

**Testimony of NYC Public Schools
Immigrants Students in NYC Public Schools
Before the NYC Committees on Education and Immigration
November 29, 2023**

Testimony of Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor, NYCPS

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and all the members of the City Council Committees on Education and Immigration here today. My name is Melissa Aviles-Ramos, and I am Chief of Staff to the Chancellor for NYC Public Schools (NYCPS). I am joined by Mirza Sánchez-Medina, Chief of Multilingual Learners, Flavia Puello Perdomo, Chief of Schools for Community Supports and Wellness, Trevonda Kelly, Acting Chief Enrollment Officer, and other wonderful colleagues from New York City Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to update the Committees on NYC Public Schools' efforts to effectively welcome and support our migrant and asylum-seeking students. Your leadership and collaboration with this administration have been absolutely critical in this challenging undertaking, and all of us at NYCPS are grateful for your support. The Council's leadership, in particular Chair Joseph, for additional STH outreach workers has been both timely and invaluable.

New York City will always be a city of immigrants, and our schools continue to welcome every child from any background who needs a safe and supportive place to receive an excellent education. Every student has the right to a high-quality public education, regardless of their immigration status. Since last summer, New York City Public Schools has been working with our sister agencies on Project Open Arms to support our newest New Yorkers. New York City Public Schools has supported approximately 34,000 students in temporary housing and their families, including both new arrivals and students in the traditional shelter system. This is in addition to the nearly one million students currently enrolled. As always, we have risen together as a city to meet this challenge.

Background

New York City has cared for over 145,000 asylum seekers, the majority of whom are families with children. While NYCPS does not track students' immigration status or country of origin, the influx of new arrivals has resulted in a significant increase of students living in temporary housing (STH). Last year, we supported roughly 18,500 students in temporary housing over the entire school year; since July 2023 we have welcomed approximately ~14,000 additional students in temporary housing.

As the Council is well aware, NYC Public Schools not only helped to launch Project Open Arms from the very beginning, but Chancellor David Banks crucially appointed me to lead the



organization's coordination of internal efforts in the New York City Public Schools. Since then, the team has expanded to include two additional team members to coordinate the work across the city. The NYCPS Cross-Functional Open Arms team meets frequently to strategize support for our nearly ~34,000 newest New Yorkers. In addition, we meet monthly with our Project Open Arms Think Tank that consists of various advocate groups, and we partner with them to create additional supports for our newest New Yorkers. Additionally, our school communities have stepped up to help create borough-specific supports and partnerships with CBOs. It is through these partnerships with the SHED, Project Rosseau, Rainbow Vision and others that we have been able to serve thousands of students and their families, receiving generous donations for goods including clothing, eyeglasses, and shoes.

For the last 18 months, NYCPS has supported thousands of students and their families via resource fairs. While these resource fairs are ongoing, we are pivoting to creating care closets, which streamline access throughout the school year to guarantee that families can always turn to their school for assistance with any needs they may have. Care closets have two key components:

1. A secure storage unit (i.e. Closet, room that stores items needed by families in temporary housing including school supplies, clothing, non-perishable food, hygiene products and more.)
2. A community of care at school that brings students and families together in a sense of caring for one another, helping remove the stigma of needing support.

We thank Chairs Joseph and Hanif for their ongoing partnership in this effort. Your feedback to our teams is invaluable. We also thank the entire Council for their continued support.

On-Site Support

From the moment these families arrived in our city, NYC Public Schools has helped to facilitate student enrollment and support families' immediate needs. Last year we set up an enrollment office at the Asylum-Seeker Navigation Center, where enrollment counselors helped families connect to schools while providing backpacks, books, and school supplies. As the city has pivoted from the navigation center to the arrival center, our supports have pivoted as well. We continue to have STH staff members supporting families at emergency shelter sites, including the newest site for families with children at Floyd Bennett Field. Our cross-functional team has staff from Students in Temporary Housing, Enrollment, Early Childhood Education, and the Office of Language Access.

Families are greeted by our staff who provide assistance in filling out intake forms for enrollment. The enrollment team works closely with the district team to determine which schools have availability to welcome our newest New Yorkers. For elementary and middle school-aged students, we are compliant with the McKinney-Vento Act, which states that students in temporary housing are entitled to placement at their zoned school. At the high school level, our enrollment team works with students and their families to select a suitable program.



Enrollment counselors review transcripts provided and support families with placement. When transcripts are not provided, enrollment works with the families to recreate an academic history for the student, which may require outreach to the child's previous school in their home country.

No matter the location of the shelter, our staff is working to identify schools with available seats that are closest to the shelters, prioritizing access to programs for multilingual learners. Our Division of Multilingual Learners identify existing programs to support multilingual learners, including which schools may need hiring support to create or expand supportive programs. We are committed to finding schools with available seats that offer support to multilingual learners and that do not pose a travel hardship for the students. All the materials we provide to families continue to be translated into the appropriate languages, and we support families in selecting the best language program for their children.

Support at School and Shelters

Once students are enrolled, we work closely with superintendents and principals to conduct initial assessments to determine what comprehensive and targeted resources are needed, especially for special education and bilingual programs. We encourage our schools to work with their district budget director if a mid-year adjustment is needed.

Last school year, in Fall 2022, we committed \$20M, or \$2,000 per student, to schools seeing an influx of six or more students in temporary housing, in addition to \$110M in Fair Student Funding.

This year, we added a new weight to the Fair Student Funding formula that prioritizes students in temporary housing, allocating more funding to schools supporting these students. We are also continuing to direct advance register growth funding to meet the immediate needs of schools receiving incoming students. Those allocations enable schools to support the following priorities:

- **Ensuring Language Access and Support** – In collaboration with superintendents, the NYCPS is ensuring that all families are supported in their native languages and that school leadership is aware of the array of resources available to provide translated content-specific information.
- **Providing Academic and Extracurricular Programming** – NYCPS curricular and instructional resources are culturally and linguistically responsive, and we provide educators with additional guidance related to second language acquisition and specialized instruction for diverse learners. Extracurricular activities are also targeted to students' needs and interests, with the goal of enhancing their academic and social experiences.
- **Creating Supportive Classrooms and Schools** – We are working with schools to make sure students receive universal social-emotional supports that help them build positive relationships, develop social and emotional skills, and connect to additional support when necessary. This includes programs like Advisory, Health Education, Restorative Practices, and others that are designed to support the needs of the whole child. Additionally, many schools implement a strengths-based social-emotional screener that is

used to assess and support students' social-emotional skills and development while connecting them to interventions. School leadership and staff have regular check-ins to review attendance and social-emotional data and ensure that interventions and supports are activated as needed.

- **Coordinating Continuously with Community Providers and Community-Based Organizations (CBO)** – Project Open Arms is working in tight coordination with critical CBO partners and other organizations to provide families with critical resources and services.

Mental Health Services

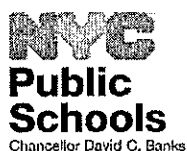
Thanks to the advocacy of the Council, every school has access to a social worker, and in some cases a school-based mental health clinic, that provides mental health services. In addition to the approximately 5,000 social workers and guidance counselors who work in our school system, nearly 400 NYCPS schools have School-Based Mental Health Clinics, more than 170 schools have on-site clinical services with contracted providers, and over 330 schools have Mental Health resources at School-Based Health Centers. Our central team is continuing to work with superintendents and principals to deploy additional resources and support as needed.

Schools also have Students in Temporary Housing coordinators who can share mental health resources and make referrals to Community Based Organizations, or to our Floating Hospital which provides medical, dental, and mental health services regardless of documentation or insurance. While these investments pre-date Project Open Arms, they are proving to be more critical with each passing day. We are working closely with NYC Department of Homeless Services to add capacity to shelters through shelter-based family assistants and STH community coordinators who are able to share information about shelter and school-based mental health resources and can assist with referrals during regular check-ins with families.

Transportation Supports

- New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) in prioritizing transportation services for all our students, especially for our most vulnerable students. All students in temporary housing in grades K-6 are entitled to busing, and their families receive MetroCards to travel. Students in upper grades are also entitled to MetroCards.
- We recognize the vital role transportation plays in enabling students to attend school regularly and are dedicated to providing reliable transportation services to ensure that every student can access their educational facilities without hindrance. Whether it's through bus services, MetroCards, or tailored solutions for families facing transitional challenges,

We are working with our chiefs of support and superintendents to address any escalations regarding transportation and regularly connect with OPT. OPT's point person for students in



temporary housing is also a member of the Open Arms Core Team, which allows for quick response to escalations.

Interagency Coordination

Since the arrival of new asylum-seeking families in April, we have worked closely with our partner agencies, including the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the Department of Social Services (DSS), NYC Health and Hospitals and others involved in Project Open Arms to support these families and students as they navigate their new city. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs connected NYCPS to Rainbow Vision. Dr. Park and Rainbow Vision provide basic eye examinations and eyeglasses in underserved communities to school-aged children in order to help them see better and increase their chances of success in school. We have been able to work with Rainbow Vision to help our students in temporary housing in need of vision supports to receive free eyeglasses. We continue to work closely with the Mayor's Fund to attain in-kind donations that are given directly to schools to support our students in temporary housing.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of this crisis, Project Open Arms' comprehensive, interagency efforts continue to ensure that thousands of students are provided with a full range of services to start their NYCPS education. I want to again thank the Council for providing essential support toward this ambitious undertaking. Your leadership in this crisis has demonstrated how the home of the Statue of Liberty continues to stand as a beacon for those who want to find refuge and thrive in the United States of America.

In the past year, we have learned that it takes a village to support our newest New Yorkers. Due to the work of our dedicated public servants and partnerships with City Council, CBOs and schools, we are able to support our students and their families, and we continue to build best practices to make their transition into New York City Public Schools as smooth as possible. We have learned to build structures and supports with limited funds and human capital. In the past year, we have created sustainable resources such as share tables, care closets, and borough response teams. From the beginning, our success has been built on working together. NYCPS will continue these partnerships to support our newest New Yorkers, as investing in our students is investing in our city. Armed with the lessons of yesterday, we continue to be resilient and wiser as we work to support all students.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today, and we look forward to answering any questions that you have. I will now pass it along to my colleague, Mirza Sánchez-Medina to share how we are preparing our classrooms for our newest New Yorkers.

Testimony of Mirza Sánchez-Medina, Chief of Multilingual Learners, NYCPS

Thank you, Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and all the members of the Education and Immigration Committees for holding this important hearing. We are so grateful to have educators and advocates who care deeply about the needs of our migrant youth and their families on the council.

My name is Mirza Sánchez-Medina and I am the Chief of Multilingual Learners within the Division of Teaching and Learning under Deputy Chancellor Carolyne Quintana.

To echo the sentiments shared by my colleague, Chief of Staff Melissa Aviles-Ramos, once a child is enrolled in our schools, we want to ensure we deliver on the promise of a New York City Public School education, regardless of their age, language, or immigration status. While the needs of our nearly 34,000 migrant and asylum-seeking students are diverse and many, we have so much we can continue to learn from our district- and school-based teams, who are our frontline of support, about the practices, processes, and partnerships that work. Specifically, we want to invest in and scale strategies that support our schools welcoming migrant students with facilitating:

1. Mastery of core academic skills and content expertise,
2. Pedagogy that prioritizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and
3. A sense of belonging and inclusivity for all learners.

For migrant students who are English Language Learners, this begins by ensuring they are placed in an instructional setting that will allow them to successfully access and attain grade-level content knowledge while developing English language proficiency.

The process for English Language Learner screening, identification, and placement occurs once a child is enrolled in a New York City Public School. At a high-level, this process includes the following steps:

- All parents and guardians of newly enrolled students complete a Home Language Identification Survey to let school staff know which language their child speaks at home.
- For students who speak a language other than English at home, schools may give the student the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners to determine if they are an ELL.
- Students identified as ELLs are entitled to receive English as a New Language and/or Bilingual Education.

Schools have ten days to complete this process once a child is enrolled.

To expand access to high-quality **bilingual education** program options, the current New York City Public Schools administration has prioritized opening new and strengthening existing

bilingual education programs. Last year, we opened 33 new programs. This year we supported 44 additional programs. Nearly 1 out of 5 ELLs is served in bilingual education citywide. In addition, through the implementation of NYC Reads, we are strengthening core instruction for the 80% of ELLs served in **English as a New Language** only.

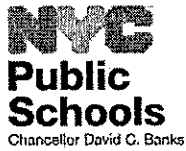
In partnership with the New York Immigration Coalition Education Collaborative, we identified a need to enhance programming for **older Newcomer ELLs in Transfer High Schools** in key boroughs. Last school year, we invested in strengthening programs and services targeting the unique needs of older Newcomer ELLs at six Transfer High Schools in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. These schools were in addition to five already established Transfer High Schools with specific programs and services for ELLs in Manhattan and the Bronx. Due to the increased focus on this population, New York City Public Schools was able to meet the increased need of newly arrived ELLs for a transfer high school setting during the 2022-23 school year, surpassing the percent of ELLs served in transfer high schools in the previous year. We continue to work with our district teams to ensure that the enhanced programs and services established at these schools are sustained and to ensure that families and youth are aware of these program options when enrolling in New York City Public Schools.

To ensure our ELLs can be successful in any program model, grade level, or content area, we work with district staff, school leaders, and their teams with building the capacity of **all teachers to be teachers of ELLs**. This includes providing professional learning, resources, and guidance on how to:

1. Use a team-based approach to creating school-wide systems to support newly-arrived ELLs from intake to instruction;
2. Scaffold instruction for multilingual learners in ways that build background knowledge, target vocabulary development, build student agency, and use peer interactions to support learning; and
3. Integrate opportunities for purposeful home language use in lessons across grade levels and content areas to help multilingual learners understand content, build confidence, and see their home language as an asset.

In addition to being English Language Learners, we know that many of our migrant students may also be **Students with Interrupted and/or Inconsistent Formal Education**. We invite all district- and school-based staff to participate in SIFeshare, an interactive professional learning network designed to support New York City Public Schools educators with building strong learning communities with their Newly Arrived ELLs and SIFE. Through this network, educators can also participate in weekly office hours with our team.

Finally, while we work to ensure that supporting the success of our newly arrived ELLs is a whole-school effort, we do acknowledge the need to expand our pool of bilingual certified and ESOL licensed teachers. To this end, we have partnered with the UFT to design a framework for transitioning teachers into bilingual or ENL roles within the New York City school system. Previously educators who chose to use their Bilingual Education Extension secondary license



mid-career would have the clock reset on their tenure, disincentivizing licensed educators from providing bilingual education. This is no longer the case. Teachers tenured under their current license and who have, but are not using, a Bilingual Education Extension secondary license will be granted immediate tenure if they agree to immediately pivot to work under this license. These educators receive a salary differential, which is a pay increase for teachers who earned a minimum of 30 credits beyond a bachelor's degree. Educators who have not earned 30 additional credits are still able to receive this pay increase. We are excited to be able to facilitate a process that allows us to support any tenured New York City Public School teacher who wants to work under their ENL or bilingual license and ultimately support our ELLs.

As a former principal and lifelong educator, I know that the importance of schools in our communities cannot be overstated. We are so thankful for the dedication of our district- and school-based teams to ensure every New York City Public School is a place where our students and families are safe, welcome, and able to access critical information, resources, and support. We also know that they cannot do this work alone. We must ensure the efforts to support and serve our migrant children and their families remain an urgent priority for the City as a whole, and we appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about where we can do more and where we can do better. Thank you.



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**Testimony of Julia Konrad, Assistant Director
To The New York City Council Committees on Immigration and Education
Wednesday, November 29, 2023**

Good morning, Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and members of the Education and Immigration Committees. My name is Julia Konrad and I am the Assistant Director for Education at the New York City Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this oversight hearing on immigrant students in New York City Public Schools. In my testimony, I will first discuss how New York City's population of English Language Learners has changed in recent years. Then, I will discuss enrollment in types of programs offered by the Department of Education (DOE) to support English Language Learners. Finally, I will discuss the availability of bilingual and English as a Second Language teachers, as of last school year.

English Language Learners Make Up Nearly One Fifth of All K-12 Traditional Public School Students

In my testimony, I will be discussing the demographics and program enrollment of English Language Learners for school year 2022-2023. Our data on English Language Learners (ELLs) includes students in traditional public schools (Districts 1-32, 75, and 79) in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. While the DOE does offer language support at the Pre-K level, our student-level data do not include those students.

In 2022-2023, the share of K-12 traditional public school students who were English Language Learners increased to nearly 19 percent of all students. In other words, nearly one in five K-12 students in traditional public school is an English Language Learner. The year before, in 2021-2022, that share was 17 percent, and in 2020-2021, it was 16 percent. Between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the number of English Language Learners increased from more than 148,000 students to about 159,000—an increase of more than 11,000 students, or an 8 percent increase.

When new students enter the NYC public school system, enrollment staff issue the Home Language Questionnaire to identify if a language other than English is spoken at home. If it is, school-based staff administer the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), which identifies students' level of English proficiency. In 2022-2023, the share of English Language Learners scoring at the "Entering" level, or beginning level, on that diagnostic test increased from 26 percent of ELLs the year before to 31 percent. And so, as of the 2022-2023 school year, nearly a third of New York City's ELLs were at the beginning level of English proficiency. In comparison, in 2019-2020, 19 percent of ELLs scored at the "entering" proficiency level. At the other end of the spectrum, the shares of students designated in the two most advanced categories of English proficiency has been declining.

The Share of English Language Learners at The Beginning Level of English Proficiency Has Increased					
Year	Total Count of English Language Learners	Share of English Language Learners at Each Proficiency Level			
		Entering (Beginning)	Emerging (Low Intermediate)	Transitioning (Intermediate)	Expanding (Advanced)
2019-2020	141,600	19%	16%	24%	41%
2020-2021	146,800	25%	16%	22%	37%
2021-2022	148,300	26%	17%	22%	35%
2022-2023	159,000	31%	17%	20%	31%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education's annual ELL survey data

In 2022-2023, the Share of English Language Learners in Bilingual Programs Increased Slightly

The DOE offers three types of programs to support English language acquisition. Two out of the three types of programs that the DOE offers to support English language acquisition—Dual Language and Transitional Bilingual Education—are considered bilingual, while the third—English as a New Language (ENL)—is not. While bilingual programs provide content instruction in students' home languages, ENL programs provide English instruction as a stand-alone class or as push-in support to students from a range of language backgrounds. Teachers providing ENL Only instruction may provide additional resources in students' home languages, but most of the instruction occurs in English. Bilingual programs are often seen as the preferred placement for ELLs as research shows that the inclusion of home languages provides cognitive, social-emotional, and academic benefits to students learning English. While the DOE offers families bilingual and ENL options, student enrollment ultimately depends both on family preferences and the availability of program seats.

In 2022-2023, roughly 79 percent of ELLs were enrolled in English as a New Language programs, 10 percent were in transitional bilingual education programs, and 9 percent were in dual language programs. Between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, the overall share of students in bilingual programs (dual language or transitional bilingual education programs) increased slightly, from 18 percent of all ELLs to 19 percent. This slight increase in the share of students in bilingual programs—even as the overall number of enrolled ELLs increased—likely reflects the DOE's expansion of bilingual programs over the last school year.

Even as the Number of English Language Learners Increased in 2022-2023, The Share Enrolled in Bilingual Programs Increased Slightly				
Year	Share of English Language Learners by Program Type			
	Dual Language Programs	Transitional Bilingual Programs	English as a New Language Programs	Student Not Being Served
2019-2020	7%	10%	81%	2%
2020-2021	7%	10%	80%	3%
2021-2022	8%	10%	80%	2%
2022-2023	9%	10%	79%	2%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education's annual ELL survey data

This current fiscal year, 2023-2024, the DOE provided additional funds to schools opening bilingual programs this fall, as well as those planning to do so the following school year (2024-2025). Forty-four schools received planning funds to open additional bilingual programs in 2023-2024, and another 14 schools received planning funds to open programs in 2024-2025.

New Incentives Aim to Recruit New Bilingual and ESL Licensed Teachers

In a report published this May, IBO identified the number of active bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in schools as of October 31, 2022, using the DOE's staffing and state certification data.

There are two types of state certifications that support language acquisition for English Language Learners: a bilingual extension in addition to an existing teaching certification, or a separate English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certification. While teachers may hold multiple state certifications that would qualify them to teach in various domains, the DOE issues one license to every DOE teacher based on their active teaching role. IBO identified 1,873 bilingual teachers and another 3,606 ESL teachers across K-12 traditional public schools as of October 31 of 2022.

Of the 1,873 bilingual teachers, the majority of teachers—1,640 teachers, or 88 percent—held bilingual licenses in Spanish. The next most common category of bilingual licenses were in Chinese languages, with 179 licensed teachers (10 percent). The third most common bilingual license was in French, with 22 teachers (1 percent). That school year, 66 percent of ELLs spoke Spanish at home. The next most common category of languages spoken at home were Chinese languages (nearly 10 percent of ELLs), followed by Arabic (roughly 5 percent of ELLs).

This fall, recent efforts aimed to encourage the recruitment of new and already-qualified bilingual and ESL teachers to work within those roles. The New York State Education Department temporarily eased requirements to receive bilingual and ESOL state certification, and the DOE is waiving the one-year probation period usually required for teachers switching between licenses. And finally, just this month, the DOE and United Federation of Teachers reached an agreement for a \$5,000 incentive to be awarded to qualified teachers who switched from an existing license in another domain into a bilingual or ESL license. As these incentives take effect, IBO will continue to track New York City's teaching workforce and the supports provided to our English Language Learners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS TO THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON IMMIGRATION AND EDUCATION
NOVEMBER 29, 2023**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Hanif, Chair Joseph, and members of the Committees on Immigration and Education for holding this hearing.

At this point, we are all familiar with the influx of migrants to New York City since 2022. More than 100,000 migrants and asylum seekers have arrived, and over 65,000 remain in our city's care. Of this figure, more than 20,000 migrant children started school this September at NYC Department of Education (DOE) schools. In August 2022, ahead of the start of the 2022-2023 academic year, the city launched Project Open Arms, a plan to provide wraparound services for new students, with targeted resources for migrant families in the city's shelter system.¹ More than a year later, a number of questions and concerns remain and new ones have been raised.

One of the greatest growing concerns regards students in temporary housing (STH). According to the DOE, approximately 34,000 STH are currently enrolled in DOE schools, and roughly 14,000 have enrolled since July of this year. These figures include recent arrivals to the city. A major problem for STH is chronic absenteeism, with over 70% chronically absent in the last school year.² Chronic absenteeism threatens to worsen, especially for migrant students and their families in the shelter system with impending 30- and 60-day notices requiring them to leave and reapply for shelter or find alternative housing. As of October 27, approximately 2,700 families have received these notices, and there is no guarantee that these families and their children will relocate to a site in the same neighborhood or even borough.³ This threatens to disrupt migrant students' studies if families are expected to move throughout the city, further and further away from their children's schools.

Maintaining transit access is a necessary component to supporting students in temporary housing in their commutes to school. Ideally, STH would reside near the school they attend, but for those that do not—such as migrant children who may be shuffled from shelter to shelter—transit options like busing or providing MetroCards is crucial to stymie chronic absenteeism. According to federal law, school districts must provide transportation for unhoused students so they can remain in their schools. The DOE offers school buses for STH from kindergarten to the sixth grade and provides MetroCards for

¹ <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/607-22/adams-administration-project-open-arms-comprehensive-support-plan-meet-educational>

² <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/1/23941021/nyc-schools-homeless-students-record-high-number/>

³ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/29/schools-prepare-for-shelter-limit-on-migrant-families/>



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older STH.⁴ However, many students remain waiting for a bus route or approval for busing, with over 2,000 students waiting as of October 2023.⁵ Some students who may be ineligible for busing have to rely on MTA subways and buses, yet as we have seen with the opening of the Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Center (HERRC) at Floyd Bennett Field, migrants are so far removed from major subway or bus routes⁶ that it would make it nearly impossible for a student to attend school on a regular basis.

Further, I share a concern over the coordination or possible lack thereof among city agencies and the DOE. Although migrant children are housed in various shelters that fall under the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Health + Hospitals (H+H), and Emergency Management (NYCEM), the DOE only coordinates with DHS in regards to sharing data and information on shelter residents. This is particularly concerning because that means that the DOE—for migrant students residing in shelters outside of DHS’s purview—is unaware of where migrant students are moving throughout the city, making it even more difficult to contact families and ensure students are attending school. The onus then falls on individual schools to track down families and whether transportation needs have changed for the students. With Covid-19 relief funding streams set to expire for shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators, all the aforementioned concerns have increased tenfold.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not stress the importance of language accessibility for the recently arrived and the existing English Language Learners population. From mental health services to shelter to food access, in-language services are what makes the difference between an individual having access to these services and an individual who does not. For our young students, this is even more important in order to shape their ongoing social, mental, and emotional development. Identification of bilingual educators and further bolstering of bilingual programs are integral to ensuring immigrant students have an appropriate transition in school. It is also important to expand the offering of language services that reflect the breadth and depth of our immigrant population. In particular, the offerings for African and indigenous languages should be a priority, given that a growing proportion of new arrivals are coming from African countries or are speakers of an indigenous language.

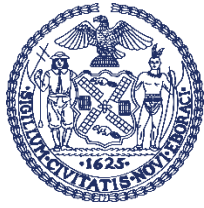
As we near the end of 2023, that also means migrant families who received 60-day notices are closer to leaving their temporary homes. The DOE and corresponding city agencies must act swiftly to ensure students and their families are not left out in the cold, that students have adequate transportation options, and that students are supported linguistically and culturally.

Thank you.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/10/28/education-of-migrant-children-threatened-by-nyc-60-day-shelter-limit/>

⁶ The Q35 is the only MTA bus nearby.



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**Testimony of Lara Lai, Senior Policy Analyst and Strategic Organizer
New York City Council Education and Immigration Committees
Oversight Hearing: Immigrant Students in NYC Public Schools**

November 29, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and members of the City Council Education and Immigration Committees. My name is Lara Lai and I am the Senior Policy Analyst and Strategic Organizer for Education in the Office of NYC Comptroller Brad Lander. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

A little more than one year ago, our office was the first to sound the alarm on the lack of additional funding from this administration for schools serving newly arrived students from families seeking asylum. In response, DOE issued School Allocation Memorandum (SAM) 65 sending additional money to many of the schools serving these students. Since then, more than 21,000 additional students have arrived in our city and enrolled in NYC Public Schools, contributing to the first increase in school enrollment in 8 years. Increased enrollment brings with it opportunity for our schools, which receive significant funding on a per pupil basis, and for our shared economic thriving. However, there are three critical and urgent issues facing immigrant students that I would like to help bring attention to today:

1. Fair Student Funding (FSF) calculations for Students in Temporary Housing (STH)
2. Limits on the time families with children can remain in shelter
3. Lack of critical support for students in shelter

Fair Student Funding (FSF) calculations for Students in Temporary Housing (STH)

DOE played a pivotal role in crafting and funding the new Fair Student Funding (FSF) weight for students in temporary housing (STH)—something long recommended by advocates as well as the FSF Taskforce convened by the administration in 2022. However, unlike other FSF weights, DOE is choosing to base the new weight allocation for students experiencing homelessness on enrollment as of December 31, 2022. If this decision stands, schools will not receive funding this school year for changes in STH enrollment that have occurred since then.

As Comptroller Lander wrote in a letter to Chancellor Banks earlier this month, the exclusion of these 21,000 students from DOE's FSF calculations will deny schools serving new arrivals nearly \$11 million in funding for urgently needed additional resources this school year.

The DOE implements other FSF weights – those for students learning English, students with disabilities, and the new concentration of needs weight – via mid-year adjustments, and is even using December 30, 2023 as the cutoff for the English language learner and special education weights. So what is the educational policy reason for DOE uniquely denying funding to schools with new students in temporary

housing? Without other explanation, it appears the DOE is purposely creating resource scarcity in schools with new arrivals.

We hope members of the City Council will join us in urging the administration to reverse this decision by December 15th, in time to apply the new weight designed to provide resources for students experiencing homelessness via the mid-year adjustment, just as the DOE is doing for other FSF weights.

Limits on the time families with children can remain in shelter

City Hall's decision to impose a 60-day time limit on families staying in HERRCs not only violates the court affirmed rights of families but endangers the physical and mental wellbeing of children. Just as thousands of children are settling into the safety and stability of new schools, establishing routines, and making new friends after months of hardship and trauma, this administration will force them to leave and reapply for shelter after 60 days. This policy creates unnecessary disruption for the teachers and other kids in the classroom by unsettling routines, taking time and attention away from lessons, and interrupting teaching and learning. For parents of very young children, who have received a childcare voucher through Promise NYC, it means relocation to another part of the city where there may be a wait for childcare seats and severing the connection and sense of security that their young child has found with their current provider. This policy creates instability for those providers who will lose the income from that seat when the child leaves.

In addition to the administration's cruel 60-day limit on shelter stays for families with children in HERRCs, hundreds of immigrant families with children have reportedly been placed in isolated hotel rooms through the City's contracts with the Hotel Association of New York City (HANYC), according to reporting by City Limits. These families have been given no supports or services and now face a 28-day limit.

The administration must reverse its 60- and 28-day shelter limit policies – first and foremost to uphold the City's Right to Shelter obligations which set New York City apart as a place where our homeless neighbors still have a roof over their heads rather than sleeping on the streets by the tens of thousands in the coldest months of the year – and to ensure our City's immigrant students are provided with the stability they need to succeed and thrive in school in a time of crisis.

Lack of critical support for students in shelter

Shelter-based community coordinators, family assistants, and other staff provide critical care to our immigrant students in temporary housing. Those services include:

- enrollment and attendance support;
- translation and interpretation services;
- ensuring children are identified for appropriate placement in 3K/PreK programs;
- ensuring students are screened for special education services, which not only prevents these students from falling through the cracks but helps schools secure additional FSF funding, which can mean between \$500 and \$9000 for schools per student;
- identifying young adults who may have come here seeking work but are still entitled to attend high school and help them enroll in transfer schools;
- connecting students and families to the immigration legal services needed to obtain pathways to permanent status, such as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS).

These workers are helping to provide the coordinated and compassionate care that all newcomer families need to get on their feet. However, these positions remain severely underfunded and at risk of future budget cuts. There are currently 100 shelter-based coordinators and 117 family assistants working in NYC shelters – that number has remained stagnant since FY23, even as the City has welcomed over 100,000 new arrivals and opened around 175 new shelters, HERRCs and respite centers. Lack of communication with schools at the HERRCs in particular is a pressing problem according to advocates. Seventy-five of the 100 coordinators currently working in NYC shelters are funded with \$9 million in expiring stimulus funds. The remaining 25 positions are funded by \$3 million in tax levy money that has not yet been baselined. Translation and interpretation services, bilingual programs provided by DOE and new bilingual transfer programs are all funded by stimulus dollars. As we provide continued oversight over the NYC budget in the face of severe cuts to critical services, we must fight to protect and expand these positions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for holding this important hearing. The Comptroller looks forward to partnering with the New York City Council to ensure that our immigrant students get the support and resources they need to succeed and thrive in NYC.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BRAD LANDER

November 17, 2023

Chancellor David C. Banks
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Rollout of new FSF weight for Students in Temporary Housing

Dear Chancellor Banks,

I hope you and your team at New York City Public Schools are well in these challenging times. I want to start by recognizing DOE's pivotal role in crafting and funding the new Fair Student Funding (FSF) weight for students in temporary housing (STH)—something long recommended by advocates as well as the FSF Taskforce you convened in 2022.

It has come to my attention, however, that unlike other FSF weights, the DOE is choosing to base the new weight allocation for students experiencing homelessness on enrollment as of December 31, 2022. If this decision stands, schools will not receive funding this school year for changes in STH enrollment that have occurred since then.

This is extremely concerning given the thousands of newcomer students that have arrived in NYC since December of last year – and who will likely continue to arrive in coming months. Many of these students will be enrolled in a relatively small number of schools near the shelters where they are living, and those schools urgently need the additional resources that were expected to come from the STH weight to meet the needs of new arrivals while continuing to provide excellent educational services to all their students.

My office estimates that approximately 21,000 students in temporary housing have enrolled in NYC schools since December 31, 2022, using recent numbers cited by DOE. The aggregate funding for the STH weight associated with these students would be \$10.7 million—that is nearly \$11 million in funding that DOE is choosing to deny to schools serving these students.

The DOE implements other FSF weights – those for students learning English, students with disabilities, and the new concentration of needs weight – via mid-year adjustments, and is even using December 30, 2023 as the cutoff for the English language learner and special education weights. So what is the educational policy reason for DOE uniquely denying funding to schools with new students in temporary housing? Without other explanation, it appears that you are purposely creating resource scarcity in schools with new arrivals.

I strongly urge you to reverse this decision by December 15th, in time to apply the new weight designed to provide resources for students experiencing homelessness via the mid-year adjustment, just as you

are doing for other FSF weights. Incorporating a mid-year adjustment for the STH weight would help DOE manage school budgets during this period of dynamic enrollment as newcomer students arrive in the City and then potentially transfer schools (especially now given the new 60-day family shelter rule). I urge DOE to adjust this policy prior to December 15th to allow a mid-year adjustment for the STH weight in January and most importantly, to ensure that schools have the resources needed to serve our students currently experiencing homelessness, along with all their other students.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Lander", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brad Lander
New York City Comptroller



**Testimony of Mary Vaccaro, UFT Vice President for Education, submitted before
the New York City Council Education and Immigration Committees**

Oversight Hearing on Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools

Nov. 29, 2023

My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I'm the vice president for education of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank the members of the New York City Council's Education and Immigration Committees for holding today's public hearing on immigrant students in New York City public schools, especially Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph and Immigration Committee Chair Shahana Hanif.

As we have stated at previous hearings, we support the city and the school district's mission to welcome these new arrivals to New York as part of our city's long history as a place where immigrants and migrants from around the world have found tolerance and opportunity. The effort to ensure that these migrants and their families have safe and secure housing, access to medical care and social services, and the ability to continue their children's education in our public schools is worthwhile and urgent. However, we remain deeply concerned that the administration's current response to these students' and families' needs is inadequate to the scale of the current situation.

As the number of migrant students in our classrooms has continued to rise over the past year, we have been in constant communication with our members in the field to assess the ongoing situation in schools. One source of information has been the frequent school visits and standing focus groups that we have always used to gauge levels of need for our multilingual learners. In addition, since spring 2023, we have carried out a survey of our chapter leaders in Districts 7 and 9 (two communities that have welcomed many migrant students) and held a listening session in early November 2023, at which members across the city spoke about their experiences, identified supports that are needed, and shared what they have tried to put in place in their individual buildings.

From these conversations with our members, we have identified a number of clear areas of need that have remained consistent over time and across the city.

Basic Needs

We have heard from our members that a majority of schools have provided basic necessities, including food and clothing, to students and their families. However, educators report that hunger remains an issue, and that even when extra food is available in schools, it cannot be brought into shelters. Many students do not have appropriate clothing for cold weather, and we have heard from teachers who bring students' laundry home on a weekly basis.

Social and Emotional Support

As we have stated previously, there is a dearth of social and emotional support (especially in home languages) for students and families, many of whom experienced and continue to experience severe trauma. More recently, fears that families will be required to leave the shelter system after 60 days have further compounded the situation. Of the spring survey, 68% of schools reported that there was no designated social worker for new arrivals and that 58% of these students were not receiving regular services from a social worker. Educators report not knowing where to refer families who have asked for outside support.

Identification, Services and Staffing

While most new arrivals are being correctly identified as English language learners (ELLs) at their schools, we have found that many are not receiving the mandated minutes of service. Last April, almost half of chapter leaders in Districts 7 and 9 (48%) reported that newly arrived ELLs were not receiving their full services. Some of this is due to a shortage of English as a new language (ENL) and bilingual teachers, and we hope that the agreement made in collaboration with the New York State Education Department and the DOE will bring more teachers into these fields.

However, at our meetings this fall, teachers from multiple schools across the boroughs reported that ELLs did not receive ENL services for over a month while ENL teachers dealt with paperwork and assessment related to the identification process. We are concerned that this will happen again in the spring and that ENL teachers will be asked to cancel services for over a month during New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test administration and scoring.

Instruction

Teachers have reported to us that, due to a lack of adequate resources and training, they and their colleagues are struggling to differentiate instruction, such as by trying to

use translation apps simultaneously in multiple languages, to meet student needs. Even for teachers in bilingual programs, it is proving difficult to meet the needs of new arrivals who enter after second grade and have experienced limited or interrupted education (SIFE). Schools report a need for curricula specifically designed for new arrivals and want to include beginning literacy instruction across grade levels.

Professional learning: Last spring, the majority of chapter leaders (68%) reported that staff at their schools had not received professional learning to meet the needs of newly arrived ELLs. Topics requested then and now include:

- Instructional scaffolds and strategies beyond the use of translation apps.
- Social and emotional learning for ELLs.
- Information on the cultures of newly arrived families as well as the causes of migration.

During last year's testimony, we stated that, "Over the last several years, the UFT has repeatedly asked for a point person from each district to reach out to each school to support educators of ELLs and to listen and provide guidance, even if it's not possible to meet every need. Most teachers we have heard from feel they are on their own as they try to support these students every period of every day. They are not aware of any DOE outreach regarding instruction. The bottom line is that the human touch has been missing." Sadly, these words remain as true today as they did a full year ago.

We urge the City Council to continue to advocate for these families and to monitor their situation as they and their children adjust to life in our city and its schools. We look forward to continuing to work with you to make their lives here stable, safe and successful.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be Delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on Immigration

Re: Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools

November 29, 2023

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Kim Sweet

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Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss newcomer immigrant students in New York City public schools. My name is Jennifer Pringle, and I am the Director of Project LIT - Learners in Temporary Housing at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We speak out for students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, students from immigrant families, and students who are homeless.

AFC has provided direct one-on-one assistance to many newcomer immigrant families in shelter on education-related issues, including enrollment, special education, and transportation, and we have provided know-your-rights workshops at schools with high numbers of immigrant students. We also partner with shelters to help them support the education of the students living there. Based on this work, we are highlighting several concerns and recommendations.

Schools require additional training and funding to serve newcomer immigrant students, especially students with disabilities and older youth:

Through our direct service, we have seen children missing out on an education that is responsive to their unique needs due to schools not being equipped to effectively serve our new students and their families.

Families have sought our help because their children have disabilities but are not receiving any special education services in school. In some cases, school staff have not referred immigrant children for special education evaluations even where a parent has informed the school that their children received services in their previous country. Students with disabilities should not languish for months in school without an appropriate education, and parents should not have to wait until they find an advocate



to obtain the services to which their children are legally entitled. New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) must train school staff to identify students who are suspected of having a disability, create a Comparable Service Plan, and promptly refer them for special education evaluations in accordance with the law. School staff should not delay in referring students suspected of having disabilities simply because they have been in the United States a short time or have limited English language proficiency. In addition, NYCPS needs to inform parents of their special education rights so that they know of the services that are available and are thereby better equipped to advocate for their children's needs.

NYCPS must also make a greater effort to help enroll older, newcomer youth ages 15-21 in appropriate high schools. In addition to many youth being unaware of their right to enroll in school, there are not enough school programs available that can serve this population. Although the City is home to over 40 Transfer High Schools which serve older, under-credited youth, only five of those schools specialize in working with newcomer immigrant students and English Language Learners (ELLs). Six additional transfer high schools received funding last school year to serve this population, but it is unclear whether they will receive the funding this year. NYCPS must immediately provide appropriate funding and resources to all Transfer High Schools serving newcomer youth. These schools need professional development on how to work with ELLs and Students with Interrupted Formal Education, additional English as a New Language ("ENL") teachers, bilingual social workers, and culturally responsive wrap-around supports and services.

60-day notices and 28-day placements are harmful to children's education:

The City's decision to limit shelter stays to 60 days for certain newcomer families and to use 28-day hotel stays for other families is and will continue to be extraordinarily destabilizing for students, families, and school communities. We have heard about many newcomer families who already faced significant delays getting their children enrolled at the start of the school year. Now, just as students are settling into new classrooms in a new country, their families will have to navigate whether to stay in the same school or switch schools closer to where the family relocates. Either option will likely result in massive disruption to students' education, whether due to delays in arranging transportation, unworkably long commute times, or being forced to start over yet again with new teachers, new classmates, and a new curriculum. If newcomer families must be moved to a new shelter placement, the City should try to place families in the same Community School District or at the very least the same borough where their youngest child goes to school.

School transportation delays make the right to continued school enrollment a right in name only:

While students have the right to stay in their original school and get bus service when they are moved to a new shelter placement, we know from our experience working with families that this is often a right in name only given the delays in starting bus service. We have already seen the impact of the bus driver shortage and the backlog in processing busing requests for students in temporary housing—resulting in students waiting weeks or longer for a bus route and often transferring schools due to the lack of bus service. With the 60-day rule, there will be even more busing requests. Additionally, due to the spending freeze, there have been delays in purchasing MetroCards for parents to take their children to school on public transit instead of yellow bus service or while

waiting for busing to be arranged. Again, with the 60-day rule, these MetroCards will be in higher demand, but schools may not be able to fulfill their obligations under the McKinney-Vento Act—and students may not be able to get to school—if NYCPS is prevented from purchasing the MetroCards it needs in a timely manner.

Delays in finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share data between NYCPS and the NYC Office of Emergency Management has made it harder to connect newcomer children with school and educational services:

While DHS and NYCPS have long had a data-sharing agreement, allowing NYCPS to know which children have entered DHS shelters, there is not yet such an agreement between NYCPS and the NYC Office of Emergency Management, the city agency that is operating many of the shelters where newcomer families are being placed (the Humanitarian Emergency Relief and Response Centers or HERRCs). In the meantime, NYCPS is not receiving any lists of children entering HERRCs who need school placements and school transportation, making it harder to ensure that all newly arrived immigrant children have school placements. Approval and implementation of this MOU should be fast-tracked and implemented as soon as possible, and in the meantime, the City should add to the intake process a form allowing newcomer parents to consent to authorize NYCOEM to share their information with NYCPS for the purposes of following up with a school placement, transportation, and other school-related services.

The City does not yet have a plan to continue funding 100 NYCPS shelter-based community coordinators and other important programs supporting newcomer students:

We appreciate the Council's support that led NYCPS to hire 100 community coordinators to work on the ground in shelters. These coordinators have helped students and families in shelter connect with needed educational services and supports, including helping newly arrived immigrant students enroll in school. However, we are very concerned that the City does not have a plan to continue funding for the community coordinators and a number of other **important education initiatives** when the funding expires at the end of the school year. For example

- 75 of the 100 NYCPS shelter-based community coordinators are funded through expiring federal COVID-19 relief funds (\$9M), and the other 25 are funded with city funding set to expire in June (\$3.3M).
- NYCPS has allocated \$10M a year in temporary federal COVID-19 funding for bilingual staff and \$7M to expand translation and interpretation, but this federal funding is set to run dry in June.
- Thanks to the Council's efforts, \$4M in city funding is allocated for the NYCPS immigrant family communication and outreach program and \$16M is allocated for Promise NYC to provide child care to children who are undocumented, but city funding for both programs expires in June.

More information about the important education programs currently funded with expiring federal COVID-19 relief funds is available at <https://bit.ly/NYCCTA>. We will need the Council's leadership to ensure these programs are continued.



We call on the City to ensure that these vital programs are continued to support our newest students, reconsider destructive policies like the 60-day notices and 28-day hotel stays, and put children first, so that all children, including our newest students, have a bright start and bold future.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.



New York City Council
Oversight Hearing on Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools
Submitted Testimony prepared by Dante Bravo, Senior Policy Analyst

November 29th, 2023

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Rita Joseph, Chair Shahana Hanif, and the members of the Committees on Education and Immigration for the opportunity to submit testimony on the city's treatment of its most recently arrived families.

For nearly 170 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no limits to a young person's aspirations. We have constructed a continuum of services for young people that fosters well-being and allows them to succeed and thrive in every milestone of life. Today, our 2,000 full- and part-time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth, and families through our network of 40 locations including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, NYCHA facilities, and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

Children's Aid is also a member of the Campaign for Children, the Human Services Coalition, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we support their policy agendas.

New York City has a storied tradition of welcoming immigrants into our city, and Children's Aid has supported that legacy throughout its 170 year tenure. Beginning in spring 2022, thousands of migrants have arrived in New York City, seeking asylum and other resources to help their transition to living in the United States. [According to ABC News](#), 126,000 asylum seekers have received services from the municipal shelter system since March 2022, and the human services sector has answered the call to service by providing humanitarian relief, childcare, food supports, emergency housing counseling, and much more.

Children's Aid in particular has served nearly 150 families with children in our Early Childhood Education and Youth Services departments. Our support services have included child care, afterschool programs, welcoming within our community schools, food boxes, making connections to ESL classes, legal aid, and much more. In addition, we've met with families to provide supportive housing, employment, health goals, and more.



That being said, Children's Aid is deeply concerned about the lack of coordination in services for these recently arrived families. Staff have reported instances of inconsistent government support, despite these families having already survived incredible trauma and danger in their journeys to New York City. In many ways, Children's Aid staff have had to cover gaps in services, communication, and misinformation for recently arrived families, even though these families ostensibly did go through some government screening through their participation in a Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Center (HERRC) or temporary City shelter.

We are also deeply concerned about the negative narrative used to describe the needs of our newest New Yorkers and placing full blame on them for this most recent harmful cycle of divestment in social services. This administration claims that the needs of these asylum seeking families are what has caused significant imbalances in the City's budget, which therefore justifies Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) to City agencies of at least 15% in the recent November modification. A key fact missing from this argument is that human services contracts historically have been underfunded and have required in-kind resources from the human services provider sector in order to accurately meet community needs with quality support.

A 15% PEG to City agencies will result in even less funding, coordination, and resources for these asylum seeking families as well as fewer services for **all New Yorkers**. While the City may argue that these cuts are a necessity, the reality is that these decisions will have a detrimental impact on youth outcomes and our city's economy for years to come. These announcements come at a critical time when interruption in these services will result in life-altering harm to our city's most vulnerable populations - newly arrived or not.

As an organization invested in the well-being of vulnerable families and children in New York City, Children's Aid therefore calls on the City to do the following:

- Develop comprehensive, multilingual messaging about the rights and resources available to all newly arrived New Yorkers in all HERCs and shelters.
- Ensure better coordination of City agencies to get much needed services to asylum seeking families.
- Increase investment in human services contracts, given the profound need for services in an already out of capacity system that include:
 - Comprehensive supports for the health and safety of asylum seeking families including mental health supports, referrals for physicals, and support with enrolling in Medicaid and other services these families could be eligible for
 - Dedicated funding and distribution of resources for daily living including (but not limited to): appropriate clothing for the weather (winter gear), metro cards, cell phones, and nutritious culturally relevant food and meals.

- Intentional allocation of these resources across all points of entry of service so that all asylum seeking families have a comparable quality of life, regardless of where they enter into the system.
- Dedicate specific resources to supporting human services workers through the vicarious trauma they experience in serving this population, especially if these workers also come from an immigrant background.
- Commit to housing asylum seekers in permanent housing preferably in the neighborhoods they have already received services, even after 60 days, especially expectant families and families with children birth to High School to promote stability and well-being.

The Need for Stability Beyond the 60-Day Rule

Children's Aid has a long history in Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the North Shore of Staten Island. It is the depth of these connections that makes the work our staff do on a daily basis so important to the well-being of the communities we serve. Unfortunately, asylum seeking families are being asked to uproot themselves from local systems of support every time they receive a 60-day notice of eviction from a shelter in any neighborhood in NYC. These families are not being allowed to build these rich connections that make a difference in seeing a new place as a new home.

Children's Aid staff have reported numerous instances of being unable to continue services for families once they leave a shelter. Many asylum seeking families struggle on a daily basis to meet basic needs, let alone have access to important tools that could keep them connected to supports like cell phones or metro cards. In one instance, our staff at one of our community schools were unable to contact a family whose child missed more than two weeks of school, despite the fact that our staff were intending to connect them with resources to alleviate the family's housing instability.

One Children's Aid staff even reported, "If I could find this family, I would happily go on the train myself to wherever they are and give this mom the relief she was asking for. It's so damaging for these kids to have to repeat the process of settling over and over again."

In the world of youth development and early childhood education, early intervention is a key strategy in creating positive outcomes for children in poverty or with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Asylum seeking children are some of our city's most vulnerable youth, and a lack of stability translates into irreplaceable time lost to a dehumanizing system. In other words, Children's Aid - as a mission-based organization dedicated to meeting the needs of children, youth and their communities - is deeply concerned with the developmental



consequences our City's response will have on this generation of new New Yorkers, especially when these youth have already survived incredible trauma just to even be in our classrooms and public spaces.

Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent from school. Housing instability creates serious barriers for families to participate in Early Childhood programs and school age child care programs, hinder a child's learning and development, and leads to poor academic and social outcomes. Children experiencing housing instability have more developmental, health, emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges than their peers who are stably housed.

The only way to combat the harm caused by this kind of housing instability is permanent housing. Growing up is already hard enough without having survived incredible danger, housing instability, and moving to a new country that does not speak your home language. Immigrating to a new place is also a deeply harrowing time for anyone, let alone a small child or teenager in the midst of important development milestones. Therefore, Children's Aid calls on the City to do what is right by asylum seeking children and their families, which is to commit to finding stable housing so that these children and youth can continue the difficult work of transitioning to a new country and having a stable lifeline to support services.

A Lack of Coordination and Comprehensive Messaging

Children's Aid can appreciate the fact that it takes much work, effort, and resources to create a coordinated response that is both comprehensive and flexible to meet the unique needs of every new New Yorker. At the same time, Children's Aid staff have reported being unable to serve prospective families with small children because of the misinformation and lack of messaging these families have about what services are available to them, regardless of documentation status. When families are relocated, they not only have an interruption of stabilizing services like Community Schools, After-school programming and Early Childhood Education, but they miss opportunities to receive life changing services because of the misinformation they receive from City officials or employees.

In one site, Children's Aid staff reported working with a family consisting of a 4-year old and a single father who were told that there were no services whatsoever for a 4-year old child, given that she is too young to be enrolled in K-12 school. This family received no referrals to any other provider or entity that could have been a support in finding appropriate childcare for this family, and was under the impression that there were simply **no resources** available for them as they transition to their lives in New York City.



At a time when many Early Childhood Education, after-school and other sites of youth development are facing cuts because of an ostensible “underutilization” of these services, this is just one of many examples of missed opportunities for human services providers to be able to serve families with the resources they deserve.

To add insult to injury, the family mentioned earlier only got in contact with Children’s Aid for services because the parent merely walked by the site and asked for services, not because a city official or employee pointed him in the right direction. If anything, this family received the wrong message through a government employee, which meant more time that this family and child missed out on engaging with expert Children's Aid staff who are there to connect families to tangible Head Start resources and other interventions that support positive family and child outcomes.

The Need for More Resources Within and Outside of Human Services Contracts

Children’s Aid understands that the City’s shelter system is being put under tremendous strain in these times. Therefore, in addition to clear, comprehensive messaging being available to all recently arrived families and a commitment to permanently housing many of these new New Yorkers, Children’s Aid calls on the city to invest more resources in human services contracts and to support the needs of human services workers.

In short, unfunded mandates are not the answer while the City is in the midst of a social services crisis. It is not the time to expect that the already underpaid, burnt-out human services workforce take on more work for little to no additional compensation. It is also not a time to blame vulnerable populations for exorbitant budget cuts, nor is it a time that we as New Yorkers can afford anything less than full investment in the human services sector.

Despite the current investment in HERCs and other supports, Children’s Aid staff have reported seeing families with young children without their most basic needs met. Specifically, Children’s Aid staff reported working with a family with an underweight two year old child. The family was given a single empanada as a meal meant for the entire family of four at the shelter they were living in, and had no access to a kitchen or any equipment that would allow this family to feed their toddler other options. Because more than 1,000 families receive services at this shelter, this family was told that there was not enough food for everyone.

Children’s Aid staff have also reported that some points of entry into the human services sector for these families have more robust support for them than others, creating an inequitable system for families with similar needs. For example, Children’s Aid staff worked with another



family with small children to obtain a microwave and mini-fridge, allowing those caregivers to give their children milk, yogurt, fresh fruit, and other nutritious foods.

Other instances include asylum seeking families coming into Children's Aid sites without weather appropriate clothing, and only having these needs taken care of because of in-kind support from Children's Aid (e.g a coat from a Children's Aid coat drive, funds from our New York Times Neediest Families fund, etc). Children's Aid has also provided other resources like Metrocards, grocery gift cards, and more - for the sake of keeping families safe and in contact so that their children would not experience an interruption in services. In other words, providers have to give additional resources and support that are not compensated by their government contracts to ensure that these families have their bare necessities supported, let alone a humane quality of life.

Small details like access to a refrigerator, a coat that fits a child properly, or even knowing where a family will be within two months make enormous differences for this population, differences that this City cannot afford to forgo.

At the same time, Children's Aid -- like many providers -- is dealing with high turnover rates and soaring vacancy rates in various government funded positions. This is because of a much longer history of this City paying human services workers less than their government counterparts in addition to a difficult economy. Because of this, Children's Aid supports the aims of the #JustPay campaign to ensure that the FY25 budget includes automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 3.2% for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, a public commitment of funding for the next three years for a 3% COLA each year, and to pass prevailing wage legislation to lift human services salaries.

Children's Aid therefore also urges the City to add additional resources in human services contracts to address the vicarious trauma human services workers are experiencing in the midst of this humanitarian crisis. Without this intentional funding and allocation of resources, we as a City will continue to lose talented human services workers to other fields, particularly those who share similar backgrounds as the communities we aim to serve. It is difficult to overstate the value of a human services workforce who are bilingual and share an identity as an immigrant with this population. Children's Aid strives to ensure that our staff hold a high degree of cultural competency and that they reflect the communities they serve; because of that, our staff hold similar struggles, barriers, and traumas of the community that they serve let alone engaging with the incredible needs of this current wave of asylum seekers.



Human services workers have always answered the call to service whenever the City and its communities have needed them, be it the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and other current events. The humanitarian crisis in serving asylum seeking families is no different. What is different is the fact that the human services workforce is at the brink of collapsing under the weight of a soaring cost of living in New York City with poverty wages, decades of underfunding, and supporting the City in dealing with successive crises one right after another without proper compensation.

Conclusion

It is true that our newest New Yorkers are coming to our city with great needs. This was also true when New York City welcomed immigrants on Ellis Island in the 19th and 20th century, and this will remain true for future new arrivals to our city. In many ways, New York City is uniquely situated to be a leader in the national conversation around immigration, and it begins with ensuring that our youngest new New Yorkers and their families have everything they need to become a part of a thriving, vibrant New York City. While the City has invested in supporting our newest arrivals, there is far more work, coordination, and resources needed for the good of our most vulnerable children and families. The challenge lies in the fact that these decisions are often made in silos, without adequate input from the organizations delivering essential services on behalf of the city. The services we offer extend beyond immediate assistance; they represent investments in our city's future.

Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council, the Committee on Education, and the Committee on Immigration for their staunch support of children, youth, and their families in New York City. We look forward to continuing working with the City to support all families in need, but especially our most recently arrived families, as part of the Children's Aid's legacy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this very important issue. Please feel free to contact me at dbravo@childrensaidnyc.org with any questions regarding this testimony.

TESTIMONY BY MAE LEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION
TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NOVEMBER 29, 2023

I would like to thank the New York City Council Education Committee and Immigration for holding this hearing. My name is Mae Lee. I am the executive director of the Chinese Progressive Association, a community based organization in Manhattan's Chinatown/Lower East Side.

Many of our clients and constituents are those who have lived in this country for three years or less. In the area of education, we run a summer program for immigrant youth (both in school and out of school). We work and assist new immigrant parents helping them to navigate the system. We run English and citizenship classes for adults. We primarily serve the Chinese community, but some of our clients/students are from countries in Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, or Africa

I am here with my fellow NYIC members to speak about language access. We've been seeing new migrant students both in the Chinatown schools and the Lower East Side schools. While the Chinatown schools are great schools, welcoming of and eager to educate/serve the new students, their strength lies with the Chinese immigrant students. They will need more resources to meet the needs of our newest students and families. The Lower East Side schools tend to have much more Spanish language resources already in place, there is still a need for language access and support in the non-DOE languages such as Portuguese and the indigenous dialects of spoken in Central and South America. An assessment of the exact language needs of the new students should be made, and then resources provided in a timely way. This is in addition to what is already in place, not a replacement for what is in place

In addition to language access, there is also a need for programs, counseling, services that bring together the new students/their families with students/families who are already here in our schools.

Our neighborhood is welcoming of the new immigrants and are eager to help. At times, you'll see projects pop up in the neighborhood to help families. They're often implemented without the help of the City because they can't get help from the City. We are aware of what MOIA is doing, however, community based organization such as the ones here at this hearing, and others not here, should be involved. There needs to be more coordination and communication from the City to further these efforts.

Thank you.



**NYC Council Committees on Immigration and Education
Joint Oversight Hearing on Immigrant Students in NYC Public Schools
Wednesday, November 29, 2023**

Thank you to Chairs Hanif and Joseph, and the Committees on Immigration and Education for holding today's hearing and for the opportunity to offer testimony on the experiences of immigrant students in New York City's Public Schools. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, is a non-profit organization with a 41-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. While our primary focus and direct services are around access to high quality, culturally responsive and sustaining early learning and school-aged education, we understand that many intersectional circumstances and experiences impact the well-being of children and their family support structures, and as such we deliver holistically responsive services within the school and wider communities we serve.

About CHCF's Work & Connections to the Issue

CHCF is a citywide agency with community contact points throughout the five boroughs. A large point of contact exists via our three after-school programs in the Bronx. Over the years, we have seen influxes of migrant families in our school communities and have continued to work diligently with school leaders to coordinate resources that meet the ongoing and growing needs of families and children. Our position as a community-based organization allows us to identify additional partnerships and funding opportunities to supplement the services directly offered through schools, working with other city agencies, such as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, our community elected leaders' offices, philanthropic organizations, and other community-based organizations that might focus on other specific resource access for community members and families.

Like so many organizations in the communities that are receiving the recently arriving migrants, our Bronx office has seen an influx of Spanish-speaking migrants reaching out for support in settling in New York City. Our Community Empowerment team has been working to offer one-on-one needs assessments and connections to resources including, but not limited to, school and childcare access, housing, food, health and mental health supports, and immigration services.

CHCF additionally took on a contract to deliver social service support at a Long Island City hotel that is housing recently arrived asylum seeking families. The hotel that we support serves 110 families; in total there are 186 adults and 174 children under the age of 18. Families housed in the hotel represent 9 different nationalities, including Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Honduras, Haiti, Jamaica, Uzbekistan, and Russia; and 7 different languages. Our services center culturally and linguistically responsiveness focused on the holistic well-being of the families and children. Our on-site team offers one-on-one support in navigating school enrollment, food and housing access, and identifying and mitigating barriers to employment opportunities. A significant piece of our work focuses on building upon the network of care and support for the children in the hotel. Our team facilitates access to school and tutoring support, with particular attention to addressing language barriers. We also help the





children to understand and adapt to a new cultural environment, while preserving their cultural identity, and acknowledging and addressing the trauma experienced during migration.

Top Concerns Related to Immigrant Students in NYC Public Schools

We wish to speak to two critical areas of concern pertaining to immigrant students in New York City public schools. **First, we continue to see gaps in availability of comprehensive, culturally and linguistically responsive program options and support.** We join the collective call for the New York City Council and the Administration to continue growing the number of multilingual educators, counselors and other mental health support staff in schools, and paying particular attention to placement in school communities with longstanding need and inadequate staffing, as well as those communities that have seen an influx of migrant groups in recent years. We have heard reports from families of children crying because they do not have teachers who speak their language or respond to cultural differences. This is an extremely traumatic, isolating, and scary experience for children who have already experienced a big life change. Having access to culturally informed and multilingual teachers and wrap-around organizational support can better help children through their transition and adjustment.

Further, families have reported a lack of access to the appropriate resources to support their child's education and acclimation to their new schools. They have expressed their frustrations at not being able to complete online homework assignments with their children because of the lack of computers. This has caused children to fall behind in their academics and has posed an additional hardship for the families and children.

We call on City leaders to act with intention to protect and grow programming that brings in the support of culturally responsive community-based organizations as partners in delivering wrap around services to families and children. Especially when there are shortfalls in resources and representative staffing in schools, partnerships with organizations that reflect the communities allow for more effective and timely identification of support needs and connection to available resources throughout the city. We know there are many programs that offer this supplemental support, but top of mind are community schools, and organizations that deliver after school and summer programming. We join many other community-based partners in expressing our opposition to the proposed programming cuts and hiring freezes. We know the continued need for these programs and supplemental supports delivered by community-based partners, as well as the importance of adequate central support staff to ensure effective coordination of resource and service delivery city-wide.

Additionally, there is a particular concern surrounding older immigrant youth and ensuring that they are being informed of their right to education until age 21; and that they are informed of schools that are equipped to meet their unique needs. A June 2023 analysis by Advocates for Children found that an estimated 3,015 newly arrived immigrant youth, ages 14-21, were not enrolled in school and had not yet earned a high school diploma.¹ As a specific example, we are working with a 20-year-old young person who was not immediately given the resource support to know of his right to an education and connect him to programs that could support his education and work/life needs. He is currently working at

¹ Advocates for Children of New York (June 2023) Rising Enrollment, Shrinking Support.
https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/rising_enrollment_shrinking_support.pdf?pt=1





McDonald's instead of trying to pursue his education to further his career and expand his work options. It is important to have programs that empower older children who are able to find better opportunities for themselves and their families.

We join our partners in the NYC Education Collaborative in uplifting the importance of supporting older immigrant youth in connecting with programs that are designed to meet their specific needs, given the limited time to acclimate to NYC schools and complete their diploma. New York City ELL transfer schools offer supportive learning spaces, including English as a New Language instruction, bilingual support staff, and partnerships with community-based organizations to ensure wrap around supports and connection to work opportunities that are conducive to completing their diploma. We call on the City Council and the Administration to prioritize funding for these essential programs and ensure that NYC Public Schools outreach and enrollment teams are trained with the specific knowledge of these programs to ensure that older immigrant students are connected to these programs and supported in their education.

Of further concern is the lack of access to childcare and early learning for the younger children in our care. We applaud the continuation of Promise NYC in the FY 24 budget, however, reaching only 600 children is grossly inadequate to meet the existing and growing need. Not only does access to care remain critical for parents who are trying to seek out employment opportunities to establish family stability in their new city and move out of shelter; as early care and learning advocates have long uplifted, the first years play a crucial role in the foundational development of children. With the additional understanding of the trauma and stress that migrant children are facing, it is imperative that we are establishing routines and consistent access to systems of support, building the proverbial village of love and care around the family in supporting the healthy growth of their children.

Families with lack of access to childcare programs and other extended school-day programs have reported the critical importance of access to programs and or space for physical activities – for the family as a whole, or even just for the children. We cannot fathom how frustrating it must be to sit in a room all day without a way to expend energy, especially for young children who are known to have elevated levels of energy. When mothers and children are in a room 24/7, parents' ability to think critically, communicate, and educate their kids may be outside their range, because of how restrictive it is to be in the same room, lacking space to move freely, and have personal time.

The second area of concern we would like to address is the 60-day limit to shelter for families. 60 days is simply an impossible amount of time for most families to build out the stability necessary to transition out of shelter. Given the barriers in accessing childcare, employment, and more long-term housing solutions in NYC, we find that families are unduly stressed when they are coming up against the 60-day limit, face removal from their housing placement, and have to start the process for continued temporary housing all over again.

Of large concern as it pertains to the children in these families, this limit poses an extreme disruption to the routines and connections to wrap-around support that we are trying to establish in the school





communities they have joined. Often children are required to attend appointments for housing with their parents, removing them from their school routine to travel to different parts of the city. Further, after the 60 days, families risk being relocated to an entirely different community or borough from where they were establishing roots – particularly in enrolling their children in school. To keep children in their school to comply with McKinney-Vento, children are often having to make far commutes to remain in their school. One family that we are working with from the Bronx is having to travel with their children to Brooklyn to maintain that consistency for their children. In other circumstances, the families may not be informed of or understand their right to keep their children in their school or may choose to move schools to ease the stress of long commutes as they navigate other life needs and schedules. Ultimately moving their children to a new school community breaks the relationships that they were beginning to establish at their initial school of enrollment. In these cases where children are moving between schools, it is worth noting that the child count has already been conducted for determining per-student funding and those dollars wouldn't move with the child, so receiving schools may not have the funds necessary to deliver appropriately responsive supports for the children.

We continue to call upon city leaders to engage community-based partners and other impacted stakeholders in assessing the systemic issues that families are facing and determining appropriate actions to reduce undue burden and harm on migrant families that are trying to adjust. We further call on city leaders to end the use of narratives that place the blame of budget challenges on immigrant families. New York City holds a long history as a city of immigrants, and has frequently heralded itself as a sanctuary city, shining light on the Statue of Liberty symbolically overlooking our harbor with her creed, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." The nation also has a long history of xenophobia and anti-immigrant scapegoating, dangerous beliefs when held by the masses, but even more so when falsely affirmed by government leaders from their bully pulpit. These families arrive having experienced traumas many of us may never truly comprehend. They are individuals, parents, children trying to make sense of their world. How we receive them and support them matters.

Thank you for the opportunity to present a 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.





Testimony of Dalvin Bartley

Mid Atlantic Program Manager, Generation Citizen

Nov 29, 2023

New York City Council

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

Elizabeth Clay Roy

**MID-ATLANTIC
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Khin Mai Aung

Good afternoon,

Thank you – Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and members of the Committees on Education and Immigration – for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dalvin Bartley and I am a Mid Atlantic Program Manager at Generation Citizen New York (“GCNY”). Via our “Action Civics” curriculum, secondary school students apply social studies learning to the real world by studying and advocating an issue of importance in their communities.

GC is thankful for the Council’s \$500,000 investment in our programming and youth civics education through the *Civics Education in New York City Schools Initiative*.

Over the past two years, Generation Citizen has experienced tremendous demand for our programming, allowing us to expand from about 150 classes in Fiscal Year 22 to over 230 classes in FY23, and about 321 classes in the current Fiscal Year 24. This constitutes at least 8025 students served across all five boroughs. Our project-based learning program allows students to connect with one another and their communities, supporting middle and high schoolers’ social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining education. Interest in our programming has boomed as schools seek to support students’ emotional and community needs as we gradually emerged from the pandemic and have seen an increase in immigrant students in our schools.

We have achieved our unprecedented expansion through systemic partnerships with school districts and networks - specifically NYC DOE D24, the Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline, the Urban Assembly, New Visions for Public Schools and CUNY Medgar Evers. Through these partnerships, we are creating communities of practice that can collaborate across networks for mutual support.

Many of our school partners service districts and neighborhoods that house many students whose families are immigrants to this country, and many of the students we serve speak a language other than English at home. For example, at I.S. 125 58% of their student body is Latinx and 30% of their population is Asian. For East Bronx Academy for the Future, 66% of their student population identifies as Latinx. GC works to ensure that our curriculum is accessible for all students, providing the student workbooks in different languages for many of these schools. This is a common thread

throughout all of the schools that Generation Citizen partners with, which is proof that immigrant students in the NYC DOE need to be kept at the forefront of conversations when discussing support that can be provided to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity for a high quality education. Over the years, Generation Citizen students advocated on a range of issues, including school-based campaigns like advocating for healthy and equitable school lunch options, which resulted in the introduction of Halal food to the school lunch menu. Others focused on community concerns like increasing protections for low wage workers, particularly immigrants, the lack of affordable housing in New York City, and addressing racism and discrimination against Asian Americans and other marginalized groups, including families who have immigrated to this country.

GC is a fourteen year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through Action Civics. Action Civics is a “student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice” ([National Action Civics Collaborative](#)). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any “hands-on,” project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

All students - especially youth of color, socio-economically disadvantaged youth, immigrant and refugee youth for whom our public education system may be their first exposure to our democratic process, and other youth from underprivileged or otherwise underrepresented backgrounds - need meaningful and empowering engagement within our political institutions as an integral part of their core social studies education.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council’s renewed funding in the past few years. GC hopes to continue its partnership with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring civics education to schools as we continue to support students of all backgrounds in the Action Civics process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Dalvin Bartley
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Growing Up Green Charter Schools

Steve Viola, Managing Director of Operations

Written Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Immigration & Committee on
Education

Oversight - Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools

Wednesday, November 29th, 2023

Dear members of the New York City Council Committee on Immigration & Committee on Education. My name is Steve Viola and I am the Managing Director of Operations at Growing Up Green Charter Schools, a network of four public charter schools located in Queens, New York (in school district 28 in Jamaica and in school district 30 in Long Island City). Thank you for providing the opportunity for me to share this written testimony.

As you know, since the Spring of 2022, over 30,000 migrant and asylum-seeking students have joined the NYC public school system, with District 30 in Long Island City having the most of any district in the city. Charter schools have been welcoming countless students from this group and have been offering a variety of support to students and their families.

Growing Up Green Charter Schools have welcomed hundreds of migrant students to our school communities in Queens, particularly at our Elementary and Middle Schools located in Long Island City (District 30). We are a school rooted in being progressive, equity-driven, and social justice oriented, our efforts to support migrant and asylum-seeking students are directly in line with our mission and core values.

At Growing Up Green, we are supporting students and their families by expediting the enrollment process (as per the McKinney Vento Laws) so that students can begin school as soon as possible. We are providing families with resources for access to various services, including free immunizations for their children, immigration lawyers, and food pantry locations. We are hosting immigrant rights workshops, running clothing and supply drives to provide free personal items, providing free hotspots for Internet access, and offering free school uniform items. Above all, Growing Up Green is being as supportive and kind as possible to any student or family that is seeking asylum here in New York. Our goal is to always be welcoming, nurturing, and people-first schools, and this time period is no different.

Last year, schools in the NYC Department of Education received \$2,000 per migrant or asylum-seeking students, while charter schools received no such funding. Regardless of not receiving the same funds that the NYC DOE is receiving, Growing Up Green is using funds from our regular operating budget to provide resources. We will continue to support our families in every way we can, but would greatly benefit from receiving the same funding that DOE schools received. This funding would allow us to hire additional teachers to support our large Multi Language Learner population that has resulted from the current migrant situation. Our teachers are working tirelessly to support our students, but additional funding would lower our

student-teacher ratio in our MLL programming, leading to more individualized support for our students.

In addition to our request for financial support, Growing Up Green kindly requests that the councils compile more resources and training materials for schools on best practices and how to support our migrant and asylum-seeking students and families. This is greatly needed across all schools in our city at this time so that we can best support the 30,000+ students that have joined our schools.

We kindly appreciate the councils allowing us to provide this testimony and look forward to the next steps. Thank you.



**New York City Council Joint Immigration and Education
Committee Hearing**

**Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair
Honorable Shahana Hanif, Chair**

November 29, 2023

Testimony of InsideSchools

Thank you, Chair Joseph and Chair Hanif and members of the New York City Council Education and Immigration Committees, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the challenges facing newly arrived immigrant students in New York City Public Schools. My name is Natasha Quiroga, Director of Education Policy and InsideSchools, of The New School's Center for New York City Affairs. InsideSchools, a project of The New School's Center for New York City Affairs, provides families with resources and support to make informed decisions and advocate for their children's education. For twenty years, InsideSchools has been the premier source for millions of families who want to better understand New York City public schools.

Since this past summer, InsideSchools has facilitated eleven in-person workshops at The New School and at nine shelters housing newly arrived migrant families throughout the city, including HERRCs and DHS shelters with no service providers. We've also met one-on-one with parents, caregivers, and students to address their specific concerns. We have helped over 400 families navigate the New York City public school system, learn how to enroll in school, figure out how to access transportation to school, find resources for their children, and set up their MySchools account. We helped families learn about EL transfer schools, schools in the Internationals Network, and showed them how to learn more about their children's schools through the 1,800 school profiles on the InsideSchools website. We've helped parents figure out how to get school bus pickups for their kids – from the littlest ones to students with disabilities – or sign up for the student MetroCards. Our experiences and observations have highlighted critical issues that demand attention and action.

Families are not receiving enough assistance or guidance at shelters. In the two weeks before school started this year, we provided workshops to families at five HERRC sites. Most families did not know there was a DOE liaison on site or where to find them. There was no liaison at the Roosevelt Hotel the week before school started. At the five DHS shelters we are visiting now, only one has a DOE liaison on site one day a week. At this same shelter, 20% of families who shared their information with us had children waiting weeks to over two months to enroll in school. While the larger shelters tend to have on-site DOE liaisons, they have limited availability (often only one day a week) and other shelters request the liaisons as needed. The enrollment process is

confusing and families often receive conflicting information from shelter-based staff and Family Welcome Centers. During the summer and now, we met several families who met with DOE liaisons for school enrollment but waited weeks for a school placement.

Language access remains a paramount problem. While the DOE website is available in multiple languages, there are still gaps in communication. Families who speak languages other than Spanish struggle to communicate with shelter-based coordinators and Family Welcome Center staff. Until a month ago, DOE emailed school acceptance offers to parents in English only. Fearing scams, families missed these messages. Unable to get them translated in a timely manner, they missed opportunities to get their children off enrollment waitlists. Also, DOE's MySchools web portal is its default mode of communicating with parents about admissions – but many migrant parents do not yet know how to log in or haven't set up an account.

School placements aren't always a good fit. Some families who arrived towards the end of the 2022-23 school year wanted to transfer to schools better equipped to meet their children's language or other academic needs. Most families are living in shelters distant from dual language programs or from schools with sufficient teachers and staff to support multilingual learners. Conversely, children assigned to more distant schools face transportation problems – and that's compounded for families with children in both elementary and secondary schools, or in preschool programs. And many families are understandably nervous about sending children to schools a long subway ride away in a still-unfamiliar city. One father worried about the long subway commute his teenage daughter would have to take alone to high school, after the trauma she experienced before coming to the U.S. Families whose children are enrolled in an English as a New Language (ENL) program worry how their children can learn if English is the only language of instruction. Families with children who speak languages other than Spanish are especially concerned. One Russian-speaking mother worries about her elementary-aged son who went to school every day where no one, not a teacher nor a classmate, speaks his language.

There's an unmet need for 3K/Pre-K and childcare. Several families struggle to find childcare or early childhood opportunities for their infants and toddlers. Early childhood education spots are limited, if available at all, near most shelters. Because many parents have not initiated a MySchools account, several children missed out on getting off of waitlists for PK as well as HS. We helped several families get on a waitlist for 3K and Pre-K as many of the options near shelters were full.

The right to transportation for students living in shelters remains a challenge. The number one concern parents brought to us was their child's school was too far from their shelter. So many children struggle to obtain transportation to school, whether by bus or subway. Several families told us less than two weeks ago they are still unable to obtain Metrocards for themselves and their children at their shelters or at their schools. A few families who received a school placement they felt was too far from their shelter

kept their kids out of school for weeks until a closer school could be found. Other families struggle with the distance to get to school on time, racking up tardies and unexcused absences. Almost half of children living at the shelters we have visited are elementary school aged. Parents who are able to obtain Metrocards struggle to balance taking their children to school, caring for younger children not old enough for school, and work. Several mothers lost job opportunities because they had to pick their kids up from school or couldn't find childcare or a 3K/PK program. A grandmother worries about who will take her 8-year-old grandchild to school if she gets sick. Another mother is undergoing a medical procedure that will prevent her from taking her children to school for weeks.

Families are worried how the 60-day limit will impact their children. We will likely see increased absenteeism of an already vulnerable student group. Children may not attend school for days and weeks while the family adjusts to a new shelter and new route to school. Children who have built relationships with their teachers and made new friends will have to do so again at a new school, a cycle which could be repeated every 60 days. Some parents worry their children will not want to go to another new school. This would be incredibly destabilizing for children, many who have experienced trauma and have already missed months or even years of schooling before arriving in New York City. It was already hard enough to find schools for families that would be a good fit for children, especially for families with a range of ages. A few families were fortunate to enroll in K-8 schools not far from their Midtown shelter so an elementary school child and a middle school child could attend the same school, making transportation easier for the parents. Many families have applied to middle school and high school based on where they are currently living as will families applying to Kindergarten.

InsideSchools recognizes the enormous task to address the number of newly arrived newcomer students to the city and the strain on the City's shelter system and the DOE. We acknowledge the immense work of the DOE and shelter staff and appreciate their responsiveness when we raise these issues. But too many children are impacted and falling through the gaps. The school system is confusing for even the most savvy and proactive New York parent. The vast majority of families we met were unaware about their children's rights and unsure of who to reach out to if they had problems.

More must be done to address this disruption to children's lives and education. Based upon our work, we make the following recommendations:

- **Strengthen Shelter-Based DOE Liaisons:** There is an immense need to increase the quantity, visibility and availability of liaisons at shelters. We understand that there are still significant, unspent federal stimulus dollars specifically allocated to support Students in Temporary Housing held at the DOE, with no clear path for their deployment. Given the current dire situation, we strongly advocate for transparency regarding the amount of funding remaining and unprogrammed, and recommendations for how the city might still advance those dollars to meet critical needs.
- **District/Borough School Placements:** For those families receiving 60-day notices, families should be placed in the same school district, or at least the

same borough, of the child's initial school. Families should also be helped to ease any school transitions.

- **Community-Based Organization Collaboration:** Leverage the combined skillset of community-based organizations working with migrant families and those with education expertise like InsideSchools by contracting with them to provide direct assistance. "Peer navigators" could, for example, help with the enrollment process, connect families to needed services, help them establish MySchools accounts, and more. There should also be increased coordination between the DOE, the shelters, and community-based organizations.
- **Streamline the Enrollment Process for Newcomers:** Ensure that Family Welcome Centers, DOE liaisons, and school staff are well-informed and up to date on the process. Shelter and Family Welcome Centers staff need additional training to support this unique population, especially about schools and programs for multilingual learners and students with disabilities.

Every child, regardless of how they arrived or where they live in New York City, has the right to an education. Many of our newest New Yorkers have faced enormous trauma and need stability. We don't just want our children to go to school, we want them to succeed and thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these experiences with you and for your interest and support of immigrant children and families in New York City.

Submitted by:

Natasha Quiroga
Director of Education Policy & InsideSchools
Center for New York City Affairs
The New School

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**New York City Council
Committee on Immigration and Education**

The Korean American Family Service Center

My name is Heather Choi, and I serve as the Coordinator of Community and Youth Engagement at the Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC). I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to testify today and express our gratitude for the steadfast support that this committee has extended to the Korean American Family Service Center over the years.

Since its establishment in 1989, KAFSC has remained committed to providing culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. Notably, 98% of those we serve face limited English proficiency. Our organization recognizes the pressing need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services within the Asian immigrant community.

In addition to our core services, KAFSC has been actively engaged in supporting immigrant families and students through programs such as the Hodori "Little Tiger" After-School Program serving over 200 students and their caregivers daily, and the Youth Community Project Team (YCPT). As a direct service organization dedicated to the immigrant and Asian community, we understand the vital importance of addressing the oversight of programs for immigrant students within the public school system. KAFSC has consistently been at the forefront, engaging the struggles and challenges faced by immigrant students and their families in schools with limited language abilities and resources.

While many of our students have benefited from English programs designed for limited English proficient students, they express a desire for more comprehensive initiatives. Often, these students find themselves isolated, facing challenges in fully understanding academic requirements and expressing themselves due to the absence of English-speaking peers, a shortage of qualified teachers proficient in their mother tongue, and a lack of resources, including textbooks, in their native languages. The availability of support groups for extracurricular activities, bridging both mother tongue and English-speaking environments, would greatly enhance their ability to connect with other English-speaking students on an equal footing. Despite existing family support systems, such as orientation for parents with translation services, the lack of resources and staff has resulted in significant delays in accessing translation services. Furthermore, the translation of essential academic journey materials for parents has been inadequate, contributing to a lack of access to quality materials and parental difficulties in navigating the school process.

KAFSC eagerly anticipates the opportunity to collaborate with the Council, this Committee, and our esteemed community partners to ensure the continuity of essential services, especially for immigrant survivors and their children.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and for your continued support of the Korean American Family Service Center.



**The New York City Council
Committees on Immigration and Education
Testimony Submission from Legal Services NYC
November 29, 2023
Testimony Provided by Nancy Bedard**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing and for your ongoing efforts to support students who have recently arrived in the United States, their families, and staff in our public schools.

My name is Nancy Bedard, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney in the Education Project at Legal Services NYC (“LSNYC”) (<https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/about-us>). LSNYC’s mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New York City residents. Through litigation, advocacy, education, and outreach, LSNYC has advanced the interests of our clients and created systemic changes that strengthen and protect low-income communities. We work to protect the rights of people with disabilities, veterans, immigrants, the LGBTIQ+ community, and other vulnerable constituents. We are deeply appreciative to the City Council for its many years of support for legal services, and for its championship of our mission and our work.

The Education Rights practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and their families each year to ensure access to education. We represent students who are at-risk and in need of advocacy including students living with poverty, students with disabilities, students facing exclusionary discipline, English Language Learners (“ELL”s), and other vulnerable populations and their families. Our attorneys and social workers assist families with a host of education issues including school enrollment, language access, special education,



disciplinary proceedings, transportation, reasonable accommodations, and academic intervention services with the goal of improving educational outcomes and removing systemic inequities. Due to the long history of structural racism these issues disproportionately impact students of color especially Black students and Black families. Over 80% of our student clients are children of color and/or immigrants ranging in age from 3 to 22. Almost all the education clients we serve have a wide range of disabilities including learning, developmental, physical, behavioral and emotional, as well as the disabling impacts of trauma/adverse childhood experiences (“ACE”s) that affect a child’s ability to learn and grow academically and socially.

I want to share my thoughts with the City Council today about Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools. As an advocate representing children in New York City, we have had the experience of not being able to find high school placements for newly arriving students for an extended period of time. Around 20,000 migrant students started school in NYC in September 2023. (<https://www.npr.org/2023/09/18/1199099781/thousands-of-migrant-kids-are-starting-school-in-nyc-is-the-system-prepared>) More than 147,000 New York City high school students were classified as English Language Learners (ELL) two years ago, according to NYC DOE. (<https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/sy-2020-21-ell-demographics-at-a-glance.pdf>) That number has most likely risen in 2023. The NYC high school admission process is long, complicated, and racially inequitable.

(<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/new-york-city-schools-most-segregated-in-the-nation>)

Access to NYC high schools for newly arriving high school students and the high school admission process are made even more complicated for students entering mid-year, and students with limited or no English language. These students deserve an opportunity to be placed in high



schools quickly. Many of these students come with the intention of attending high school, learning English, and being gainfully employed upon completion or attending higher degree programs. Our experience as advocates has been that the inability for families to satisfy document requirements and the long wait to be placed in high school makes many students forgo this American dream. (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/8/29/23851045/school-enrollment-delays-asylum-seekers-nyc-migrants/>) English Language Learners are twice as likely as other students to drop out of high school, according to NYS statistics, and graduated at significantly lower rates. (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/2/2/23583538/nyc-2022-school-graduation-rate-regents-exam-requirement/>)

We need more high school options for newly arriving high school students. These options should include more Dual language programs. Many of these students are older and have no credits when they arrive to complete high school. More local school options in every Borough would make the students more likely to begin and complete high school. We are hopeful that the NYC DOE can assist these newly arriving students with placement assistance at their local high schools and Welcome Centers with appropriate translation and interpretation.

We applaud the New York State Regents for their policy to help students with less rigorous Regents scores and some exceptions. With permission from high school principals, 11th and 12th grade students may apply to be exempted from some regents and ELL students can receive testing accommodations.

(<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/currentdiplomarequirements.pdf>)



Most important, newly arriving students and students that are ELL need tutoring.

Tutoring will assist these motivated students in completing their courses with passing grades, as the NYS Regents exams are a requirement to high school completion. We also seek that the tutoring be provided both as English language tutoring and bilingual tutoring in the student's primary language. English Language Learners are legally entitled to extra support, but some schools are struggling to provide it.

(<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/5/9/23716167/nyc-immigrant-students-asylum-seekers-support-english-learners/>)

We are also hopeful that the NYC DOE will be mindful of the traumas that many of these students faced in traveling to and arriving in the US. The NYC DOE should embrace the differences in their language and cultures, and offer them a broad range of services like art, music and sports, that do not require English language to be useful and therapeutic in a healing centered school environment. *(<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/articles/2022/june/nyc-schools-must-better-support-english-language-learners/>)*



My name is Melissa Escano. I use she/her pronouns. I am a social worker at Make the Road New York at the Bushwick Campus Community School.

"We are being thrown around with no real help... I just want a stable place for my children." Cried the mom I spoke with as she shared her experience of being evicted with her entire 7 family members, with just 24 hours notice. Her son is a student at our Bushwick Campus Community School. A teacher had shared that he seemed disconnected and worried in class and was not the same since the eviction. The family was living in a shelter in Bushwick near the school and was just moved to a hotel in Queens almost two hours away. Her other two children also attend school in Bushwick. The mom works at a factory in New Jersey and the father goes out everyday looking for work. They arrived from Ecuador seven months ago, are undocumented and waiting for a consultation to see if they have any immigration relief eligibility. The mom says the food at the hotel is not good and since there's no kitchen to cook, she fears her children will get sick. My student told me that of a worker at the new hotel threatened families that ICE was going to be called and they better find housing soon.

The story of my student and his mom seem to be one of thousands and thousands being displaced each month, uncertain of what's to come in the next few weeks. Just last month a new report from Advocates for Children stated that an alarming rate of 1 in 9 students in NYC are homeless. It also showed that in the district I work in - District 32 - we have one of the highest concentrations of students experiencing homelessness throughout the city. Less than a few weeks later, Mayor Adams announced sweeping budget cuts to city agencies - including massive cuts to education services and supports - and cuts to community schools like ours. How can the city cut vital services and support to its most vulnerable students? What message does that send to our students and families?

As a formerly undocumented immigrant myself, who spent more than 18 years undocumented in this country, I know first hand the uncertainty and fear of being moved around by city and federal agencies with disregard for stability, respect, and genuine humanity. I went to high school and college here in the city, and I know how difficult these places are, so I can imagine what our families are experiencing.

I am currently a social worker at Bushwick Campus Community School with Make the Road New York, providing mental health and attendance support to students. I work with a lot of our recent arrival students, many of whom are feeling disoriented, lonely, and unsupported by the Department of Education and the city as a whole.

Our young people and their families are struggling in severe and inhumane ways, and these evictions are making it all worse, having deep impacts on their mental health. Large families are being placed in a single hotel room with only two beds to share and one bathroom. They cannot leave their children in the hotel or shelter alone, but get no support with childcare thus making it difficult to work. Our families and their youth are being forced to make decisions between childcare and surviving. Some families I spoke with outside the Roosevelt Hotel shared that they haven't been able to enroll their children in school because they are being moved around since they arrived. How is the DOE not seeing that its own city is committing educational neglect? Mayor Adams has vowed that no child's education will be disrupted - from what we know students and families are facing everyday we know this is entirely untrue. This is completely unacceptable in a city that claims to be a sanctuary city.

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As a mother, a social worker, an immigrant, as a human, I am demanding our city agencies and our Mayor stop these inhumane attacks against our most vulnerable communities. No matter where you live, when you arrived here, or where you're from, everyone deserves a home where they have the freedom to stay and the freedom to thrive. Make the Road New York, along with the families I've spoken with, demand permanent housing, work authorization, access to childcare vouchers for undocumented parents, and a protection to the right to shelter for all. We also demand that the city reverse the deeply damaging budget cuts to community schools like mine - now more than ever we need these vital services in schools to support and protect students and families. I urge you all here to take some time and stop by the Roosevelt Hotel and the East Village reticketing centers and ACTUALLY talk to the people there if you haven't already, and you'll hear the truth. Just don't wait for us to come here, go see it yourself. You can and you must.



Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) on
Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools
Before the New York City Council Committees on Immigration and Education
November 29, 2023

Chairs Hanif and Joseph, Council Members, and staff, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools. My name is Jessica Selecky, and I am the Director of the Special Education Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence victims, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

For more than twenty years, NYLAG's Special Education Unit ("SEU") has advocated on behalf of low-income children with disabilities. Our lawyers collaborate with families to ensure that students receive the educational services to which they are entitled. Our advocacy includes representing students at IEP meetings, impartial hearings, and appeals to the State Review Office and Federal Court; securing appropriate school placements and related services; and obtaining independent educational evaluations. The Special Education Unit also provides education advocacy through partnerships with other NYLAG units and community-based organizations. Through this work, we ensure that families are well-informed and have advocates to help them navigate the

complexities of the special education system. Further, we partner with NYLAG's Special Litigation Unit in bringing impact litigation seeking systemic change to NYC's education system. Our unit serves many immigrant families and many families for whom English is not their first language.

NYLAG's programming also includes an Immigrant Protection Unit (IPU) and the Shelter Advocacy Initiative, which SEU works collaboratively with. IPU provides New York City's low-income immigrant communities with comprehensive and multifaceted consultations, direct legal representation, legal clinics and an array of educational workshops and presentations. The IPU provides a wide range of immigration legal services including assistance with applications for citizenship, adjustment of status, relief under VAWA, U-visas, asylum, removal defense, and many other areas. Through its services, the IPU seeks to broaden and improve access to quality legal representation and, through an integrated approach with other internal programs, to address the social welfare needs of New York's immigrant communities experiencing low-income. The cornerstone of the IPU's outreach, education, and advocacy efforts is to empower and help New York's immigrant communities to overcome their unique hardships. The Shelter Advocacy Initiative provides legal services and advocacy to low-income people residing in and trying to access homeless shelter placements in New York City. The Shelter Advocacy Initiative works to ensure that every New Yorker has a safe place to sleep by offering legal advice and representation throughout each step of the shelter application process and assists and advocates for clients who are already in shelter as they navigate the transfer process, seek adequate facility conditions and resources for their needs. Working closely with the newest wave of immigrants in New York City, the Shelter Advocacy Initiative has firsthand knowledge of the barriers immigrant children face when trying to access education in New York City.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify to the Immigration and Education Committees regarding immigrants in New York City Public Schools (“NYCPS”). NYLAG is proud to operate in a City that values its immigrant community and supports much-needed services to them. As a ‘sanctuary city’ with innovative and responsive programming and services for our immigrant communities, NYC serves as a model to the nation. Almost 30,000 newly arrived immigrant children have entered NYCPS since the spring of 2022.¹ Indeed, the NYCPS reported an 8,000 student increase in overall enrollment—the first enrollment increase in eight years.² Simultaneously, NYCPS is confronting imminent and severe budget reductions amounting to nearly \$550 million.³ NYLAG is very concerned that these budget cuts will exacerbate existing inequities in an already ailing NYCPS, which routinely fails to provide legally mandated supports and services to our most vulnerable student populations, including immigrant children, children with disabilities, and children living in poverty.

The Special Education Landscape

New York City is home to approximately 283,000 students with disabilities⁴, not including students with disabilities that have yet to be identified. Over 20% of NYCPS students are identified as having a disability, which is higher than the national average. Students who have been

¹ Jones, Athena. “New York City schools are seeing an influx of students. Here’s how they’re handling the immigration crises.” *CNN*, Oct. 19, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/19/us/nyc-schools-immigrants/index.html#:~:text=More%20than%20120%2C000%20migrants%20have,to%20the%20city's%20public%20schools.>

² Campanile, Carl. “NYC adds 8k students thanks to immigrant crises after years of decline.” *NY Post*, Nov. 15, 2023. <https://nypost.com/2023/11/15/metro/nyc-adds-8k-students-amid-migrant-crisis-after-years-of-decline/>

³ Elsen-Rooney, Michael and Zimmerman, Alex. “Eric Adams axes \$547 million from NYC Education Department Budget, more cuts on the way.” *Chalkbeat*, Nov. 16, 2023. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/16/nyc-education-department-loses-547-million-in-eric-adams-cuts/#:~:text=New%20York%20City's%20Education%20Department,expected%20to%20take%20effect%20immediately.>

⁴ Lander, B. (2023, August 28). *NYC Comptroller Report Finds DOE Fails to Deliver Mandated Special Education Services to Thousands of Children Even As Claims Spending Surged Tenfold*. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/nyc-comptroller-report-finds-doe-fails-to-deliver-mandated-special-education-services-to-thousands-of-children-even-as-claims-spending-surged-tenfold/>

identified as disabled have long faced harmful delays and obstacles in receiving necessary evaluations, programs, and services. According to the State’s 2019 Compliance Assurance Plan, the City had been violating federal law governing students with disabilities for 13 consecutive years and failed to initiate the “systemic change necessary to sustain compliance.”⁵ Unfortunately, compliance has not improved since 2019 and the failure of NYCPS to provide mandated services has been particularly detrimental to impoverished children, students of color, and English language learners. In districts primarily composed of Black and Hispanic students, recommendations for IEP-related services in grades K-12 were more likely to be only partially fulfilled or not fulfilled at all by the DOE, in contrast to districts with a higher proportion of white and Asian students. For English language learners, the situation was even more concerning: while 88% of students citywide received their mandated SETTS or special class, only 36% of English language learners received the bilingual SETSS, ICT, or Special class.⁶ Despite having a legal right to appropriate bilingual special education evaluations, programs and services, the DOE routinely requires non-English speaking families to choose between getting the services their children require to progress at all and receiving those services in their child’s native language.⁷ NYLAG client, C.R.’s, story illustrates this dilemma:

- C.R., a young man with severe nonverbal autism spectrum disorder and inherent intellectual disability, has been NYLAG's client since 2019. In 2019, C.R.'s mother came to NYLAG with a feeling that "something was wrong with C.R.'s special education" because the school called her nearly every day to pick him up. She was a recent immigrant and her primary language is Spanish. C.R. was placed in a small bilingual classroom of six students.

⁵ [NYCDOE-Compliance-Assurance-Plan-May-2019.pdf \(documentcloud.org\)](https://documentcloud.org/nycdoe-compliance-assurance-plan-may-2019.pdf)

⁶ Lander, B. (Aug. 28, 2023). NYC Comptroller Report Finds DOE Fails to Deliver Mandated Special Education Services to Thousands of Children Even As Claims Spending Surged Tenfold. Available at: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/nyc-comptroller-report-finds-doe-fails-to-deliver-mandated-special-education-services-to-thousands-of-children-even-as-claims-spending-surged-tenfold/>

⁷ NYLAG clients who are non-English speaking students consistently report that their children are being taught in English and not provided access to translation.

At the time C.R.'s mother reached out to NYLAG, several informal assessments had recently been conducted, but she was not provided with a Spanish translation. None of C.R.'s IEP meetings were fully interpreted to her in Spanish. C.R.'s mother remained silent while others discussed her child in English. All that she was told in Spanish were the program recommendations at the end of the meeting. Contrary to the law's requirements, C.R.'s mother was unable to be a full participant in the development of her child's IEP.

During an early 2019 IEP meeting, C.R.'s mother was suddenly informed that C.R. could no longer be placed in a small bilingual classroom because the school did not offer the small bilingual classroom setting for C.R.'s grade level. There were never any educational evaluations or language assessment finding that C.R. was ready to transition to a larger or monolingual classroom. C.R.'s mother was told that she had no other options but to choose between a larger bilingual classroom and a small English monolingual classroom. Although she acknowledged that both classroom settings would be detrimental for C.R., she was forced to choose a larger bilingual classroom. As a result, C.R. experienced significant educational regression.

The disparity between the quality of services provided to English speaking students and non-English speaking students was evident even before the recent surge of newly arrived immigrant students. Considering the influx non-English speaking students, it is hard to imagine that these disparities will not widen.

The IDEA's complex protocols and mandates disproportionately benefit wealthy, well-educated, English-speaking parents, who can deftly and aggressively navigate the due process system with the aid of private counsel. Because of education, language or income barriers, potential time off work, the majority of low-income and/or non-English speaking parents cannot obtain representation, afford to pay for it, or advocate effectively for their children.⁸ This fact is born out in the city's reported data on who files due process complaints ("DPCs") to enforce their children's special education rights.

⁸ Pudelski, S. (Apr. 2013). *Rethinking Special Education Due Process*. The School Superintendents Association. <https://www.aasa.org/docs/default-source/resources/reports/aasarethinkingspecialedueprocess.pdf>

Despite a special education system that disadvantages students of color and non-English speaking students, in 2021 only 69 DPCs were filed in District 9, of which 92% of their students live in poverty and 96% of their students identify as Black or Hispanic. In contrast, 3,384 DPCs were filed on behalf of students living in District 20. District 20 has only a 2% Black population, with the majority being White and Asian. There were 0.41 complaints filed per student in District 20. Districts 7, 9, and 23 have the highest poverty index in NYC and more than 95% of their residents are Black or Hispanic. While the city-wide average DPC per capita is 0.1, the data shows that on average, only 0.01 DPC was filed per one student with a disability living in Districts 7, 9, and 23.

This gap in the amount of DPCs filed is further amplified by the fact that about 76% of students identified with disabilities are Black or Hispanic. Of added concern is that these inequalities existed in an environment of enormous increases in NYCPS spending. Overall, DOE's estimated programmatic special education budget increased by 43% in the last decade.⁹ During the same period, City spending on special education due process claims increased 500%.¹⁰ Contemplating a continued substantial influx of vulnerable non-English speaking children entering the school system, combined with draconian cuts to the NYCPS budget—is terrifying.

Unique and Foreseeable Issues Specific to the Newly Arrived Immigrant Population

1. Lack of Outreach to Vulnerable Population Leading to Lack of Provision of Services

NYLAG's five-attorney SEU has an open and active intake line where families call every day seeking legal advice and representation in obtaining the special education services, programs,

⁹ Lander, B. (Aug. 28, 2023). NYC Comptroller Report Finds DOE Fails to Deliver Mandated Special Education Services to Thousands of Children Even As Claims Spending Surged Tenfold. Available at: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/nyc-comptroller-report-finds-doe-fails-to-deliver-mandated-special-education-services-to-thousands-of-children-even-as-claims-spending-surged-tenfold/>

¹⁰ *Id.*

and school placements their children require to progress in school. Since October 2023, we have received 77 calls looking for help. Only one of these callers identified as a recently arrived immigrant family.¹¹ In a city where more than 20% of children have disabilities that require special education services, where we know the provision of appropriate services is disproportionately denied to children of color, low income children, and non-English speakers—the only rational conclusion is that the city is not conducting sufficient outreach or providing needed support to recently arrived immigrant families with school aged children to educate them on their children’s right to education, bilingual education, special education, and bilingual special education services. Non-profit legal services and other community-based organizations can try and bridge that information gap; however, new immigrant families are largely unaware and unable to access our services due to organizational capacity constraints. Legal service organizations’ education law units are few, small, and severely underfunded to support outreach and respond to the community needs.

Additionally, recently arrived immigrant children face distinctive hardships. First, many of these children have experienced significant trauma in their home countries and on their journeys to the U.S. Trauma can profoundly affect a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. This can manifest in various ways, including behavioral challenges, difficulty concentrating, heightened anxiety, or developmental delays. The effects of trauma often intersect with educational needs, potentially leading to difficulties in learning, maintaining focus in the classroom, or forming healthy relationships with peers and teachers. As a result, many children who have undergone trauma may qualify for special education support and services. Besides not speaking English and needing language supports, students arrive here in NYC with varying levels of education,

¹¹ SEU does, however, receive many intakes from non-English speaking families. Our intake callers frequently report that their children returned home with bruises, scratches, missing teeth, or broken fingers with no information about what happened at the school that resulted in these injuries. Many non-English speaking intake callers report to us that they feel they are excluded and ignored by their child’s school because they do not speak English.

sometimes having missed months or years of school.¹² It is crucial that these children be evaluated and identified, as required by federal and state education law, so that they can receive the programs they require to thrive in school. An illustrative example of the unique challenges an asylum-seeking immigrant student may face is the experience of NYLAG's client, G.B.:

- G.B. was born in Sierra Leone into the indigenous Mende tribe. There, G.B. experienced incredible trauma from a young age, including witnessing his home burn down. When G.B. was eight years old, he, his mom, and his sister fled to the U.S. After experiencing further abuse at the hands of family members here in NYC, G.B.'s family entered the shelter system. G.B. received no formal education in Sierra Leone. G.B.'s mother spoke no English. She spoke a rare native dialect of Sierra Leone. G.B. enrolled in NYCPS shortly after arriving here but was not evaluated or deemed eligible for special education services until the end of the following school year. The NYCPS's recommended program for G.B. was inadequate and never revised despite his failure to make any progress year after year—as he continued to perform on a second to third grade level in 2021 as an eighth grader. G.B.'s mother remained largely unaware of her son's struggles due to NYCPS's failure to provide her required translation and interpretation. G.B.'s mother only became aware of his struggles when G.B., after years of stagnation, began to act out behaviorally and was suspended from school over and over again. Yet, G.B. did not receive a comprehensive evaluation by an evaluator trained to evaluate children who have experienced complex trauma until he began working with NYLAG in 2021. Then we filed a due process petition on his behalf seeking an appropriate independent neuropsychological evaluation, which ultimately recommended extensive remedial services and a specialized therapeutic placement—eight years after G.B. had initially enrolled in NYCPS.

Even challenges far simpler than those faced by G.B. that recently arrived immigrant families experience are not being addressed by the city. Many recently arrived immigrant children do not have the information they need to enroll in school at all, often because New York City has segregated recent immigrants into a newly created, sub-standard shelter system solely for new immigrants. These emergency relief shelters fail to meet the minimum standards for shelter in New

¹² Jones, Athena. "New York City schools are seeing an influx of students. Here's how they're handling the immigration crises." *CNN*, Oct. 19, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/19/us/nyc-schools-immigrants/index.html#:~:text=More%20than%2012%2C000%20migrants%20have,to%20the%20city's%20public%20schools.>

York City and do not provide the supports of the traditional shelter system that help homeless children access education. Take for instance, one family NYLAG represents, the P. family:

- The P family has a 4-year-old daughter and a 1- year-old son. After a difficult journey to the United States from Nicaragua, followed by time spent in ICE detention, they arrived in New York and were placed at an emergency relief shelter on November 2. The P. family's birth certificates were taken by United States Custom and Border Patrol and not returned. Because of this, shelter staff incorrectly informed the family that their children could not be enrolled in school. The P. family repeatedly requested shelter staff help to enroll the 4-year-old in school and were incorrectly told it was not possible without a birth certificate.

The P. family had been living at the emergency relief shelter for over a month before they were connected with NYLAG. This family was particularly concerned with enrolling their daughter in Pre-K so that she would have the opportunity for proper schooling and not fall too far behind. Luckily, NYLAG was able to advocate for this family so that they could enroll their daughter in school. However, the emergency relief shelter was aware of this situation for over a month and did nothing to address this critical issue. In contrast, the traditional shelter system has caseworker staff in its shelters tasked with supporting residents with these types of issues and many more. This failure would be very unlikely to occur in New York City's traditional shelter system due to the availability of these supports. And this problem is all too common, as NYLAG represents numerous families living in emergency relief shelters who have reported to us that they have been unable to enroll their children in school without NYLAG's assistance.

2. A Current and Impending Transportation Disaster

NYLAG's SEU is also acutely concerned about if and how the growing influx of recently arrived immigrant children living in the city's shelter system will be transported to school—especially when 60-day eviction notices begin being issued to families late next month. These notices could potentially force up to 4,000 families to move in the middle of the school year.¹³ Homeless students have a legal right to stay in their current school or choose to attend a zoned school. They

¹³ Hogan, Gwynne. "Migrant Parents Work, Save and Worry as Shelter Eviction Looms." *The City*, Oct. 23, 2023. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/10/23/migrants-families-row-shelters-eviction-schools-eric-adams/>

also have a right to free transportation provided by NYCPS, including the right to any required transportation medical accommodations due to disability.

However, NYCPS is already falling horrifically short on its obligations to provide legally required transportation to and from school for students with disabilities. Indeed, on behalf of seventeen families, and along with six other nonprofit legal services and community-based groups, NYLAG recently filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights of the federal U.S. Department of Education over disability discrimination in busing services. We alleged in that complaint that, for decades, NYCPS has engaged in systemic discrimination against students with disabilities by routinely denying them access to legally required bus transportation and other accommodations, in violation of federal civil rights law, causing students to lose out on valuable class time and after-school programs, and endure unreasonably long transit times, among other injuries.

As of November 2022, 150,000 DOE students rode school buses each day.¹⁴ The DOE's Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) oversees all aspects of DOE busing. When their child's bus doesn't show up, comes home hours late, or gets into repeated accidents, parents of students with disabilities have reported being forced into an endless loop of redirection: after calling OPT to learn what route their child is on, for instance, they may be told to call the school, and vice versa; other times, OPT may instruct parents of students with disabilities to speak with the private bus company contracting with OPT, the school, or others. The ways the DOE has offered to resolve the ongoing busing issues remain woefully insufficient for the vast majority of families. For instance, rather than fixing the constant busing issues, the DOE has instead offered to pay families' fares for rideshare services provided by companies such as Uber or Lyft in some instances. However, these options require parents of young children with disabilities to take time off from work

¹⁴ <https://abc7ny.com/nyc-bus-transportation-issues/12478329/>

to accompany their child. They also may require a parent of a student with a disability to travel all the way to a child's school at pickup time, just to accompany them on a rideshare back home. Parents of students with disabilities have become so desperate that at least one private company, Special Needs Logistics, was created specifically due to busing delays for students with disabilities. However, in order for families to access the services of Special Needs Logistics, they have historically had to seek funding through the impartial hearing process, which can be lengthy, time consuming, and expensive in and of itself if the family does not have access to pro bono legal assistance.

NYCPS is also failing to transport new-immigrant students without recognized disabilities. Currently, new-immigrant families who are able to enroll their children in school have a minimum 60-day wait before a school bus is provided. Parents, most of whom do not speak English and have no familiarity with New York City, are handed metro cards and told to take their children to school themselves. However, many such parents have several children in several different schools, sometimes located over an hour away from their assigned shelter. It is almost impossible for these families to get their children to school in a consistent and timely manner.

Given the school transportation crises as it exists now and has for many decades, it is unfathomable that the system as it stands will not collapse under the pressure of a continuing influx of new immigrant families, many of whom may soon require school transportation to and from new shelters and/or new schools. And for these families, with little to no financial means to otherwise pay for their children to get to school, it is unclear if and how these students will continue to get to school on time or at all. For families without advocates, these transportation problems can feel insurmountable.

As an initial matter, the City must repeal the 60-day stay limit for families in shelters so that vulnerable children are not required to move, which is very likely to create uncertainty and

inconsistency in their educations. Additionally, the growing legal needs of a large and expanding population of newly arrived immigrants continue to crystallize. These needs certainly include immigration assistance and representation, but these families also face a myriad of other challenges beyond that—including needing help to access their children’s education and special education services. We ask that the City Council support efforts to do outreach and education to empower immigrant family communities to understand the services and resources available as well as their children’s educational rights, and to access support, legal assistance, and guidance as it relates to their children’s right to a public education. Support, through flexible funding, could enable organizations to respond to the myriad of needs that immigrant communities are facing in order to help these communities thrive. We thank the committees on immigration and education for the work they have done to facilitate services for vulnerable new New Yorkers and for holding this hearing. I hope NYLAG can be a resource for you going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica L. Selecky

New York Legal Assistance Group



Good Morning, Honorable members of this committee and distinguished guests. My name is Alexander Reyes, and I am here on behalf of Oyate Group, a nonprofit organization whose main mission is to alleviate poverty across New York City and empower underrepresented communities.

New York City is a city of immigrants who work hard to provide for their families and children. They live in our neighborhoods, work in our restaurants, clean our city, and attend our schools. However, they cannot live a normal life due to the fear of deportation and lack of documentation.

Despite this, there is tremendous potential in the immigrant community, especially among students. Undocumented students aspire to become doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, and lawyers. Unfortunately, they lack the same opportunities as domestic students due to their immigration status. However, Oyate Group is working to change this reality for the better. Oyate has created an undocumented student internship called 'Beyond Rising.' In this program, participants are not judged by their status but by their ability to explore, learn, and become professionals who will continue to be valuable members of society.

Beyond Rising participants are able to grow in the sciences, humanities, law, marketing, and higher education. At Oyate, we value our participants' contributions, which is why we compensate them with a \$500 gift card for every 25 hours of work. This opportunity helps participants make valuable connections, leading to college admissions and potential jobs. Beyond Rising is building future leaders who will likely one day run this institution.

Oyate Group not only helps undocumented students succeed and reach their full potential but also hires former undocumented individuals. I came to this country with no clear path to succeed. I crossed the southern border in 2012 as an unaccompanied minor, was later adopted, and obtained permanent residency. Graduating at the top of my class, I earned a full scholarship to attend St. Lawrence University. After graduating, I decided to join Oyate because I believe in their mission and the work they do for our youth. Together, we have opened many doors and proven that it is possible, which is the reason I am standing here delivering this testimony.

Alexander Reyes

Oyate Group Program Coordinator



Good morning, City Council members. My name is Jason Autar, and I serve as the Chief Operating Officer for the Oyate Group, a nonprofit organization. The term 'Oyate' is derived from the Lakota Sioux language, translating to "the people." In alignment with this, the mission of the Oyate Group is to serve "The People." Today, I am here to share the inspiring journey of our *Beyond Rising Internship* program and its transformative impact on the youth of New York City.

In the summer of 2022, the Oyate Group collaborated with Fordham University's Center for Community Engaged Learning to establish an internship program for high school youth aged 16-20. Our goal was to place 20 young people across the university by providing hands-on experience with campus faculty, students, and other university personnel. Throughout the 5-week program, the Oyate Group provided participants with on-the-job training along with a weekly stipend of \$500 distributed through prepaid Visa gift cards. Interns worked four days a week (Monday through Thursday, 10 AM to 4 PM) and attended workshops on Fridays, covering topics such as financial literacy, time management, communication and advocacy skills.

The workshops laid the foundation for the interns, many of whom experienced a professional setting for the first time. The inaugural cohort expressed that the opportunities presented at Fordham University gave them access and the belief that they could attend a post-secondary institution. Additionally, our Friday sessions at the Oyate offices allowed for special bonding experiences outside the typical work environment, including trips such as an 'escape room challenge,' 'city scavenger hunt,' and a culminating trip to Six Flags Great Adventure. For many of the participants it was their first time going to New Jersey let alone Six Flags.

In Summer 2023, we expanded the program in partnership with Lehman College, accommodating 40 participants with two cohorts of 20 each at Fordham and Lehman. The program's philosophy remained unchanged: to foster meaningful partnerships and provide impactful work placements. Two interns were assigned to Fordham's HER Migrant Hub, a resource for women asylum seekers. One intern, reflecting on designing pamphlets, asked, "[W]hat would I have benefited from that I never received?" Another notable placement was at CUNY's Mexican Studies Institute at Lehman College, where participants, supported by staff and faculty, developed a podcast. They used photography to express themselves artistically and curated a segment of the department's oral history project. For Oyate, this epitomizes the transformative vision of *Beyond Rising*, empowering young people to leverage their skills and life experiences as subject matter experts. Both departments at each institution requested the return of these specific interns for the academic year cohort.

Beyond Rising has expanded to an academic year cohort. In order to better align with participants' interests we added placements at Hostos Community College, the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College at Columbia University, the social entrepreneurship non-profit Cambio Labs, and the public relations firm the TASC Group. The academic year cohort requires interns to dedicate upwards of 25 hours a month providing scheduling flexibility while receiving a \$500 monthly stipend via prepaid Visa gift cards.

The *Beyond Rising Internship* demonstrates Oyate's commitment to inclusivity, providing opportunities, and making a tangible difference in the lives of young lives of people. Our program can be used as a template to ensure that undocumented young people across New York City have equitable access to resources.

Jason S. Autar

Oyate Group

Chief Operating Officer



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Full Length Testimony by Queens College Faculty

November 29, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Hanif, Chair Joseph, and Members of the City Council's Immigration and Education Committees. My name is Kate Menken and I am a professor at Queens College, and I am honored to speak before you today on behalf of Dean Bobbie Kabuto and Professor Marcela Ossa-Parra, who is here with me, about our proposal from Queens College to create a pipeline of bilingual educators. Today you are hearing about many of the educational challenges immigrant communities are facing in our schools, but we are here to propose a possible solution.

In New York City Public Schools, 19% of all students are multilingual learners who speak over 151 languages. New York City Public Schools have experienced an urgent increase in the need for bilingual educators as they have received 30,000 students whose families are seeking asylum. It is to the economic benefit and sustainability of New York City to invest in the education of all students, including newly arrived students.

The bilingual educator shortage is an issue that has received attention in the media and is one that many of you are well aware of, as New York City Public Schools need more bilingual education programs and educators. The benefits of bilingual education for students learning English have been well documented, and the robust and convincing base of research in this area shows that multilingual learners who have the opportunity to attend bilingual education programs typically outperform their peers in English-only programming and are more likely to succeed academically.

Yet bilingual education continues to be at the top of the list of teacher shortage areas in the New York City Public School, and a May 2023 report by the Independent Budget Office found that just half of the schools that enrolled asylum seekers last fall had a bilingual educator on staff. In Jackson Heights, IS 145 received over 450 newly arrived students last year and the school wanted to expand their Spanish bilingual classes, but were unable to fill their many vacancies for bilingual educators. And even though there are over 40,000 speakers of Bangla in Queens there are no dual language bilingual programs for them.

The [NY-AFFIRMs policy platform](#) seeks to address the devastating bilingual educator shortages that New York school districts have faced for well over two decades, which have resulted in stark outcomes for multilingual learners. In concert with NY-AFFIRMS, [Queens College's School of Education has developed a \\$3.6 million proposal](#) to support the recruitment, preparation and certification of bilingual education teachers in New York City over a five year period.

We are here to urge you to fund [our proposal](#), which will prepare 280 future bilingual educators in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6), Secondary Math Bilingual Education, and Secondary Science Bilingual Education by offering tuition support to undergraduate and graduate students seeking to teach in NYC Public Schools. Funding will also support the opening of a new bilingual education undergraduate degree program at Queens College in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6). Many students at Queens College, “the World’s Campus,” speak languages other than English, and we have the capacity to prepare bilingual educators of any language. We will partner with Districts 24, 30, and Queens North High School - districts that have received large numbers of new arrivals.

In conclusion, we are here to advocate that we have a shared responsibility in advancing high quality public education for all and working together to meet the needs of students at this historic moment.

Queens College Bilingual Educator Pipeline Proposal

Executive Summary

- Funding in the amount of **\$3,676,546** to support both the recruitment and preparation of qualified and certified bilingual education teachers in Long Island and New York City.
- This funding will be used to prepare 280 future bilingual educators in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6), Secondary Math Bilingual Education, and Secondary Science Bilingual Education by offering tuition support over a five year period to undergraduate and graduate students.
- Funding will also support the start up of a new bilingual education undergraduate degree program at Queens College in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6).
- Funding will support the provision of professional development and technical assistance for partnering Districts 24, 30, and Queens North High School.
- Funding will support the development of a robust program to recruit qualified candidates from our partnering districts and promote their retention through support and guidance to the selected district candidates while they are working toward their certification.

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this communication is to request funding in the amount of **\$3,676,546** to support both the recruitment and preparation of qualified and certified bilingual education teachers in New York City and Long Island. This request is made in partnership with NY-AFFIRMs (NY Advocates for Fair and Inclusive Resources for Multilingual Learners) to address the decades-long bilingual educator shortage, which has been exacerbated in New York State and nationally around the country during and post pandemic, and as New York State has welcomed record numbers of new arrivals.

NY-AFFIRMs is a statewide coalition of diverse educators and community-based organizations focused on the needs of Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs) and their families. MLLs/ELLs are students who speak a language other than English at home and qualify to receive support to learn English at school. We are committed to working with our state and federal legislative and administrative leaders to ensure that New York State can increase efforts to recruit, train, and retain a culturally and linguistically responsive bilingual educator workforce. It is our goal to ensure that all MLLs/ELLs are provided the support and services they deserve and to which they are entitled.

Bilingual Educator Shortage in New York City and Long Island

New York City Public Schools currently serve 147,922 MLLs/ELLs, who comprise 14.1% of all students. These students speak over 151 documented languages, with the vast majority speaking Spanish (61.83%), followed by Chinese (12.20%), Arabic (6.01%), Bengali (4.02%), and Russian (2.75%). Queens is the borough of New York City serving the largest number of MLLs/ELLs (43,802 students) or 30.83% of all MLLs/ELLs. In spite of ample research that supports bilingual education, only 17.19% of all MLLs/ELLs are currently enrolled in bilingual education programs citywide - a problem exacerbated by the shortage of certified bilingual teachers.

A more recent immediate need for bilingual education teachers is due to the growing number of communities across New York State experiencing an influx of recently arrived and asylum-seeking students and families. New York City Public Schools, in particular, have experienced a rapid increase in the need for bilingual educators. Based on a November 2022 [New York City Comptroller Report](#), 369 schools in the NYC Public Schools represent 5,851 students who are seeking asylum. According to the report, out of 369 schools, 70% are elementary or K-8 schools, 15% are middle or 6-12 schools, and 15% are high schools. The highest concentration of schools are located in the Bronx (Districts 9 and 10) and Queens (Districts 24 and 30).

Asylum seeking students and families present an additional challenge for New York City Public Schools. This population of students may have varying degrees of English proficiency, interrupted schooling, special needs, and experienced dislocation and trauma. Knowledgeable and experienced bilingual educators can play critical roles in providing positive educational experiences for this population of students as they transition to a new life in New York.

As such, bilingual education is at the top of the list of [teacher shortage areas](#) and currently listed as [one of four high need subjects](#) for which the New York City Public Schools are actively recruiting teachers. According to a [report by the Independent Budget Office](#) (May, 2023), just half of the schools that enrolled asylum seekers last fall had a bilingual educator on staff. The city added 33 new bilingual education programs last year, and rolled out another 44 this year in response to the demand, adding on to the 550 programs already in city schools, but with many vacancies to fill. Currently, the city has approximately 1,700 bilingual teachers, and far more are needed to meet the demands citywide.

Long Island also serves large numbers of MLLs/ELLs, including many new arrivals. After New York City, [Suffolk County and Nassau County](#) are the areas of New York State with the largest percentages of MLLs/ELLs in school, and Long Island school districts are [also facing a shortage of bilingual educators](#).

Queens College Bilingual Education Programs

The Borough of Queens continues to be the most culturally and linguistically diverse borough in New York City. Students who attend Queens College (QC) come from over 100 countries and speak over 83 languages. As part of the City University of New York, QC is well positioned to develop and implement a bilingual educator pipeline to address the shortage of bilingual educators not only in New York City, but also in Long Island due to our close proximity to Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

The QC School of Education as an Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) is among the largest producers of teachers in NYC and has 154 registered programs that award more degrees in education than any other college within the CUNY system. Included in these registered programs are:

- 7-12 Bilingual Education Extension, Advanced Certificate, Fully Online
- Bilingual Education-All Grades, Advanced Certificate, Fully Online
- Mathematics and Bilingual Education, MSED
- Science and Bilingual Education, MSED

In addition to the above existing bilingual programs, the QC School of Education is developing a new undergraduate Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6) Program. This program will certify bilingual teachers in grades 1-6. Not only will this program provide a direct path for certification for QC undergraduates who enter as freshman, it will also provide a path from an Associate's to a Bachelor's degree and bilingual education teacher certification for community college students.

The QC School of Education has articulation agreements in Elementary Education with the two CUNY community colleges in Queens: Queensborough Community College and LaGuardia Community College. We plan to extend these articulation agreements to also include the new undergraduate bilingual childhood education program.

Proposed Bilingual Educator Pipeline Program at Queens College

The QC School of Education is requesting funding to create a bilingual teacher education pipeline that focuses on collaborating with our district partners New York Public School Districts 24, 30, and Queens North High School District. As noted above, all of these districts serve large numbers of MLLs/ELLs and face an acute shortage of bilingual educators. Letters of commitment for these districts are included.

The goals of this bilingual educator pipeline are to: (1) Recruit qualified and diverse candidates to become certified in Bilingual Education, and (2) Provide ongoing mentorship through cohort meetings and workshops before, during, and after program completion to ensure candidate completion and teacher retention in Bilingual Education.

The key components of the pipeline include:

- Using a cohort model to support the recruitment, retention and completion of program candidates. Included in this model are two seminars during the academic year to support the professional knowledge and skills of program candidates to prepare them to go into and persist in the field.
- Professional learning during their coursework and after they graduate.
- The development of a leadership team that will include stakeholders from Queens College and our district partners who evaluate the effectiveness of the program and develop a process of co-selecting future program candidates. The Leadership Team will meet every other month.
- The undergraduate level of the bilingual educator pipeline will enable students to participate in early fieldwork experiences and student teaching in our partnering districts. They will be considered as potential candidates to be hired in the partnering districts after graduation.
- The bilingual educator pipeline for QC graduate programs consists of supporting teachers and districts in our partnering districts. Each year graduates of the bilingual programs will be invited to professional learning seminars. These seminars are aimed at supporting the partner districts in their professional development efforts and promote retention in the profession.
- **Funding will support 280 future bilingual educators.**

Specifically, funding will support the development and implementation of a new undergraduate degree program in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6), and support four cohorts of undergraduate students in this new program. In addition, we are seeking funds to support five student cohorts enrolled in the MSSED degrees in Secondary Mathematics and Bilingual Education and in Secondary Science and Bilingual Education, and five cohorts of Bilingual Extension students who work as teachers in our partner school districts.

Budget Narrative:

Requested funding will cover the following:

- Undergraduate tuition stipends, after federal aid has been calculated, for four semesters for QC first-time freshman and transfer students with full-time status. A 3% tuition increase is included after Year 1.
 - Year 1
 - Cohort #1: \$3,465 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Year 2
 - Cohort #1: \$3,873 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Cohort #2: \$3,873 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Year 3
 - Cohort #2: \$3,980 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Cohort #3: \$3,980 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Year 4
 - Cohort #3: \$4,091 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Cohort #4: \$4,091 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
 - Year 5
 - Cohort #4: \$4,204 tuition and fees @2 semesters@20 undergrads
- Graduate tuition stipends for candidates in the online bilingual extension-all grades program. This program is 2 semesters and 15-credits. A 3% tuition increase is included after Year 1.
 - Year 1: -\$470 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students
 - Year 2: \$485 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students
 - Year 3: \$499 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters@20 students
 - Year 4: -\$513 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students
 - Year 5: -\$529 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters@20 students
- Graduate tuition stipends for two semesters for candidates in the bilingual MSSED programs. Funding will cover the bilingual extensions courses for 2 semesters and 15-credits. A 3% tuition increase is included after Year 1.
 - Year 1: -\$470 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students

- Year 2: \$485 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students
- Year 3: \$499 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters@20 students
- Year 4: -\$513 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters@20 students
- Year 5: -\$529 tuition per credit @15 credits and \$199 fees for 2 semesters @20 students
- 2 Part-Time College Program Coordinators: Recruitment, advising, and monitoring progression of students enrolled in the bilingual education programs
 - Years 1-5: \$20,000 per year @ 2 coordinators
- Part-Time Community college coordinator: Recruitment, advising, and monitoring progression of community college students transferring to a QC bilingual education program
 - Years 1-5: \$20,000 per year
- Part-time Administrative assistant: Provide administrative assistance to the coordinators
 - Years 1-5: \$10,400 per year
- Professional Learning Sessions: Designed to enhance students' professional learning to support retention in the field. Years 4-5 have increased funding to support the increased number of completers from the bilingual education programs.
 - Years 1-3: \$20,000 per year
 - Years 4-5: \$30,000 per year
- Certification Costs for Undergraduate Students in the Bilingual Childhood Education Program: Support certification cost for undergraduate students who are becoming initially certified.
 - Years 2-5: \$750 @20 students
- Bilingual Materials and Assessments: Materials to support curricular content and pedagogy
 - Years 1-5: \$10,000 per year
- Undergraduate Student Teaching Stipends: Support undergraduate students complete their student teaching requirements of 70 full-time days in their clinical placement. The amount of \$2,500 is in line with internship stipends provided by the QC Office of Career Engagement and Internships
 - Years 2-5: \$2,500 @ 20 students per year

Scope of Services

Pipeline: Candidates begin with early bilingual fieldwork in partner districts, then student teach, and the opportunity to work two years after completion.

Year 1

Undergraduate Bilingual, Childhood Grades 1-6 Program

- Recruit Cohort 1: 20 Queens College (QC) students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Develop and place Cohort 1 in early bilingual fieldwork opportunities in partner districts
- College program coordinator and community college coordinator will hold advising sessions.
- Undergraduate students will attend “Next Steps in Teaching Seminars”

Graduate Bilingual Programs

- Bilingual Extension Cohort 1: 20 teachers in partner school districts
- Bilingual MSED Cohort 1: 10 students in the MSED Secondary Mathematics and Bilingual Education and 10 students in the MSED Secondary Science and Bilingual Education
- Provide professional learning opportunities
- Create a leadership team for the bilingual teacher pipeline at Queens College
- Develop a school network plan to support the recruitment and retention of future bilingual educators
- Create an agreement with the districts in NYC Public Schools and on Long Island for candidates to work for a minimum of two years after program completion

Total estimated cost for Year 1: \$557,755

Year 2

Undergraduate Bilingual, Childhood Grades 1-6 Program

- Cohort 1: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Develop and place Cohort 1 in bilingual student teaching in partner districts
- Recruit Cohort 2: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Place Cohort 2 in early bilingual fieldwork opportunities in partner districts
- Provide cooperating teacher professional learning
- College program coordinator and community college coordinator will hold advising sessions.
- Undergraduate students will attend “Next Steps in Teaching Seminars”

Graduate Bilingual Programs

- Bilingual Extension Cohort 2: 20 teachers in partner school districts
- Bilingual MSED Cohort 2: 10 students in the MSED Secondary Mathematics and Bilingual Education and 10 students in the MSED Secondary Science and Bilingual Education

- Provide professional learning opportunities

Total estimated cost for Year 2: **\$790,295**

Year 3

Undergraduate Bilingual, Childhood Grades 1-6 Program

- Cohort 2: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Place Cohort 2 in bilingual student teaching in partner districts
- Recruit Cohort 3: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Place Cohort 3 in early bilingual fieldwork opportunities in partner districts
- Provide cooperating teacher professional learning
- Provide the professional learning opportunities for Cohort 1.
- College program coordinator and community college coordinator will hold advising sessions.
- Undergraduate students will attend “Next Steps in Teaching Seminars”

Graduate Bilingual Programs

- Bilingual Extension Cohort 3: 20 teachers in partner school districts
- Bilingual MSED Cohort 3: 10 students in the MSED Secondary Mathematics and Bilingual Education and 10 students in the MSED Secondary Science and Bilingual Education
- Provide professional learning opportunities

Total estimated cost for Year 3: \$807,574

Year Four

Undergraduate Bilingual, Childhood Grades 1-6 Program

- Cohort 3: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Place Cohort 3 in student teaching in partner districts
- Recruit Cohort 4: 20 QC students total, including 10 undergraduate QC students and 10 community college transfer students
- Provide cooperating teacher professional learning
- Provide the professional learning opportunities for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2.
- College program coordinator and community college coordinator will hold advising sessions.
- Undergraduate students will attend “Next Steps in Teaching Seminars”

Graduate Bilingual Programs

- Bilingual Extension Cohort 4: 20 teachers in partner school districts
- Bilingual MSED Cohort 4: 10 students in the MSED Secondary Mathematics and Secondary Bilingual Education and 10 students in the MSED Secondary Science and Bilingual Education
- Provide professional learning opportunities

Total estimated cost for Year 4: **\$835,370**

Year Five

Undergraduate Bilingual, Childhood Grades 1-6 Program

- Place Cohort 4 in student teaching in partner districts
- Provide the professional learning opportunities for Cohort 1, Cohort 2, and Cohort 3

Graduate Bilingual Programs

- Bilingual Extension Cohort 5: 20 teachers in partner school districts
- Bilingual MSED Cohort 5: 10 students in the MSED Secondary Mathematics and Bilingual Education and 10 students in the MSED Secondary Science and Bilingual Education
- Provide professional learning opportunities

Total estimated cost for Year 5: **\$685,552**

Total estimated cost of the full project: **\$3,676,546**

Project Impact

The requested funding of \$3,676,546 will have a transformative impact on bilingual education in Long Island and New York City, addressing the critical shortage of certified bilingual educators. This project aims to prepare 280 future bilingual educators across various grade levels and subject areas while establishing a new bilingual education undergraduate degree program at Queens College. The impact will be felt in multiple ways:

Increased Bilingual Educator Workforce: The funding will significantly contribute to addressing the severe shortage of bilingual educators in the region. By supporting the preparation of 280 bilingual educators, this project will substantially expand the pool of qualified professionals ready to serve Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs).

Professional Growth for the Current Educators: Graduate programs for bilingual educators will continue to support teachers and districts in partnering areas, ensuring ongoing professional development and teacher retention.

Financial Accessibility: The funding will provide tuition stipends and financial support, making education more accessible for aspiring bilingual educators, particularly for underrepresented and low-income students.

Creation of New Bilingual Education Program: Queens College will establish a new undergraduate degree program in Bilingual Childhood Education (Grades 1-6), providing a direct pathway for certification. This innovative program will not only enhance the education of future educators but also cater to community college students seeking bilingual education teacher certification.

Diversity and Inclusion: The recruitment efforts will focus on bringing in qualified and diverse candidates, reflecting the multicultural demographics of the region. This will contribute to a more inclusive educational environment and improve outcomes for MLLs/ELLs.

Enhanced Educational Experience for Asylum-Seeking Students: As the number of asylum-seeking students and families continues to rise, the presence of knowledgeable bilingual educators becomes even more critical. This project will equip educators to provide positive educational experiences for these students as they adapt to life in New York.

Increased Bilingual Educator Workforce: Bilingual education has been identified as a high-need area, and the funding will help bridge the gap between the demand for bilingual educators and the current supply. It aligns with the New York City Department of Education's efforts to recruit more bilingual teachers and establish new bilingual education programs.

Long Island Impact: The project extends its impact to Long Island, where a significant population of MLLs/ELLs resides. By addressing the shortage of bilingual educators in Suffolk and Nassau Counties, the project supports education across the entire region.

In solidarity,

Queens College Team

Prof. Bobbie Kabuto, Dean of the School of Education, Queens College

Prof. Marcela Ossa-Parra, Elementary Bilingual Education Program, Queens College

Prof. Kate Menken, Linguistics and TESOL, Queens College

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Trenton Price

Testimony to Joint Hearing on Immigration and Education
From Trenton Price – Executive Director, Salvadori Center
Wednesday, November 29th, 2023

Thank you Chair Hanif, Chair Joseph, members of the Committee on Immigration, and members of the Committee on Education for convening this important conversation. My name is Trenton Price, and I am the Executive Director of the Salvadori Center. At Salvadori, we provide STEAM education services – that is STEM plus the A for Arts and Architecture – to schools, after-school sites, and NYCHA community centers across the five boroughs focusing on the built environment. Last year, Salvadori taught over 8,000 students in 129 schools and community centers. And we are grateful to receive support through CASA, Digital Inclusion & Literacy, and Speaker's Initiative.

I am speaking today as a former middle school teacher, school and district leader, now Executive Director of Salvadori, and as a parent. Serving children is core to who I am and the work we do at Salvadori. We at Salvadori have heard the Council and the Mayor's pleas for innovations to support the new families and children arriving to New York City seeing asylum. Our hearts break for the terrible situations so many are fleeing, and we want to be part of the solution.

As with many in the nonprofit education sector, we stand ready to lead and support these efforts. The challenge we see is families and children coming into temporary shelters with 60 days to handle many immigration logistics.

But we also see an opportunity to welcome the young people into New York City and preparing them for school. Salvadori developed a program to provide drop-in STEAM education services in these temporary shelters. These out-of-school sessions will introduce the youth to New York City's urban landscape, provide them bilingual opportunities to practice English, and allow for collaboration with other children to create community. And all of this in a safe space in their shelter so parents can coordinate all the daunting immigration logistics.

This model can be utilized by other nonprofit organizations to bring a variety of educational opportunities into shelters. We ask the Council to consider leveraging the model of CASA to set aside funding for nonprofits to provide these much-needed out-of-school services in the temporary shelters. Programs like this will allow young people to learn about their new home in New York City, create community, and set them up for starting school, all while providing parents time to work through the logistics of immigration.

I thank you for facilitating this hearing and for your commitment to these important issues. We are grateful to be able to serve New York City's youth and stand ready to do more. Thank you.

TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Education
Committee on Immigration

Oversight - Immigrant Students in New York
City Public Schools November 29, 2023

The Legal Aid Society
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

The Legal Aid Society welcomes the opportunity to testify and thanks Chairs Joseph and Hanif and the City Council for their leadership on Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools.

Throughout our more than 145-year-history, The Legal Aid Society (LAS) has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. Our mission is simple: we believe that no New Yorker should be denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. LAS annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in more than 250,000 legal matters involving civil, juvenile, and criminal matters, including education advocacy for school-age children and youth. The Civil Practice provides advice, training, and representation that benefits more than 100,000 New Yorkers each year. Our work ensures that our clients can earn a living wage, have a place to sleep, and can care for themselves and their families. The Juvenile Rights Practice handles more than 30,000 matters each year, representing over 90% of the children who appear in New York City's Family Court through juvenile justice or child protection cases. Our work with these most vulnerable New Yorkers keeps them safe and makes our city's families and communities stronger. The Criminal Defense Practice is the premier public defender program in the country, handling 125,000 criminal matters in a typical year. Our victories in and out of the courtroom protect the constitutional rights of our clients and strive for greater humanity in the criminal legal system. Our Civil, Juvenile, and Criminal Practices engage in educational advocacy for our clients, in the areas of special education, school discipline, and school placement and programming. In addition to representing these children each year in administrative hearings, appeals, and court proceedings, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients.

Our perspective comes from our daily contacts with children, youths, and their families as well as our frequent interactions with courts, social service providers, and NYC agencies including the Departments of Education (DOE), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Homeless Services (DHS); the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and the Human Resources Administration (HRA). Collaboration within LAS practices, including the Homeless Rights Project, Health Law Unit, Immigration Law Practice, and the Education Law and Education Advocacy Projects, ensures that we approach resolving our young clients' barriers to education from a multidisciplinary perspective.

1. Housing and School Stability

An estimated 30,000 new arrival students are enrolled in NYC schools, both public and charter.¹ New arrival students face significant barriers to schooling, including learning a new language, processing the trauma created by whatever forced them to leave their home countries and the arduous journey here, months or years of interrupted education, and the complete disruption of their childhoods. Healing can only begin when families have stable housing and consistent, robust schooling.

For many children, and especially traumatized, vulnerable new arrival children, school represents the only stable, safe environment in their lives. Many schools support new arrival students and their families with food, school supplies, laundry facilities, and information on essential community services including resources for legal assistance with immigration cases. The single greatest threat to school stability for new arrival students is the City's misguided

¹ DiNapoli Examines Fiscal Hurdles Facing Key NYC-Supported Agencies, *Office of the New York State Comptroller*, available at: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2023/11/dinapoli-examines-fiscal-hurdles-facing-key-nyc-supported-agencies> (November 9, 2023).

effort to force families to move shelters as frequently as every few days, and at most, every two months.²

The McKinney-Vento Act establishes the federal right of homeless students to remain in and receive transportation to their original schools after a relocation. The City's ill-conceived decision to issue 60 day notices of forced relocation, however, will in many cases render that right meaningless by forcing families to choose between re-enrolling their children in new schools or enduring untenably long commutes to their original schools. For students who choose to remain in their original schools, parent MetroCard shortages, bus routing delays of at least a week, and missing school on moving days will result in significant absences from school. Students who reenroll in schools close to their new residences may be able to start attending quickly, but the trauma of yet another transition and even a minimal number of days absent will affect their academic progress and social-behavioral outcomes. Currently, the first set of 60 day notices are set to expire at the end of the year when schools will be closed for winter break, making it especially difficult for students to receive support from schools during their moves. Of course, the schools themselves will also face burdensome disruptions from the constant changes in enrollment on top of the issues they already face due to a lack of adequate resources.

Researchers have consistently found that homeless students living in shelters generally experience chronic absenteeism at a higher rate than their housed peers. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, approximately 19 school days. Specifically, during the 2013-2014 school year in New York City public schools, 58% of elementary students living in shelter were chronically absent. Furthermore, of elementary students living in shelter

² Currently, families with children in Health and Hospitals shelters (HERRCs) are subject to the 60 day rule. Families in DHS shelters are not currently subject to the time limit but are often moved from one DHS placement to another with little to no notice.

who transferred twice or more in a school year, 80% were chronically absent.³ Chronic absenteeism results in detrimental education outcomes, including lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates, and decreased social-behavioral progress.⁴

If the City continues on its current reprehensible path, some students could conceivably experience five school transfers within a single school year. Those who exercise their McKinney Vento rights could spend three to four hours per day on school busses or public transportation. Parents' opportunities to participate in and receive support from school communities will be severely limited. We are especially concerned about these issues for new arrival students housed at Floyd Bennett Field who are living in inappropriate congregate housing in a remote part of the city with no access to public transportation or services. For all students, destroying school stability will only prolong their adjustment to a new country, culture, and language; and delay their acquisition of academic, developmental, and social-emotional skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The City must reverse its 60 day notice policy for families and, instead, focus on robust case management for new arrival families to help them maintain stability and secure permanent housing. The DOE must distribute MetroCards to parents and create an expedited bus routing system.

2. New Arrival Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities will be profoundly disadvantaged by the City's 60 day notice rule. For students suspected of having disabilities, the DOE has 60 days to evaluate, develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and commence services, if appropriate. If a student moves

³ Empty seats: The epidemic of absenteeism among homeless elementary students, *Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness*, November 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sTdGo5>.

⁴ Pavlakis et al., Examining Complexity in Student Homelessness: The Educational Outcomes of HISD's Homeless Students. Research Brief for the Houston Independent School District, *Houston Education Research Consortium*, available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED607649> (2020).

schools partly through that process, the teachers and other staff at the original school – the only group that knows the student well – will cease to be involved. In our experience, school transfers during the evaluation period result in delays in finalizing the process, which in turn delays the commencement of crucial special education services.

Second, there are new arrival children and youth in temporary housing who have significant disabilities like severe autism, cognitive delays, and neurological conditions that affect all areas of physical, intellectual, and social functioning. In general, students with disabilities newly enrolling in NYC schools are entitled to receive “comparable services” while the DOE completes new evaluations. The new arrival students will likely not have documentation of prior services, and thus they will not receive special education services upon enrollment. New arrival students cannot currently enroll directly in special education programs; instead, they are advised to register in their local public schools. Once again, parents are faced with an impossible choice: attempt to enroll their children in neighborhood schools that do not have the supports that they need and will likely reject them for this reason, or keep them home while the evaluation process unfolds, resulting in lost instructional time and risking involvement with ACS for educational neglect.

Third, the influx of new arrival students with disabilities requires additional staffing in the DOE Committees on Special Education (CSEs) to ensure timely evaluations. In general, school teams are responsible for evaluating students who are registered in their schools. CSE staff is responsible for evaluating non-attending, charter, private, and parochial school students. School teams are over capacity and understaffed, with some school psychologists covering multiple schools per day. CSE staff must pick up the slack to ensure timely evaluations for both non- and attending students.

Finally, every new arrival student must have access to mental health services, whether or not they are identified as students with disabilities. The availability of school based mental health clinics was insufficient prior to the influx of new arrival students, and is even more so now, particularly for non-English speakers.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DOE must train shelter staff to identify children and youth with disabilities, give parents information on special education services, and help parents request special education evaluations. DOE must provide comparable services to students during the evaluation period by immediately screening new arrival children for the presence of a disability and place students with apparent disabilities in schools with higher levels of special education supports during the evaluation process. Evaluations must be expedited for students with the most significant disabilities. DOE, with its clinical partners, must increase the number of school based mental health clinics.

3. Bilingual education and language access

The DOE has a notoriously long history of failing to provide adequate bilingual education programs and educators. During the 2022-2023 school year, the DOE had 557 bilingual education programs of which 447 programs were Spanish bilingual programs (305 general education programs and 142 special education programs).⁵ To staff the bilingual programs, the DOE employs a mere 1,700 bilingual teachers, approximately 3 teachers per bilingual program.⁶ Of the 160,000 students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) during the 2022-2023 school year, only 1 in 5 ELLs were enrolled in bilingual classrooms.⁷

⁵ <https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/programs/english-language-learners-programs-and-services>

⁶ <https://gothamist.com/news/many-migrant-kids-at-nyc-schools-are-new-to-english-theyre-finding-creative-ways-to-learn>

⁷ <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2022-23-ell-demographics-at-a-glance.pdf>

Since June 30, 2023, at least 12,000 new arrival students have enrolled in school, but bilingual teachers and programs have not increased enough to meet the demand. Students with disabilities traditionally fare the worst as the number of bilingual special education teacher applicants typically falls short of open positions, especially in high schools.⁸ Furthermore, translation and interpretation services for parents were already difficult to secure in many schools throughout the City, and that situation has only worsened with the influx of new arrival students. We continue to hear about school meetings where students translate for their non-English speaking parents because no school staff speak their home language.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DOE must increase general and special education staffing to provide adequate, robust bilingual programs to all new arrivals and ensure that all schools have sufficient services for English Language Learners (ELLs) including translation for families in compliance with Local Law 30.

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⁸ Chalkbeat New York, “Here’s what NYC’s teacher workforce looks like as a new school year begins,” September 23, 2023. [bit.ly/40YMlgF](https://www.chalkbeat.com/story/teacher-workforce-looks-like-as-a-new-school-year-begins/2023/09/23/40YMlgF)

The New York City Charter School Center
Jennifer Hall MLL/ELL Program Manager
Written Testimony to the New York City Council Committees on Education and Immigration
Oversight Hearing on Immigrant Students in New York City Public Schools
Wednesday, November 29, 2023

Dear Chairperson Joseph, Chairperson Hanif and members of the New York City Council Committees on Education and Immigration. My name is Jennifer Hall and I am the MLL/ELL Program Manager of [The Collaborative for Inclusive Education](#), associated with [The New York City Charter School Center](#) (Charter Center). Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony.

NYC Charter schools have seen a 20%+ increase in MLL/ELL enrollment from the 2020-21 to 2022-23 school years and 9.6% of all students in charter schools are classified as MLL/ELL. With an increase of multilingual student enrollment comes the need for more teacher and leader professional learning targeted towards English language development. The Collaborative for Inclusive Education partners with approximately 90% of the charter schools in the city and provides weekly professional development, as well as weekly “on the ground” coaching and training, for teachers and leaders on MLL/ELL supports, including providing access grade-level content, trauma-informed practices, and culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogy.

As with many district schools, charter schools have seen an influx of asylum-seeking MLLs/ELLs this school year and last. We are currently facilitating a five-part training series for a cohort of 9 such charter schools from across the city to help create comprehensive action plans to meet the unique needs of this MLL/ELL sub-population and address school-wide policy, programming, instruction, family engagement, and multi-tiered systems of support. We know we are not alone in wanting to do our best for these students. While collaboration between NYC district and Charter schools in this area has been limited under the prior administration, we look forward to using this opportunity to work in partnership with the district to share best practices and collaboratively bring educators together to best support these students and families. In this spirit, we ask that any trainings and resources made available to support asylum seekers be shared with charter schools.

NYC charter schools are eager to continue to do their part to serve the families coming to our city in search of a better life. Just as we did last school year, in order to fit into the enrollment

process created by NYC DOE, the Charter Center reached out across the sector to ascertain which schools had the room, and as importantly, the structures and capacity to effectively educate these students. We have submitted a list of 24 schools to NYC Public Schools; this is in addition to the schools that reached out directly on their own. We will continue to welcome the newest residents of NYC in partnership for as long as is needed to help solve the humanitarian crisis and beyond.

Based on our direct work and communication with schools, we have found that many newly arrived students are in need of mental health services, as well as more intensive English language development support. The charters experiencing an influx of newly arrived students have also voiced the struggle of budgeting for the extra services to properly support these students' social-emotional and academic development. Schools are spending more money on hiring additional dedicated MLL/ELL educators, translation for families, newcomer-specific resources to supplement current content curriculum, and much more to meet the needs of this specific student population. As such, we advocate for increased funding and resources for mental health, translation, dedicated MLL/ELL educators, and programmatic resources.

The charter sector has been working diligently over the past decade with the support of the Collaborative for Inclusive Education to address the academic and social needs of MLL/ELL families and we will continue to do so in service of the recently arrived families to address the diverse needs of them and other MLL/ELL families in various and unique ways including: creating bilingual family hubs, hosting weekly curriculum family meetings in multiple languages, and connecting families with various services in order to provide additional support with basic and family needs during this time. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with these committees to provide anecdotes from the charter sector field to support the decisions the committee makes in the future regarding MLL/ELL students in New York City Public Schools. We thank you for your shared commitment to the families seeking shelter in our city and look forward to being part of the solutions to address their needs.



Our Immigrant Students at Valence College Prep

by Yadira Kim, Manager of English as a New Language Program

Valence College Prep Charter School is a fifth through eighth charter school that serves students from our neighboring Queens community, like Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Corona. We opened our doors in 2019 and actively recruited families from these neighborhoods to join our school so that this particular population of students, mainly from immigrant families, could become a part of our Valence community. At Valence, all students can maximize their academic and character potential. We do so by highlighting it in our school's mission: "To equip all scholars with the academic skills, professional habits, and strength of character to graduate from college and lead lives of opportunity." Our mission remains true to our dedication to all our students, specifically our immigrant students, who comprise about 90% of our student population. Our immigrant students can achieve academic success with the necessary support and programming that we can intentionally and strategically offer to benefit their futures.

At Valence, for the past five years in operation, we have welcomed newcomers to our school and provided them with the support required to succeed by developing an intensive and strategic English as a New Language (ENL) program. We have had and currently have immigrant students from countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, and Mexico who have limited to no English proficiency. We currently have 94 out of 440 immigrant students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs); the rest are not classified as ELLs because they are second or third-generation immigrants. Our program has had reiterations each year because we have implemented feedback and have learned from what works and what does not. In this manner, we are growing with our immigrant students and providing them with the exact support they need to be successful in language acquisition. Our ENL program is based on language proficiency from entering, emerging, transitioning, and expanding levels. Based on these levels, we are supporting our immigrant students with the tools necessary to achieve a commanding level of English. A newcomer student typically falls in at an entering level; sometimes, if their home country taught English,



they are at an emerging level. These levels are usually more urgent because for them to succeed in all content classes, they must have access to the language. Entering indicates that students are at the early stages of English acquisition and may need more time to be ready to produce because their English is extremely limited while emerging highlights that students can begin to enhance their vocabulary and speak short phrases but have limited comprehension. Compared to our immigrant students at the transitioning and expanding levels, they have a more foundational language base yet still need support in language modalities: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Our program needs to be formatted for each language level because the experience needs to be differentiated since all levels are unique. We must maximize their language acquisition by meeting our immigrant students where they are.

Our immigrant students at the entering and emerging levels acquire many intensive opportunities to practice English throughout their days. Immigrant students at these levels receive standalone ENL classes and push-in support in content classes with an ENL teacher. In this manner, they receive literacy instruction that is differentiated by their language level. Utilizing the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) information determines the placement of these students. We intentionally cohort our ENL standalone classes based solely on English language acquisition and literacy. Even though it is a standalone course, literacy enables our immigrant students to adapt to the language more effectively than the English language in isolation. Although we differentiate using their native language with partial translations, we do not believe bilingual programs are as effective as our immersive English with literacy components. We learned this when we had numerous immigrant students formally enrolled in bilingual programs at their previous schools and were in the country for two or more years. They were still at the earliest entering language level and had yet to demonstrate language growth. We have discovered that this support has made our newly immigrant students successful in language acquisition and have been able to move scholars by one to two language levels in one school year alone. This year, we were able to exit 30 students from the program and reach the commanding level.



We also have scholars at the transitioning and expanding level who understand the language better and can communicate, yet still need differentiated instruction and support to thrive in our school. Scholars at the transitioning level receive push-in support in ELA class with an ENL teacher who focuses on language intervention and differentiating the literacy component in class. If necessary, for projects and special assignments that may require additional support with the language, ENL teachers pull students into small groups to differentiate the experience further. On the other hand, scholars at the expanding level receive small-group instruction daily focusing on all language modalities since they are much more advanced in the language and need guidance with in-depth analysis, like inferences and higher-order thinking skills. Lastly, we offer a daily small-group intervention that follows their language proficiency, where students have an additional 45 minutes of grammar, reading, and writing. Our school believes that for our immigrant students to be prosperous in the language, it needs to be catered to the language level.

Since the operation, we knew our population was composed of immigrants and purposely began an English as a New Language program at Valence that caters to our immigrant students. We have developed our program each year and made reiterations based on the data. We have discovered that immigrant students can succeed academically through differentiated instruction, push-in support from an ENL teacher in content areas, standalone ENL with literacy embedded, and small-group intervention.

Serving our Latino/Hispanic immigrant community is Valence's pride because we are passionate about our student community and its importance in our country, where, unfortunately, it is frequently isolated, ignored, and not cherished for its unique experiences and culture. At Valence, we expect and exude the opposite by instead appreciating our students' distinct experiences and perspectives for who they are by holistically focusing on our immigrant students, academically and personally. Our ENL and content teachers do a fantastic job at fostering relationships and incorporating culturally responsive teaching that invests in scholar learning, their academic outcomes, and their appreciation for their culture and experiences.



Below are testimonies from our current students about how Valence has played a role in their lives as immigrant students in Queens.

Camila A.

Camila joined Valence two years ago as a newcomer immigrant student who was at the entering level and is now transitioning.

"My ENL teachers helped me learn a lot of the meanings of words that I didn't know. In ELA, I learned words that are difficult and I understand when they give me the meaning. It's easy to remember the definitions when I see that the words are similar to Spanish. Also, Valence helped me learn English by assigning essays, projects, and presentations in English."

Joao C., 7th Grader

joined Valence last year as an immigrant student who was at the transitioning level and is now expanding.

"Ms. O helped me understand the words that I didn't know. She inspired me to never give up and to not listen to what others say and focus on myself. Reading the books in Spanish and in English also helped me learn English."

Miguel R.

Miguel joined Valence two years ago as a newcomer immigrant student who was at the entering level and is now commanding and officially exited the English Language Learners program.

"My ENL teacher understood Spanish and that was helpful. Once I was more adapted to the school and the language, I was moved to regular ELA class and it was great because I was able to learn English faster and use the dictionary that was given to me. SGI (small-group intervention) also made me learn English faster because it was ENL. My classmates were also helpful and friendly by translating questions or words that I struggled with. My teachers also tried to use Spanish words here and there to help me understand the homework when I didn't understand. Sometimes in other content areas, my teachers created packets that made me understand English related to the subject. They also placed me next to students who were bilingual and could support me during classes."



Stephanie, Valence Alumni

Stephanie joined Valence in 2019 and graduated last year. She was an immigrant student who began learning English at a nearby public school and joined Valence as a student at the entering level, although she had been in the country for two years at that time.

"Ms. Kone really helped me grow and learn the English language. She really cared about me. Back in 5th grade, she always supported me in what I had to do and believed in me. In 8th grade, I looked at how much I grew thanks to her. Almost everything I did is thanks to Ms. Kone because she never gave up on me."





Good Afternoon; first, I want to thank Chair Joseph and Chair Hanif and the rest of the council for allowing this conversation. My name is Aqida Rama, and I am a Senior at Brooklyn Technical High School.

I'm a youth advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy Project, ASAP, Within ASAP, and a youth advocate at the Language Access campaign.

As a former ELL student, my experiences weren't great. I often felt lost, and teachers didn't seem concerned because of that. (PAUSE) At parent-teacher conferences, they depicted me as a quiet kid who didn't want to talk to other children, but since I wasn't academically behind, there was no real issue. In reality, I hoped to talk to others, but I found it challenging and I was scared of others judging my accent or mispronounced words. (PAUSE) I wished there was more understanding from teachers about the importance of social connections for students like me. Having someone notice and offer support would have made a significant difference during my time as an ELL student.

Last year my team started to identify the challenges faced by immigrant students, we collected responses from students from 18 high schools across the city. We gained valuable insights into the challenges faced by AAPI ELL students in NYC high schools. One prominent struggle was the struggle with judgments and identity. This goes beyond academic hurdles and directly impacts their sense of belonging. Some students shared that they were afraid to make friends in school because people make fun of their pronunciations LEADING to social isolation in school.

Some students shared that their teachers assumed they didn't have questions because they were quiet in class. Many students expressed in their survey that they only wish to be treated and seen as a regular high school, not a foreign student who does not belong. This is not okay, we



need schools to actively foster an environment where AAPI ELL students feel genuinely welcome.

To tackle this, we strongly recommend an increase in culturally responsive staff, including teachers and counselors. These staff members should be aware of and celebrate students' diverse backgrounds, avoiding stereotypes and integrating cultural elements into their interactions, lessons, and assemblies. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that every student, including immigrant students, regardless of their background, feels proud of their identity and fully see themselves in the school setting.(PAUSE)

It's crucial for schools to step up and create an environment that truly embraces and supports students learning English. This means more than just having resources; it's about implementing special programs that cater to their language needs and providing engaging materials for an inclusive learning experience. By doing this, schools aren't just helping these students academically, they're fostering a culture of understanding and respect among all students. It's about ensuring that everyone, regardless of their language background, feels valued and included in schools.

Thank you

Dear Councilmembers:

I am an elected member of CEC 15. My most recent professional role with the DOE was serving as superintendent of District 2 in Manhattan. Prior to that, I served as deputy superintendent in District 15 (Park Slope, Gowanus, Carroll Gardens, Sunset Park, and Red Hook).

The sixty-day policy is a clear violation of the federal McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the NYCDOE's Chancellor's Regulation A-780 (attached). This harms all the children in our schools: Those who are required to be uprooted and those who form friendships with those children. Purposefully creating this kind of instability in a child's life is cruel, and will wound students in deep ways that will shatter their sense of security, self-efficacy, belonging, and mental health.

I also have a major concern that these extremely vulnerable newcomer students are being enrolled almost exclusively in our highest poverty schools. This is a practice that NYCPS justifies by saying that these schools have dual language programs whereas other schools do not. In actuality, the screening and placement process used by the Office of Enrollment funnels newcomer students into Title I schools. By law, screening for English Language Learning services is supposed to be conducted at schools, as no child is supposed to be directed to enroll in a school specifically based on their level of English language fluency. There is data available on this pattern within our school district (District 15) that I can provide if you would like to see it.

Thank you for your dedication to ensuring that all our children receive the best that our city and schools have to offer.

Sincerely,

Donalda Chumney

Elected Member, Community Education Council 15

Honorable members of the NYC City Council,

Last October, I witnessed the incredible resilience and compassion of our community at PS 87. When 38 new New Yorkers arrived at our school, they carried little more than fear in their hearts. Our community, however, rose to the occasion, coming together to provide these families with more than just material support. We gave them a sense of belonging, warmth, and the strength to face their challenges.

Out of this spirit, D3 Open Arms emerged, a collaborative effort involving District 3 schools, community institutions, and Houses of Worship, working tirelessly to ensure that these new New Yorkers not only survive but thrive in our midst. The unique needs of Students in Temporary Housing, particularly those living in hotel rooms without access to a kitchen, prompted us to take action. Together with the JCC Manhattan and others, we've created a network that goes beyond mere assistance – it's a lifeline of support, a testament to the power of community. D3 Open Arms stands ready to share beyond District 3, empowering other districts to create similar paths.

Crucially, securing additional funding for our Superintendent is not merely a request for resources; it's an impassioned plea to invest in the language assessments and specialized services that these 1500 new New Yorkers desperately need, bridging the gap for a brighter future for each and every one of them.

In the face of the 60 Day Rule, this vital community is under threat. Our schools have become the homes, the bedrocks of stability for these children who have already endured so much. The fear is that by including families in the 60 Day Rule, we risk dismantling the very fabric of this support system that has been a beacon for those who have found solace and hope within our District 3 schools.

I implore you to recognize the immense value these new families bring to our schools and community. They are not just statistics but cherished members of our extended family. Please, in the spirit of compassion and understanding do not include families with school aged children in the 60 Day Rule. At the core of NYC policy, let us passionately commit to every possible endeavor that safeguards these students' education from any disruption, whether it be by allowing them to remain at their current school or ensuring they are not sent far from the nurturing environments they've come to rely on. Please let our schools continue to be the consistent, nurturing homes these children deserve.

With gratitude,
Gina Cirrito
Mañana Otro Día



Good Afternoon; first, I want to thank Chair Joseph and Chair Hanif and the rest of the council for allowing this conversation. My name is Jonas Wooh , and I am a Sophomore at NYC Lab High School.

As the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) aims to improve the health and well-being of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) children and families in New York City.

I'm a youth advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy Project, ASAP. ASAP is CACF's youth leadership program.

I'm a part of ASAP's Language Access campaign. Our Language Access campaign aims to identify the academic and social needs and challenges faced by AAPI English Language Learners. We also aim to advocate for an inclusive and welcoming school environment and culturally responsiveness resources for all students.

I joined the Language Access campaign because I was not fully aware of how poorly ELL students are currently treated beforehand. Because I am not an ELL student myself, I felt it was important- even more important than if I were an ELL student- to further educate myself on ELL issues in NYC schools. This is because I come from a background of privilege in this context, growing up speaking English, and so I need to make sure I can use that privilege to advocate for all students.

Two very impactful challenges our campaign discovered were a lack of culturally responsive staff and faculty, and a harmful and non nurturing environment for ELL students. Now, these two challenges go hand in hand. By that, I mean that they both are caused by each other, but are also the result of an unjust system behind them. Our team has found that staff and faculty in NYC public schools are severely untrained in cultural responsiveness. Some schools



even have staff and faculty that feel discouraged to be culturally responsive in the first place, so as to present better grades to principals. When the people nurturing the environment are apathetic and ignorant to students, especially to students who are learning English and adjusting to a new environment, they are naturally not going to feel belonged, valued or supported. Cultural responsiveness in a classroom can be anything from simple things such as teachers being patient and taking initiative with clarifying things for ELL students. Cultural responsiveness can also be more elaborate things, such as making sure ELL students are not alone during class work. For many immigrant students, especially AAPI immigrant students, asking for help is not commonly seen in classroom, however teachers should not assume students do not have questions or do not need help when they are not asking questions.

The city, the council and the Department of Education need to ensure that staff are being trained on a regular and consistent basis. A one time training is not going to be enough as we should know, a very general and broad training is not going to set teachers up for success and cannot help the teachers to feel equipped and prepared to respond to the diverse needs of the students. Teachers and schools need to spend more time thinking of ways to create an inclusive school environment, where all students can feel like they belong and are supported. Immigrant students should not be afraid to ask for help or feel helpless in school, and **every student** deserves to be seen as human and to be valued. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

New York City Council: Joint Oversight Hearing of the Immigration and Education Committees, November 29, 2023

Testimony by: José A. Jiménez, Internationals Network for Public Schools

Good morning esteemed members of the Council. My name is José Adolfo Jiménez and I'm here to share my testimony with the hope that my story will help to elevate the importance of supporting the education of multilingual immigrant learners. I stand before you as a proud graduate of International High School at LaGuardia Community College, a school which supports this special community which is often overlooked. International changed my life, and empowered me with the tools that allowed me to seek opportunities I couldn't have dreamed of when I first arrived in this City. I was able to graduate from high school, college and graduate schools. I was the first person in my family to achieve this. In fact, at the time, my very own sibling and cousin attended other traditional high schools in our neighborhood, and eventually dropped out. That marked difference resulted from the different educational experiences we had. I've dedicated the past 20 years of my professional career to public service, and recently I joined the executive team of Internationals Network. Why share my story now? Since my days at International High School, 15 other Internationals Network schools have been opened in New York City and 15 others across the country under the mantle of an educational non-profit called Internationals Network for Public Schools. These schools serve over 6K in New York City alone. My story is only one of thousands. That's a real impact in our community, and now more than ever, recently arrived immigrant communities need our support.

In New York City, there are over 120K newly arrived immigrants, adding almost 30K to our schools, with 22K students overall in shelters. Newcomer multilingual learners including asylum seekers have higher rates of interrupted formal education resulting in lower literacy levels, limiting their opportunities to succeed under the extremely difficult circumstances they already face. Those circumstances include the trauma they experienced in their home countries and/or on their journey to the United States. They include the difficulties of finding housing, learning a new language, understanding a very different school system and society....all while navigating adolescence, a challenge in itself. These students and their families need our help and Internationals Network has

met this moment in multiple ways. With our support, our schools in New York City have worked to facilitate enrollment of these recently arrived adolescent immigrants into their schools. Our schools have sent personnel to shelters, enrollment offices and our nonprofit staff has reached out to both the enrollment office staff, including those working with students in temporary housing to facilitate smoother processes for families enrolling students as well as to advocacy organizations working to enroll these young people. Out of our almost 6000 students in Internationals Network schools in NYC, most of our schools have an average of 30% or more students in temporary housing (STH), and in two schools, the percentage of STH is above 50%.

Once enrolled in our schools, our faculty and staff engage with families, providing socio-emotional and practical support and engaging a variety of community based partners to broaden our support. Our schools are already skilled in providing high quality education to recently arrived adolescents, and we have integrated students into our classes and academic programming in ways that have helped them continue their education. Further, since our schools can only serve a fraction of these newly arrived students, our nonprofit has produced a series of [free resources for all schools](#). We've produced a [very brief document for school leaders](#) outlining 6 quick steps that they can take to create a welcoming environment in their schools. And we've created a more expansive [Newcomer Toolkit](#) which includes strategies and resources that were developed and vetted by leaders across Internationals Network to aid school leaders, and their faculties and staffs, as well as community partners and we included customizable samples of some Internationals resources as well as tip sheets about how to implement strategies.

In addition to creating these materials that are free and easily accessible, we've raised enough money to provide direct support to 10 other schools in NYC serving high concentrations of these newcomers. These supports include engaging district leaders, school leaders, teacher leaders and teachers in collaborative learning with the goal of helping each individual school build an internal team that can customize a strong plan for its context and to create a network among them so they can continue to support each other.

Internationals Network for Public Schools was founded as a nonprofit in 2004, which grew out of the work of our 4 existing schools. Our mission has always been to provide

equitable, quality education for recently arrived immigrant adolescents by both growing and sustaining a network of innovative public schools as well as sharing our successful practices with the field to improve education for all newcomer adolescents. All the recent efforts we are engaging in (from working to open new district schools to providing support to existing schools, as well as partnering with immigrant advocacy organizations) are driven by our mission and commitment....a commitment that impacted my life directly and provided me an education that set me on the path to testify before you at this hearing. I know from my personal experience that newly arrived immigrant adolescents can succeed in New York City Public Schools if their schools know how to educate them, provide broader services to them and their families and have the resources to do so.. Internationals is stepping up its work in order to give these recently arrived adolescents a fighting chance to achieve their dreams. I was once given this chance through education at an International High School all those years ago. Our organization stands ready to expand and deepen our work to give today's newly arrived students a fighting chance. We look forward to New York City Public Schools and City Council to join us in this work and support our efforts to open two new schools and to support schools outside our network. Details of the work we are doing follow. I thank you for your time and look forward to your continued support of our work and those of others in trenches working with schools and communities to provide students that will allow them to achieve their dreams, as I did. I thank you for your time.

Proposals Submitted to the NYCPS for New Schools to Serve Newcomer Adolescents

New 6-12 School to Serve Newcomer Students in Underserved Neighborhoods

Since 2022, over 120,000 migrants have arrived in New York City. In the past 1.5 years, of all the boroughs, Queens has welcomed the most migrants including 9000+ school aged children, most of whom reside in temporary housing.¹ Many, of whom, experienced forced displacement, complex

¹ Students in Temporary Housing Presentation to Internationals Network for Public Schools. 10/11/23.

trauma and long-term gaps in formal education, resulting in lower literacy. This school embraces an asset based view of all students' cultural and linguistic resources, talents, and lived experiences. The influx of newly arrived multilingual learners (MLLs) especially in Queens districts that historically have not enrolled large numbers of newly arrived MLLs drives this timely and critically needed **6-12 International Community School**.

The **mission** of the proposed 6-12 school is to leverage students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to create a collaborative, academically stimulating and nurturing community that prepares students for post secondary success. Families' driving desire for high quality education that empowers their children is especially relevant for the current waves of immigrants. Education promotes a sense of independence that translates into a greater sense of one's societal role. This **instructional framework** is the best approach for the 6-12 International School as it closely aligns to the core principles of our partner, the **Internationals Network for Public Schools**. For more than 35 years, the Internationals Approach has furthered newcomer MLL achievement through dynamic student-centered learning, where the community is motivated to contribute to their fullest potential.

Graduates of our 6-12 school will connect content knowledge with real word experiences resulting in the development of the following **career ready knowledge, skills and competencies**. The focus of career skills supports graduates to be in a competitive position. Students will benefit from the integration of WBL experiences in projects, an external internship, certification electives and participation in career programs (ie Future Ready)

1) **Communication Skills**: Speak, read & write proficiently in English while building students' home language; (Biliteracy Seal)

2) **Collaborative Problem-solving Skills**: Ability to self-advocate, & work in diverse settings

3) **Critical Thinking Skills**: Ability to analyze written, graphic, digital text-to draw conclusions & challenge ideas

Three key strategies to ensure success

1) An **interdisciplinary team structure** ensures adherence to core values and commitment to distributive leadership, with decisions driven by the needs of MLLs.

Teachers collaborate, promoting high quality teaching through embedded collaborative opportunities. Each team provides a small and supportive community for students, who may feel displaced in an unfamiliar culture.

2) School faculty will engage in regular **progress monitoring**. Faculty evaluate projects and formative assessments. They meet weekly reviewing data, student progress, develop PD and curriculum. Faculty regularly monitor student growth in:

- Content & language competencies (credits)
- Portfolio Based Assessment Tasks & Regents
- WBL internships & certification opportunities
- College course opportunities

3) **Community partnerships** are integral to sustained school success.

- Programs promoting accelerated college credit accumulation;
- CBOs & cultural organizations providing culturally competent wrap-around services;
- Industry partnerships robust WBL experiences

The **current & sustained demand** for the proposed school is very high. According to a May 2023 NYC IBO Report, the MLL population continues to increase citywide from 146, 800 to 148, 254 in the 2021-2022 sy.² According to DML, Queens had 55, 432+MLLs (34.5% of the total MLL population.)³ There's only 1 MLL focused middle school in Western Queens and MLL designed HSs are D24 & 25. Given Queens' size and the lack of cross borough trains, MLLs residing in Eastern Queens need a nearby International School.

The current increase in enrollment of MLLs is connected to an influx of migrants including asylum seekers, residing in temporary housing across NYC. Some neighborhoods with existing shelters or hotel conversions have seen a higher number of arrivals than others. (See Chart 2 page 5.) Note, since the data publication, the numbers have increased. In October 2023 ABC news reports "Neighborhoods across the five

² NYC Independent Budget Office. "Met with Open Arms: An Examination of the Teachers and Programs Available to English Language Learners in Schools." May 2023. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/met-with-open-arms-an-examination-of-the-teachers-programs-available-to-english-language-learners-in-schools-may-2023.pdf>.

³ NYC DOE Division of Multilingual Learners. <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2022-23-ell-demographics-at-a-glance.pdf>

boroughs are seeing a large influx of students, but the largest is in Queens in Districts 27, 28 and 29.”⁴

Families entering the shelter system often have children at different grades. Navigating multiple schools especially during periods of shelter relocation can be overwhelming for families negatively impacting school attendance. A 6-12 school supports the **systemic need** that families have in maintaining connection to school while limiting schooling interruptions. Also a 6-12 supports students, who need more time to acclimate.

Lastly, concerning trends in student performance are reemerging. With older MLLs often having financial pressure to work, a 2020 report cited the drop out rate of newcomer MLLs was 26%, the highest of any subgroup.⁵

As a child of immigrant grandparents, who had limited formal education, a day didn’t pass without someone repeating that an education was, “something no one could ever take away from you.” For nearly 20 years, I’ve dedicated myself to advocating for the rights of immigrant youth. The instructional, operational, and community knowledge that I’ve gained as a teacher, advocate and Principal have **prepared me well to lead** another new school.

- 12 year (founding) Principal of Claremont IHS (09x564)-an HS that serves newcomer MLLs and STH.
- Education Officer for the NY IRC, a NGO that works with refugees & displaced persons: Experience working with city, state & federal contracts to support immigrants;
- Background in TESOL & International Affairs with focus on Refugee Populations
- NYC teacher for ESL & social studies

Three characteristics for leadership:

- 1) **Demonstrated Success in School Leadership for MLLs and STH**
 - Graduation rates 90+%,
 - Implementation of WBL programs (SYEP, Career Connect & CRMYA)
 - CBO partnerships, Community School, Project Pivot, NationalEd Equity
- 2) **Instructional & Policy Experience with Refugee and Asylee Youth**

⁴ Miles, Darla. “Exclusive: How New York City schools are handling the influx of migrant students.” ABC Eyewitness News. October 6, 2023. <https://abc7ny.com/migrant-crisis-nyc-children-in-schools/13871657/>

⁵ New York Immigration Coalition. (<https://www.nyic.org/2020/02/new-data-shows-drop-out-crisis-among-newcomer-immigrants-in-nyc-schools/>).

3) Empathetic & Collaborative Leader⁶

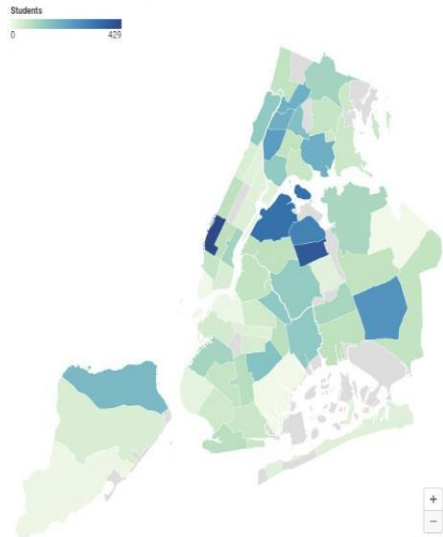
Engagement with the community through school design and operational phases is instrumental to the sustainability of an innovative program. The school should serve as a center for the community and can be a second home. New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) has expressed enthusiasm for the new school and is excited to engage partner organizations. We'll engage community partners, students, families and educators through a school planning team with input from current Internationals students and families. A collaborative distributed leadership structure including a community partner advisory board will support continued engagement in school operation.

⁶ 2021-22 NYC School Survey.

https://secure.panoramaed.com/nycdoe/understand/9048040/survey_results/20368513#/questions/topics/43692

NYC Public Schools and Asylum Seekers

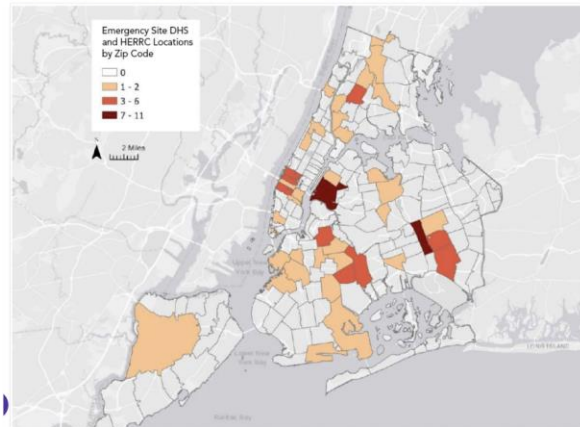
This map shows newly-enrolled New York City homeless students in K-12 classrooms, by community district. The students were identified through the city's Project Open Arms initiative launched by Mayor Eric Adams in response to the surge of asylum seekers. The city data does not include schools that received fewer than six students since July.



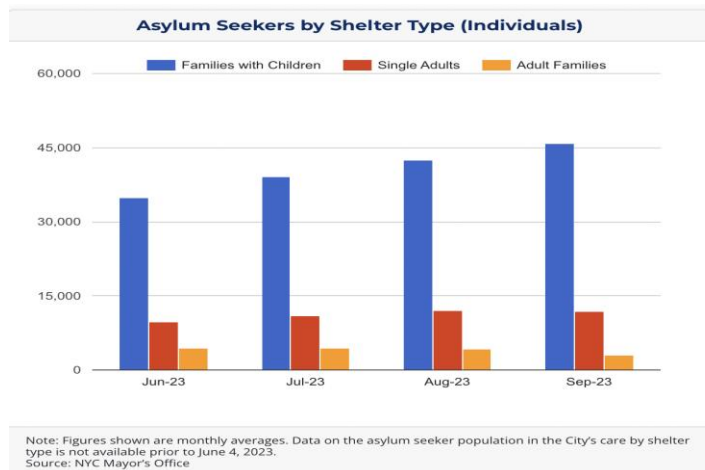
Map: Clayton Guile - Source: NYC Department of Education - Created with Datawrapper

<https://gothamist.com/news/thousands-of-asylum-seeking-students-spread-out-across-more-than-300-nyc-schools>

Chart 2. Concentration of Emergency Shelters and HERRC Sites by Zip Code



"As shown in Chart 2, the emergency DHS shelters and HERRCs are dispersed throughout the city, with significant clusters in Long Island City, Astoria, **Jamaica/Southeast Queens**, East New York, the mid-Bronx, and Midtown West in Manhattan." <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/accounting-for-asylum-seekers/>



Proposal for New School STEAM Center for Recently Arrived ELLs

What is the envisioned educational framework and mission of the prospective new school?

This school aligns with all four of Chancellor's Pillars for Building Trust in the NYC Public Schools and will support the BOLD FUTURE and OPEN ARMS initiative for recently arrived ELLs by providing access to career-connected learning pathways. The school will provide early college credits, experiences and industry validated credentials while developing language and skills.

What core knowledge, skills, and competencies will graduates of the new school possess upon completion of their studies?

Students will engage in project based learning and earn industry recognized CTE credentials alongside college credits. They will learn employability skills and gain job experience through internships.

What strategies will you implement to ensure the school's continued success and sustained effectiveness in the ensuing years?

- Identifying the best CTE tracks based on school location and needs of new arrival ELLs.
- Utilizing the Success Via Apprenticeship program to hire.
- Partnering with the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS) schools to enroll students.
- Working with the NYCDOE Office of Student Pathways to identify the certification exams and forge partnerships.
- Working with the OSP team to earn expedited State accreditation or CTE tracks.

- Connecting with organizations like Make the Road (MTR) and New York Immigration Coalition that support immigrant workforce development (NYIC has already expressed interest, plus MTR has worked on a joint proposal for a school with INPS)
- Partnering with Brooklyn STEAM Center in developing MOU's for the partner schools.

What tangible evidence or data supports the projected demand for this school and its ability to maintain sustainable enrollment figures?

- Based on [September 18, 2023 NPR.org article](#) 20,000 migrant students have started school in NYC. The current immigrant influx should be looked at with an asset based approach to develop this multilingual, experience-rich young workforce.
- Earning income while studying is an overwhelming need of many new arrivals that this school can address as reported by New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC).
- As per the [Build Your Future](#) article there are following data based benefits of expanding the CTE education:
 - CTE concentrators are 7% more likely to graduate than non CTE concentrators.
 - 81% high school dropouts say that their reason for dropping out was lack of relevance in their learning.
 - 85% families are satisfied with the CTE education their children receive compared to 54% in non CTE schools
 - Over 75% of students taking a CTE in high school go on to enroll in postsecondary education after graduating
 - Migration Policy Institute's Research Report, [Unlocking Opportunities: Supporting English Learners' Equitable Access to Career and Technical Education](#), says, " as CTE's scope and audience have grown, educators and advocates have brought attention to the need to ensure equitable access for historically marginalized student groups."
 - INPS admit only recently arrived English language learners have an adjusted 2023 graduation rate average of 88% far outperforming the NYC ELL graduation rate.
 - According to the [Migration Policy Institute Press Release](#) dated Oct 10, 2023, "One in every six adults in the United States is an immigrant. These immigrant adults contribute to the vitality of the U.S. economy and local communities, but at the same time often face barriers to their integration and economic mobility."

What systematic challenge does this school address?

- Low NYC ELL graduation rate, high dropout rate amongst new arrivals who are overage and undercredited.
- This school will provide robust industry specific certifications and experiences in a variety of fields

What grade span or special population will the proposed new school serve?

- 9-12
- Newly arrived ELL immigrants, in particular asylum seekers, often in temporary housing.

Why are you the person to lead this new school?

- Track record of raising the graduation rate, evidenced by transforming the International HS I lead from a 39% graduation rate (2014) to a 96% (2023) under my principalship with comparable increases in all related metrics.
- 18 years of experience as a teacher, chapter leader and school leader in serving new arrivals in Queens and Bronx public high schools.
- Consistently innovated at my school in the following ways:
 - Certified and then recertifying our NYSED CTE status
 - Added 'Education CTE track' through DOE's Future Ready program.
 - Successfully implemented participation of 200+ students including all undocumented new arrivals, in the SYEP, Career Connect, Student Pathways, Work Learn, Grow and Bridges programs for the past three years.
 - Earned increase in funding due to effective implementation of the programs.
 - Received grants from Councilmember Oswald Feliz for schoolyard upgrade and Vanessa Gibson, Bronx Borough President for a Hydroponics Lab.
 - Developed 50+ CBO partnerships where 100+ students go for internships throughout the school year.
 - Applied for partnership with Bronx Steam Center for Healthcare CTE tracks.
 - Partnered with National Equity Lab to provide college credit classes from USA's best colleges.

What are 3 characteristics that will enable you to be successful in leading this school?

- Intuitive resourcefulness and entrepreneurial energy
- Clear visioning and strategic support in building strong collaborative teams
- Experience in serving newly arrived ELLs

How will you engage the community (students/families/community stakeholders) in the design, development, and ongoing operation of this new school?

Design Stage:

I developed a connection with Brooklyn Steam Center Principal to gain insight into the design and development of his school and presented a new school draft to my Superintendent Alan Cheng and Dr. Claire Sylvan, the Founder and Senior Strategic Advisor of INPS, my school's parent network. After their approval, I, along with Claire, have been meeting several key stakeholders.

We have had conversations with many people who are supportive plus helped with additional connections.

- **Dr. Kayon Pryce**, Principal of Brooklyn STEAM Center.
- **Ingrid Alvarado**, from Accelraise.
- **Liza Schwartzwald, Esq.**, Director of Economic Justice and Family Empowerment, New York Immigration Coalition.
- **Diallo Shabazz**, Executive Director, New York State P-TECH Leadership Council; Managing Director, Braven Solutions

- **Harini Venkatesh**, Executive Director, Career Connected Learning, NYCDOE who looped in **Sara Kaufman**, Senior Executive Director, Office of First Deputy Chancellor; **Jade Grieve**, Chief of Student Pathways, NYCDOE.

We will schedule conversations:

- **Donovan Richards**. His staff will schedule a meeting.
- **Adrienne E. Adams**, Speaker of NYC Council; District 28 CM Member
- **Gavaskar Reid**, Industry Engagement Manager, NYCDOE who looped in Senior Directors **Reina Utsunomiya** and **Sean Reyes**.

In addition to above, other potential partners include::

- CUNY
- Monia Salam, Program Director of Work Based Learning at Expand Ed
- Additional industry and CBO partners

Development stage: Once the school proposal is approved and sited, we'll create a school planning team with key stakeholders including (students and families) to plan for school opening.

Ongoing operations: After the school opens, we'll form an Advisory Board incorporating key partners including students and families.

Internationals Network Proposal for Supporting Schools Outside its Network

PROJECT SOARING:

Support for Open Arms with Resources through Internationals Network's Grant

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As the only school network dedicated to serving recently arrived immigrant and refugee MLL students in NYC, Internationals is well positioned to provide guidance and support to schools and the district on how to welcome and serve their new student populations. Both Internationals Network and our schools have expertise in building school capacity to serve their new student populations. We can support schools and their local district as they welcome asylum seekers in the 2023-24 school year.

In addition to supporting over 900 educators in our 16-school network, Internationals is broadening our support to schools outside our network who are serving an influx of recently arrived MLLs and creating a community of practice among them in NYC.

Goal: Prepare NYC school leaders and their schools serving an influx of recently arrived multilingual learners to enroll, welcome, and learn to build on their students' and schools' assets to provide academic and social emotional services to their recently arrived, multilingual learner student.

Objectives:

1. Provide targeted support to school leaders new to serving recently arrived multilingual learners to improve and implement asset-based structures and practices that address academic and socio emotional needs of their newcomer students.
2. Prepare a new generation of school leaders and educators at schools serving recently arrived MLLs based on the practice and research base behind the Internationals approach to educating MLLs and supporting bilingualism.
3. Collaborate with NYCPS to build out a comprehensive approach to successfully welcoming and serving the recent influx of newcomer students.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Community of Practice Leadership Cohort

Internationals Network is committed to supporting school leaders who are new to serving immigrant multilingual learners (MLLs) and seeking effective strategies and structures to meet the needs of these students. To address this, we will develop a community of practice, providing a collaborative and supportive environment for leaders to learn from one another and enhance their knowledge and skills in serving MLLs. The community of practice will focus on the experiences and needs of school leaders who are currently serving an influx of recently arrived MLLs in schools *outside* of Internationals network and who are learning to best serve their new populations. The community of practice will be facilitated by Internationals Network, and it will include leaders from our Internationals schools who will act as peer advisors. These experienced leaders will share their expertise, insights and best practices, serving as valuable resources for the cohort. The community of practice will feature:

- **Six day-long Institutes**, which will include opportunities for intervisitation to schools, including the Lighthouse Collaborative school visits. The intervisitations will enable school leaders to observe firsthand how other schools, including those within the Internationals network are successfully serving recently arrived immigrant MLLs by building upon their home language skills and cultural wealth. By witnessing effective strategies and structures in action, participants can gain practical ideas and inspiration to implement in their own schools. Leaders will also plan and prepare to bring the rest of their school-based team together for a strategic planning session.
- **Strategic Planning: Coaching calls and culminating planning session between school leader and seasoned Internationals principal.** Leader coaching will be a key component of the community of practice. A leadership coach will provide one-on-one coaching for participating school leaders. This will culminate, at the end of the series, with support by the leadership coach for the school leader in applying what they have learned to develop their next steps in serving recently arrived MLLs. This coaching will provide valuable opportunities for reflection, problem-solving, and growth as leaders navigate and collaboratively plan ahead with their team for their unique contexts.

Activity 2: Four Foundational Practice Workshops: The community of practice will also organize foundational practice workshops for key instructional staff from the schools participating in the leadership cohort. These workshops will equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement effective instructional strategies, create inclusive classroom environments, and support the linguistic and academic development of recently arrived MLLs and the foundational knowledge that they will need to best serve these MLLs students: Foundational practice topics:

- *Accessible High-Quality Instruction for Multilingual Learners:* This workshop begins with a lesson taught entirely in a world language. After an initial experience in which the content is delivered in this language with no supports, participants are taught the same content through activities, curriculum and instruction that models good teaching for students who are new to the language of instruction. This workshop is a useful introduction to this highly effective approach as it puts participants in the shoes of their newly arrived students and helps them gain first-hand experience with the benefits of teaching students using the techniques expanded on in other workshops.
- *Let's Give 'Em Something to Talk About: Strategies for Integrating Language + Content:* This workshop supports all teachers in becoming language teachers, regardless of the content they teach. This approach enables students to develop their academic language in both English and home language in all content areas while deepening their knowledge of content.
- *No More Parallel Play: Encouraging Meaningful Student Collaboration:* This workshop engages participants in activities that model various strategies for designing meaningful collaborative roles and for getting students to work together productively. Through various activities and readings, teachers learn how to get away from the front of the room and facilitate true student-centered instruction.
- *Experiential learning: Teaching Language and Content through Projects:* This workshop helps participants define what project-based learning is, develop their own driving questions, identify content that is culturally responsive to their immigrant MLL students, distinguish between higher order thinking and lower level thinking tasks, and walks participants through common pitfalls of project-based learning and how to address them.

Activity 3: Instructional Support and Development Group: Teacher Leaders

The Teacher Leader Cohort for the schools participating in the leadership series aims to deepen participants' understanding of recently arrived multilingual learners and provides strategies to support adult learning specifically related to this student population. Participants explore effective instructional approaches that develop a strong foundation by valuing home language and building on the unique assets of MLLs, while also addressing their needs. The cohort will primarily focus on school-based instructional coaches, department heads and/or other school-based teacher leaders of multilingual learners who are educators providing instructional support and guidance to their peers. Six cohort sessions will emphasize strategies for supporting the professional growth of their colleagues. Participants learn how to effectively facilitate adult learning and provide support to other educators in implementing asset-based best practices for multilingual learners. The cohort creates opportunities for networking, collaboration, and mentorship among participants. This fosters a supportive professional community that encourages the exchange of ideas, resources, and best practices, especially for schools new to working with recently arrived multilingual learners.

Activity 4: District Leadership Engagement and Support

Support 23 NYC Public School Superintendencies by developing and leading a cross-superintendency community of practice and facilitating collective learning so district teams can support participating schools. District leaders will learn how to better support schools as they implement a whole-school approach to welcoming and addressing the needs of newly arrived students and their families in NYC schools. This can include visits to existing Internationals schools, connecting with and learning from CBOs and advocacy groups who work closely and

serve newly arrived families, and providing learning experiences for district teams around best practices in supporting newly arrived MLLs aligned to activities 1, 2 & 3 above.

Cost per school: Approximately 30-35 K depending on size

Project SOARING School Roster

District Superintendency	School
Alan Cheng, Citywide - Consortium, Internationals, Outward Bound (CIOB)	Queens Satellite
	Landmark High School
	Lyons Community School
Hoa Tu, Queens North	Newtown High School
	Newcomer High School
	Bryant High School
	Flushing High School
John Sullivan, Transfer Schools	TBD
	Independence HS
	Queens Academy



Good Afternoon; first, I want to thank Chair Joseph and Chair Hanif and the rest of the council for allowing this conversation. My name is Karen Kong, and I am a senior at Midwood High School.

I'm a youth advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy Project, ASAP. I'm a youth advocate at ASAP's Language Access campaign. Our Language Access campaign aims to identify the academic and social needs and challenges faced by AAPI English Language Learners and to advocate for an inclusive and welcoming school environment and culturally responsiveness resources for all students.

Oftentimes, people would assume the challenges that ELL students face are all related to translation, while it is true that there has to be adequately translated resources for ELL students, we cannot ignore the challenges that go beyond translation. One of the challenges is dealing with stereotypes. One of my AAPI ELL friends would recall moments when she faced stereotypes from her peers that she's good at math and learns things quickly. As a result, she was afraid to ask for help. When her classmates were engaged in conversations, she felt lonely because she didn't know what they were talking about. She also didn't get enough opportunities and courage to interact with other students. School is not only a place for students to focus on academics, but also a place to build social skills, which are crucial for building relationships and feeling supported in their community.

Last year, my team collected the stories from AAPI ELL high school students in NYC. Our team learned that the barriers ELL students face go beyond academic challenges. They face cultural challenges and barriers in social interactions as well. One student said "I wanted to be American so I abandoned my culture and language". But no one should feel the need to give up



their identity to feel belonged. This is far from the inclusive and welcoming school environment that ASAP expects schools to have.

We recommend including more culturally responsive staff, which includes teachers and school counselors. With school counselors that understand AAPI ELL students' individualized experiences as opposed to lumping their story with the *entire* AAPI community, it allows these students to feel recognized and valued in schools. We recommend schools putting in more effort to integrate ELL and native English speakers because they should not feel isolated from the student body. Schools are places where students spend a lot of time in so it is important for schools to be inclusive and welcoming so immigrant students can comfortably build those relationships with their peers. We believe that all students deserve to be supported, seen and valued in the school community, therefore we also ask the city and schools to think beyond the language barrier when serving the immigrant students. Thank you.

My name is Nurys Leroux. I am a forensic social worker in the Education Law Project in the Legal Aid Society's Civil Practice and I thank the Council for their advocacy for new arrivals. At the Education Law Project, I collaborate with a team of attorneys who advocate for equitable educational access and opportunities for low income students, primarily students with disabilities. Prior to joining Legal Aid, I advocated for education services for children in foster care.

Most relevant to today's hearing, I am a former NYC public school student who was classified as an English Language Learner, often referred to as an "ELL." I was born in the United States, however my family moved to the Dominican Republic when I was one year old. At the age of 10, we returned to the US and I enrolled in a NYC public school where I had to learn about an unfamiliar culture and navigate a completely new school environment.

I attended a 4th grade bilingual class, but there was no English language instruction at all. The entire day was conducted in Spanish, including the extra ESL instruction I received. By middle school, my bilingual classes had some English instruction, but not enough to get me to fluency. I had to learn English on my own, by listening to music, watching TV, and trying to talk to English-speaking peers. I was isolated from my peers and could not connect with the school community.

What I DID have when I arrived in New York was stable housing and the ability to attend the same schools consistently. Acclimating to a new culture or environment is already intimidating and can negatively affect a student's social, emotional, and mental well-being. Now, the newest students are facing the added threats of frequent displacement due to the City's 60 day notices,

potentially disrupting school stability, on top of food insecurity, limited to no income, and unimaginable trauma.

As a social worker, I know that cultural competence is vital to helping newcomers adjust to a new country, and it is important that we create school environments that are inclusive and stable. First and foremost, the City must stop issuing 60 day notices and retract the ones that have already been sent out so that new arrival students can have the stability that their schools provide. Second, NYC public schools need more bilingual social workers, guidance counselors, and educators. Third, parents must be provided with translation services so that they can fully participate in the school community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.

Hello, my name is Tahmin and I am student at CUNY school of Public Health and today, I would like to shed light on the pivotal role of food, agriculture, and nutrition education in New York, a force that can profoundly impact students and elevate their overall health and well-being. P = Problem

Our state's educational systems face a formidable challenge in fully integrating agriculture and nutrition education. The introduction of these courses could empower students to adopt healthier eating habits, potentially curbing the alarming obesity rates. Shockingly, nearly 40% of New York City's public-school children are overweight or obese, a crisis often linked with the local food environment and the prevalence of fast-food establishments. Moreover, the city contends with hurdles such as limited green spaces and disparities in access to nutritional knowledge.

Urban agriculture planning and policymaking in New York City take various forms, involving multiple stakeholders, including practitioners, advocates, researchers, government officials, and funders. Therefore, policymakers should collaborate across sectors, working with government, businesses, non-profits, and communities to address these challenges of implementing agricultural and Nutritional education. Furthermore, schools should take active steps to better equip teachers with the tools and knowledge they need to effectively integrate agriculture and environmental education into their classrooms

Let's encourage policymakers to prioritize supporting bill A00395, which can help create an innovative classroom setting and reduce disparities in access to knowledge about agriculture and its benefits. This bill not only seeks to advance agricultural and nutritional education but also aims to improve the overall health of our students by motivating them to make healthy food choices and develop lifelong habits. Urban agriculture policies call for a positive social change, addressing food access, community building, and sustainability.

Testimonio Anónimo

Buenas tardes Una de mis inquietudes y mayor preocupación es nuestra situación actual que resulta muy estresante y angustiante con respecto a los desajolos y traslados sin previo aviso y sin derecho a poder decidir... Otro aspecto que también me parece interesante aclarar es la accesibilidad de nosotros respecto a las ayudas y vales de vivienda ya que en repetidas ocasiones acá se nos ha dicho que no somos aptos para recibir dicho beneficio, no obstante en otras ocasiones nos dicen que si podemos solicitarlo; es allí donde nosotros nos sentimos confundidos y desorientados porque no contamos con información clara y precisa.

También es importante destacar información actual sobre el dicho suministro de alimento y productos de aseo e higiene personal ya que muchas veces no llega a ser distribuido como ellos lo dicen y en algunos caso muchos de nosotros nunca llegamos a recibirlos...

Agradezco mucho por el apoyo brindado confiemos en que todo sea para mejoras porque sin duda alguna hay un sinnúmero de irregularidades que son necesarias puntualizar. Muchas gracias.

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I represent: CACF

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Name: Karen Kong

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I represent: _____

Address: CACF

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I represent: CACF

Address: CACF

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Name: Lupe Hernandez

Address: 80 N. Moore St Apt 9J

I represent: NYC Public Schools

Address: _____

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Name: Kate Menken

Address: _____

I represent: Queens College CUNY

Address: _____

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Name: Mae Lee

Address: 230 Grand Street Room 504 NY 10013

I represent: Chinese Progressive Association

Address: _____

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Name: Dante Bravo

Address: Ocean Parkway

I represent: Children's Aid

Address: 116 W 124th NY NY 10029

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Name: Melissa Escano

Address: Irving Ave, Bk NY 11237

I represent: Make The Road NY

Address: _____

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Name: Jose Jimenez

Address: 40th Avenue, Bay Side NY

I represent: Internationals Network

Address: _____

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Name: Aracelis Lucero

Address: Commonwealth Ave Bx NY 10973

I represent: Masa

Address: 2770 Third Ave, Bronx, NY 10455

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Name: Jessica Seligson

Address: 100 Pearl St. NY NY 10004

I represent: NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

Address: _____

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natasha Quiroga

Address: 79 5th Ave

I represent: Insideschools

Address: 79 5th Ave

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Name: Kesi Gordon

Address: 143rd Ave, Springfield Garden

I represent: NYIC

Address: 131 33rd

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Name: John Benson

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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Name: Julia Korrad

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Independent Budget Office

Address: 110 William St

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Name: Tamia Santana

Address: _____

I represent: Ballet Hispanico

Address: _____

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Name: Trenton Price

Address: _____

I represent: Salvador Center

Address: _____

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Name: Heather Choi

Address: CAK STREET Brooklyn NY

I represent: Korean American Family Service Center

Address: P.O. Box 541429 Flushing, NY 11354

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nurya Leroux
Address: 2090 Adam Clayton NY NY 10027
I represent: The Legal Aid Society
Address: _____

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Name: Kimberly Cruz
Address: Union St Flushing NY 11355
I represent: Kinetic Civic Education
Address: 4127 main st Flushing NY 11355

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Name: MICHA Sanchez-Medina
Address: _____
I represent: NYCP3
Address: _____

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Name: Melissa Aviles - Ramos

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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Name: Alexander Reyes

Address: _____

I represent: Oyate Group

Address: _____

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Name: Jason Avtar

Address: _____

I represent: Oyate Group

Address: _____

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Name: Gina Cirrito

Address: Delancey St NY, NY 10002

I represent: Alabancobro Pa P3 Open Arms

Address: _____

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Name: Glenn Risbroek

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Trevonda Kelly

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: LARA LAI

Address: 1 CENTRE ST

I represent: COMPTROLLER BRAD LANDER

Address: 1 CENTRE ST.

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Name: Melissa Ramos

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Kleber Palma

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Gillian Smith

Address: _____

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Address: _____

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Name: John Hammer

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Flavia Puella Perdomo

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Jennifer Pringle

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates for Children of NY

Address: _____

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Name: Mirza Sanchez-Medina

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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