime Victim Assistance Program, as well as externally from the immigration courts, law enforcement agencies, other community-based organizations, legislators, and from former and current clients. ILP strives to provide the highest quality services to a very vulnerable population. Clients live in all five boroughs and experience a multitude of victimizations including domestic violence, sexual assault,

and other crimes. As a result of the settling of recent arrivals in New York City and the anti-immigrant policies emanating from Washington, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen an increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, the overwhelmed systems have left countless in tenuous circumstances—food and housing insecure and desperate for work—making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and in need of our support and services.

The City has prioritized assisting migrants with completing asylum applications, but nonprofit civil legal providers with expertise in complex immigration cases have not seen equitable investments in our services, namely more comprehensive legal screenings and longterm representation and assistance. Without additional resources, we are simply unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

In FY24, ILP provided full representation, advice, and consults to nearly 800 clients and also provided over 5,400 telephonic information and referral services. The City Council supports ILP through the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)** (contracted through DYCD), the **Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)** (contracted through DSS/HRA), and the new **Protect NYC Families Initiative** (contracted through DSS/HRA).

The **Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative** – part of the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)** – allows ILP to provide full representation to immigrant victims of domestic violence. The majority of these cases include clients or families where there is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence and where the victim is between the ages of 16 and 24. To help ensure that we have the capacity to respond to pressing legal cases for immigrants, we are seeking an **enhancement to \$100,000** through the YWI - Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative in FY26.

SafeChat

Safe Horizon offers a continuum of service for all victims of crime through telephonic, live chat, and/or in-person supports. Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists by visiting safehorizon.org. Live Chat Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. Live Chat Specialists conduct safety assessment, safety planning, crisis counseling, supportive counseling, psychoeducation, information about and referrals to supporting resources. In FY24, SafeChat responded to nearly 700 chats from survivors.

The City Council supports SafeChat through a **Speaker's Initiative**, contracted through DYCD.

In FY22, Safe Horizon was awarded **Speaker's Initiative** funding to launch a SafeChat microsite intentionally directed towards young men of color. The site provides educational materials related to trauma and provides access to our live chat platform. We have continued to receive Speaker's Initiative funding to support the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist and enhance our ability to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help. This year, we are seeking a

restoration of \$100,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding to continue to support SafeChat's operations and the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist. This support allows us to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help and intentionally build avenues for young men of color to access supportive services and healing.

Recommendations to Support RHY

The NYC RHY Providers are writing to urge you to improve the City's response to the homeless youth crisis by funding the priorities we have outlined below in the FY26 Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) budget. These investments will support critical additions to the pre-existing RHY continuum and aid in making New York City a national leader in the fight to end youth homelessness.

The needs of the homeless youth population are diverse, and the network of providers serving the needs of RHY do much more than provide a bed and hot meal; we provide supportive services and ensure that young people will not become homeless adults. We encourage you to fund the additional interventions that we have outlined below to ensure that the services that are available to youth experiencing homelessness in this city are as comprehensive and outcome-driven as possible.

- 1. Increase the Bed Rate for Crisis Shelter and TIL Services to \$70K per bed and "Right-Size" RHY Residential Contracts: \$5.5M** DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts fall short of covering the true costs of program operation. Current crisis shelter bed rates and TILs vary by provider based on when contracts were awarded. We propose implementing a consistent \$70,000 per bed rate across all programs to ensure equitable and adequate funding.

Streetwork's contracts either do not cover or insufficiently cover: assistance accessing housing & exiting homelessness; showers; laundry services; peer education; sexual health and peer programs; sexual health interventions; assistance obtaining HRA and SSA benefits; needle exchange and overdose prevention services; groups; food, pantry, and soup kitchen/hot meals; socks, underwear, and clothing; hygiene supplies; and baby/child/parenting supplies and services.

We need additional funding to meet the very real demands of our clients. For example, we are currently nowhere near meeting the demand for assistance obtaining housing and exiting homelessness. With funding that matches the need, we could place significantly more clients into housing. We need more funding to cover paid peer internships, job skills and job search assistance, benefits assistance, 24/7 drop-in services, and case management. Our contracts pay for these services but at rates that nowhere meet the overwhelming needs of RHY in NYC.

- 2. Restore and Baseline Housing Navigators and Financial Empowerment:** To assist young people with finding housing and to comply with the local law requiring programs to provide financial counseling services, baseline funding must be allocated to support contracts for Housing Navigators and Financial Counselors. These investments will ensure

youth experiencing homelessness have access to critical financial education and resources to build long-term stability.

3. **One-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts to Support Newly Arrived and Unaccompanied Minors: \$1.63M** DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers have been going above and beyond to meet the growing needs of newly arrived youth and unaccompanied minors without any additional support. We are asking for a one-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts. This additional funding will support meeting the basic needs of young people and fund more appropriate staffing across sites.
4. **Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services: \$625,000** Young people in DYCD programs have been excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and most young people qualify for youth-specific immigration relief (i.e., SIJS) that the city does not currently fund. Funding should be made immediately available for five positions for full-time experienced lawyers, who will be awarded to DYCD-funded RHY programs through an RFP based on the documented need for such services.
5. **Maintain Funding for 16 Housing Specialists in the RHY System: \$1.5M** The 16 Housing Specialists funded through temporary federal Emergency Housing Voucher funds have facilitated record-breaking transitions of youth into stable housing. Continued funding is necessary to sustain this critical support.
6. **Restore and Baseline Funding for Peer Navigator Positions in the RHY System: \$1.62M** Peer Navigators play an essential role in providing peer-to-peer support for vulnerable youth, providing crucial support to young people navigating homelessness, helping them access resources, and building trust with service providers. Baseline funding for these 16 positions is vital to maintaining this impactful service.
7. **Create and Fund 100 Additional RHY Beds for Youth Ages 21-24: \$5.6M** The current 60 beds for young adults ages 21-24 fall short of the need. Additional funding for 100 more beds at the 70k bed rate will provide safety and tailored support for more young adults.

Many young adults refuse to go to or return to DHS shelters because these shelters can be traumatizing and violent for them. When youth shelter placement is not available, many young people opt for street homelessness or risky housing options (like living with an abusive intimate partner). NYC must increase the number of DYCD RHY beds available for youth aged 21-24 years.

8. **Baseline Funding for Street Outreach and Drop-in Center: \$1.03M** Street outreach teams and drop-in centers are the first points of contact for many young people in crisis. These programs must be funded adequately to sustain critical services.
9. **Establish Higher Bed Rates for Specialized Programs:** Specialized programs, such as those focused on severe mental health, require care beyond what current RHY programs can provide. We request the state will work with providers to create an adequate bed rate

to match the need for specialized services to create new shelter programs with qualified clinical staff to deliver targeted mental health services, ensuring youth receive consistent and adequate support.

- 10. Fund Two Mental Health-Focused TIL Pilots: \$2.6M** To address the significant mental health needs of RHY, we propose funding two pilot programs that include on-site clinical services and intensive case management. These programs will offer the specialized care necessary to stabilize youth with complex mental health challenges.
- 11. Ensure Youth Experiencing Homelessness Can Access CityFHEPS Vouchers Without Barriers:** Youth in DYCD-funded RHY programs and those transitioning from ACS care must be categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without entering DHS shelters. Despite existing laws, the Administration has failed to comply, leaving youth without critical housing support. This investment would streamline access to stable housing and align with the goal of preventing homelessness. This is not just a moral obligation; it is a fiscally responsible decision that will reduce long-term costs associated with chronic homelessness, emergency healthcare, and justice system involvement. By making these critical investments in the FY26 budget, the City will affirm its commitment to ensuring that every young person—regardless of their circumstances has access to the resources and support they need to build a stable future. This is especially critical given the news we received from DYCD this week.

On March 19, 2025, we were informed by DYCD that we would lose access to the NYCHA provider portal to refer clients for NYCHA HCV Section 8 vouchers. For context, we only gained access to making these referrals on February 13, 2025, not even two months ago. We had been told we would have access for 10 years. The explanation for this change was twofold. First, NYCHA had already received 212 referrals from DYCD programs and needed to process those referrals first. Second, and more importantly, HUD is experiencing funding cuts. DYCD described this change as hopefully only a pause. We hope that we will be able to process referrals again in a month, but there is no guarantee that we will regain access.

In the same meeting, it was announced that our clients who previously received EHV Section 8 vouchers and who have already leased up and moved in might lose their vouchers because the federal government has defunded the EHV program, effective January 2026. Our program has housed over 200 clients with these vouchers. NYC received approximately 8,000 EHV Section 8 vouchers, almost all of which were given to homeless New Yorkers. If this rental subsidy ends on January 1, 2026, thousands of individuals and families will again face homelessness. New York City is facing a mounting crisis. Our clients and so many others will return to homelessness. DYCD's advice to us was that we should reach out to all our clients who are housed with EHV and offer our support. We asked if the city could also offer support, providing citywide outreach efforts, information campaigns, and know-your-rights trainings. DYCD would not commit to these efforts.

In the meeting, one provider asked what we should tell homeless young people who ask about housing assistance, since we have no access to any vouchers (including CityFHEPS),

no NYCHA priority, and the waiting lists for Rapid Rehousing are years long. We have not received an answer or any further guidance.

Late Contracting Issues

Safe Horizon is grateful that the City Council understands and has demonstrated deep concerns that human services providers continue to face late contracting issues, which have detrimental effects on community-based organizations **and** the communities that you serve. Although the City previously cleared the backlog of more than \$4 billion in unpaid contracts and amendments, more needs to be done to support the sector. The City needs to hold each agency accountable to pay invoices on time and clear the backlog of indirect and COLA contracting actions.

Frequent government contract payment delays put providers at risk of eviction and worsen deficits by forcing organizations to borrow to pay rent and salaries. Providers enter a risky situation where they start work without a registered contract and payment, which affects the communities that depend on our services. The City's delays cost us real money and jeopardize the quality of services by diverting funds away from programs to pay interest on lines of credit. The sector and our city simply cannot continue to operate under these conditions.

Fund MOCS

MOCS is responsible for overseeing the City procurement process and leading reform initiatives to make it more equitable, transparent, and efficient. However, there are a significant amount of pending contract actions that are preventing providers from getting paid for the services they provided. This is unsustainable for the sector especially as we continuously deal with delayed procurement processes, which further exacerbates the cashflow challenges that countless human services nonprofits face. MOCS needs to be adequately funded to ensure that providers' contracting needs are met so that we can focus on providing services to our communities. We support what MOCS is asking for in the budget to ensure appropriate service levels. Given the mounting concerns emanating from Washington, D.C., we must get the City's house in order.

Conclusion

As the City Council and the Administration sets the budget for the next fiscal year, it's imperative that our city expand, perfect, create, and invest in programming that provides healing and support to people who have experienced harm, violence, and trauma. When we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of individual New Yorkers, we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of New York City as a whole.

And it is essential that the City invest in the nonprofit human services workforce that we collectively rely on to support our safety net. We urge you and your colleagues to listen to providers, our dedicated workforce, **and** survivors. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.



To Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan and members of the Children and Youth Committee,

We are at a time when LGBTQ+ unhoused youth are in more crisis than before. We are thankful to DYCD for funding more beds for 21-24 after years of advocacy but as rents soar and food costs increase the current contract amounts do not meet the needed cost we need to successfully run our programs without extra fundraising. Additionally the issues with contracts not being registered on time and payments being delayed put AFC and other RHY programs in serious financial risk. At this moment we are currently owed \$10M from City, State and Federal contracts out of our \$24M budget. We have regularly taken loans out for payroll, are behind on paying vendors and have no safety net when issues arise. RHY programs are meant to be a place safety and stability in youths moments of crisis, when we are not able to provide that due to lack of funding it puts our youth at risk and we lose amazing employees.

The City cannot run without non-profits and we need to be paid the rate it costs to run our programs and on time. When will it be time to do the “radical” act of making sure unhoused youth have a safe place to seek shelter in crisis.

We demand:

1. Immediate payments of vouchers;
2. No recoupment of vouchers until 26 contracts are registered; and,
3. Immediate registration of vouchers.

AFC stands with our RHY partners in advocating for the RHY budget to increase by \$16.45M to fund:

- A bedrate to increase to at least \$70K for existing contracts and the new 100 beds to come closer to the real cost to run our programs successfully.
- Restore and baseline housing navigators who are a vital resource for LGBTQI unhoused youth to feel safe and affirmed while moving to the next step of independence. As we know landlords already discriminate against youth and for our Trans youth it is even more vital they have an affirming advocate.
- Fund Financial Empowerment: Our youth need financial empowerment, it is vital for all youth to learn how to manage their finances, understand how the system works and make it accessible to them. Without it youth are more likely to return to youth or adult shelter.
- Fund Youth Specific Immigration Services: Youth have been completely left out of the City plan for New New Yorkers, leaving RHY programs already in a deficit to increase services overall and increase specialized services. All youth suffer when we don't support our immigrant youth
- Restore Peer Navigators: This was a successful program that not only provided employment to youth in the RHY system but was incredibly impactful for our young people to learn how to navigate the system from their peers who have been successful and have an advocate that understands them and affirms their identity.

The NYC Trans and Queer Political Advocacy Coalition also advocates for the proposed \$10M for LGBTQ youth housing services. AFC has had a 10% increase in youth seeking our services in the last year, our waitlists have doubled and with the new federal policies trying to erase Trans youth more and more youth are seeking our services. Our federal funding is under attack and we must be able to provide the life saving services to our most vulnerable youth, Trans youth who travel to us from other States and Countries. Our waitlists have doubled and the amount of youth we serve who come to us from outside of NY is up 10%. Trans unhoused youth are the most vulnerable and this is the developmental stage that has a giant impact on their futures. The reality is that when Trans and LGBQ youth do not have access to specialized services it threatens their life. LGBTQIA+ unhoused youth have more than double the rate of early death than their cis/het peers. We saw this happen during covid when youth did not have access to drop in centers or safe housing, we lost more in those 5 years than we did in the 10 years prior. We cannot keep losing youth due to the harms of homelessness.

The ACS budget must include increased funding for the expansion of LGBTQI foster care and prevention services. ACS has been proactive in working on the recommendations from the white paper I wrote last year. In order for their efforts to be successful they need adequate funding to:

Immediate Policy Reform - We must see homophobia and transphobia more clearly addressed as forms of abuse in the child welfare policies of NYS-OCFS and NYC-ACS:

- Provide staff with more clear guidance and examples on how to identify homophobia and transphobia in the home and during SCR calls. Providing different levels and the appropriate intervention. Example: “Red, Yellow and Green Flags”.
- Hold workers and foster parents accountable when not followed and provide mandatory training with LIFT or Ackerman as part of their performance improvement plan.
- Complete revision of the current LGBTQ Policy¹, last updated in 2012. With input from LGBTQ+ organizations and LGBTQ+ youth in the system. Example : The “How to Communicate Effectively” portion is on page 87 in the 146 pages of the policy and only focuses on health care.
- LGBTQ+ children and youth who are placed in a foster home, must be placed with foster parents that not only affirm but celebrate their identity; and workers must prioritize finding such a placement.
- Provide up-to-date guidance on accessing transition-related care.

Tailored Mental Health Services, a Lifeline for LGBTQ+ Youth - LGBTQ+ youth in the foster system are significantly more likely to experience mental health challenges, with rates of depression and anxiety far surpassing their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

- When homophobia and transphobia are reported in the system, access to mental health services specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth and families is needed.
- Create more partnerships to fast track LGBTQ youth and families to affirming services

Affirming Family Therapy to Build Bridges and Heal Divides - Family rejection is the violent reality for all too many LGBTQ+ youths— studies² show that family acceptance is linked to significantly lower rates of depression and substance abuse, and promotes overall well-being for young people.

¹ The City of New York Administration of Children's Services, "Policy # 2012/01, Promoting a Safe and Respectful Environment for LGBTQ Youth and their Families Involved in the Child Welfare, Detention and Juvenile Justice System," 2012

² Katz-Wise SL, Rosario M, Tsappis M. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth and Family Acceptance. *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 2016

- Create a specialized Prevention path for families to engage in individual, group and family therapy to educate and bridge gaps in understanding, reducing family conflict and increasing acceptance while keeping families out of the foster care and Runaway and Homeless Youth system.

Educational Programs to Empower Change from Within - Ignorance breeds fear and prejudice. Educational programs targeting both families and child welfare staff can dramatically shift perceptions, attitudes, and treatment of LGBTQ+ youth in the system. We would never expect someone to unlearn racism, ableism etc in one training; homophobia and transphobia are no different.

- Staff need expanded trainings with clear examples of how to identify the abuse and guidelines on what actions to take when homophobia and transphobia is occurring in the home— by offering expanded training programs that include :
 - Empathic consciousness raising
 - The importance of accurate name/pronoun use
 - LGBTQ+ history and systemic oppressions
 - The impacts of discrimination
- Update the 2022 Parents Handbook³ to include LGBTQ+ affirmation in the Parent Responsibilities section and other relevant areas.

Voucher Subsidy to Support LGBTQ+ Foster Parents-One of the biggest barriers preventing potential LGBTQ+ foster parents from opening their homes is the lack of affordable housing. Many qualified, loving individuals who want to provide care for LGBTQ+ youth face systemic discrimination and financial constraints that limit their ability to secure adequate housing. By implementing a voucher subsidy program, we can ensure that prospective foster parents have the necessary resources to access stable housing that meets the necessary requirements to be a licensed foster home.; making it possible for them to provide the affirming care that LGBTQ+ youth desperately need.

This subsidy would serve as an incentive for individuals and families who are eager to foster LGBTQ+ youth but are currently unable to due to being able to afford a large enough apartment or housing insecurity. Investing in this initiative will not only increase the number of affirming placements available but also contribute to better outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth in care by placing them in homes where they can thrive.

Please reach out with any questions to nswanson@aliforneycenter.org

Thank you,



Nadia Swanson, LCSW
Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy
They/Them

³ The City of New York Administration of Children's Services, "A Guide for Parents of Children in the Foster Care System" 2022

**Brooklyn
Headquarters**

150 Court St, 3rd Fl
Brooklyn, NY 11201
T: (718) 643-8000
F: (718) 797-0410

**Atlantic Ave
Community Center**

384-386 Atlantic Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11217
T: (718) 643-8000

Queens

37-10 30th St, 2nd Fl
Queens, NY 11101
T: (718) 643-8000
F: (347) 808-8778

Queens 2

37-14 30th St, 2nd Fl
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966 Morris Park Ave, 2nd Fl
Bronx, NY 10462
T: (718) 643-8000

**AAFSC @ the NYC Family
Justice Centers**

Bronx: (718) 508-1222
Brooklyn: (718) 250-5035
Manhattan: (212) 602-2800
Queens: (718) 575-4500
Staten Island: (718) 697-4300

**TESTIMONY OF THE ARAB AMERICAN FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER BEFORE
THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
May 19, 2025**

The Arab American Family Support Center (AAFSC) respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of continued funding and enhancement of the City’s First Readers initiative. AAFSC provides culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed, and multi-generational social services to the growing Arab, Middle Eastern, North African, Muslim, and South Asian (AMENAMSA) communities across New York City. With locations in all five boroughs and services offered in over 30 languages, AAFSC supported more than 20,000 individuals last year.

As a proud recipient of City’s First Readers (CFR) funding, AAFSC, alongside 16 other nonprofit organizations—has participated in this collaborative initiative to ensure that New York City children from birth to age five receive the early literacy support and stimulation they need to thrive in school and in life. Each year, CFR collectively reaches nearly one million children, caregivers, early childhood providers, and educators with research-based programming designed to support healthy development during the most critical years of brain growth.

At AAFSC, our work under this initiative centers on our Caregiver-Child Bonding Circle—an innovative, linguistically accessible parenting support program for caregivers and their children ages 0–3. These circles are offered in Arabic and Bangla and are delivered in four 10–12-week cycles each year. The program is grounded in play-based learning and early talk strategies that foster cognitive, social, and emotional development, strengthen caregiver-child bonds, and lay the foundation for early literacy.

The curriculum covers topics such as attachment and bonding, emotional regulation, behavior management, early literacy practices, sensory play, and positive communication. Through this approach, our program not only promotes early childhood development but also addresses the intergenerational impacts of trauma and supports long-term economic mobility.

The caregivers we serve are predominantly low-income, immigrant AMENAMSA women with limited formal education and English proficiency. In 2024, 67% of participants reported annual household incomes below \$40,000. More than half had less than an eighth-grade education, and 26% had received less than a third-grade education or none at all. Most are not employed outside the home and face considerable social isolation. As such, our bonding circles also serve as essential peer support networks, a lifeline for caregivers navigating the challenges of parenting in a new and unfamiliar environment.

This work is critical because 80% of a child's brain develops by age three, and 90% by age five. Reaching children early isn't just beneficial, it's essential. Early engagement improves developmental outcomes, helps identify delays, and reduces the need for more costly interventions later in life.

Today, this impact is more important than ever. With continued uncertainty surrounding future 3K and Pre-K funding, limited infrastructure at the federal and state levels, and looming shortfalls in city funding, including the potential for major cuts to the Child Care Assistance Program if the City does not match the State's \$350 million allocation, City's First Readers plays a vital role in ensuring that NYC's children have access to high-quality early learning resources, especially in underserved communities.

CFR partners operate in every Council district, with programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods. The Council's support has made this possible, and we are deeply grateful.

To continue meeting the growing demand and deepening our impact, we respectfully request:

- A \$1 million enhancement to the City's First Readers initiative.
- Renewal of \$50,000 in discretionary funding for AAFSC's Caregiver-Child Bonding Circle to sustain and expand the program, reaching more families with culturally responsive, high-impact services.

As a New York City Council Member, you are in a unique position to protect and sustain the work of trusted community-based organizations like AAFSC. Your continued investment will help ensure that every child, regardless of zip code, language, or background—has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive from the very start.

Thank you for your time, your commitment to our city's youngest learners, and your ongoing partnership.

Testimony by Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles of The Brotherhood Sister Sol

May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Members of the Committees on Finance and Children & Youth. Thank you Chairs Brannan and Stevens for the opportunity to testify today.

For over 30 years, The Brotherhood Sister Sol (BroSis) has been at the forefront of social justice; educating, organizing and training to challenge inequity and champion opportunity for all. With a focus on Black and Latinx youth, BroSis is where young people claim the power of their history, identity and community to build the future they want to see. BroSis provides around-the-clock support and wraparound programming, making space for Black and Latinx young people to examine their roots, define their stories and awaken their agency.

All youth deserve safe, high-quality, holistic, and positively transformative educational experiences. If we believe in equity and want to create the futures all New Yorkers deserve, we must build within our schools systems of accountability, restorative justice, and behavioral management that do not include the NYPD *and* holistically support student success. Our vision for education in New York public schools includes safe, restorative, and healing environments where all students have the opportunity to learn and grow. To meet this goal, we must equitably resource New York State public schools and defund the tactics that push out marginalized students.

Faced with mental health, loneliness, and homelessness polycrises, now more than ever, our youth need city officials to do *more*. The current budget is a step in the right direction. That said, our communities are contending with federal threats to our education system and our LGBTQIA+ and non-citizen family members. Our city budget, therefore, needs to fully fund meaningful Restorative Justice, mental health, and immigrant protections in schools. City Council members should redirect the funding currently going to school police and policing infrastructure to the healing-centered programs and staff our schools, without which our schools cannot thrive. Moreover, we ask that you divest from school policing, including ceasing all NYPD recruitment, hiring and training of school police, and funding for surveillance technology. Thereafter, the City Council should prioritize the following in budget negotiations:

1. Expand school-based restorative justice and social-emotional supports, including investing \$80 million in hiring school-based Restorative Justice Coordinators in 500 schools.
2. Protect and baseline critical programs currently funded with expiring City dollars including \$12 million for restorative justice, \$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, and \$5 immigrant family communications and outreach

3. Redirect money away from school policing and surveillance
4. Protect the safety of immigrant students and parents

Furthermore, we need continued investment in our young people both in school and in the broader community; funding like the Young Women's Initiative, Summer Youth Employment Program, and more also needs to continue.

To advance and protect our city and this next generation, we must provide them with the academic, social, and life skills necessary to be engaged and innovative world citizens. We need elected officials to invest in our students, our communities, and our success – now more than ever.

For more information, contact the Director of Organizing, Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles at mjc@brotherhood-sistersol.org.



**The New York City Council
Committee On Children and Youth
Chair: Council Member Althea V. Stevens**

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearings

Testimony of
The Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit

May 19, 2025

Presented by:

Anthony Posada
Supervising Attorney
Community Justice Unit
49 Thomas Street
New York, NY 10013

On behalf of The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU), I want to thank the Committee on Children and Youth and the Chair Council Member Althea Stevens for holding this critical hearing on the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) budget. My testimony today focuses on DYCD restoring our funding for CJU's legal service programs for cure violence participants and their families to prevent undermining the cure violence model's progress in reducing gun violence in our communities.

I. THROUGH ITS WORK SUPPORTING THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN REDUCING VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

The Cure Violence/Crisis Management System (CMS),¹ launched by the City Council in 2012, delivers a multiagency approach to reducing gun violence in New York City. Cure Violence is a community-based violence interruption model for reducing shootings that treats gun and gang violence as an infectious disease. It employs credible messengers from the community as violence interrupters and outreach workers to detect and stop conflicts before they escalate, to identify and help high-risk individuals, and to change the community's social norms concerning gun and gang violence. CMS encompasses the Cure Violence program and related programs that offer legal services, youth employment opportunities, school-based conflict resolution and mediation, mental health and wellness services, and other social support services. [OBJ]

CJU was established in 2012 as part of the CMS model by the City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence.² CJU adopts the Cure Violence philosophy – that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement – and provides comprehensive legal services to CMS partners, participants, and community members to reduce gun and gang violence in their neighborhoods. We offer direct representation to thousands of New Yorkers experiencing legal emergencies. CJU's comprehensive legal services empower at-risk youth and their families to navigate criminal, housing, immigration, and any other legal issues that require assistance so they can improve their circumstances. *See* Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2024 Report.

In addition to legal counsel, CJU conducts extensive community outreach, including providing legal clinics and training at over 40 Cure Violence/Crisis Management partner locations and the catchment areas they serve. *Id.* CJU staff and attorneys hold community events across all five boroughs, including Know Your Rights events, rallies, and educational clinics. *Id.* To help combat youth's early involvement in the criminal justice system, CJU's community organizers lead several Know Your Rights trainings and workshops. *Id.* For example, CJU leads a Youth Ambassador Training where youth learn how to organize their communities and teach other community members about their legal rights when interacting with police. CJU also leads cure violence workshops at schools, and our CMS partner sites throughout the city.

¹ Neighborhood Investments and Public Safety, New York City Council, *available at* <https://council.nyc.gov/data/cure/#:~:text=Cure%20employs%20credible%20messengers%20from.with%20respect%20to%20gun%20violence.>

² The New York City Council, Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, Task Chairs City Council Member Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera, *available at* [https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/.](https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/)

Through these comprehensive legal services, CJU works to defend, educate, and organize community members. CJU's defense services include running a critical 24/7 hotline for legal emergencies, such as arrests and housing evictions, helping individuals obtain their rap sheets and seal their criminal records, and assisting New Yorkers with employment and family law issues. We educate community members on their rights to help them navigate legal systems and access vital services that respond to their legal and social service needs. We organize community members to harness community power and mobilize communities to advocate for resources and social justice. As a result of our work, community members receive legal services that they otherwise might not be able to access, and those services directly contribute to their improved circumstances and safer communities. *See Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2024 Report.*

Our services help stop the spread of gun violence and improve people's circumstances in numerous ways, so I want to highlight three specific examples that illustrate the essence of our services:

- Our CMS/CV partner on Staten Island contacted us to assist with expediting a FHEPs to move voucher approval for a family where the son was the victim of gun violence. The site had been working to obtain this FHEPs to move approval for a few months but was not successful. The family found a new apartment through the Housing Connect Lottery and just needed the voucher approval to move in. The family urgently needed to move away from the area where the gun violence occurred and the teen was due to have surgery to address his injuries from being shot, his family wanted to be moved before his operation to allow him a safe place to recover. Once CJU got involved, we were able to obtain the voucher approval very quickly.
- We completed an 8-week Youth Ambassadorship program with participants from Man Up Inc's. East New York, Brooklyn. Our community organizer and staff attorney led the initiative. The program trained participants about the NYPD Gang Database with the aim of mobilizing them to educate their peers about this oppressive policing tool. Every Friday the youth looked forward to being in the workshop and they even suggested creating a public service announcement (PSA). As a result, the participants had to work with the CMS staff to set up videographer services, rehearse their scripts, and then memorize their lines. This project showed how talented the youth are, how they worked as a team supporting each other in their different roles and even improvising in the moment. After the day of the filming, the participants were invited to a ceremony joined by their friends and family where they were awarded certificates for becoming Youth Organizing Ambassadors. To this day we remain in contact with the participants and family members who were a part of the initiative.
- One of CJU's community organizers referred a senior citizen who was in need of legal advice-she was struggling to pay her rent each month because her Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption wasn't being applied because she failed to renew it properly and couldn't get any assistance from DHCR. She had mold and other conditions that needed to be repaired in her apartment. We reviewed all the SCRIE paperwork and determined what the issue was and how to resolve it getting SCRIE payments started again. We advised her regarding how to sue the landlord for the mold and other conditions in her apartment, and she obtained a \$4,000 rent abatement and her landlord immediately started making repairs.

II. THE ONGOING FUNDING CUT OF THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT UNDERMINES THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM'S EFFORTS TO ERADICATE GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

CJU's budget cut is a disinvestment in underserved communities, particularly underserved youth because CJU's services target those vulnerable communities. This cut signifies a decrease in legal services which means more underserved communities – experiencing over-policing, unstable housing, limited employment opportunities, and an overall lack of adequate services – are unable to address their basic needs. We know that our communities thrive when they are equipped with resources and access to opportunities. When we reduce critical legal services, we are only further entrenching the long-standing barriers to justice that have disproportionately impacted them and preventing people from rebuilding their lives. CJU's funding translates into tangible services that help mitigate the root causes of violence and that fosters a sense of security and trust in CMS's broader public safety strategies.

The administration's ongoing cut to CJU's funding undermines the CMS work to reduce violence. For example, last year after we learned of the funding cut, we almost had to reduce our 24/7 emergency hotline service. Our CMS partners rely on that service when their participants and staff are confronted with legal emergencies such as arrest and illegal evictions. The CMS organizations know that our comprehensive legal services have helped grow the number of participants in cure violence interruption programs because of our commitment to improving the lives of participants and their families. When we reduce our legal clinics, our Know Your Rights workshops, and our community events, that represents a disruption of essential services, and it sends the message that our most vulnerable communities are not a priority.

CJU's services are vital to the city's gun violence prevention work. During the recent preliminary budget hearing in March, DYCD Commissioner Howard testified that he had witnessed the CJU working with CMS and its participants and he understood that the legal services were vital to the success of the CMS network³. Members of the Mayor's Action Plan (MAP) and the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS), which is responsible for overseeing the contracts of CMS providers, also had the opportunity of attending one of CJU's legal education workshops. Following the workshop, they all agreed that CJU's legal services make up an essential component of the CMS effort to increase public safety in our communities.

The CMS/CV model has proven remarkably effective at keeping our communities safe. Recent data from the NYC Council Data Team showed that *“precincts that received a Cure [program] experienced an 18.1% reduction in shootings in the first year of the program. Additionally, we find a 16-19% reduction in the years after that, demonstrating the longevity of this change.”*⁴ A 19% reduction in shootings means that lives were saved. Similarly, a recent report from the Comptroller's Office found that CV organizations helped *“with an average reduction of 7.4 shootings per precinct per year in areas where CVI programs were active.”*⁵ The means that

³ New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth, Preliminary Budget Hearing, March 20, 2025, available at, <https://citymeetings.nyc/meetings/new-york-city-council/2025-03-20-1000-am-committee-on-children-and-youth/chapter/importance-of-community-justice-initiative-legal-services-for-public-safety-efforts/>

⁴ NYC Council Data Team, Cure Violence Programs in NYC, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/data/cure/>.

⁵ New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, The Cure for Crisis: The Power and Potential of Community Violence Intervention, p. 17, available at <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-cure-for-crisis/>

precincts with an average of 35 shootings per year experienced a 21% reduction in shootings where CV organizations were active.⁶ But this administration’s ongoing cut to CJU’s work is weakening the CMS/CV network’s effectiveness by cutting off comprehensive legal services for New York City’s vulnerable communities.

III. INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT PAYS DIVIDENDS BECAUSE IT IS AN INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS.

Funding CJU is an investment in communities that are in crisis. And that investment pays dividends because CJU has proven to serve more communities in ways that directly contribute to our city's public safety. In FY24, CJU provided 8163 legal services, including 537 services to Cure Violence partner organizations and 7626 to non-affiliated community members throughout New York City. *See Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2024 Report.* These numbers include 789 services to Project Hope and Project Reset. During FY24, CJU also organized 111 events, including legal clinics, office hours, and community town halls. Additionally, we also launched an advocacy campaign titled “Your Rights, Your Power” meant to educate New Yorkers about their rights during police encounters. This campaign successfully reached over 1.6 million fifteen to twenty-five-year-olds throughout New York City.

As much as we want to replicate the successes of FY24, the 1.5 million funding cut has forced us to scale back some of our services resulting in community members being left in a state of crisis without their basic needs met. Specifically, the funding cut is having an impact on our individual services. *See Exhibit B, Community Justice Unit 2025 Q1-Q3 Report.* From FY 24 to FY25, the number of individual services dropped from 3050 to a projected 1500 by the end of FY25. Without full restoration of funding, we are unable to meet the growing demands of the CMS network, and this destabilizes the gun violence prevention model.

As CMS has shown, reducing violence and promoting public safety requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal support, community education, and systemic transformation. We cannot afford to lose sight of the long-term benefits of these services, which have created safer, more connected neighborhoods and instilled a sense of care and trust between residents and the institutions designed to protect them.

Conclusion

Our communities thrive when they can access comprehensive legal services that improve their lives. To invest in community safety, particularly among youth in underserved communities, the City should restore CJU’s funding so we can continue providing critical legal services to communities and meaningfully support the crisis management work to reduce gun violence.

⁶ *Id.*

Exhibit A

**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY
CRIMINAL
DEFENSE**

THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038
212-577-3300

<https://legalaidnyc.org>

The Community Justice Unit (CJU) provides comprehensive wrap-around legal services to New York City's Crisis Management System (CMS) and Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). We adopt the Cure Violence philosophy - that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement. Our work empowers communities impacted by gun violence to develop proactive strategies to reduce violence through providing holistic legal representation to underserved communities throughout the five boroughs of New York City. In addition to legal counsel, the CJU conducts extensive community outreach, including providing legal clinics and Know Your Rights trainings at over 30 Cure Violence/Crisis Management partner locations and the catchment areas they serve.

CURE VIOLENCE

Provide legal services to Cure Violence sites across the city

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citywide community engagement under a public health model



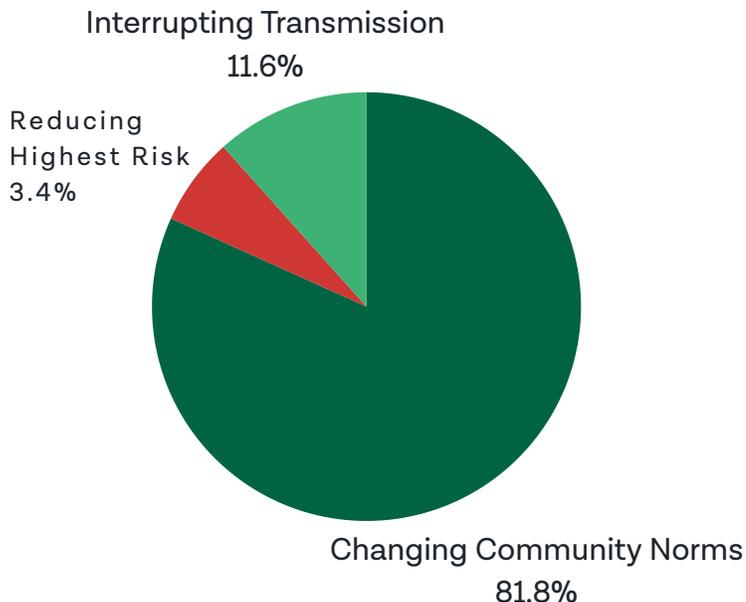
IMPLEMENTING THE CV MODEL

| | INTERRUPTING TRANSMISSION | REDUCING HIGHEST RISK | CHANGING COMMUNITY NORMS |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| MODEL GOALS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent Retaliations • Mediate Conflicts • Keep Conflicts Cool | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess Highest Risk • Change Behavior • Provide Treatment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to Shootings • Organize Community • Spread Positive Norms |
| CJU ROLE | <p>Provide support to CV partner agencies and participants intermediary role between communities and law enforcement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical Representation Model • Connect CV partner agencies, community members, and participants to social/legal services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify Community Voices • Challenge policies negatively impacting communities (e.g. MJ reform, gang database) |
| SERVICES PROVIDED | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Surrenders • 24/7 Hotlines • Emergency Legal Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rap Sheet Clinics • Job Fairs/Employment Training • Access to Benefits (Housing, Disability, Education, Healthcare) • Case Closed - Record Sealing • Immigration Issues • Court Information/Legal Advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shooting Responses • Know Your Rights Events • Community Events (Tabling) • Policy Advocacy/Reform • Awareness Campaigns • Pathways to College • Gun Violence Awareness |

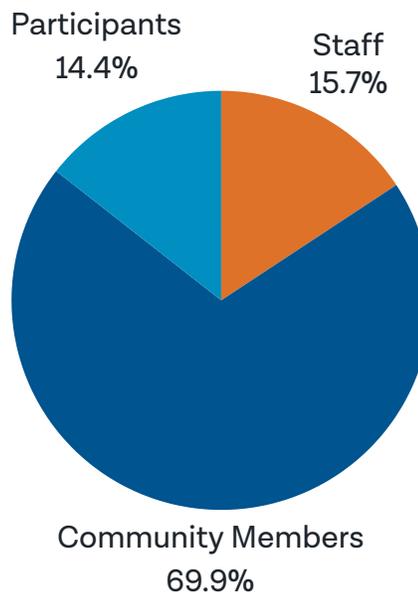
OUR SERVICES

The CJU provided a total of 8,163 services including: 537 services to members of Cure Violence partner organizations and 7,626 services to non-affiliated community members throughout New York City. These numbers include 789 Project Reset and Project Hope participants. During FY24, the CJU hosted 111 events.

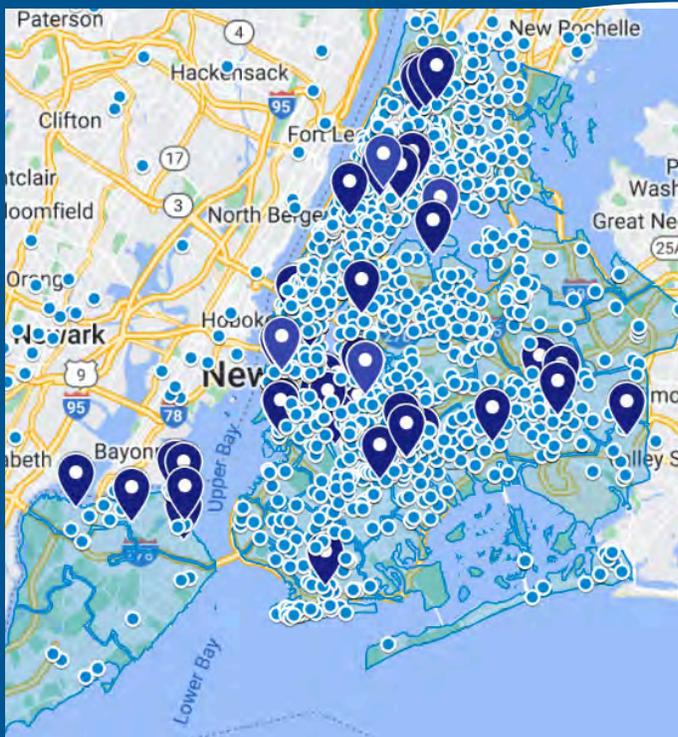
SERVICES BY CATEGORY



SERVICES BY PARTICIPANT TYPE



SERVICES BY LOCATION

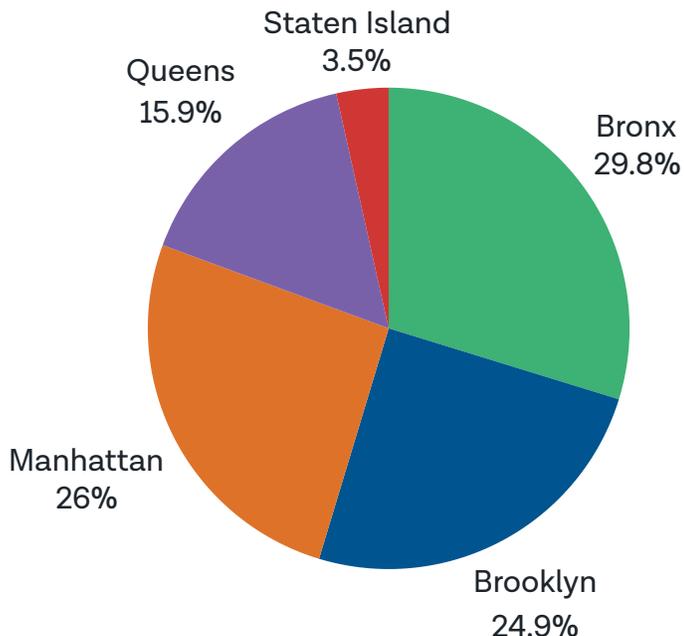


KEY

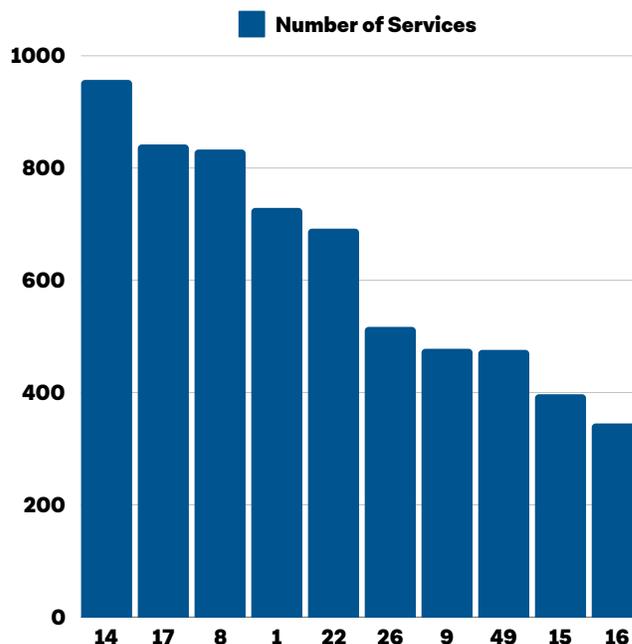
- Clients and Community Members
- 📍 CJU Events

The CJU provided services in all 5 boroughs to all 51 City Council Districts.

SERVICES BY BOROUGH



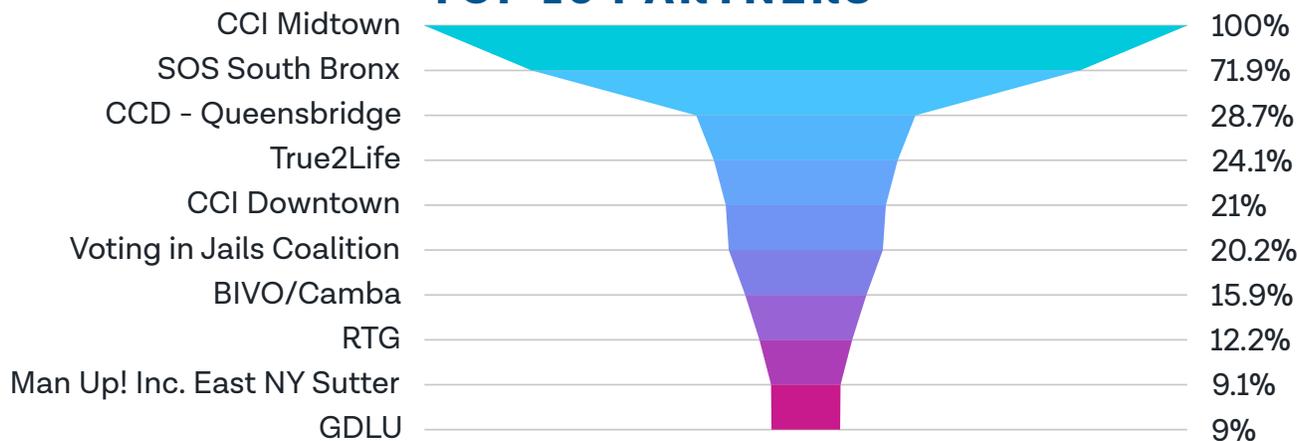
SERVICES BY TOP 10 CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS



OUR PARTNERS

The CJU The Community Justice Unit (CJU) provides services to low-income individuals in New York City through its partnership with the NYC Crisis Management System. The CJU also hosts community events open to all community members.

TOP 10 PARTNERS



OUR ADVOCACY

Over 1.6 million fifteen to twenty-five-year-olds from throughout New York City have engaged with the CJU's "Your Rights, Your Power" campaign. Launched in 2023 in part to educate New Yorkers about their rights during police encounters, this campaign had the highest engagement rate among fifteen to seventeen-year-olds!



We partnered with the Queens Community Justice Center to provide a Know Your Rights workshop. Participants learned about resources to keep police accountable and methods to keep themselves and their communities safe.

CJU team members conducted a workshop with the youth group from Brownsville In Violence Out (BIVO) to discuss their rights during police encounters.



CJU Lead Community Organizer Takeasha Newton attended Governor Hochul's signing of the Clean Slate Act, which brings critically needed relief to individuals who experience discrimination because of criminal convictions.

**Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit**

Service Area #1 Service Area #2

FY 24

| Quarter # <u>1</u> | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | From: 7/1/23 Quarter Total | To: 9/30/23 Year to Date |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Legal Services | | | | |
| Level of Assistance | | | | |
| Advice | 4 | 744 | 748 | 748 |
| Brief Services | 69 | 285 | 354 | 354 |
| External Referral | | | 0 | 0 |
| Internal Referral | | | 0 | 0 |
| Representation | 70 | 1005 | 1075 | 1075 |
| Quarter Total | 143 | 2034 | 2177 | |
| Year to Date | 143 | 2034 | | 2177 |

| Sub Case Type | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Benefits | | | 0 | 0 |
| Civil Rights | | | 0 | 0 |
| Consumer Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Criminal | 5 | 1 | 6 | 6 |
| DAP | | | 0 | 0 |
| Education | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Employment | | | 0 | 0 |
| Family Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Health Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Law | | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Immigration | | | 0 | 0 |
| Prisoner's Rights | | | 0 | 0 |
| Project HOPE | | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| Project Reset | | 228 | 228 | 228 |
| Rap Sheet | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Tax Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Other/Miscellaneous | 138 | 1769 | 1907 | 1907 |
| Quarter Total | 143 | 2034 | 2177 | |
| Year to Date | 143 | 2034 | | 2177 |

| Additional Matters | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | Quarter Total | Year to Date |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| # of Cases Referred Out | | | 0 | 0 |
| # of Cases Open | 143 | 2034 | 2177 | 2177 |
| # of Cases Closed | 143 | 2034 | 2177 | 2177 |
| Quarter Total | 143 | 2034 | 2177 | |
| Year to Date | 143 | 2034 | | 2177 |

Service Area #3 & Service Area #4

| Event Type | Training | Legal Clinic | Other Events | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Virtual | | | 3 | 3 |
| Tabling | | | 1 | 1 |
| Advice | | | 1 | 1 |
| RAP Sheet | | | | 0 |
| Voter Registration | | | 2 | 2 |
| Intake/ Office Hours | | | 1 | 1 |
| MJU | | | | 0 |
| Know Your Rights | 4 | | | 4 |
| Law Day | | | | 0 |
| Other | 4 | | 9 | 13 |
| Quarter Total | 8 | 0 | 17 | 25 |
| Year to Date | 8 | 0 | 17 | 25 |

Service Area #5

| Legal Services to ONS Network | Advice | Brief Services | Training | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Individual Vendor | 3 | | | 3 |
| Event Participants | | | | 0 |
| Quarter Total | 3 | 0 | | 3 |
| Year to Date | 3 | 0 | | 3 |

**Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit**

Service Area #1 Service Area #2

FY 24

| Quarter # <u> 2 </u> | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | From: 10/1/23 Quarter Total | To: 12/31/23 Year to Date |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Legal Services | | | | |
| Level of Assistance | | | | |
| Advice | 13 | 795 | 808 | 1556 |
| Brief Services | 46 | 575 | 621 | 975 |
| External Referral | | | 0 | 0 |
| Internal Referral | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Representation | 32 | 434 | 466 | 1541 |
| Quarter Total | 91 | 1806 | 1897 | |
| Year to Date | 234 | 3840 | | 4074 |

| Sub Case Type | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Benefits | | | 0 | 0 |
| Civil Rights | | | 0 | 0 |
| Consumer Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Criminal | 2 | 30 | 32 | 38 |
| DAP | | | 0 | 0 |
| Education | | | 0 | 1 |
| Employment | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Family Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Health Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Housing Law | | 8 | 8 | 15 |
| Immigration | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Prisoner's Rights | | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Project HOPE | | 30 | 30 | 57 |
| Project Reset | | 238 | 238 | 466 |
| Tax Law | | | 0 | 1 |
| Other/Miscellaneous | 89 | 1458 | 1547 | 3454 |
| Quarter Total | 91 | 1806 | 1897 | |
| Year to Date | 234 | 3840 | | 4074 |

| Additional Matters | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | Quarter Total | Year to Date |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| # of Cases Referred Out | | | 0 | 0 |
| # of Cases Open | 91 | 1806 | 1897 | 4074 |
| # of Cases Closed | 91 | 1806 | 1897 | 4074 |
| Quarter Total | 91 | 1806 | 1897 | |
| Year to Date | 234 | 3840 | | 4074 |

Service Area #3 & Service Area #4

| Event Type | Training | Legal Clinic | Other Events | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Virtual | | | | 0 |
| Tabling | | | | 0 |
| Advice | | | | 0 |
| RAP Sheet | | 2 | | 2 |
| Voter Registration | | 1 | | 1 |
| Intake/ Office Hours | | | | 0 |
| MJU | | | | 0 |
| Know Your Rights | 9 | | | 9 |
| Law Day | | | | 0 |
| Other | 6 | | 6 | 12 |
| Quarter Total | 15 | 3 | 6 | 24 |
| Year to Date | 23 | 3 | 23 | 49 |

Service Area #5

| Legal Services to ONS Network | Advice | Brief Services | Training | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Individual Vendor | | 1 | | 1 |
| Event Participants | | | | 0 |
| Quarter Total | 0 | 1 | | 1 |
| Year to Date | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

**Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit**

Service Area #1 Service Area #2

FY24

| Quarter # <u>3</u> | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | From: 1/1/24 | To: 3/31/24 |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Legal Services | | | Quarter Total | Year to Date |
| Level of Assistance | | | | |
| Advice | 4 | 939 | 943 | 2499 |
| Brief Services | 211 | 1250 | 1461 | 2436 |
| External Referral | | | 0 | 0 |
| Internal Referral | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Representation | 22 | 313 | 335 | 1876 |
| Quarter Total | 237 | 2504 | 2741 | |
| Year to Date | 471 | 6344 | | 6815 |

| Sub Case Type | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Benefits | | | 0 | 0 |
| Civil Rights | | | 0 | 0 |
| Consumer Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Criminal | 9 | 9 | 18 | 56 |
| DAP | | | 0 | 0 |
| Education | | | 0 | 1 |
| Employment | | | 0 | 1 |
| Family Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Health Law | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Housing Law | | | 0 | 15 |
| Immigration | | | 0 | 1 |
| Prisoner's Rights | | 161 | 161 | 201 |
| Project HOPE | | 11 | 11 | 68 |
| Project Reset | | 93 | 93 | 559 |
| Tax Law | | | 0 | 1 |
| Other/Miscellaneous | 228 | 2229 | 2457 | 5911 |
| Quarter Total | 237 | 2504 | 2741 | |
| Year to Date | 471 | 6344 | | 6815 |

| Additional Matters | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | Quarter Total | Year to Date |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| # of Cases Referred Out | | | 0 | 0 |
| # of Cases Open | 237 | 2504 | 2741 | 6815 |
| # of Cases Closed | 237 | 2504 | 2741 | 6815 |
| Quarter Total | 237 | 2504 | 2741 | |
| Year to Date | 471 | 6344 | | 6815 |

Service Area #3 & Service Area #4

| Event Type | Training | Legal Clinic | Other Events | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Virtual | | | | 0 |
| Tabling | | 4 | | 4 |
| Advice | | | 1 | 1 |
| RAP Sheet | | | | 0 |
| Voter Registration | | | 6 | 6 |
| Intake/ Office Hours | | 1 | | 1 |
| MJU | | 2 | | 2 |
| Know Your Rights | 6 | | | 6 |
| Law Day | | | | 0 |
| Other | 6 | 1 | 12 | 19 |
| Quarter Total | 12 | 8 | 19 | 39 |
| Year to Date | 32 | 11 | 41 | 84 |

Service Area #5

| Legal Services to ONS Network | Advice | Brief Services | Training | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Individual Vendor | | | | |
| Event Participants | | | | |
| Quarter Total | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Year to Date | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

**Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit**

Service Area #1 Service Area #2

FY 24

| Quarter # <u>4</u> | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | From:4/1/24 Quarter Total | To: 6/30/24 Year to Date |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Legal Services | | | | |
| Level of Assistance | | | | |
| Advice | 2 | 25 | 27 | 2526 |
| Brief Services | 60 | 1054 | 1114 | 3550 |
| External Referral | | | 0 | 0 |
| Internal Referral | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| Representation | 2 | 200 | 202 | 2078 |
| Quarter Total | 66 | 1282 | 1348 | |
| Year to Date | 537 | 7626 | | 8163 |

| Sub Case Type | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Benefits | | | 0 | 0 |
| Civil Rights | | | 0 | 0 |
| Consumer Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Criminal | 4 | 6 | 10 | 66 |
| DAP | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Education | | | 0 | 1 |
| Employment | | | 0 | 1 |
| Family Law | | | 0 | 0 |
| Health Law | | | 0 | 1 |
| Housing Law | 2 | 10 | 12 | 27 |
| Immigration | | | 0 | 1 |
| Prisoner's Rights | | | 0 | 201 |
| Project HOPE | | 53 | 53 | 121 |
| Project Reset | | 109 | 109 | 668 |
| Tax Law | | | 0 | 1 |
| Other/Miscellaneous | 60 | 1103 | 1163 | 7074 |
| Quarter Total | 66 | 1282 | 1348 | |
| Year to Date | 537 | 7626 | | 8163 |

| Additional Matters | CV Prog Participants | Community & CV Partner | Quarter Total | Year to Date |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| # of Cases Referred Out | | | 0 | 0 |
| # of Cases Open | 66 | 1282 | 1348 | 8163 |
| # of Cases Closed | 66 | 1282 | 1348 | 8163 |
| Quarter Total | 66 | 1282 | 1348 | |
| Year to Date | 537 | 7626 | | 8163 |

Service Area #3 & Service Area #4

| Event Type | Training | Legal Clinic | Other Events | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| Virtual | | | 2 | 2 |
| Tabling | | 1 | | 1 |
| Advice | | | 2 | 2 |
| RAP Sheet | | | | 0 |
| Voter Registration | | | | 0 |
| Intake/ Office Hours | | 2 | | 2 |
| MJU | | 1 | | 1 |
| Know Your Rights | 7 | | | 7 |
| Law Day | | | | 0 |
| Other | 3 | | 9 | 12 |
| Quarter Total | 10 | 4 | 13 | 27 |
| Year to Date | 42 | 15 | 54 | 111 |

Service Area #5

| Legal Services to ONS Network | Advice | Brief Services | Training | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|-------|
| Individual Vendor | 21 | | | 21 |
| Event Participants | | | 46 | 46 |
| Quarter Total | 21 | 0 | 46 | 67 |
| Year to Date | 24 | 1 | 46 | 71 |

Exhibit B

The Community Justice Unit

THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY
CRIMINAL
DEFENSE



Quarter 3 Report

July 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025

199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038
212-577-3300

legalaidnyc.org

Empowering NYC Communities

The Community Justice Unit
The Legal Aid Society

The Community Justice Unit (CJU) was established in 2011 as part of the New York City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence. The Unit adopts the Cure Violence philosophy - that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement. Our work empowers underserved communities impacted by gun violence to develop proactive strategies to reduce violence through providing holistic legal representation, extensive community outreach, and public educational campaigns. Since 2014, CJU has become the primary legal service provider of New York City's Crisis Management System, a network of credible messengers who mediate conflicts and connect high-risk individuals to services that can reduce the long-term risk of violence.



Implementing the CV Model

| | INTERRUPTING TRANSMISSION | REDUCING HIGHEST RISK | CHANGING COMMUNITY NORMS |
|-------------------|--|---|---|
| MODEL GOALS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent Retaliations • Mediate Conflicts • Keep Conflicts Cool | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess Highest Risk • Change Behavior • Provide Treatment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to Shootings • Organize Community • Spread Positive Norms |
| CJU ROLE | <p>Provide support to CV partner agencies and participants intermediary role between communities and law enforcement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical Representation Model • Connect CV partner agencies, community members, and participants to social/legal services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify Community Voices • Challenge policies negatively impacting communities (e.g. MJ reform, gang database) |
| SERVICES PROVIDED | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Surrenders • 24/7 Hotlines • Emergency Legal Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rap Sheet Clinics • Job Fairs/Employment Training • Access to Benefits (Housing, Disability, Education, Healthcare) • Case Closed - Record Sealing • Immigration Issues • Court Information/Legal Advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shooting Responses • Know Your Rights Events • Community Events (Tabling) • Policy Advocacy/Reform • Awareness Campaigns • Pathways to College • Gun Violence Awareness |



Our Services

CJU integrates the Cure Violence initiative into its legal and outreach services. The Unit provides legal support on various issues such as housing, criminal law, and crisis intervention. The CJU also operates a 24-hour hotline to address community members' most urgent legal needs.

To engage the community members outside of CMS sites, the CJU hosts events like Rap Sheet clinics, Voting Registration drives, and Know Your Rights trainings. The Unit also organizes annual public awareness campaigns. Each campaign targets historically over-policed neighborhoods and shifts the focus from punitive measures to expanded community services and support.

Our Impact

1,100

individual legal services provided

931

of the individual legal services provided were to Project Rest and Project Hope participants

69

events hosted by the CJU

4,485

event attendees

141

hotline calls received

57

community engagement events, including rallies, shooting responses and advocacy meetings



Our Service Locations

The CJU provides services across all five boroughs, including over 30 Crisis Management System (CMS) locations and Cure Violence sites.

The map to the right provides an overview of New York City Council Districts with icons on the 25 neighborhoods served by the partner sites the CJU worked alongside during the first two quarters of FY 2025.



Our Most Served Partners

SAVE OUR STREETS



Save Our Streets
Bronx



Getting Out Staying Out



Man UP! Inc.

Midtown
Community Justice
Center

Midtown Community
Justice Center

Bronx
Community
Solutions

Bronx Community
Solutions



Our Advocacy

In July, the CJU joined forces with organizations across New York City to raise awareness about gun violence, promote community health, and support youth advocacy. During National Gun Violence Awareness Month, CJU participated in the Gun Violence Awareness Community Call for Peace event, following tragic shootings in Brooklyn that remind us of the urgency of Cure Violence efforts. CJU attorneys engaged community members at the SPF Cure Violence Health & Awareness event, while CJU organizers supported Queensbridge's "Occupy the Corner" Safe Summer event by providing brochures and legal assistance to attendees.

Housing attorneys offered legal advice to residents at Queensbridge Houses, and CJU continued leading Know Your Rights workshops. CJU also stood alongside youth advocates at the Invest in Youth rally, and celebrated women's leadership at the second Women in Leadership Conference.



In September, the CJU partnered with Bronx Rise Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.) and Stand Up To Violence, CJU stood in solidarity at multiple events, including "Occupy the Corner" in Harlem and "Save Our Streets" in the Bronx, raising awareness and distributing

resources like swag bags to strengthen neighborhood safety. Through their newly launched "Do NYC Justice" campaign, CJU informed underserved communities of free legal resources. In addition, CJU facilitated Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests to help individuals challenge unjust gang database listings and organized voter registration drives at Rikers Island.





In September, The Legal Aid Society hosted its inaugural East Harlem Law Day. The event was co-sponsored by New York City Council Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, East Harlem Community Board 11, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, New York State Assembly Member Edward Gibbs, and New York State Senator José M. Serrano.

The event invited New Yorkers to learn about their rights and get information about various areas of law, including housing/NYCHA, immigration, education, public benefits, community development, and more. CJU staff tabled at the event and provided information on the services they offer.

In October, the CJU supported Save Our Streets to end gun violence at the neighborhood level. Our staff participated in their shooting response and call to action in the Bronx. These events convey that the community will not tolerate violence and provide services to meaningful educational and employment opportunities.



In March, the CJU stood alongside council members and the Gangs Coalition during a rally on the steps of City Hall in support of a bill to eliminate the NYPD's Gang Database. Similarly, CJU joined protests alongside advocates opposing mass deportations and ICE raids and challenged Mayor Eric Adams' directive concerning ICE access to city properties.

The CJU also participated in multiple events focused on holding law enforcement accountable, such as facilitating a planned rally outside of D.A. Fitzpatrick's office, standing in solidarity with families who lost loved ones in custody, and later marching around Governor Hochul's office demanding an investigation into the death of Robert Brooks and others affected by violence in New York State prisons.



CJU also continued its public education efforts, including its Know Your Rights workshops, which focused particularly on immigration and ICE encounters. Additionally, CJU helped educate partners from Community Not Cages and the Fortune Society on legislative efforts, including the Second Look Act, Earned Time Act, and Marvin Mayfield Act.

On the community outreach front, CJU showed strong support for violence interruption efforts. The team joined Cure Violence partners such as True 2 Life, Central Family Life, and Guns Down Life Up for outreach events in Staten Island and the Bronx.





CJU also participated in several Peace Week activities, including tabling at Willis Avenue and joining LifeCamp and other Crisis Management System partners for the celebration's closing event, where local leaders recognized community members for their dedication to peace-building.



THE LOWER EASTSIDE
GIRLS CLUB

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WELLBEING &
HAPPINESS** ☺

Joy. Power. Possibility.

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212-982-1633 • www.girlsclub.org

**Testimony from the Lower Eastside Girls Club
City Council FY 26 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Children and Youth, Jointly with
Committee on Finance
May 19, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Althea Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth, and Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Jenny Dembrow, and I am the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club. I've been with the organization since its founding in 1996, when there were three Boys Clubs, but no Girls Club in the neighborhood. We operated out of a basement, community rooms, schools, and over two dozen locations until we moved into our current 35,000 sq ft facility in 2013. For nearly 30 years, thousands of young women, gender-expansive youth, and their families have benefited from our free programming, services, and initiatives.

The Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) connects young women and gender-expansive youth throughout New York City to healthy and successful futures filled with Joy, Power, and Possibility. We nurture safe spaces where young people can dream big, find their passions, and connect to peers and careers through free, year-round programming and mentoring. In 2022, we expanded our offerings by launching the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness (CWBH), with a core belief that the well-being of our young people is intimately connected to the well-being of their family and community.

LESGC serves youth from across the five boroughs, reaching youth from 27 zip codes. Our Youth Programming covers three key areas: 1) **Education, Equity, and Access** through offerings in STEM, Digital Media, Arts, Design, Movement, and Wellness. 2) **Economic Mobility and Opportunity**: Connecting hundreds of youth annually with Internships, Mentors, Training, and College and Career Exploration. 3) **Civic Leadership**: Through our New Girl City leadership initiative and the STARS coalition, sponsored by the Women's Caucus, we are building a diverse pipeline of advocates, activists, and policymakers for the future New York City.

NYC youth have been particularly impacted by the socio-economic tumult of recent years. According to the Citizens Committee of Children of NYC: *Keeping Track on New York Children 2024 Report*, growing income inequality keeps hundreds of thousands of NYC children living below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In NYC, more than 80% of families cannot afford child care or after-school care costs, and over 100,000 public school students are living in temporary housing. An estimated 38% of NYC High School youth report having symptoms of depression. Black and Latinx youth are disconnected from school and employment at more than double the rate of their white peers.

Community-based youth programs, such as LESGC, are essential to addressing the youth mental health and affordability crises in NYC. Operating outside of schools and within neighborhoods,

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these organizations are valuable assets for youth, families, and communities alike (Gootman & Eccles, 2002; Vandell et al., 2015). A recent study by the Wallace Foundation highlights how culture-centered, community-based youth programs provide vital spaces to support the well-being and well-becoming of young people (Osai et al., 2025).

In 2023, over 190,000 (18%) children and youth in public schools were reached through the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) after-school programs. Despite this need, DYCD cut key programs in 2024, negatively impacting youth services throughout the city. Specifically, LESGC lost two DYCD grants: Compass Explorer (\$65,765) and Adolescent Literacy (\$108,274). While not fully covering program costs, these contracts have been essential to our overall funding model.

Currently, LESGC is navigating a challenging financial reality and stands at a critical inflection point. Beyond the government funding cuts, LESGC is also confronting the recent attack on DEI initiatives and general fiscal uncertainty, which have negatively impacted philanthropic giving among corporate, private foundations, and individual donors. Between a \$3 million mortgage for purchasing our CWBH space in 2019, rising costs due to inflation, and declining donations, our revenue has fallen behind, resulting in a \$2 million deficit.

Combined, these fiscal challenges pose a direct and imminent risk to our ability to provide the vital services and innovative programming so many youth rely on at a time when the need is greater than ever. We have already been forced to lay off 17 employees in April 2025 and cut back on our program offerings. We are requesting a total of \$2.5 million from the City Council in FY26 to support the broader stabilization of the organization. City Council support will:

- **Invest in a Proven Solution:** Support an organization with a demonstrated track record of success in uplifting youth.
- **Address Urgent Needs:** Provide critical resources to tackle the youth mental health crisis through culturally relevant, community-based approaches.
- **Create Lasting Change:** Promote long-term economic mobility by investing in education, workforce training, and comprehensive youth services.

As we search for a way forward, general operating support from the City Council would help us secure our legacy as a transformative force in youth development in New York City and expand our impact for future generations.



Center for
New York City
Affairs

Center for New York City Affairs

The New School

72 Fifth Avenue, 6th Floor

New York, NY 10011

**New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Executive Budget Hearing for FY2026**

Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair

May 19, 2025

Good afternoon and thank you Chair Stevens and the Children and Youth Committee for the opportunity to testify today on the City's FY2026 Executive Budget. My name is Lauren Melodia, and I am the Director of Economic & Fiscal Policy at The New School's Center for New York City Affairs. We conduct independent economic and fiscal analysis to build better livelihoods for workers, families and communities in New York City.

As you know, the City's funding requirements for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) vouchers took a hit in the State budget process this year. The Administration for Children's Services (ACS) determined late in the budget process that the State's Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funding allocation for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2025 (ending September 30, 2025) – which comes to the City from a federal block grant administered by the State – would not be sufficient to continue to accept new "income eligible" families to the program. ACS claimed this would result in the City creating a waitlist for the CCAP voucher program, which provides heavily subsidized childcare for working "income eligible" families earning 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) as well as families receiving cash assistance (called Temporary Assistance "TA").

While the State budgeted additional funds for the City to address this challenge, the State budget includes new parameters for the City to access those funds. First, while the City's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) had previously been \$53 million to access the State's CCBG allocation, it is now \$328 million. This will go into effect in FFY 2026 (starting October 1, 2025). Additionally, the State set aside an additional \$350 million for the City to access for CCAP vouchers above its existing \$1.1 billion allotment, but these additional dollars will require the City to provide a 1-to-1 match to access those funds.

The City has a lot of tough budget choices to make this year, as demand for services collide with anticipated and real federal and State funding cuts. Luckily, the CCBG funding, which comes from a federal block grant, is not at risk as of now. Still, this is an important year for the City to both increase its budget and for the CCAP voucher program and make progress towards a more integrated childcare system in NYC.

I urge you take the following actions:

- 1. The City should add \$596 million to the CCAP voucher budget:**

The City should budget \$246 to cover the MOE during City fiscal year (CFY) 2026 and an additional \$350 million to access additional State funds. The City regularly under-budgets for the CCAP program and spends to meet demand regardless of that budget. It is better to overbudget this year, so that those State funds will not be compromised and to reduce further disruptions to the program. Deputy Mayor Mastro's May 5th announcement of a CCAP voucher waitlist has already stoked confusion amongst City residents. This program is a life-line for families – providing care for over 75,000 children from both income eligible families and those TA-recipient families who need them to maintain their cash assistance benefits. While the waitlist was technically only imposed on income eligible families in an effort to preserve funding for TA families, it creates confusion and new bureaucratic challenges for parents and childcare providers that could result in unintended consequences, such as families leaving the City, parents and businesses experiencing work disruptions, and more financial strain for center- and family-based childcare program providers.

- Adding \$350 million to the City's adopted budget to access additional State funds may seem unrealistic in light of economic and federal policy uncertainties, but the Council should think of it as a cost-saver for the City on early care and education (ECE) spending broadly. In CFY 2024, City revenue comprised 13 percent of the adopted budget for CCAP vouchers and approximately 30 percent of the adopted budget for Pre-K and 3-K. While it is disappointing that the State has imposed this 1-to-1 match on the additional funds set aside, it is smarter budgeting to tap into early care and education (ECE) seats with this match, compared to other ECE program expansion efforts which may require 100% City revenue.

This brings me to my other recommendation.

2. The City should better integrate its ECE programming, primarily the CCAP voucher and DOE-contracted programs.

- New York City's existing ECE system is complex. Despite New Deal-era efforts to build a comprehensive, government-funded childcare system in New York City, the provision of childcare takes place largely in the private sector and is subsidized by public resources and parents' and providers' unpaid work. For families that rely on care outside of their homes, regulated ECE is provided in a variety of program types. Each has its own unique set of State and City regulations, policy supports, and funding streams.
- The expansion of the Pre-K and 3-K programs over the past ten years has been wildly popular, because they substantially tackle the childcare affordability crisis for parents whose income is too high to be eligible for CCAP vouchers. The City has worked hard to promote and fill its Pre-K and 3-K programs, and to understand where there is supply and demand mismatch. But it has done so as if the CCAP program doesn't exist alongside those programs. Center- and family-based childcare programs are often serving 3-year olds from the DOE 3-K program, the CCAP voucher program and private parents *simultaneously*.
- The public support for 3-K and the CCAP voucher funding crisis this year demonstrate that there is high demand for both of these programs. However, this program demand (and its budget implications) exist alongside empty seats in the DOE-contracted ECE system. As of the Mayor's Management Report published in January 2025, there were over 18,000 unfilled seats in DOE programs that serve children five years old and younger (see Table 1). 12,771 of these were in programs that offer care for the full day and full year. The City has contracts

with non-profit agencies, family childcare providers and DOE schools that pay for these seats, regardless of whether or not a child is enrolled.

- In a [March 2025 report](#) I wrote about the CCBG funding crisis, I estimated that an additional 37,717 vouchers would be needed per month once TA recipients are fully in compliance with work requirements. If 12,771 of these or other current voucher recipients had their childcare needs met by using DOE contracted services, the additional monthly voucher need would only be 24,946 per month. If TA recipients and/or current voucher holders were able to have their childcare needs met using the School Day/Year seats as well, only an additional 19,335 monthly vouchers would be needed.
- However, I'm not suggesting the solution is moving children from the CCAP voucher program into DOE-contracted care. I highlight the empty seats to demonstrate that we have created an overly complicated ECE system, and this current budget challenge presents an opportunity for City Council to better understand the current ECE system and make policy solutions that improve this system for families and childcare program providers. Ultimately, parents and providers need an integrated system. For parents, this is one place to go to find out about the different program modalities available (center-based, family-based, school-based) and their unique qualities (language accessibility, special needs accommodations, etc.); and to determine their eligibility for and apply to DOE, CCAP and private care options. For childcare programs, this translates to working with one agency (not four) to enroll and management payments for children in their care, regardless of the funding stream. For this City, this would result in having better data on ECE supply and demand, based on geography, program modality and more that would prepare the City and the network of schools, non-profits and family childcare providers that deliver these services to plan better for where to build more childcare seats, increase targeting marketing, etc.
- Building that more integrated program would require more engagement with the ECE system's providers and parents than is possible during this short budget period. However, one step towards a more integrated system is necessary after the CFY 2026 budget is finalized. Over the next year, City Council should regularly convene the four City agencies that currently work with ECE programs – ACS, HRA, DOE and DOHMH – to make sure they are better coordinated and sharing data. A recent survey CNYCA conducted shows that the average family childcare provider in the City is operating at half-capacity, demonstrating that better coordination and marketing support is needed to match parents and providers. For example, if there needs to be a waitlist for CCAP vouchers as Deputy Mayor Mastro has suggested, is ACS helping those on the waitlist access empty DOE-contracted seats? As HRA takes more lead in voucher disbursement to TA-recipient families, how are they communicating with ACS, DOHMH, center- and family-based childcare programs and the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies to best match parents to providers and remove bureaucratic hurdles?

Lastly, I want to focus your attention on the TA-recipient families who will be increasing their CCAP voucher utilization in the coming months. One of the main reasons for the CCBG funding crisis this year is due to the fact that TA-recipient families will have work requirements enforced for the first time in five years.

3. **The City should be creative in its roll-out of work requirements for families receiving cash assistance.** The City has seen skyrocketing public assistance enrollment since Covid, a

sign that there are families in tremendous need. This is an opportunity to learn from past experiences and for City Council to re-design work requirements in a way that supports TA-recipient families. There is a possibility that there will still be insufficient funds for the CCAP program even if the City adds \$596 million to the CCAP voucher budget. One administrative change the City could make is to delay the work requirement for new parents. Currently parents must meet work requirements after 3 months, which forces them to get a childcare voucher to enter the workforce after 3 months. However, the City could change this requirement to allow TA-recipient parents to stay home with their child until the child is one year old. This means that parents would have the option to forego the work requirement for the first year of a child’s life. This would result in some cost savings for CCAP vouchers. While I estimate this would be a small group of parents, this is an example of a sensible change to the City’s work requirements that would improve family wellbeing and reduce CCAP voucher costs this year. I encourage the Committee on Youth and Children to work with the Committee on General Welfare to review current TA-recipient work requirement policy and determine if there are administrative changes that would be beneficial for youth and child wellbeing.

Table 1: Available seats in DOE-contracted early care and education programs

| | FY23 Actual | FY24 Actual | FY25 Target | FY25 4-mo Actual |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Full Day/Year</i> | | | | |
| Infants | 2,148 | 438 | | 5,440 |
| 3 year-olds | 3,860 | 3,481 | 3,293 | 4,105 |
| 4 year-olds | 4,371 | 3,756 | 3,917 | 3,226 |
| Total Full Day/Year | 10,379 | 7,675 | 7,210 | 12,771 |
| <i>School Day/Year</i> | | | | |
| 3 year-olds | 5,495 | 4,965 | 1,954 | 2,656 |
| 4 year-olds | 11,218 | 10,252 | 8,614 | 2,955 |
| Total School Day/Year | 16,713 | 15,217 | 10,568 | 5,611 |
| Total Seats | 27,092 | 22,892 | 17,778 | 18,382 |

Note: Full Day/Year seats include both Head Start as well as EarlyLearn, 3-K and Pre-K. School day seats only include 3-K and Pre-K seats.

Source: CNYCA analysis of Mayor’s Management Report.



Written Testimony for the Committee on Finance Jointly with the Committee on Children & Youth

To: The Honorable City Council Members Athea Stevens & Justin Brannan

Re: *Save the Child Care Assistance Program By Fully Match the State's \$350 Million & Fund Supports for Home Based Providers through Start-up Grants and Fixes to the Licensing Approval System*

From: Emily Sharrock, Policy & Strategy Consultant, NYC Thriving Provider Project, Home Grown

Date: May 19, 2025

Dear Council Member Althea Stevens & Council Member Justin Brannan,

I want to begin by thanking you for your leadership in providing access to quality, affordable care across the five boroughs. I also applaud the inclusion of funding on this issue currently represented in the city budget including restoration of funding for center-based care, funds for special education in PreK, afterschool funding and Promise NYC.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Children and Youth Committee on behalf of home based childcare providers and *the 85,000 children ages 0-5* they serve in New York City. As a Policy & Strategy Consultant with [Home Grown's Thriving Provider Project](#) (TPP) here in New York City, I am acutely aware of the vital role that home based care plays to support our economy and our families.

Home Grown is a national funders collaborative committed to improving access to and the quality of home-based child care. It leads the national funding for TPP, which is focused on improving both the sufficiency and stability of income for home-based child care providers. We know that when providers' economic stability is secured, they can engage in caregiving work that promotes quality, ensures family access and connects them to the profession for the long term. To address the gaps in adequate compensation that persist TPP provides \$1,000 in direct cash transfers each month for 18 months to newly licensed providers in the Bronx. TPP participants across the country and in New York City report that they are better able to meet their basic needs and experience higher economic stability and emotional well-being after receiving cash. Additionally, **when providers have the income they need to sustain their caregiving work, they also invest in increasing the quality of their services, which can create a chain reaction that positively impacts children's overall development.**

In addition, providers report that they are less likely to leave their jobs and experience financial insecurity.

Because of this, TPP stands with our providers in warning this Committee that **without further funding for childcare subsidies, we are going to see massive disruption to the city's supply of family child care for New York's neediest families. The city must move to fully match the \$350 million the State has offered in matching funds for CCAP in the city budget.**

Without access to these matching funds, new eligible families will be unable to enroll, and thousands of families could lose access to childcare vouchers as early as this summer—worsening the city's growing affordability crisis and jeopardizing parents' ability to work and support their children. **It is estimated that in the absence of additional funding, [4,000-7,000 children would lose child care assistance each month.](#)**

In addition, we urge the Committee to make additional budget recommendations to include provisions that will shore up the stability of family childcare. **If we are serious about moving toward universal child care, we must address the structural and financial barriers facing FCC providers and invest in practical solutions that ensure their sustainability and growth.** Based on ideas generated in partnership with our providers and implementation partners I recommend:

(1) Providing \$5,000 start-up grants to help new FCC providers overcome initial barriers to entering the child care market. Our research shows that start-up costs often average over \$15,000. We need to make the prospect of starting home based care realistic if we are going to meet the demands of the market, especially in outer boroughs.

(2) Establishing a cross-agency task force to streamline the licensing process with input from providers and offer temporary Licensing-to-Subsidy "Gap" stipends that keep providers financially stable while awaiting subsidy approvals and navigating bureaucratic delays.

Family child care is an essential service for New York City neighborhoods. Right now, New Yorkers are struggling to get by - managing everything from rising rents, to the rising cost of groceries, to the rising cost of childcare. Childcare subsidies have become a lifeline to thousands of families in the city. Of all of their expenses, the cost of childcare for parents is now reported to be the highest cost families face. In fact, paid child care in New York [for minimum wage workers is close to half of that person's annual salary](#), making it nearly impossible for low-income workers to pay for child care. **When parents struggle to find adequate childcare, staying in the workforce is close to impossible for many - hurting not just families, but also businesses who hire them and the overall economy.**

New York City's supply of childcare is already fragile, especially in home based care (which supplies 52% of subsidized care for families in New York). Compared to other ECE program types, regulated home-based programs, which are small businesses owned by providers themselves, have experienced a rapid rate of closures in the past 10 years, further accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. [From January 2020 to July 2022, 3,524 ECE programs in New York State closed; 79 percent of those were Family Child Care \(FCC\) or Group Family Child Care \(GFCC\) programs.](#) Given the very tight margins within which these small businesses operate, they are especially vulnerable to changes in enrollment or any threats to take-home pay and operational viability. Even if short term, threats to the funding for families to enroll in these programs can lead to financial distress, ruin and closure quickly.

The families and communities that will be most impacted by this lack of funding are those who live in the outer boroughs, especially the Bronx. This is where home based child care is most prevalent. Many families in these areas need flexible care including longer hours, or at non-traditional hours to accommodate longer commutes and jobs that require this flexibility. For example, in the [Highbridge/Concourse area of the Bronx \(Bronx Community District 4\) there are 415](#) licensed home based programs. These business owners, largely women, are anchors in their community. Policies that threaten the viability of these providers and their services will have a significant impact on individual families, childcare businesses, and also the entire neighborhood economy.

On average, businesses lose \$1,640 a year for each working parent due to lost revenue and hiring costs because of insufficient child care, totaling \$23 billion annually. Due to a failure to invest, child care challenges cost the United States economy an [estimated \\$122 billion a year](#). These losses hurt families too. Not having child care — or enough child care — costs individual parents more than \$5,500 a year, or [more than \\$78 billion](#) in total. [Read more [here](#)]

Yet, the **community's return on investment for childcare funding is irrefutable. Investing in high-quality child care and early learning programs can generate up to \$7.30 per every dollar invested.** High quality home-based child care ensures young children are developmentally on track and ready for school and that parents are working and contributing to the economy. Parents want care in small settings that they trust for their babies. Nationally, 30% of infants and toddlers attend home-based child care as their primary care arrangement. ([Child Trends, 2018](#)). Home base settings support children whose parents work nontraditional or nonstandard work hours ([Urban Institute 2022](#)). Many families want and choose home-based child care; this care accommodates their family circumstances and aligns with their families values, preferences and child creating practices. Families across the country report selecting this care option because they trust caregivers to support their children's learning and development. ([Child Trends 2023](#)). [Read more: [2023 Home-based Child Care Fact Sheet](#)]

We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We also know that the State has created a challenging budget year for the city. Unfortunately, New York City cannot afford not to act. **Funding childcare checks all of the boxes.** It is key to affordability, economic growth, employment and the wellbeing of children and families. But, **cutting access to childcare subsidies will hurt New York City businesses, the economy and importantly thousands of hardworking New Yorkers raising our youngest children.**

We are advocating as strongly as we can to ask you to respond to ACS's request for additional funding by *fully matching* the State's \$350 Million budget allocation for CCAP funding.

Thank you for your consideration of this crucial investment.

Respectfully,

Emily Sharrock

Strategy & Policy Consultant

Thriving Providers, Home Grown

To Learn more about Home Grown and Contact Us:

- Website: <https://homegrownchildcare.org/>
- Newsletter: <https://homegrownchildcare.org/newsletter/>
- Email: info@homegrownchildcare.org



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

**New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
and
New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Submitted by:
Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York**

May 19, 2025

Thank you, Chairpersons Brannan and Stevens and members of the Finance and Committee on Children and Youth Services, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Manager of Government and External Relations 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 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 \$185 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, counter antisemitism and strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

Maintain the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers

UJA appreciates the City Council and Administration’s \$741 million commitment to provide a 3% COLA for human services workers through FY27.

A COLA is a significant step towards addressing the historic underfunding and lack of investment in the human services sector, as these workers do some of the most important jobs in our communities yet are underpaid and undervalued. As government is the predominant funder of human services through government contracts, this has resulted in nearly 25% of all human services workers qualifying for food stamps in 2016-2018. Low wages also have a sweeping effect on workplace conditions and the outcome of programs, with high staff turnover and vacancy rates resulting in heavy and unsustainable workloads.

Years of underfunding of the sector have resulted in the human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City’s economy. These are workers who do some of the most important jobs in our communities; they take care of our aging neighbors, assist families in staying in their homes, provide workforce training, work with people to overcome substance abuse and addiction, and help people from all walks of life in the event of an emergency. The COLA investment is a step in the right direction to ensuring

city-contracted human services workers are paid fairly. **UJA urges the City Council and Administration to continue their commitment to supporting this workforce.**

Reverse the \$6.9 million cut made to COMPASS Explore in FY 25

The FY25 enacted budget included a \$6.9 million cut to the COMPASS Explore afterschool program. **UJA is urging the City Council and Adams' Administration to include \$6.9 million in the FY 26 enacted budget for COMPASS Explore reversing the cut made to the program in FY 25.**

The \$6.9 million cut made to COMPASS afterschool programs decreased access to these programs. Two nonprofits in UJA's network lost funding for 72 youth to attend their afterschool programs. One of these programs had a waitlist; both provided services to communities that had limited access to other affordable afterschool options. The recent announcement made by the Adams' Administration about increased funding for afterschool programs did not include funding to restore the COMPASS Explore program. **UJA urges the City Council and Adams' Administration to reverse the \$6.9 million cut made to COMPASS Explore.**

Strengthen existing afterschool programs

Nonprofits in UJA's network oversee COMPASS and/or SONYC afterschool programs throughout New York City. These nonprofits recognize the resource they provide to children, youth and their families. For parents and guardians, available and affordable afterschool programs provide a respite for them when they are unable to be with their children at the end of the school day. For children and youth, afterschool programs offer a place where they can prepare for the next school day and learn new skills. UJA is grateful that the Adams' Administration has recognized the importance of these programs by announcing new investments in New York City's afterschool system. However, this investment focuses on growing the program before strengthening it.

The recently proposed investment included an announcement that a new afterschool request for proposal (RFP) will be released in FY 2027. This new RFP will include enhanced rates. At the same time, no additional investments have been revealed for FY 2026 while additional slots are being added to the COMPASS system. COMPASS and SONYC programs have not been re-procured in over a decade, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation. These are the same reimbursement rates they will receive in FY 2026 while serving additional children in their elementary afterschool program. The expansion proposed in the Administration's plan forces some providers to make a difficult decision between taking on additional slots at a decades-old rate or forgoing the opportunity to serve more children in their communities. **The City must increase funding to the afterschool system by including \$159,794,100 in the FY 26 Adopted Budget to bring both COMPASS Elementary and SONYC Middle School programs halfway to full funding, thereby stabilizing our afterschool system and preparing for the announced expansion.**

Before the afterschool expansion announcement, COMPASS and SONYC contracts were extended through Summer 2028 by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) in January 2025. Providers were asked to continue to oversee programs with no additional funding included for enhanced rates. The contract extension DYCD asked COMPASS and SONYC providers to agree to is what they will be paid in FY 2026. COMPASS afterschool providers will be compensated between \$2,800 and \$3,200 per participant and SONYC afterschool providers at \$3,200 per participant for a nine-month program. Keeping the per participant rates at these levels does not help providers in FY 2026 address the higher costs of overseeing these programs as well as increase salaries for staff that would help both attract and maintain employees in afterschool programs. Because of this, the city must commit to funding higher per participant rates for afterschool programs in the FY 26 budget to stabilize New York City's afterschool system while it is being expanded.

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) produced a report in November 2023, where they analyzed the true costs of implementing high-quality afterschool programs in New York City.¹ They took into account increasing salaries for staff in afterschool programs to at least \$22 an hour and applying a 3 percent COLA and additional costs related to other than personal services (OTPS). UNH found the true per participant rate for COMPASS elementary programs to be \$6,600, more than double what COMPASS programs are currently paid and what was included in the proposed contract extension. Using the same salary information, COLA and costs related to OTPS, UNH found the per participant rate for SONYC afterschool programs was \$5,500, double the current contract and proposed contract extension for a School-Year SONYC Program.

The cost of living continues to increase in New York City while the costs associated with providing services to children, youth and their families are also on the rise. Afterschool programs cannot maintain staff and operate high quality services while being paid outdated rates in FY 2026 that do not recognize these increased costs. The current system does not support the existing slots, let alone expansion. **In order to address the true cost of providing high quality afterschool services and set expansion of the system up for success, the Adams' Administration must invest \$159,794,100 in the FY 26 enacted budget.** This would phase-in higher rates and result in per participant rates for COMPASS Elementary of \$4900, and for SONYC middle school programs \$4150 per participant.

Other mechanisms that would ensure that DYCD is supporting providers to oversee high-quality afterschool programs include:

- Establishing year-round, twelve-month youth service contracts and streamlining the procurement process.
- Ensure that afterschool program enrollment is controlled locally by community-based organizations and not centralized by DYCD.
- Ensure that afterschool programs are paid on time and efforts to catch up on payments owed from previous fiscal years are immediately prioritized.
- When the new RFP for SONYC and COMPASS is released contracts must include:
 - Paying approved providers indirect rates in full, in accordance with the City's Indirect Cost Rate Initiative. Providers must also be able to claim those rates at the outset and include them in budgets, not have a placeholder rate that later gets amended.
 - Including annual funding for cost escalators in contracts, in accordance with inflation.
 - Supporting staffing ratios appropriate for School Age Child Care (SACC) licensing for all 12 months of the year.

COMPASS and SONYC programs continue to provide services to children and youth, regardless of how much or when they are reimbursed to do so. Increased financial investments must be made starting in FY 2026 to better support these programs, so providers can continue to serve their communities for years to come.

Summer Rising

This past summer, six nonprofits in UJA's network oversaw Summer Rising programs. Each of these agencies managed New York City funded summer camps that existed before the development of Summer Rising. Years of overseeing summer as well as after school programming for children and youth across New York City has resulted in each nonprofit gaining an understanding of the needs of the communities they serve. And more importantly what it takes to run successful programming for children and youth.

¹ <https://uploads.prod01.oregon.platform-os.com/instances/542/assets/True%20Cost%20of%20Afterschool%20November%202023.pdf?updated=1700510432>

Every provider in the UJA network recognizes that the families they serve need access to free and consistent summer programs for their children. Private summer camps are often too expensive or do not offer enough hours or weeks of programming to support working parents' schedules. Summer Rising provides free programming for ten hours, up to seven weeks (depending on the age of the participant) for those who were able to secure spots in the program. Many of the families who received Summer Rising spots would have difficulty securing other summer programming for their children making it challenging for them to work and provide for their families through the summer. Free summer programming like Summer Rising is essential to supporting New York City families. **It is for this reason that UJA is thankful the FY 26 Preliminary Budget included \$19.6 million to continue to serve middle school students, five days a week until 6pm through summer 2025.** It is critical for planning purposes that Summer Rising providers know as early as possible the exact schedule they will be responsible for serving children and youth. UJA urges the Administration to baseline \$19.6 million in FY 27 onward, so providers have a reliable and consistent Summer Rising schedule.

The need for free summer programming is evident, however it is unclear if Summer Rising should be the only free option for New York City families. Many families who received a Summer Rising spot for their child or children were simply happy to have access to free programming regardless of its structure. If parents are disappointed in any aspects of Summer Rising, they often bring them to the attention of the Community Based Organization (CBO) overseeing the enrichment portion of the day. Specifically, many parents told CBOs they prefer having their children attend a typical summer camp style program that removes their children from classrooms and focuses on developing different skills through engaging in new activities. This year, parents were allowed to opt their child out of the academic portion of the day. However, few chose to do this because they did not have another programming option outside of Summer Rising to attend. Over 140,000 children applied for 110,000 Summer Rising slots in 2024. But the popularity of the program may be contributed to it being the only free summer programming option for families.

Families need access to free summer programs and community-based organizations want to continue offering this service. While Summer Rising may make sense for some families, UJA-Federation of New York believes New York City families need access to different summer program options for their children. This means while Summer Rising is invested in, a traditional full day summer camp model must also be supported. Below are recommendations that will strengthen future free summer programs (including programs that resemble Summer Rising) in New York City.

1. Ensure CBOs have autonomy over the enrollment process for summer programs. This includes access to the waitlist for their programs, being able to both view and actively move individuals on and off the waitlist. Allow families to directly enroll with the CBO they wish their child to attend programming at.
2. Establish a baseline funding level for the DOE and DYCD portions of the Summer Rising program and baseline funding for DYCD for traditional summer programming that does not have an academic component enabling more effective planning for the summer. Transition all summer programming contracts to twelve-month contracts which will promote year-round planning for the summer.
3. Ensure summer program providers are compensated promptly. As of October 2024, many CBOs have yet to receive payment for overseeing summer 2024 Summer Rising programs with some still waiting to be compensated for summer 2023 programming.
4. Develop an information-sharing system to ensure CBOs have access to information regarding students' Individualized Development Plans (IDPs) and allergies.
5. Ensure paraprofessionals are available for all participants who need them, and a specific protocol is developed to follow when a paraprofessional is unavailable to assist a participant who requires this support.

6. Require DYCD and DOE to have greater data transparency regarding the outcomes of surveys completed by families who participated in any city funded summer programs.

UJA looks forward to working with the City Council, Adams' Administration including DYCD and New York City Public Schools, to continue to improve and diversify summer programs for New York City families.

Child Care Assistance Program

In early February 2025, New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) shared that the state Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funds will be exhausted as early as summer 2025. **If this happens, thousands of New York City children will be losing access to child care assistance.** The FY 26 New York State Enacted Budget included \$400 million for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) with \$350 million of that money designated for New York City. To access this money, New York City must agree to invest at least \$350 million. **UJA is urging City Council members and the Adams' Administration to include at least \$350 million for the Child Care Assistance Program in the FY 2026 New York City adopted budget to minimize the number of families that will lose access to child care vouchers.**

State CCBG funds are used to provide: child care assistance for families including those on cash assistance, contracted child care for children 0 to 5 years old and extended day/year care for 3- and 4-year-olds, and child care vouchers for low-income families engaged in work, training, or other qualified activities. ACS has stated that New York City is close to exhausting available state CCBG funds due to the increased market rates implemented by New York State, which have not been funded by the state. Counties are required to use these rates to reimburse child care providers serving children who receive subsidies. There will also be an increased need for child care for families on cash assistance due to New York City fully re-instituting work and training engagement requirements to receive child care assistance. ACS is mandated to provide subsidized child care to families on cash assistance in need of child care and this population will continue to be served moving forward. However, the non-mandated populations who benefit from these vouchers will be at risk of losing this benefit.

Affordable child care in New York City is increasingly out of reach for families—especially those with children under age five. The financial strain threatens the economic stability of families across New York City, particularly low-income families. Families who receive child care assistance can continue to work or pursue education and/or training programs that will advance their careers and increase their earning potential. Any cuts to child care assistance will negatively impact families as well as the providers who oversee their children's care. Families unable to access child care assistance will struggle to afford care, creating a ripple effect on providers by impacting enrollment and harming their businesses.

ACS stated that New York City needed an additional \$987 million included in the FY 2026 New York State budget for the City's Child Care Assistance Program to continue to serve the same number of children moving forward. As stated earlier, \$350 million was included in the FY 2026 New York State enacted budget, and New York City is required to invest \$350 million to access this money. If New York City agrees to contribute \$350 million, that means only an additional \$700 million will be infused into the Child Care Assistance Program resulting in some families losing access to child care vouchers.

Because of this, UJA is requesting City Council members and the Adams' Administration agree to invest at least \$350 million in the Child Care Assistance Program to help decrease as many families as possible from losing these vouchers in New York City. UJA is also urging both ACS and the New York State Office

of Children and Family services to work together and develop a more sustainable funding plan to support the Child Care Assistance Program. In recent years, the Child Care Assistance Program expanded and benefits some of the poorest families that live in New York City. This expansion should be maintained, and New York City families continue to access this important benefit in the future. This will be impossible without an at least \$350 million investment from New York City in the Child Care Assistance Program.

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.



**UNITED
NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSES**

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

**FY 2026 Executive Budget Hearing:
Committee on Children & Youth Services
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Submitted by Kate Connolly, Senior Policy Analyst
May 19th, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kate Connolly, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach 800,000 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.

Youth programming has played a significant role throughout the history of New York City by engaging young people in programming that can expand their minds and opportunities, connecting families to other essential supports beyond after school, and helping youth navigate challenging times. It is crucial that New York City maintain and invest in its youth and community development programs to provide all New Yorkers with opportunities to learn, grow, play, and access resources and opportunities to better their lives.

This testimony will focus on recommendations to support and stabilize citywide youth services and strengthen the human services workforce including:

- Invest \$160 million to stabilize the afterschool system;
- Pilot an alternative summer program model for middle schoolers and fix payment delays;
- Maintain the \$16.5 million total in discretionary funding for the City Council's Adult Literacy Initiative and Adult Literacy Pilot Project;
- New York City's CCAP crisis;
- Create a \$3 Million Youth Mental Health Council Initiative;
- Restore and baseline the Promise NYC program with a \$25 million annual investment;
- Submit Waiver of Hardship to the State to access Raise the Age funds;
- Reduce barriers preventing asylum seeking families from accessing youth-serving programs.

Invest \$160 Million to Stabilize the Afterschool System

COMPASS/SONYC programs provide afterschool and summer programming to school-aged youth across the city. Settlement houses collectively operate 140 school-based after-school programs. COMPASS/SONYC programs have struggled in recent years with low staff wages which have led to recruitment and retention challenges, as well as vacancies due to delays in the DOHMH Comprehensive Background Check process.

In January of 2025, afterschool providers received communication from the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) that their contracts would be extended through Summer 2028. However, as with past contract extensions, this extension will include no increase to their base funding rates, leaving the program stuck with its original funding structure that was negotiated a decade ago.

Then, on April 29, 2025, Mayor Adams announced a new three year investment of \$331 million for New York City's COMPASS afterschool system. This new investment includes both a gradual expansion of 20,000 new slots, as well as future rate increases through a new Request for Proposals (RFP) projected for FY27. Under this proposal, the only new investment in FY26 would be funding for 5,000 new elementary school slots at the provider's current rate. We have not received confirmation of a commitment to raise rates for SONYC Middle School programs as part of this proposal.

Although we appreciate the City's recognition of the importance of afterschool, the existing system is in crisis due to a stagnant funding structure that has not been increased since the last RFP over 10 years ago. The stale base funding in the face of increasingly higher costs has left programs financially unsustainable, has exacerbated the staffing shortage crisis, and jeopardizes program quality. **This disinvestment is unacceptable and the City must commit to funding higher base rates for afterschool programs in the FY26 budget to maintain the stability of NYC's afterschool system.**

Afterschool providers have been vocal that the costs of running afterschool programs are not sustainable at the currently funded base rates. The following examples, from across the afterschool sector, highlight their concerns:

- Costs for Other than Personnel Services (OTPS) have surged since 2019.
 - Bus transportation costs for field trips have nearly doubled, causing many programs to take fewer trips to manage this expense.
 - Liability insurance costs have surged in recent years. At one program site, insurance costs have more than doubled since 2019.
- Stagnant contract rates have made it difficult to recruit and retain staff.
 - Multiple providers reported that staff training costs have more than doubled since 2019.
 - Although providers track attrition data in different formats, all providers reported high turnover rates with supervisor-level positions turning over approximately every 2 years.
- Threats of cuts to federal programs such as AmeriCorps and 21st Century Community Learning Centers further threaten program stability as many providers have built their programs around other funding streams that supplement their staffing structures.

- One provider shared that in looking at their FY26 afterschool budgets after the loss of AmeriCorps funding, their afterschool-related costs have doubled. This is causing them to rearrange budgets to support increased personnel costs, and is limiting their OTPS budgets.
- The minimum wage has increased from \$8.75/hr in 2014 to \$16.50/hr now, and will further increase to \$17/hr in January 2026, putting a further strain on program budgets and decreasing the amount of OTPS funding available.

In November 2023, UNH released a report that detailed the actual cost of running an afterschool program, including a sample budget - [Assessing the True Cost of Implementing High-Quality Afterschool Programming in New York City](#). The report concluded that the City should fund COMPASS Elementary programs at a base rate of at least \$6600 per participant, and SONYC Middle School programs at a rate of at least \$5500 per participant. **As the City has revealed a plan for a new RFP in FY27 with increased rates, the City must begin a phase-in process for higher rates now, committing to a halfway increase of base rates for COMPASS Elementary to \$4900, and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4150 in FY26.** The end goal must be fully funding elementary and middle school programs in the FY27 procurement.

The chart below shows a breakdown of the number of proposed FY26 slots and funding rate, as well as the total funding needed to bring current contracts up the proposed FY26 base rates:

| Current Rate | # of Slots | FY26 Phase 1 Increased Rate | Additional Funding Needed Per Slot | Total Additional Funding Needed for FY26 |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>COMPASS Elementary</i> | | | | |
| \$2800 ¹ | 33,310 ² | \$4900 | \$2100 | \$69,951,000 |
| \$3200 | 16,655 | \$4900 | \$1700 | \$28,313,500 |
| <i>SONYC Middle School</i> | | | | |
| \$3200 | 64,768 | \$4150 | \$950 | \$61,529,600 |
| | | <i>Additional FY26 Funding Needed</i> | | \$159,794,100 |

Given these growing threats and the past decade of disinvestment, the City must act now to invest in afterschool to preserve the fiscal integrity of these programs. **The City must increase funding to the COMPASS afterschool system by \$159,794,100 in this year’s budget to bring both COMPASS Elementary and SONYC Middle School programs halfway to full funding, thereby stabilizing our afterschool system and preparing for the announced expansion.** With a

¹ From what we have gathered, COMPASS Elementary programs contracted in 2011 have a base rate of \$3200 per participant, while programs contracted in 2015 have a base rate of \$2800 per participant due to cuts made when former Mayor Bloomberg baselined programs formerly funded by City Council.

² In the April 29th press release, the Mayor listed the total number of current Elementary School slots as 44,965

forthcoming RFP, the City must commit to base rates of at least \$6600 for COMPASS Elementary and at least \$5500 for SONYC Middle School programs, ensuring that funding levels take into account inflation, increased OTPS costs, cuts to supplemental funding sources, and increases to minimum wage.

Finally, we urge DYCD to work with providers to develop a plan for serving youth with disabilities in COMPASS/SONYC programs. Recommendations include:

- Providing funding for paraprofessional support and allow that paraprofessional staff to report directly to CBO staff;
- Enable CBOs to hire experts and trainers in multiple modalities of learning to support Education Specialists and other existing staff;
- Give program staff access to assistive technologies (and training on how to use them) like communicators (including speech-to-text devices), computer access tools, hearing and visual aids, and more present in their community centers; and
- Issue clear protocols for CBOs to seek out support when integrating a youth with a disability and have programs available to refer these youth to if the current arrangement is not fulfilling that young person's needs.

Pilot an Alternative Summer Program Model for Middle Schoolers and Fix Payment Delays

Despite having completed four years of Summer Rising, the City has released little data on its efficacy and has not conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the model. In response to questions from settlement houses and their communities about the efficacy of this model, UNH conducted a study of Summer Rising, composed of a digital survey of 700 parents and CBO providers, and 7 focus groups of middle school participants. In November 2024, UNH released [*One Size Does Not Fit All: Assessing the Efficacy of the Summer Rising Program in Meeting the Needs of New York City Families*](#). Some of our key findings were:

1. Many families are dependent on free summer programming provided by the city. 58% of surveyed parents said they did not have a back-up option if Summer Rising was not available, with the percentage rising to 64% for low-income families.
2. Middle schoolers expressed frustration with the DOE-led academics. 87% of focus group participants disagreed or felt neutral in regards to the statement "I feel engaged in the morning session" of Summer Rising."
3. Despite recognizing the value of summer academic enrichment, many parents participating in the survey expressed frustration over a lack of communication around the DOE-led academic program. Parents reported being unclear about what curriculum was being used, who their students' teachers were, and if their child's learning needs were being met. This was in contrast to reports of regular communication from the CBO staff.
4. There are widespread concerns whether students with IEPs and English Language Learners are receiving appropriate accommodations. Over half of CBO staff said that a shortage of paraprofessional support for students with IEPs was one of the most pressing challenges. Additionally, some focus group participants who identify as English Language Learners shared that they were excluded from the DOE-led academic portion and given arts & crafts projects instead.

On March 13, 2025, the Department of Education released the *Summer Rising 2024 Impact Analysis*³, which used spring 2024 and fall 2024 standardized academic data to compare the academic performance of young people who participated in Summer Rising to those who did not participate in the program.⁴ From this data, we can see that there were moderate academic gains in the elementary school participants. However, this was not true for middle school students. Even for middle school participants who attended Summer Rising programming for 20+ days, there was no statistically significant impact on Math scores. Furthermore, when compared to other students in the City, middle school Summer Rising participants who attended Summer Rising programming for 20+ days actually fared worse in reading scores than the comparison group. DOE's own impact analysis supports our findings that Summer Rising is not an appropriate model for all middle school youth.

With funding for future summers already allocated in the budget, **the City should use a portion of the dedicated summer funding to pilot alternative summer programming models for middle school students in 2026.**

The summer months offer young people a break from the traditional school schedule, and allow more time for outside play, postsecondary exploration, field trips, positive peer socialization, and hands-on learning activities. Higher-income families often have the option to pick from different summer options depending on their child's preference, but most low-income families are reliant on city-funded programs to ensure a safe summer placement. Youth and families should have a voice in deciding what kind of programming is right for them, and, if youth, parents, and staff are reporting frustration with the current model, the City should pivot to alternative models that have the potential to re-engage them. Allowing for multiple summer programming models⁵ would also provide district-level flexibility to better serve English Language Learners and students with disabilities. In the current model, there is little room for flexibility and limited resources to provide these young people with the proper support.

In addition to investing in multiple program models to meet the needs of more young people, the City must commit to fixing the extensive operational issues:

- Although Summer Rising programming is an add-on to existing contracts, this funding sees huge delays every summer. As of mid-May 2025, providers in the UNH network have only received advances on their Summer Rising contracts, and have not been able to invoice on their contracts for FY25. In fact, several providers revealed that they had only been sent the total amount they will be receiving within the last few weeks. As these providers will need to start hiring Summer 2025 staff soon, this leaves providers floating a huge amount of money for the City in order to make this program happen.
- DYCD intentionally overenrolls programs, leaving providers without guidance on how to staff their programs. DYCD says that this policy is done to account for drop-off over the course of the summer. However, providers are left with the question of whether they should hire staff based on the number of slots they are contracted for, or the number of students who have accepted enrollment into the program. As there is no clear guidance from DYCD as to under what circumstances providers will be compensated for additional

³https://pwsblobprd.schools.nyc/prd-pws/docs/default-source/default-document-library/summer-rising-2024-impact-analysis-web-deck.pdf?sfvrsn=62dd096a_2

⁴ There is not sufficient information provided to know if the comparison group of young people who did not participate in Summer Rising did participate in alternative summer programming.

⁵ Examples of alternative summer programming models are provided in our [Recommendations for Summer 2025](#) document.

enrolled students, providers are forced to balance a lack of funding with unsafe staffing structures.

Maintain the \$16.5 million total in Discretionary Funding for the Council's Adult Literacy Initiative and Adult Literacy Pilot Project

UNH advocates for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services for New Yorkers to improve their literacy skills, learn English, obtain a High School Equivalency diploma, and enter training and post-secondary education.

In New York City, an estimated 2 million adults have limited English-language proficiency or lack a high school diploma. No-cost community-based adult literacy programs such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), adult basic education (ABE), and high school equivalency (HSE) preparation programs enable New Yorkers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to secure higher-paying jobs that can sustain their families, support their children's education, and advocate for themselves and their families. Adult literacy programs run by settlement houses and other community-based organizations often serve as entry points for adult learners who are subsequently connected to workforce training support and other wraparound services that strengthen their families' economic and social well-being.

The wave of newcomers to New York City since 2022 has increased the need for adult literacy education. Adult literacy education is especially critical to helping new and long-time immigrant New Yorkers build skills and knowledge, as ESOL classes allow students to learn English grammar, practical information, and technology skills that they are able to use after they leave the classroom.

In FY25, DYCD's Adult Literacy RFP introduced new geographical restrictions, limiting the eligibility of organizations to apply for funding based on their location, and these changes left a lot of organizations without funding to sustain their adult literacy programs. In response, the City Council increased funding for adult literacy initiatives to \$16.5 million in FY25. This was an impactful increase that has been critical for sustaining programs run by settlement houses and other community-based organizations.

The City Council's \$16.5 million Adult Literacy Initiative and Adult Literacy Pilot Project currently fund 62 programs, including 15 programs run by UNH members, that reach thousands of adults. For four UNH settlement house adult literacy program providers (CAMBA, Center for Family Life, Queens Community House and Sunnyside Community Services), City Council discretionary funding is the sole funding source sustaining these programs, and they have served or expect to serve more than 3,100 students collectively. Without renewed funding, organizations excluded from the current DYCD literacy portfolio will not be able to offer adult literacy classes after June 30th of this year. UNH released a report earlier this year called ["A Worthy Investment: NYC Council's Adult Literacy Programs"](#) which goes into more detail, and highlights the importance of adult literacy programs as well as the need for continuing support and funding from the city council.

Notably, the Executive Budget included \$10 million in one-year funding for Adult Literacy programs at DYCD; however, this funding will not be able to support the Council-funded programs because they still do not meet the geographic requirements.

It is necessary for adult learners to have stable programs and support, as continued City Council funding supports staffing and essential program infrastructure and thousands of adult learners depend on these programs for essential skills. Ideally, these programs would be supported by a robust, baselined program managed by DYCD that offered students and providers stability with year-over-year funding. However, until DYCD revisits its unnecessarily restrictive stance on geographic priority for programming, **it is crucial that the City Council continue this \$16.5 million support to make sure that adult learners continue to have access to quality classes.**

New York City's CCAP crisis

New York City is facing a major shortfall in funding for its Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which provides vouchers to help low-income families and families receiving Temporary Assistance (TA) pay for child care.

In light of the FY26 New York State Enacted Budget, there are growing concerns about the City's capacity to meet current and future child care assistance needs. The State allocated \$350 million for New York City under CCAP, but requires the City to match those funds, and we understand this is only part of the funding shortfall. We have many outstanding questions: Is the City committed to fulfill its obligations under the new funding structure? What steps are being taken to address the waitlists and ensure no eligible family is left without child care assistance?

We are in the midst of a rapidly evolving situation, with new details emerging regularly. We know that New York City is facing a major burden in committing the necessary funds to maintain access to child care vouchers. At this time, we urge the Council to monitor this issue closely and keep active communications with the Mayor, ACS, and OMB. Meeting this funding shortfall is crucial to ensure that families do not lose access to the child care they rely on.

The City must be held accountable for protecting access to child care. **The Council should press for clarity and action, and urge the City to prioritize families by guaranteeing that every child who needs care will not be left behind, while working with the State to develop a long-term funding solution to this issue.**

Create a \$3 Million Youth Mental Health Council Initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic had long-lasting effects on young people, including their mental health. During the first few months of the 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. 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." 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. Furthermore, according to a 2022 survey from the Institute of Education Sciences, 69 percent of public schools reported an increase in students seeking mental health services that year, but 43 percent of schools "moderately agreed" that they could

“effectively provide mental health service to all students in need.” Only 13 percent “strongly agreed.”

Given these growing mental health needs among young people, we propose using approximately \$3 million in new Council Initiative funds to create a new Youth Mental Health initiative. This new initiative would provide flexible mental health services for youth programs run by CBOs – such as Beacons, Cornerstones, COMPASS/SONYC, and others—with a focus on out-of-school time. Programs would be able to hire mental health professionals who are trained to engage young people, lead structured group activities, or test other innovative, tailored solutions to youth mental health needs – much in the same way the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative functions for older adults. These funds could also offer supports for youth workers when dealing with mental health crises, or creating proactive programming for mental health wellness.

The communities facing the highest risk for mental health concerns are the same communities who have historically lacked access to appropriate mental health services. It is generally accepted that youth mental health services are more effective when provided in a safe and trusted setting, which makes CBO-led youth programs the perfect environment for these supports. If we genuinely want to confront this crisis, it is vital that our young people have access to comprehensive mental health services that address the many stressors they are facing with substantive and professional care.

Restore and Baseline Promise NYC with a \$25 million Annual Investment

Under Promise NYC, four providers, including three settlement houses, have contracted with the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to implement a child care voucher program in each of their respective boroughs (NMIC in the Bronx and Manhattan, Center for Family Life in Brooklyn, Chinese-American Planning Council in Queens, and La Colmena in Staten Island). Since the program launched in FY23, providers have been reporting full enrollment and long waitlists, which demonstrates the need and desire from families to have these seats.

Promise NYC was funded at \$25 million in the City’s FY 2025 budget, and this increased investment has helped clear waitlists across the program. Although the FY26 Executive Budget includes funding for this program, it is a one-year investment that fails to provide long-term stability, leaving providers once again uncertain about the continuity of funding in 2026. We urge the City to **restore and baseline \$25 million for Promise NYC** in the FY2026 Adopted budget so that families can continue to access the affordable, subsidized child care they need and providers can have the necessary stability and resources to keep offering these services.

Submit Waiver of Hardship to the State to Access Raise the Age Funds

Last fall marked five years since Raise the Age was first implemented across New York State, ending a shameful chapter in our history of prosecuting 16- and 17-year olds as adults regardless of the offense. Prior to the passing of this legislation, thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds were held in dangerous conditions on Rikers Island and other adult jails across the state. Moreover, these youth were systematically locked-out of age-appropriate services in family court programs designed to meet the needs of adolescents and avoid the barriers of an adult criminal record.

Youth crime has consistently decreased since Raise the Age implementation in 2018. In New York City alone, since 2013 there has been a 48% decrease in adolescent arrests for serious offenses. Evidence from implementation across the State clearly shows how the law has improved community safety and youth well-being.

Despite making up half of the state's youth justice system population, New York City is currently excluded from accessing the Raise the Age funding because the City exceeds the tax cap prescribed by state law. However, it would be possible for New York City to access this funding by submitting a waiver of hardship, indicating that our City and our programs need the resources that are available through the Raise the Age law. Again, New York City accounts for half of the state's youth justice system population and therefore should be able to access additional funding to support this population. However, Mayor Adams has yet to apply for the waiver of hardship, despite the administration's reluctance to baseline funding for youth-centered programs and Alternatives to Incarceration initiatives.

It is critical to invest in programs and organizations that are serving our communities through youth development, violence-prevention services, and other alternatives to incarceration to prevent the necessity of further investment in the carceral system. **We therefore urge the Council to pressure the Adams Administration to submit a letter with the waiver of hardship to the New York State Office of Children and Families to allow New York City to be considered for the funding.** This would be beneficial for young people and community-based organizations offering these services alike.

Reduce Barriers Preventing Asylum Seeking Families from Accessing Youth-Serving Programs

Even with the creation of Promise NYC, newly arrived families face many hurdles in accessing child care and youth programs – challenges that New York's CBOs are unable to address without financial and administrative support from the City.

Settlement houses have been welcoming immigrant New Yorkers since their founding in the late 19th century, and today's wave of the newest New Yorkers is no exception. Settlement houses are experts at pivoting services to support the most urgent needs in their neighborhoods. According to a September 2023 survey of UNH members, 72% reported an increased presence of asylum seekers in their youth programs.⁶

However, settlement houses have described several barriers to young people and families engaging in these programs:

- Lack of transportation - Youth residing in shelters who participate in afterschool programming are not able to take advantage of free bussing that is provided at the end of the school day.
- Need for additional bilingual staff - With an increase of youth whose first language is not English, providers have stated a need for additional bilingual staff who can support youth

⁶ UNH, *Settlement Houses Supporting the Newest New Yorkers: Voices from the Field*, https://assets.nationbuilder.com/unhny/pages/12/attachments/original/1702991539/UNH_Voices_from_the_Field_Report_1252023%281%29.pdf?1702991539

in their own language. This issue is compounded by the persistent staffing shortage in early childhood and school-aged youth programs due to low wages.

- Inconsistency due to 60-day shelter timeline - Even when families are able to overcome other barriers to enroll their young people in child care or afterschool programs, they may receive notice and be required to move sites, displacing young people from the program they were enrolled in.

Especially with the current threats from federal actions, the City's inability to provide consistency for immigrant youth and provide supports to keep them enrolled in child care and afterschool programs is a missed opportunity to support our newest New Yorkers. **For the City to appropriately tackle this issue, it must simultaneously invest in afterschool, early childhood education, and youth mental health services, while removing barriers to access.** We look forward to working with the Council to address many of these existing challenges and work toward solutions.

Thank you for your time. For any follow up questions, I can be contacted at kconnolly@unhny.org.

May 19, 2025

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Anita Rebutti-Otero. I am a parent of a PS 516-CFL after school student. I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program because *I rely on this program to continue to be employed as a public school teacher and without this program I would be unable to continue my employment. I unfortunately do not have any who is available to pick him up and would never be able to pick him up at dismissal time. I feel secure in knowing that CFL is able to care for my son Austin when I am unable to do so.*

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely

Anita Rebutti-Otero

DATE: May 17, 2025

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Anna Jasch. I am a parent of a second-grade student at Sunset Park Avenues Public School 516 who regularly attends the Center for Family Life (CFL) after school program. I am also a long-time community member in the Sunset Park community. Additionally, I have served as a teacher for over 10 years in the Sunset Park community. Throughout this time, I have witnessed first-hand the incredibly positive impact that CFL programming has had on our young people and our community.

I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program. I rely on this program to continue to be employed. I fully support the academic and social-emotional learning of the young people in the Sunset Park community that occurs through CFL programming.

Without this program, I would be unable to continue my employment at the level that our children deserve. I care deeply about the kids and families in my community. I often work late hours at my job as a teacher. I prepare lesson materials, work with parents, and attend school events. Without CFL after school programming, I would be unable to fulfill these responsibilities.

I want the city to invest in our children by funding their after-school program in the face of federal budget cuts that serve the rich and only further disenfranchise young people in low-income communities of color. I love CFL because it allows my daughter to form deeper connections to her PS516 classmates and the wider community. High school students from the community serve as mentors by teaching in the program. Middle school students serve as reading mentors and allow my daughter to see positive role models in her community.

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely,

Anna Jasch

5/16/25

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Courtney Epton. I am a parent in the Sunset Park neighborhood, and my children both attend schools in Sunset Park. My youngest attends PS516 and attends CFL after school and summer camp. My oldest attends MS 136 Dewey Middle School, and attends CFL afterschool.

I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program for many, many reasons, including:

- My income does not cover the cost of childcare 5 days a week and all summer. We are a two family working household, and childcare after school is necessary for us to continue working.
- I care about the kids and families in my community and want the city to invest in them by funding their afterschool program in the face of federal budget cuts that serve the rich and only further disenfranchise young people in low income communities of color.
- I love CFL's afterschool program!

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely

Courtney Epton

From: [Emma Dzula](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Exec. Budget Hearing- Children & Youth- Save CFL at PS 516- Sunset Park!
Date: Sunday, May 18, 2025 5:41:44 PM

DATE: May 18,2025

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Emma Dzula, and my son Basil is a 1st grader at PS 516. He is also an enthusiastic participant in the CFL after school program there. We specifically chose PS 516 because of its exceptional after school program, and to lose it would be devastating to our family and so many others in the community.

Today, I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program. By losing funding, so many children- especially children of color and those with limited financial means- would miss out on this key source of learning everyday, via science experiments, reading, art, homework help, cooking lessons, athletic activities, not to mention a safe and secure space to play with friends, allowing their parents and guardians the opportunity to work with the knowledge that their children are well taken care of, at CFL.

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely,

Emma Dzula
Mom to Basil Dzula,

[REDACTED]

DATE: May 21, 2025

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Esteban Rodriguez. I am a Parent of a PS 516-CFL after school student.

I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program because CFL has been a great asset to our community. Having my child in afterschool has allowed me to continue to pursue my business interests. Without that time, I would not be able to continue to build a business, bettering my family and community. Lots of the school community is in the same position. Many parents would have no choice but to work less hours as afterschool care is unaffordable.

Furthermore, the CFL after school program is an invaluable experience for the students. They learn art, music, dance, science, literacy, sports and cooking. They build teams, put on shows, and learn social and emotional skills. Without it, most of these kids will be at home or on the streets, some without adult supervision.

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely,

Esteban Rodriguez

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Ethan Penha, and I'm a public health professional advocating for for bill 0702-2024 to sustain public school students access to school meals in remote learning settings. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the classroom learning experience and environment, mitigating interruption of students' education. However, remote learning has not safeguarded NYC public school students from the existing disparities in food insecure conditions that they live in, compromising their health and ability for academic achievement.

Problem: As of 2022, the child food insecurity rate in NYC is approximately 24%. If another public health emergency or even one bad snowstorm were to force remote classes, families could lose that vital support from their school and over half a million children could go without a meal at home on a school day. Students that are dependent on school meals could be at greater risk for chronic health issues such as obesity and diabetes, which were often associated with COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Call to Action:

The NYC Council proposed the bill Int 0702-2024, proposed by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams last year is an opportunity to address this risk. This legislation will involve collaboration between the Office of Emergency Management, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, and the Department of Education to implement a plan to deliver meals to students if NYC public schools must transition to remote learning or close by order of the governor, mayor, or chancellor. This will ensure that students can continue their school day from home without them or their families worrying they will not have access to a meal.

To ensure nutritious meals can effectively reach students' remote locations across the five boroughs, it is recommended that the policy ensures that city agencies collaborate across the public and private sector – working with local vendors, pantries, and community-based organizations along with revitalizing partnerships with emergency delivery services utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank You

Notes:

- Food insecure children typically come from severely rent-burdened households that spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing as reported by the Food Bank for New York City.
- The city's immigrant family populations may also be at risk as they were highly dependent on emergency meal distribution during the pandemic. A year into the pandemic, immigrant New Yorkers use of emergency food services remained high (25% compared to 23% for all NYC residents)
- According to the NYC Department of Education School Food Report in fiscal year 2024, across the 5 boroughs, 154,723,585 breakfasts, lunches, after school snacks and suppers were served in schools
- Bill introduced March 2024, in Committee: Committee on Fire and Emergency Management

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Fanny Manzo-Luna, and I am a proud parent of a student at PS 516 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn—a community I was raised in and am deeply connected to. I'm writing to advocate for urgent and sustained funding for the Center for Family Life (CFL), the afterschool and summer camp provider at PS 516. This program is not just a support—it's a **lifeline** for our children and families.

PS 516 is a Title 1 public school serving a vibrant, diverse, and often marginalized community. Approximately 80% of our students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 26% live in temporary housing. These numbers speak volumes about the needs in our community—and the essential role CFL plays in meeting them.

As a child, I personally benefited from the CFL afterschool program. It gave me a safe space to learn, grow, and explore my creativity through art, dance, theatre, music, and sports. It helped build my confidence, taught me teamwork, and offered emotional support that carried into adulthood. Today, my son is enrolled in the same program at PS 516, and I see firsthand the same values being nurtured in him.

But now, this vital support system is in jeopardy.

Due to **federal budget cuts targeting social services and early childhood education**, funding for our CFL afterschool and summer programs has either been eliminated or rendered uncertain. These cuts are a direct result of budget choices that prioritize tax breaks for billionaires over the basic needs of working-class children. And while the loss of funding is a citywide issue, **PS 516 is uniquely vulnerable**, as we have been forced to rely on unstable federal funding since the school's founding.

As of now, **160 students and their families** who rely on CFL for high-quality, **free afterschool and summer camp programming** are being left without this crucial resource. For many of us, CFL provides the only safe and enriching option available for our children outside of school hours.

Despite repeated efforts dating back to 2013, PS 516 and CFL have not been granted COMPASS funding from the city, **even though we clearly meet all the eligibility requirements and have demonstrated the overwhelming need and capacity to deliver these services**. It's time for that to change. Our community cannot—and should not—have to beg year after year for what should be a guaranteed investment in our children's future.

We are calling on you now, with urgency and respect:

Secure funding for the Center for Family Life's afterschool and summer programming at PS 516.

Not tomorrow. Not next budget cycle. **Now.**

Our children deserve better. Sunset Park deserves better.

With deep appreciation for your attention to this urgent matter,

Fanny Manzo-Luna

Parent of a PS 516 Student

Sunset Park Resident

Kathlyn Clark

Brooklyn, NY 11232

May 20th, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Kathlyn Clark, and I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget.

While I am writing this testimony as a PS 516 parent, it has also been informed by my career supporting New York City Public Schools as an ENL teacher, Assistant Principal, Director of Instruction and now as a District MLL/ELL Services Administrator. The opinions and beliefs stated below are entirely personal, but I hope they serve to shed light on CFL's work from both an educator and parent perspective.

When I think of CFL and what they have brought to the PS 516 community, there are a few points I would like to highlight:

CFL is *QUALITY*:

As an organization, the Center for Family has served Sunset Park for decades. **The level of engagement and relationships maintained between CFL and students is unparalleled by any other CBO I have worked with in my 17 years with NYCPS.** The CFL staff and counselors engage caretakers as partners, conducting themselves with professionalism and empathy. In conversations I have had with staff, the level of thoughtfulness demonstrated meets expectations I would hold for the most-seasoned pedagogues. They have always offered concrete strategies to support my child, while honoring her assets and personal preferences. I have always felt heard and valued as a parent. This speaks to the incredible human beings they have at PS516 AND to the quality training CFL provides to their staff.

CFL is *SECURITY*:

My daughter first enrolled in the CFL after-school program when it opened in the Fall of 2022 at PS516. Since that time, they have maintained consistent staff from year-to-year which has served as a throughline of our family's time at PS 516. This consistency has been such a gift for my daughter, who had extreme anxiety in her transitions from grade to grade. My daughter is known by EVERY adult in the CFL program, and I am grateful that her after-school hours are spent with those that know and understand her.

For many of PS516 families, this consistency is especially critical. PS 516 is a Title 1 school, where 26% of the students live in temporary housing and 80% qualify for free lunch. Our population is diverse and represent groups that are being disproportionately targeted by federal policy shifts.

At a time when so many of our neighborhood children are facing increased levels of fear and anxiety, removing CFL from PS 516 would be the impetus for even more uncertainty. The bonds that have been built between CFL staff and children are rock solid. They have brought exciting new annual traditions such as our Thanksgiving Feast, Winter and Spring, Shows, Games Nights, "March Madness" Competitions, and more. I am heartbroken that all of us, but especially our most vulnerable families, will lose the consistent relationships built with CFL staff and the traditions that have brought such connection and joy to our school.

CFL is OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL:

Losing CFL at PS 516 could impact the learning opportunities for ALL PS 516 families, not only the families that currently participate in after-school.

As a parent, I chose PS 516 for my child because it had a Spanish dual language program starting in Pre-K. We opted to remain at PS 516 for Kindergarten because of the tandem teaching dual language model (i.e.- two teachers) AND the opening of CFL's program.

Since my daughter's enrollment at PS 516, a new elementary school and charter school were opened within a 10-block radius, with another charter school currently under construction a mere three blocks away. PS 516's enrollment is already down as a result. **If there is not a subsidized, reputable after-school program like CFL at PS 516, I fear our working families will be forced to enroll their children at other schools where this programming is available.**

While I am not privy to the budget of the school, my work has given me insight into the consequences of enrollment loss on school staffing and budget. I worry that continued drops in enrollment will compromise the funding needed to continue to offer tandem dual-language programming, especially in the early grades. Already, there was not tandem dual language programming in the first-grade class this year. Funding CFL at PS 516 would support recruitment and maintenance of school enrollment and, in turn, school funding. As such, an investment of COMPASS dollars in CFL's PS 516 program is also an investment in what PS 516 offers during the school day for all families. In fact, it could serve as an indirect investment in the Office of Multilingual Learners' Bilingual Revitalization work!

CFL is A SURE THING:

CFL's PS 516 program is a sound investment of COMPASS dollars because CFL has proven track record across eleven afterschool programs and deep community ties built over decades. Many PS 516 CFL counselors were participants in CFL after-school programming themselves in their youth. The funding that was used for our counselors' after-school programs YEARS ago are continuing to have an impact on our community today. To put it another way, **the dollars invested in our counselors' after-school programs years ago were also an investment in our kids' experience with CFL at PS 516.**

Directing COMPASS dollars to CFL at PS 516 would support our working families now and, given CFL's track record, will be the first step of engaging the CFL staff of the future. **CFL can deliver today a strong program today, and our children will continue to deliver a return on this investment for years to come through CFL's work in Sunset Park.**

CFL is JOY!:

CFL creates joy, builds bonds, and makes my daughter proud to be part of the Sunset Park community. They build events, shows, and opportunities for neighbors to know one another and celebrate our children together.

Simply put, **I wish every child in NYC had a CFL.** Everyone should have a **Jhodessa, Kathy and Olney** lighting the way. Every kid should have a **Noel or Derjoy** to hold their hand when they are upset and celebrate their wins. Every parent should have a **Kaia, Amaya, or Chaz** to support them when their kids are 'exploring boundaries'. Every kid should get to be part of a **Fran** show! The list goes on and on....

Thank you for your time and consideration. Where others have let our school village down, I hope you all will be able to lift us up.

Sincerely,

Kathlyn Clark

PS 516 Parent

From: [Kay Cid](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth
Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 10:20:46 PM

My name is: Kay Cid and I am a single mom and parent of a *PS 516-CFL after school student.*

I am writing to support P.S. 516 and CFL in their bid to save the afterschool program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor's budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program.

I rely on this program in order to continue to be employed as a city employee at the Department of Education (NYCPS), without this program I would not be able to continue my employment. I work with families of all backgrounds in all 5 boroughs and I know from personal experience and through my relationships with parent leaders that afterschool programs are vital to NYC parents.

Unfortunately, in our community of Sunset Park, there are already not sufficient seats of afterschool and Summer Rising programs; in addition of a lack of affordable housing, our community is also a childcare desert.

Childcare and afterschool programs are the best investment of taxpayer funds, they benefit the whole community and make our communities stronger and safer.

I ask that you please prioritize our Sunset Park community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Looking forward in hearing back from you,
Kay Cid



Sent from my iPhone

Dear Council Members,

As I know you are aware title one school federal funding has taken a major hit. Additionally services like AmeriCorps and Century 21 grants which support after-school and summer camp programming have also been eliminated.

My daughter's after school program & summer camp has been majorly affected by these cuts. Center for Family Life located in Sunset Park Brooklyn at many schools, including my daughters school PS 516K is in danger of closing.

I am an artist, and educator and work with thousands of NYC public school teachers, artists, and school principals each year in my job on building equitable educational practices, and deepening student learn and engagement through arts integration.

Our family, and thousands more need after school care, and the alternative options are not accessible for us financially.

It will not be possible for me to continue to work as a engaged member of NYC's arts in education field without the support of child care for my daughter. These services that Center for Family Life provides are essential for the families in the neighborhood. There are not alternatives. Please consider additional funding for afterschool programs – specifically Center for Family Life – the loss of AmeriCorps funding alone at CFL has resulted in a loss of afterschool and summer programming to 800 students across CFL programs. The loss of Century 21 funding will compound that loss.

Thank you for stepping in and up and prioritizing our children's care and well being so that we as parents can continue to do the valuable and needed work we do, while knowing our children are cared for, and are having enriching experiences.

Sincerely,

Kyla McKoll

Mother, Director of Professional Learning at ArtsConnection, Sunset Park, Brooklyn Community Member

Hello , thank you for taking the time review my testimony.

I am Majé Louverture , a 22 year old survivor of homelessness in New York City. My time spent navigating the RHY system has greatly assisted me in my journey towards stability. That being said it would be unjust for me to not also mention areas I believe should be urgently improved.

Working as youth leader since early in my homeless journey and still to this day I know intimately the impact of peer to peer support. The mental discomfort and physical defeat one deals with while experiencing homelessness often creates bonds of empathy that cannot be replicated.

As people facing similar circumstances I have found peer to peer support crucial in the obtainment of stability for myself and many others. In addition to consolation and empathy , peer navigators also stand as a vital source of inspiration for those of us who have been beaten down so low we struggle to see the light.

Additionally, I would like to draw attention to the role housing navigators play in helping youth find a place that we truly call home. As the landscape for the housing market is rapidly changing and landlords across the city are not readily willing to accept the housing vouchers or subsidies we are provided with, having housing navigators to serve as the middleman is often the most efficient solution to preventing youth homelessness. In my experience the support of my housing navigators have been the only reason I was able to placed in more permanent housing.

Furthermore , as the federal government continues prosecution of social services, many rely on such as Section 8 to continue to support housing and basic needs. Now, youth ages 21-25 are in dire need of housing vouchers that remain available consistently. EHV is scheduled to expire in a few months and the fate of many rapid rehousing programs grow weary with the days. It is crucial that the city/state develop a sturdy system of vouchers for vulnerable young adults , as we too deserve a chance at life , liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In conclusion, I would like to close by stating how valuable the RHY system is in the forward progression for the entire community. For if the youth are without stability, security and hope then it will not be long before the entire state is as well.

Thank you again for your time.

In the name of justice,

Majé Louverture

From: [Michael Handell](#)
To: [NYC Council Hearings](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony for Education Budget Committee
Date: Friday, May 23, 2025 7:17:57 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. Report suspected phishing emails with the Phish Alert Button or forward them to phish@oti.nyc.gov as an attachment.

FY25 Preliminary Budget Hearing City Council Committee on Education

Friday May 23, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony. My name is Michael Handell and my child is in 1st grade at Washington Heights' PS-IS 187 in School District 6. I'm also a member of our schools Class Size working group.

Class size reduction is a top priority of parents at PS 187 according to our DOE surveys. Currently PS-IS 187 is well over capacity. We need a concrete and feasible plan with funds allocated for a class size reduction starting now. Without funds allocated both for additional faculty and staff, building upgrades, annex or co-location for more space and other services our school won't be able to meet the law requirements. If our school reduces the number of new students accepted next year it will be penalized with a smaller budget, since school budgets are based on the number of students enrolled.

PS/IS 187 is the most overcrowded school in District 6 and our community welcomed the class size reduction law. Last December I participated in our school's class size reduction grant application for Contracts for Excellence launched by DOE. The strategies suggested by DOE in that application were detached from the reality of our school with the focus being to utilize all available classroom space. Unfortunately, for our school and countless others, there is no more classroom space. The only realistic solutions are two fold: In the short term, reduce the number of students admitted to the school without sacrificing needed funding. This would require updating the New York State per-pupil Foundation Aid formula that is currently incongruent with motivating schools to lower class sizes. The longer term solution is to expand the schools classroom footprint with an annex or a co-location space but this will take several years.

With this in mind, we asked to implement two meaningful strategies for reducing class size in our December application, which was denied:

We requested that kindergarten enrollment be capped at 80 students. Until this year, our school has consistently started with four kindergarten classes enrolling up to 100 students, while all subsequent grades have only had three classes each. The Department of Education's denial of our request clearly indicates that it does not intend for our school to meet the class size mandate in the foreseeable future.

We asked for funding to hire a dedicated staff member responsible for developing and

implementing our school's class size reduction plan. This role would explore and coordinate innovative strategies such as outdoor learning for younger grades, temporary co-location with a nearby charter school that is not fully enrolled, or use of an annex. While all these approaches have potential, they cannot be effectively designed or piloted by our already overextended teachers and staff, who are managing a full load of responsibilities. If we are permitted to use C4E (Contracts for Excellence) funds to support a position focused solely on class size planning and implementation, we could see immediate and meaningful progress.

The fact that exemptions are being granted proves the disconnect between the state and the DOE in actually executing and making this class size plan a reality. While promises of future annexes are being made, the School Construction Authority has no concrete plans in place—meaning these annexes may not materialize for another decade. This is unacceptable and exemptions just prolong the needed compliance that will benefit these students. This path forward is not only inadequate—it is a disservice to our school communities. Today's parents, students, and even teachers in these overcrowded schools do not want exemptions. They want action. Exempting schools from the mandate sends the message that overcrowding is acceptable in schools that perform well on paper, while ignoring the very real daily toll it takes on learning, teaching, and school climate.

The class size law is vital to improving public education across New York City's school system. This is an opportunity to critically strengthen the education and learning environment our children receive and ensure students stay in these schools and parents trust them to provide high quality education going forward. We must act now to ensure going forward our schools perform at their highest levels while educating our children.

Sincerely,

Michael Handell - District 6 Parent

917-415-9644

MHandell@gmail.com

May 19th, 2025

Committee on Children and Youth Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony: Mistou

Hi everyone, my name is Mistou. I'm from Bénin, a country in West Africa, right next to Nigeria, where we speak French there.

Covenant House has been helping me for the past three years, and I've been a Youth Ambassador with them for the last two.

As an immigrant, when I first got to the U.S., I didn't have any guidance or resources. Living alone in a new country and trying to survive on less than minimum wage was one of the hardest things I've ever gone through. I couldn't even afford the room I was renting and ended up homeless for a while. I didn't know about shelters at all until I walked into a police station in desperation, and they connected me to Covenant House.

Covenant House gave me hope and the chance to dream again. That might sound small to some people, but for me, and for many others with similar backgrounds, that's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

They've helped me work toward my dream job of becoming an art teacher. Through their Job Readiness program, I got help with building my resume, learning how to dress for interviews, and understanding how interviews work. Earlier this year, I earned my GED diploma, which is something I'm really proud of. Now I can dream about going to college one day and working toward my teacher's license.

Shelters like Covenant House give youth more than just a bed - they give us tools and support to reach our goals, whether it's school, a career, mental health, or just finding stability. These are basic human needs. I hope that any other young person who doesn't have the resources they need can get help in the same way that I've been helped.

Which is why I am here today, asking the Council to ensure that the current contract extensions come with appropriate funding adjustments for Covenant House and other Runaway and Homeless Youth providers to reflect what it costs the organizations to run programming and allow youth, like me, to have a safe place to sleep at night. Specifically, I ask for the bed rate on the current DYCD contracts to be increased to \$70,000 per bed. I also ask the city to fund the compounding COLA increases at 3% each year, so the staff who work at these organizations are supported in the way they deserve.

Thank you so much for your time.

Urgent Plea to Save Center for Family Life (CFL) Programming at P.S. 516

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Rebecca Anderson, and I am a parent of a kindergartner at P.S. 516 and her future PS 516 little sibling. I am writing to you today with an urgent plea to protect the Center for Family Life (CFL) afterschool program that my child, and so many others in our community, rely on.

P.S. 516 serves a diverse and often marginalized community in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where 80% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch and 26% live in temporary housing. Since 1978, CFL has been an integral part of our neighborhood, providing vital support through counseling, employment services, education, the arts, and recreation, including afterschool programs at 11 locations in Sunset Park.

The potential loss of funding for CFL's programs at P.S. 516 is devastating. 160 students and their families, including mine, depend on this free, quality afterschool program and summer camp programming. This is not just an afterschool program; it's a lifeline.

I work full-time at a nonprofit called Technovation, where we focus on tech and entrepreneurship education for girls. Our work equips **over 30,000 girls each year with essential problem-solving skills**. Without my job, Technovation's ability to serve these girls would be significantly impacted. I **rely on the CFL program to provide a safe and enriching environment for my child after school** so that I can continue to contribute to our important mission.

Federal budget cuts aimed at social services are disproportionately affecting our community. While many schools face funding challenges, P.S. 516 has relied on unstable federal funding since its founding. It is time this changed. **Our children deserve better.**

P.S. 516 and CFL have been requesting COMPASS funding from the city since 2013, but these requests have been unmet despite clear needs. We are requesting priority in funding allocation, whether through existing sources or two years of emergency funding, to stabilize the program while CFL seeks alternate funding. The Mayor's Budget proposes expanding COMPASS funding, and P.S. 516 is asking for just **200 of those 5000 new seats**.

A survey by the Afterschool Alliance shows that 74% of New York parents say afterschool programs help them keep their jobs. In Sunset Park, where unemployment and poverty are persistent issues, CFL's program is crucial for families to maintain employment. CFL is a proven and reliable childcare provider with years of experience.

Our community needs these afterschool programs to continue. They are essential for our children's well-being and for our ability to contribute to the workforce. Please consider our plea and help save CFL at P.S. 516.

Best,
Rebecca Anderson
Parent of a Kindergartener at P.S. 516

From: [Sarah Brooks](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony for Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth
Date: Monday, May 19, 2025 7:49:57 AM

May 19th, 2025

Testimony for Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Sarah Brooks. I am a proud public-school teacher at PS 169 in Sunset Park. I am also the mother of a Kindergarten student at 516 in Sunset Park. As a teacher in a public school that is serviced by CFL I know how crucial after school is to families. Countless families have explained to me that in order to work they need after school. They do not make enough money to be able to afford a paid after school program. After school is essential to their livelihood. Taking away this program would have harmful lasting effects on our community. I am also writing to implore that you specifically support PS 516 and CFL in their bid to save the after school and summer program by securing 200 of the 5000 expanded grant seats. CFL has brought so much joy and enrichment to my daughter's school experience. We love CFL and we, quite literally, need CFL! I cannot do my job, as a public school teacher, without it. CFL is not an optional service or program. It is essential to my family and to hundreds of families in our community. We need your help!

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Thank you,
Sarah Brooks

Testimony for the Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth
May 19, 2025

Good Afternoon

I am writing in representation to support continued funding for CFL (center for family life) at PS 516. I am a mother of 3 children. 2 boys which participate in the afterschool program with Center for Family Life and my daughter, who is entering this coming September. As a low income mother working 3 jobs it is hard for me to rely on my pay, to not only support my 3 children but to also pay the cost of babysitting for them.

The staff of CFL are great supporters and if it wasn't for their services I can honestly say I wouldn't be able to provide my children with a decent standard of living. I hope this email reaches the hearts of the district council to save the CFL Program. I personally know other families of the PS 516 community that are struggling with similar hardships and are hoping for the continued support.

Yours in health,

Sheila Medina
Mother of Oliver, Noah and Anastasia Reyes



DATE: May 19, 2025

TESTIMONY FOR Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

My name is Shilpa Narayan. I am a mother of a second-grader and a kindergartner, both of whom are PS 516-CFL after-school students. I rely on CFL to care for my children and provide them with quality educational and extra-curricular programming while I and my husband work as full-time, public-interest attorneys serving our community. Without the PS 516-CFL program, I do not know what we would do to care for our children while continuing to work at our jobs.

For the past several years since my children have been in the PS 516 community, CFL has proven to be part of the life-blood of the neighborhood. Indeed, CFL is homegrown in Sunset Park, and its caring staff of counselors and educators cultivate in our children a strong sense of what it means to be part of a community that looks out for one another and works together to build new foundations. Through thoughtful and fun programming, CFL has given my kids a space where they feel encouraged to try new things and develop character. Sunset Park community members have a history of coming together from culturally diverse backgrounds to work toward a common set of values, one of which is raising the next generation to be strong and grounded leaders. But we cannot do this without the support of our electeds. We need stability in our funding. This is one of the most hardworking communities in the city. Please invest in us—our families, our caregivers, our children—by supporting the Center for Family Life’s afterschool program. Please secure 200 of the 5000 expanded COMPASS grant seats outlined in the Mayor’s budget and consideration for other emergency funding that would stabilize this program. Your support will most certainly yield meaningful dividends as our children rise toward community leadership themselves.

I ask that you please prioritize our community for continued funding through any available source of funding and make every effort to clarify how the COMPASS seats will be allocated.

Sincerely,

Shilpa Narayan

May 19, 2025

To: testimony@council.nyc.gov

Subject: SAVE CFL AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMING FOR 160 KIDS AT P.S.516

Good morning, my name is Tirtzah Bads. I'm a parent of two children in the CFL afterschool program at PS516 and long time resident of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and I'm an artist and educator—part of New York City's education system and creative economy.

CFL has been essential to our family. It allows my partner and me—both working in the education sector and creative industries—to do our jobs, contribute to the city's vibrant cultural and educational life, and provide for our family. Our kids don't just have a safe place to go after school—they thrive there. They are supported emotionally, socially, and academically.

Without CFL, we have no reliable or affordable afterschool options in our neighborhood, which has been historically underserved. Cutting this program would not only harm families like mine—it would also impact the broader creative and educational ecosystem of this city. I urge you to protect funding for CFL and invest in the future of our children and New York's creative economy.

Thank you.

Tirtzah Bassel


May 19th, 2025

Committee on Children and Youth Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony: Veony

Good morning, my name is Veony, and I'm 19 years old. I'm originally from Queens, NY, but I currently live at Covenant House, a crisis shelter in Midtown. I come from a low-income, dysfunctional family where instability became the norm. I needed space, support, and an opportunity to move forward with my life and pursue the goals I've set for myself. After hearing my situation, a case manager from another resource center referred me to Covenant House, where I was able to get a bed that very same night.

What stood out to me immediately was the structure at Covenant House. I needed discipline and a push in the right direction — and from the moment I arrived, I was surrounded by people who genuinely cared and wanted to help me reach my goals.

Right now, my biggest dream is to have stable housing. Professionally, I hope to become a journalist. I've participated in multiple afterschool filmmaking programs and have directed several of my own short documentary projects. I also take courses at NYFA, where I've earned several certificates for my work so far. My plan is to pursue a master's degree in journalism and business.

I currently attend BMCC as a business major and work at a film studio called Hook Arts Media, where I've had the opportunity to direct and produce a documentary on the intersectionality within youth homelessness.

To me, success means stability. Whether it's having a roof over my head or a steady job, success is about being able to live without the constant fear of ending up back on the streets.

Today, I'm asking the Council to recognize what it truly takes to keep programs like Covenant House and other Runaway and Homeless Youth providers running strong. These services aren't just programs—they're lifelines. For youth like me, they mean having a safe, stable place to sleep, grow, and rebuild. To ensure that these organizations can continue doing this essential work, I urge the City to raise the bed rate on current DYCD contracts to \$70,000 per bed to match the real cost of care and support. And I ask for the city to fund the promised 3% compounding COLA increases each year so that the staff at these organizations are valued and fairly compensated.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

35

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Velez

Address: _____

I represent: Youth Build

Address: 46 Wadsworth Ave

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 05/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jacarah Sanders

Address: _____

I represent: Youth Build (NEMIC)

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Azad R. Banzel

Address: _____

I represent: Youth Build/NMJC

Address: 45 Wadsworth

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Audrey Dum...

Address: _____ NY, NY 10031

I represent: Bronx Net

Address: 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W. Bronx 10468

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Suzan Grant

Address: _____ New York, NY 10031

I represent: Youth B. B. / NMJC

Address: 45 Wadsworth Ave
New York, NY 10033

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Almazan

Address: 45 Wadsworth Ave - NMIC

I represent: YouthBuild at NMIC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ella Downs

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Girls for Gender Equity

Address: 25 Chapel St Brooklyn, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Israel Mena Director of Case Change *

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: Center for Family Life

Address: 413 34th St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christina Arroyo (Student)

Address: _____

I represent: Center for Family Life

Address: 1413 30th St

Translation by
Luzel
Moroz

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sandra Santamaria

Address: 4417 5th Ave Brooklyn NY 11220

I represent: Center for Family Life

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jackson Ulloa-Salcedo

Address: _____

I represent: CFL @ Sunset Park

Address: _____

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

Mother
of
Jackson
01100

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Weslie Hardcastle

Address: [Redacted] BK, NY 11220

I represent: CFL @ Sunat Park

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: _____

Address: _____

hypocrite
of
Jacob Young Itz

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

Date: 5/12/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Theresa Reimer

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: Center for Family Life

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

20

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ragnea Hemingway

Address: _____

I represent: Figure Skating in Harlem

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nikita Boyce

Address: _____

I represent: Coalition for Asian American Children & Families

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

18

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alpamekya Reynolds

Address: [Redacted] BK, NY

I represent: You Got to Believe

Address: [Redacted] 254 W 31 Street

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

RHY
(young person)

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aniah Arts

Address: _____

I represent: Covenant House NY

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

RHY
(young person)

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5-19-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mistou Kangbeto

Address: _____

I represent: Covenant House NY

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

SINCE INITIATE

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5-19-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jasmine Reed

Address: _____

I represent: Figure Skating in Harlem

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL STARS
THE CITY OF NEW YORK Initiative

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: 5-19-2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Dembrow

Address: _____

I represent: Lower EAST SIDE GIRLS CLUB

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ira Yankwitz

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn

I represent: Literacy Assistance Center

Address: 85 Broad St

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Scott Daly

Address: _____

I represent: NYJTL

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Rosado

Address: _____

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: 49 Thomas Street NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

10

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL MAX KNOBBE

Address: Bronx Net

I represent: BronxNet

Address: 130 GALS PLACE, BRONX 10463

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aaron Sanders

Address: _____

I represent: Grant St Settlement

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sebastian Vank

Address: _____

I represent: Safe Horizon - Streetwork Project

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nadia Swanson

Address: _____

I represent: The Ali Forney Center

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Connolly

Address: _____

I represent: United Neighborhood Huses

Address: 45 Broadway, NYC

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANDREW SANTA ANA

Address: _____

I represent: ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

Address: 120 WALL STREET 9th Floor, 10005

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAITLYN PASSARETTI

Address: _____

I represent: CCC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Brender

Address: _____

I represent: Day Care Council of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shanita Bowen

Address: _____ Bx, NY 10472

I represent: ECE on The Move, COO

Address: SI, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles

Address: _____

I represent: The Brotherhood Sister Sol

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Pletoikoff

Address: Deputy Commissioner, Financial Services

I represent: Administrator for Children's services

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Winette Saunders

Address: First Deputy Commissioner

I represent: Administrator for Children's Services

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: 5/19/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jess Dannhauser

Address: Commissioner

I represent: Administration for Children's Services

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KATH HUNNARD

Address: Commissioner

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alan Cheng,

Address: First Deputy Commissioner

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeremy Halbridge

Address: 2 LAFAYETTE, NY NY 10007

I represent: DYCD

Address: 2 LAFAYETTE, NY, NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sy san Haskell

Address: DC

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chris Lewis

Address: Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Chief Financial Officer

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daniell Guillen

Address: 2 Lafayette street 21st floor

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Valerie Mulligan

Address: 2 Lafayette NY NY 10007

I represent: DYCD

Address: 2 Lafayette NY NY 10007



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



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mike Bobbitt

Address: Dep. 4 Cambridge

I represent: DYCD

Address: 2 Lafayette

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DACAR PATRICK

Address: 2 Lafayette St, NY 10017

I represent: DYCD

Address: 2 Lafayette St NY 10017

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