

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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October 19, 2022
Start: 1:23 p.m.
Recess: 6:20 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Rm. 16th Fl.

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Alexa Avilés
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
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Linda Lee
Farah N. Louis
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Kara Ahmed
Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education

Simone Hawkins
Chief Executive of Early Childhood Education
Operations

Elisheba Lewi
Chief Procurement Officer for NYC Public Schools

Rosemarie Sinclair
Vice President Council of School Supervisors and
Administrators

Joyce Mcclammy
Local 205 DC37

Barbara Reeves

Robert Ramos
President Local 205 DC37

Celeste Bradsher-Layne
Local 205 DC37

Linda McPherson
President Local 205 DC37

Joanny Ruiz
Director of Early Childhood Education Programs
at Sheltering Arms

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Sonja Neill-Turner
Executive Director at Brooklyn Sandbox

Omar Etman
Early Childhood Anti-Racism Coalition

Sarita Subramanian
Independent Budget Office

Tara Klein
United Neighborhood Houses

Gregory Brender
Daycare Council of New York

Rebecca Charles
Citizens Committee for Children

Lillian Fincher
Former Employee at Division of Early Childhood
Education

Jia Lee
MORE

Natasha Jones
Parent

Allison Demas
Instructional Coordinator

Noelle Mapes
CUNY Graduate Center in Urban Education

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lupe Hernandez
Community Education Council

Lanny Cheuck
wBees Forest School

Sasha Maslouski
Home-based Daycare Owner

Esther Morrison
National Council of Negro Women

Thelma Richards

Lois Lee
Director of Early Childhood Center

Carol Flores
Early Literacy Coordinator at JCCA

Kayereathea Boyd
Kaye's Cubs Family Daycare

Andre Farrell
Katmint Learning Initiative

Acasia Henrick
Parent

Jeremy Kaplan
Parent

Stephanie L. Yeung [sp?]
Parent

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Steven Morales
All Our Kin

Maria Pia Belloni
NGO Committee on Migration

Devora Cafiero
Instructional Coordinator

Ashleigh Ide
Social Worker/Parent

Gabrielle Cryan
IATSE 764

Chris Treiber
Interagency Council

Betty Baez Melo
Advocates for Children

Ellen McHugh
Citywide Council on Special Education

Jolene Gunther-Doherty
Guild for Exceptional Children

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Hybrid hearing on the Committee on Education. At this time, please silent all electronic devices to vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. I repeat, testimony@council.nyc.gov. Also, there'll be no food or drink-- no food or drink in the Committee Room. Thank you for your kind cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was ready before, sorry. I'll call this meeting to order. [gavel]
Good afternoon and welcome to today's Committee hearing on early childhood programs in New York City. I'm Rita Joseph, Chair of the Education Committee. I'd like to welcome everyone present here today and those testifying remotely. Studies have consistently shown that high-quality early childhood education for children provides significant medium and long-term benefits for students. Children who were in early childhood education programs are likely to repeat a grade, less likely to be identified as having special needs, more prepared academically for alter grades, more likely to graduate from high school, and higher earners in the workforce. Okay. Ms. Joseph has to

come out now. Access to affordable diverse programs allow all children, children of color, and children from disadvantaged families in particular to achieve their full potential. This is why it is alarming to hear that anything would threaten the very existence of early childhood education programs in New York City. In 2014, the de Blasio Administration made a commitment to offer free, high-quality pre-k to every four-year-old in New York City with a two-year phase-in. Despite a pandemic-related dip in enrollment. Pre-K for All remains a popular and critical initiative. Hoping to build on the success of Pre-k for All, in 2017 the de Blasio Administration launched a similar initiative for three-year-olds. By 2020 there were 3K programs in half of the City's school districts, and in 2021 de Blasio announced the expansion of 3K to the remaining school districts. In order to do so, the City used 1.9 billion of federal stimulus dollars to fund the initiative through the 2024-2025 school year. However, the de Blasio Administration did not put forth a plan to continue paying for the expanding program, and according to State Comptroller, the program is expected to cost 470 million this school year, and faces an estimated

376 million shortfall in 2026. 3K programs are not evenly distributed in all 32 school districts. There are reports of unfilled 3K seats in some neighborhoods and not enough 3K spots for all families who wanted one in other neighborhoods. There are also reports of a shortage of 3K teachers, especially monolingual [sic], multilingual teachers, and teachers who are qualified to work with students with disabilities. Meanwhile, contracted early childhood providers have complained that the City owes them millions of dollars in delayed payments that could force centers to close. Sheltering Arms and Family Services, a childcare provider that operated six centers serving 400 children in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan claim they were forced to close in October of 2022, not being reimbursed by DOE. The Chinese American Planning Council, a not-for-profit which provides 3K and Pre-K at six Early Childhood Centers claim the City owes them 4.6 million dollars for the last Fiscal Year that ended in June. Now, the current Administration is reassessing how 3K fits in its broader Early Childhood education strategy, claiming that the previous Administration was partly to blame for the

1 payment delay and that the education officials are
2 working to fix the problem. Yet, other issues
3 continue to complicate the problem, including loss of
4 more than 100 staffers in the DOE division of Early
5 Childhood Education which oversees Pre-K and 3K. As
6 the Chair of the Education Committee, I hear
7 education concerns from constituents across the five
8 boroughs, and resounding message I'm getting is that
9 these Early Childhood programs are vital. The status
10 of these Early Childhood education programs affects
11 more than children and their families. Early
12 Childhood education providers are largely women of
13 color and mostly underpaid. In an email I received
14 days before the start of the school year, an Early
15 Childhood educator for more than three decades who
16 joined the DOE three years ago stated that the
17 instructional support team, policy supports,
18 specialists, the professional development team,
19 social workers, and assessment and screening team has
20 been dismantled or either dissolved or diminished to
21 a minimal staff. And in the spring, literacy teams
22 were dissolved and 500 reading coaches supporting
23 early learners were reduced to approximately 250 and
24 reassigned K to 12. How can we have any hope of
25

1 saving these programs when they have been gutted of
2 the people that support them, furthermore adding to
3 the City's financial concern and the influx of asylum
4 seekers into the DOE schools. According to the
5 Mayor's Office, the City has enrolled 5,500 children
6 in public schools through Project Open Arms, a
7 multiagency efforts to streamline student enrollment
8 and provide social services to recently-arrived
9 families supported by translation services. However,
10 recent media reports paint a dire picture of the
11 experiences of these migrant children and their unmet
12 needs. For example, at the now over-enrolled PS111
13 in Hell's Kitchen, there are reports that the new
14 students do not have weather-appropriate clothes.
15 While some migrant parents have reported that the DOE
16 set up an office at their Hell's Kitchen hotel to
17 smooth the school enrollment process and provide kids
18 with backpacks, school supplies, metro cards, and bus
19 schedules. Reports out of Bronx are different. PS5
20 and MS5 in the South Bronx have enrolled an estimated
21 65 migrant students in needs of clothes, medical
22 help, and had to put out an urgent call for
23 donations, local nonprofits, advocates in surround
24 neighborhoods. While meant to provide support,

Project Open Arms does not provide schools with additional funding. In PS5 and MS5 like other schools is operating on a budget tied to outdated projection, anticipation a drop in enrollment. Over months, these migrant students face serial peril as they cross borders with in between countries to flee persecution, war, and violence to reunite with family members abroad and to seek better economic and educational opportunities. Now, in New York City, along with their trauma and mental health needs, many of these students are also suffering from disrupted learning, illiteracy, language and cultural barriers that will only compound if not properly addressed. At today's hearing, I hope to hear a real plan of action on how to address these dire issues. I want to understand exactly what is going on with non-payment and delayed payments to contract providers. Where is the breakdown? What is the DOE doing if anything to assist families who have lost Early Childhood programming? What is happening to the faculty and staff? What is the future of 3K in the City? What is the plan to staff up in open centers and underserved communities? I also want to understand what exactly is going on with gutting of

Early Childhood Education support, especially as we face influx of students with serious needs from language and the remedial education to mental health. How can we do right by these children and ensure that they're set up for success? I also want to thank those who are testifying today. I want to thank the City Council staff for the work that they put into today's hearing, Jan Atwell [sp?], Chloe Rivera [sp?], Masi Sockasin [sp?], Monica Saladi [sp?], and Frank Parett [sp?]. I also want to thank my Chief of Staff Sam Wienberg [sp?], and Khanna and Jovanni Piquant [sp?] as my Education Liaison. I'd like to remind everyone who wish to testify in-person today that you must fill out a witness slip which is located on the desk of the Sergeant of Arms near the entrance of this room. To allow as many people as possible to testify, testimony will be limited to three minutes per person whether you're testifying on Zoom or in-person. I'm going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions and comments to five minutes. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues that are present: Council Member Louis, Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member Feliz, Council Member Abreu, Council Member Avilés, Council

Member De La Rosa, Council Member Gutiérrez, Council Member Hanks, Council Member Lee, Council Member Menin, Council Member Narcisse, Council Member Restler, Council Member Stevens, and Council Member Ung, and Council Member Lynn Schulman, and Council Member Sanchez, and Council Member Hanks. I'd like to-- without further ado, I'd like to turn to the first witness panel, Kara Ahmed, Simone Hawkins, and Alicia Louis, right?

UNIDENTIFIED: Elisheba [inaudible]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I will now administer the oath. I will call on each of you individually for a response. Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Kara Ahmed?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Elisheba Lewi?

ELISHEBA LEWI: Yes, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Simone?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Yes, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to also recognize Council Member Shekar Krishnan and Council Member Lee. You may begin. Good afternoon.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Good afternoon. Good afternoon Chair Joseph and the Members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Doctor Kara Ahmed. I am the Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education for New York City Public Schools. I'm joined here today by my colleague Simone Hawkins, Chief Executive of Early Childhood Education Operations, and Elisheba Lewi, Chief Procurement Officer for New York City Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the critically important issue of Early Childhood Education programming in New York City. Before I begin, I'd like to express our gratitude to Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph, and the entire City Council for your continued work and advocacy on behalf of our youngest learners. The Department of Education and I deeply share in that commitment. I have spent my entire professional career, over 21 years, working to promote high-quality Early Childhood Education and family-centered partnerships across my roles as both a school leader and as an Early Childhood educator

teacher. Most recently, I had the privilege to serve as the proud Principal of LYFE, Living for the Young Family through Education. LYFE serves children as young as six weeks old to three years old and their parents who happen to be student parents attending New York City public schools, middle school, high school, adult education. LYFE provides high-quality Early Childhood Education classrooms across the five boroughs in over 30 large high school buildings, as well as comprehensive academic and social/emotional supports for student parents and fostering an extraordinary multigenerational impact on three generations of New Yorkers: children, their parents, and the families of our student parents. As Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education I entered this role with the understanding of the critical importance of this work for our children, our families, our communities, and our economy. This Administration is very fortunate to have inherited a vast system of Early Childhood programs with rich diverse settings. We are proud to serve over 140,000 young children which includes over 10,000 infants and toddlers, and it has 3-K and Pre-K in every school district, but our system is also a highly-complex and

an uneven system in need of an honest and deep examination to ensure that it is delivering on the promises of a high-quality Early Childhood Education for all children. Research clearly shows us that a child's first three years of life have a profound impact on their future learning and their lifelong health and wellbeing. It is imperative that we shift our focus to a birth to age five continuum. We cannot continue building our home starting on the second floor. To craft this vision, my team and I have spent our first six months visiting and hearing from the programs in schools on the ground doing the work. We learned from leaders at our community-based organizations, our family childcare networks, our district schools and our charter schools. We've listened to their stories and their journeys, including their concerns, disappointments with our bureaucratic systems, worries about the future, and optimism for a better path forward. based on these observations and conversations, as well as our team's extensive experience, we have developed a comprehensive vision for a high-quality birth to five continuum built on an inclusive and a mixed delivery model that's going to optimize seats to provide high-

quality programs aligned with family needs and family preferences, going to guarantee sustainable, equitable, and a responsible financial support for programming, developing a fair and a fairly compensated workforce, and ensuring safe, high-quality care and learning across New York City for every single child in every single zip code. And to carry out that vision, let me briefly walk you through the steps that we are taking which include reorganization, portfolio planning, financial sustainability, qualified workforce and compensation equity, and serving all children, along with provider quality. Conversations with our programming school leaders have made it clear that we need to change our model so that-- of support, so that our instructional coordinators were focused on supporting leaders rather than working independently from them. The reorganization we've embarked on will allow us to connect to many more programs and have a much greater impact. Supporting the instructional capacity of our leaders, school leaders, program leaders will have the greatest impact on the instructional capacity of our teachers. Similarly, social works will work directly with the Family Partnership point person at

programs and schools to ensure strong family partnership plans, supports for facilitating family engagement experiences, and connecting families to important resources. Every decision we have made has been informed by the voice of our stakeholders and in collaboration with our labor partners. Every decision is made under the lens of ensuring a high-quality Early Childhood Education to every child from every zip code, not shifting resources away from children, but instead providing more focused supports to program and school leaders within Early Childhood while also allowing for a greater focus on direct supports and direct services to students. We've seen a grave problem in our system of oversaturation. Too many similar seats in one geographical area while not meeting the demand in other communities. That leads to thousands of empty seats in some communities and long wait lists in others. Not only is this not the best use of resources, but the imbalance creates unhealthy competition between and among our Early Childhood programs in schools and has ultimately resulted in under-enrollment across the system. This has destabilized the sector, especially our community-based organizations that our city has

relied on for years and as the Chair has said, are lead mainly by women and primarily women of color. We've also identified articulation gaps. For example, one site may have plenty of 3-K seats, but not enough Pre-k seats for children once they turn four. This disrupts learning for children and reliable care for children as they age out. By putting seats in the right locations where they're needed and having seats available for children across the age spectrum, we will reduce oversaturation and optimize our Early Childhood portfolio fostering a birth to five continuum in every community based on family need and family preference. Though we will be launching a formal community assessment in the fall, children do not have time for us to wait for us to get it right. So in the last several months we've already moved forward by doing the following: increasing 3-K seats. In the spring, in preparation for this school year, approximately 8,000 3-K seats were added to areas with unmet demand, bringing the total of 3-k seats to approximately 55,000. On Staten Island our team worked closely with the superintendent to reallocate resources from one part of the borough from the Northshore in which 3-k seats

were underutilized to neighborhoods on the South shore where there weren't enough seats. We will be adding another two to three 3-K classrooms on the upper east side of Manhattan by converting underutilized seats to support the current unmet need. We've also increased infant/toddler seats. In the spring we surveyed family childcare center networks to gather their feedback on their community's current needs, which identified an interest in converting 500 underutilized 3-K school day school year seats to extended day, extended year, infant/toddler seats. These changes are not limited to family childcare programs. Just to take one example, we worked with a CBO provider in Harlem recently to convert underutilized 3-K and Pre-K seats to more toddler seats that her community needs. She has strong partnerships with nearby elementary schools that also have 3-K and Pre-K and we'll work to ensure families have those options when their child turns three. This is the heart of our vision, responding to the community need through a birth to five continuum led by programs and led by schools across all sectors. We've also begun to reduce oversaturation. Throughout the summer months,

approximately 300 3-K and 300 Pre-K seats were moved from areas of oversaturation to areas with unmet demand informed by the input of program and school leaders and by existing data mostly through a reallocation of resources across CBOs. So in addition to reducing oversaturation, this reallocation of resources, approximately 600 3-K and Pre-K seats, also helped to close articulation gaps. By ensuring 3-K families do not need to change programs when their child turns four, and can remain in the same program until their child enrolls in kindergarten. Not only do children and families deserve this type of community-driven reallocation to better meet their needs, but it also increases the likelihood that CBOs will increase enrollment in ways that will help to stabilize the sector fiscally. In order to sustain this crucial work, we must ensure its financial sustainability. The system that we inherited unfortunately has been plagued by an equitable pay rate per child across settings, inadequate processes within the DOE for supporting our CBOs and our partners and a 3-K expansion that was funded through stimulus dollars that now we face a fiscal cliff. But I want to be clear, we are not

going to abandon 3-K. Our ultimate goal is to provide a seat for every three-year-old who needs one. We are building a birth to five continuum that will be inclusive of 3-K and Pre-K, and it will be based on community and family need, and again, family preference. Though we acknowledge the big challenge that's ahead of us of determining how we will fund any of this in light of the impending fiscal cliff. But we will solve this problem, and we'll do it in collaboration with each of you, because our children's successful educational journey absolutely depends on it. We arrived at this place with city, state, federal help, and we will continue to need city, state, and federal help to build on it, but we have to change our landscape by creating a sustainable financial plan, a responsible plan, that can fund our commitments and guarantee stability for families. Our community-based organization providers are critical partners in this work, and ensuring their financial well-being is essential for a stable system that supports all of our children. Currently the misallocation of seats has led to severe enrollment challenges that have caused financial distress for many CBOs that have deep roots in their

communities and have a significant and reliable presence for families for countless years. Our CBOs are essential partners in this vision, but there is an enormous structural challenge. We rely on a system of hundreds of independent, often small providers that need a support infrastructure to ensure they can manage all of their organization well and navigate the DOE systems. Without question the Department of Education has built an adequate support system which we are striving to urgently address by greatly improving communication and customer service. A standardized invoice review and submission policy establishes clear and predictable guidance for contracted providers, creating pathways for efficient review practice for city agency staff. A standard policy and practice also aims to minimize the negative impact of payment delays on the delivery of critical Early Childhood Education services. As a result, we've already eliminated burdensome monthly invoice processes, and we've improved invoice processing times so that payments are made in a more timely manner, while initiating fiscal training series for our providers. To date, we have paid over 930 million dollars to providers for Fiscal Year

2022. We have processed over 70 percent of the anticipated Fiscal Year 2022 invoices, but we are still waiting for the submission of approximately 4,000 additional invoices for Fiscal Year 2022. Once received, we will continue to expedite processing and especially those that may result in payment. We are doing everything we can to stabilize the sector, and we have already begun to fix it, but it will take some time to truly repair and to truly rebuild. Another big challenge for the Early Childhood sector is providing consistently equitable compensation across the Early Childhood workforce. Teacher qualification requirements and pay vary widely across our settings which creates inequities for both staff and for children and their families. A lack of clear teacher qualification data also proves very challenging on our end. We have begun to address these issues by supporting providers and registering all staff certifications in developing partnerships with CUNY to address gaps. We plan to continue this work with CUNY to expand the workforce, development opportunities, and increase New York State certification rates among our Early Childhood workforce, as our CBO workforce that is comprised

again, primarily of women, and specifically women of color, deserve access to opportunities for professional growth and for economic mobility. We're going to build pathways to pay parity for CBO teachers by working closely with our city partners to address those inequities. This is a woman-dominated workforce that serves our youngest children during crucial stages of their development. So we are determined to ensure they are well-qualified and they're compensated accordingly. We are also committed to creating an Early Childhood system that serves all students, including students with disabilities for whom there have been significant shortages of seats under the old model. We've already begun to address this challenge by shifting 13 million dollars from our central office support to hiring of related service providers to meet the needs of children with IEPs that are attending our Early Childhood programs specifically within our CBO locations. We are-- also have addressed the 4410 contract enhancement delay by moving the solicitation forward and increasing Special Education seats with the goal of significantly meeting the number of necessary seats identified through original need

data. To ensure our children with disabilities have access to high-quality, Early Childhood education that they deserve. Though here we also face the challenge of identifying sustainable funding to continue this enhancement. So we will look to you for your support and advocacy as we know how important this issue is to you as it is to us. this will be done while we continue to staff an office within the Division of Early Childhood that prioritizes fidelity of services to children with disabilities, ensures seamless transitions for children to and from early intervention, and the Committee on Preschool Education, and provide support in professional development for leaders, coaches, teachers, and specialists. We cannot have quality universal Early Childhood education until all of our students are served. And finally, it is not enough that Early Childhood Education simply exists for our children. We need high-quality programs that launch our children towards a successful educational career in life. We inherited a system in which quality and quality measurement are inconsistent. In response, we conducted a citywide inventory to examine the screening curricula and assessments used by over

4,300 schools and programs. We will replacing any outdated curricula requirements with research-based curriculum options while standardizing the use of developmental screeners to allow for more organized and comprehensive data to support instruction and planning citywide. Quantity is not enough. We want our children to receive the high-quality learning experiences they need and that which they deserve. High-quality Early Childhood Education that meets the needs of our young children is an essential part of our school system and is a priority of our Administration. As a former principal, this work is personal to me. And it is personal to our Chancellor who rightly proclaims that bold futures begin with bright starts. We are both proud of what has been accomplished and are confident in the progress we have made so far, and that we will continue to make. We recognize that this is just the beginning. My team continues to work closely with program and school leaders on behalf of our children and their families, because that is our charge, to do right by the children and families that we stand in service to. We continue to welcome the Council's partnership in this pursuit, and your leadership and advocacy are

absolutely essential to everything that we do. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this topic today, and we are happy to take any questions that you have.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

Alright, so our first question, my first question is how many children are currently enrolled in Pre-K for All?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: The current enrollment is roughly 55,000. For Pre-K for All, you're asking for specifically, correct?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct. How many are enrolled in Pre-K in district schools?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: 23,000 approximately.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you repeat that?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately 23,000.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many are enrolled in Pre-K and Pre-K centers?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: In Pre-K centers, roughly 4,500.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many enrolled in Pre-K in CBOs, known as NYCEC's?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Roughly 26,000.

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: OF those enrolled in
3 Pre-K in CBOs, how many are extended day and year
4 programs?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
6 2,600.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of those enrolled in
8 Pre-K in CBOs, how many are in Head Start seats?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Close to 1,500.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many children you
11 have currently enrolled in 3-K?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: 35,786, close
13 to 36,000.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many enrolled in
15 3-K in District schools?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
17 7,000.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many enrolled in
19 3-K and Pre-K centers?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
21 3,200.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many enrolled in
23 3-K in center-based programs in CBOs?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: A little over
25 22,000

2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of those enrolled in
3 3-K in CB's, how many are extended-day and year
4 programs?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
6 2,300.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of those enrolled in
8 3-K in CB, how many are in Head Start seats?

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Almost 1,200.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many are
11 enrolled in Family Childcare centers?

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
13 3,100.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many infants and
15 toddlers are currently enrolled in Early Learn
16 programs?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Approximately
18 5,400.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many infants and
20 toddlers enrolled in center-based Early Learn
21 programs?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Around 1,100.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many infants and
24 toddlers are enrolled in home-based Early Learn
25 programs?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: A little over
4,300.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many infants and
toddlers are enrolled in early Head Starts?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Roughly 1,100.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: According to the
latest Mayor's Management Report, Early Learn
enrollment has declined every year for the past five
years from 26,656 in FY18 to just 15,213 in FY22. To
what do you attribute this decline which began well
before COVID pandemic?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I appreciate
the question and thank you, Chair Joseph. Yes, we've
had the same actual concern around that decline and
looking at the data. you know, one thought really is
that given the rapid expansion of 3-K and Pre-K over
the last several years, which has also been a key
factor in destabilizing the sector, it has shifted
many of the infant/toddler seats that were once part
of many of our community-based organizations across
the city, even including in family childcare, to 3-K
and to Pre-K.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you.
What is the total budget for Pre-K for All?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: \$861 million.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And for 3-K, what's the budget?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: \$601 million.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And Early Learn?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: \$416 million.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: there has been a report that the DOE will not be moving forward with previously announced commitment to making 3-K universally available to three-year-olds by September 2023. Can you please explain where the Administration's commitment lies with respect to 3-K? What can the City Council do to partner with city, state, federal, elected officials to ensure we can sustain 3-K?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you again. I do appreciate that question. As I just previously stated in my testimony, we are not abandoning our commitment to 3-K. We are committed to ensuring that we have a goal to ensure that every child that needs a seat in 3-K has one. We are going to build a birth to five continuum. So that is going to be inclusive obviously of 3-K and of Pre-K, but the truth is that the funding of 3-K with stimulus

1 funding will sunset, and so we've got to act fiscally
2 responsibly, and we need to develop a sustainable
3 plan. And so as I previously shared, we didn't get
4 here without the help of city and state and federal
5 resources, and we are going to call on that same help
6 right now for city, state, and federal resources to
7 support us in achieving this goal and to be able to
8 move this work forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, thank you. 3-
11 K, Pre-K seats available in outreach, how many Pre-K
12 seats are currently still available?

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I'm going to
14 check to see if we have that data on-hand.

15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Sorry. I'm
16 Simone Hawkins. We're looking into that, so as soon
17 as I have that data point we'll be sure to share.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, wonderful.
19 Thank you. And how many 3-K seats are currently
20 still available.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We will gather
22 both of those pieces of data.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. How many and
24 what percentage of families have applied for 3-K and
25 received an offer?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: WE will gather that as well. Much of that goes through our Office of School Enrollment. So we will get that data.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright. So, I do have a series of questions around that line. Should I continue with them or should I circle back with you?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yep, that is your decision. If they're specific to the actual percentages or numbers of the--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Yeah, and wait list offers.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, sure.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, I'll circle back. According to recent Chalk Beat article just about under half of the 2,400 3-K seats in Highbridge and Morrisania in the Bronx have been filled by late September. What outreach effort is the DOE making to make sure that low-income communities of color ensure their families have 3-K seat and access to them?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Outreach is ongoing, and especially given the fact that we have a number of seats, 3-K seats in particular, that are extended-day/extended-year, so those are 12-month

1 programs. So it's not just a September to June
2 process in our Early Childhood world. So, there's a
3 combination of things that happen. There's an
4 outreach team that is unique and specific just to our
5 Office of School Enrollment Division. This is their
6 work all day every day. Making sure that they've got
7 the word out there to families through on-the-ground
8 outreach, in communities and in neighborhoods, lots
9 of social media, lots of bus advertisements, things
10 that happen across the City to make sure that those
11 pieces of information of how to enroll, what's
12 available, what's accessible, as well as just being a
13 form of contact and a source of contact for families
14 to gather information and to ask questions. The same
15 also applies throughout all of our Early Childhood
16 programs. Our Early Childhood programs don't just
17 rely on central DOE for outreach efforts. Each of
18 that is also very unique to their own communities.
19 And so being able to really, really share information
20 about their unique programs, their unique settings,
21 their rich diverseness of each of those settings, and
22 the different and unique things that they each offer
23 is extremely important for us to get into the hands
24 of families. So that is a constant effort.
25

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Knowing that we have high communities of immigrant, is language access available when they sign up their children? Is there someone there to make sure they walk them through the process, and is language access provided?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely. So the Department of Education has Family Welcome Centers throughout all of the boroughs, and there is language access available at each of those centers either with people on staff who speak multiple languages and/or through the translation services.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, now we're going to get to the meaty part, contract providers issues, timely payments. There's been very concerning reports about significant delays in payments to CBOs that are providing a majority of the Early Learn, 3-k, Pre-K classes, and the city owing programs millions of dollars for the last school year. What is the status of providing these payments?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, as I shared previously in my testimony, to-date there has been almost one billion dollars paid out to CBOs for Fiscal Year 2022. Approximately 29 percent of all

1 invoices are still outstanding, meaning that they
2 have not yet been submitted by providers to the DOE.
3 But let's just take a little bit of a step back to
4 think about this invoicing process and how we
5 actually got here. Enrollment and expenses must be
6 submitted monthly for any type of payment to be
7 released, but not every invoice will result in a
8 payment, and so that's just something that I want to
9 make sure that we clarify on the record as well. But
10 in order for any payment to be released, enrollment
11 and attendance records also need to be submitted as
12 part of that process and expenses. And so to-date,
13 when we talk about 4,000 outstanding invoices, that
14 also indicates for FY22 that there are also
15 incomplete enrollment and attendance records
16 documenting the wellbeing of our children across our
17 portfolio. So as a former principal, I'm fully aware
18 that enrollment and attendance is something that we
19 did on a daily basis, right? Rosters need to be
20 current. There's an evacuation that happens, we need
21 to know who's in the building, exactly how many
22 children, and if we need to contact their families.
23 So in FY22 the former policy was that enrollment and
24 attendance was linked to invoicing. So when you
25

invoiced on a monthly basis, that's when you submitted enrollment or updated enrollment and submitted your attendance. And so obviously that's problematic, and so that has been a huge shift and a rapid shift on our end when we identified that that was a current policy in place. So it's decoupled, right? Attendance and enrollment is no longer tied to invoicing. The expectation is that enrollment and attendance is happening daily and that invoices is happening monthly. So, going back to Fiscal Year 2022, in that process there just were not systems that were in place. So entering into this role and learning that there were still outstanding invoices going back to the onset of Fiscal Year 2022, so going back to the fall, going back to the summer. Learning that to-date in this moment, there are providers who have not submitted a single invoice from July 2021 to the end of 2022. And in learning that, you know, obviously just as much alarm as you have, so did we. And so to really unpack that and understand how did we get here, right? How did we walk in-- we walked in at the end of a Fiscal Year-- and to learn that this was happening. But there was not an infrastructure in place. There were not systems of

1 outreach. You know, yes, there are contractual terms
2 and yes, it's up to providers to meet those
3 contractual terms, but it's also up to us as an
4 agency to do support, follow up, technical
5 assistance, outreach, and so we did institute systems
6 in which we are looking at who still owes what, what
7 is still outstanding, and we have respective analysts
8 and their supervisors doing massive outreach
9 campaigns via phone, via email to indicate here's
10 what you're still missing. How can we help you? What
11 else can we do? In addition to that, there were
12 burdensome requirements around the invoicing process,
13 very, very cumbersome, required lots of paperwork,
14 lots of documentation. So we've eliminated-- we've
15 eliminated that to speed up the process both for the
16 vendor to make it easier, but also for our central
17 staff to review and to speed up the time of review
18 and approval. We're at a place now that with
19 submitting an invoice void of any issues that need to
20 go back and forth have corrections or errors or
21 questions, that the invoicing approval-- review and
22 approval time is anywhere from six to seven days.
23 When there's back and forth exchange, anywhere to two
24 weeks. But looking at Fiscal Year 2022 data and
25

analysis, we saw that it took over 80+ days for a provider to submit an invoice just to get it to our office. So when you think about that and you put it in perspective, you're looking at 80+ days, almost three months, right? Then by the time our office was reviewing all of the requirements, you know, that previously were, you know, it could take anywhere for four months for a provider to get paid. Couple that with the fact that there could be missing months of invoices for certain providers going back to early 2021 and just no follow-up on asking providers to submit that. So here we are now and I will say that again we've paid almost a billion dollars to providers to date, 70 percent of what we would anticipate should be invoices coming in, and still 4,000 that need to be submitted, and once those are submitted, we will continue to expedite payments. We will continue to move that work forward. We're going into Fiscal Year 2023. I will say this, we've changed policies and we've changed practices. We've established guidelines with clear timelines that didn't exist before. So right-- we do expect that invoices should be submitted by the fifth of the month, you know, following that last service month.

1 Just simple things, simple but not simplistic. Those
2 pieces were not in place previously. So we've done
3 that. We've established those systems. We've
4 established improved systems. We still have work to
5 do. We still have work to do. I'll be the first to
6 acknowledge that. You know, the lack of systems, the
7 lack of infrastructure didn't happen overnight. So
8 it's not going to be repaired overnight, but we are
9 working quickly and efficiently to-- and urgently to
10 repair it, but now that we are in Fiscal Year 2023,
11 we've had programs that have been operating since
12 July, and I will say that we have less than one
13 percent of invoices submitted still in now this new
14 Fiscal Year. So we don't want to be in the same
15 circumstances that we were in Fiscal Year 2022.
16 We're going to work hard to improve that, and we are
17 confident that working in partnership with our CBOs
18 and with all of our stakeholders, that we will see an
19 improvement in the turnaround.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In terms of safety,
22 how did you attach-- public schools, we do ATS every
23 day, you know--

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
25 That's right.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: that as a principal.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How come the youngest, most vulnerable people in our city were attached to attendance and invoicing? That doesn't make sense.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, I can't speak that. That was a former policy. I was certainly shocked, to your point, as a former principal. Attendance and enrollment was something that needed to be kept current on a daily basis, and yes, entered into ATS daily.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Daily. If the child goes missing, if there's a fire, if--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
All of it.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: anything happens, I have to wait a month later to see who's missing.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That's right.
So, it's non-- it's a non-negotiable. And so we-- we have decoupled it, right? And so the expectation now is that we don't wait until there's invoice happening. Irrespective of submitting an invoice or not, enrollment and attendance is to be kept current

on a daily basis. We've improved even the technical systems around the submitting of that invoice and the enrollment and attendance just to make that possible as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, for now-- you were saying earlier-- what is the number of centers that are still owed money for services? How much is still owed?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, that is difficult to say. Payments are connected to contract IDs which are then connected to each vendor. So vendors could have multiple contract IDs, and we cannot say how much is exactly owed, because each invoice does not result in payment. Vendors were issued advances going back to the beginning of Fiscal Year 2022, right? So, in the early part of 2021 of this school year, when there was a recruitment schedule that should have been implemented but it wasn't. So as it-- with any city agency and with any contract, Health and Human Services contract issued in advance, those are recouped as invoicing occurs. That never occurred. So at this point, as invoices are coming in, there are many invoices that won't result in payment, because they were issued an

advance early on and that process never took place.

And also, again, based on enrollment and based on expenses. So, until that invoice is submitted, it is not clear if actual payment would even be made.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Interesting.

SeaChange Capital Partners estimated that the DOE still has not paid out 464 million dollars in funding of service rendered at the end of FY22. This analysis was based on public information on Checkbook NYC. Does the DOE agree with this analysis to-date? How much funding has the DOE still not paid out for services rendered in 2022?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Again, that's difficult to claim until we can send the invoices, until we can see the enrollment and the expenses.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can-- putting this on the record. Can I get a report of that once you find out?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I would love a report sent to the committee.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. So, childhood services also struggled to-- struggling

providers. DOE taking any steps to make monthly payment to process easier for providers, or increase its own capacity to process the payments?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes. I'm sorry, was that-- I'm sorry, Chair Joseph, can you repeat that question?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What steps have you taken to simplify the invoice process going forward to change this? Is it retroactive? What is the DOE helping to clear the backlogs of payments for the last year?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely. I'm going to pass this to our Chief Executive Simone Hawkins to answer, but as I have stated, we've absolutely eliminated some burdensome requirements. She can speak to the specifics to really ease and make it much more efficient and effective.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, for Fiscal Year 22, previously we would get individual receipts as invoice backup, and as you can imagine, that can lend to a very lengthy review process once it reaches our team. So once we were informed about that from providers, we immediately informed them to cease and desist with submitting individual receipts and to

provide kind of comprehensive accounting documents such as a general ledger or a profit and loss statement. That has made an immense change to the processing times of invoice reviews. For FY23 because, of course, communication and planning was able to commence prior to the start of the Fiscal Year, we were able to really re-evaluate the entire document review process and restructure it. So, in Fiscal Year 22 and prior years, they would-- providers, CBO providers in particular would undergo a very, very I would say scrutinized review of documents such as the paper receipts, individual receipts on a monthly basis. So we eliminated that for Fiscal Year 23. We converted the expenditure review process to a biannual process, so happening at the mid-point of the Fiscal Year and at the end of the Fiscal Year. And again, giving us the kind of comprehensive accounting documents to lend to a quicker review. So, invoices are submitted. It is done electronically. We can quickly review it without going through, combing through documents. So that in and of itself. And then, the caseloads of our analysts who are responsible for processing

1
2 invoices, we are working feverishly to lower the
3 caseloads to help build capacity internally.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what about the
5 providers that are in significant financial distress,
6 how are you supporting them?

7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Yeah, so for FY
8 22-- and I'll actually turn it over the Deputy
9 Chancellor. She can speak in length. We uncovered
10 that for Head Start programs in particular, there
11 were COLA funds that were left unallocated for Fiscal
12 Years 20 and 21. We worked to allocate those to
13 eligible providers. And then we also worked to
14 release an unprecedented hold harmless, again for
15 eligible providers. That was never done before, and
16 it wasn't done before because the funding structure
17 for Early Childhood is very nuanced and complex. It
18 is comprised of federal dollars, some of it one time
19 stimulus. Other state dollars, as you can imagine,
20 have significant regulations and requirements guiding
21 it. CCBG being one. And then we have local City Tax
22 Levy. So allowing a funding model that allows any
23 portion of hold harmless was very difficult. So we
24 had to earmark dollars separate and apart from that.

1
2 So, I'll turn it over to the Deputy Chancellor to go
3 into detail.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you,
5 Simone. Yeah, just to echo what Simone has said and
6 throughout our time here in these last several months
7 identifying where there monies still owed to
8 providers. There was roughly eight million dollars
9 in pandemic relief funds that was never allocated
10 back in 2021 that providers were owed. So those were
11 quickly allocated to providers to support fiscally.
12 There were, to Simone's point, COLA funding that had
13 not been allocated back going back to 2020, 2021. So
14 those funds were also allocated, and the one-- the
15 first-ever one-time held harmless, partial held
16 harmless, close to 20 million dollars that was
17 allocated. There was also over three million dollars
18 used to buy supplies, classroom supplies to get in
19 the hands of children, at CBOs in particular, to
20 offset their budgets and their cost so that they
21 didn't have to spend money on materials. So we're
22 working hard at A, identifying where there were
23 issues of money that previously should have been paid
24 out to providers to make sure that that gets into
25 their hands as quickly as possible, because they're

owed that and that's their right. And also, quickly looking to see how we can support providers in the constant invoicing process, making it easier, making it more efficient, and proving our system is working hard at doing that, and working hard at supporting providers and advocating the DOE systems at large.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'll come back for other questions. I think my colleagues want to ask questions. Council Member Brooks-Powers?

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and good after-- afternoon everyone. Thank you, Madam Chair, for pulling together such a critical issue on Early Childhood programs that affect some of our younger New Yorkers. Like many parents I believe in robust early education-- will set our youngest students up for educational success. Having strong Early Childhood Centers like Saint Albans Montessori Schools that have a footprint in the community and strong curriculum will ensure our youngest minds are on a pathway to success. However, often times our under-resourced communities are not provided with the same educational foundation as some of the more affluent communities. In light of some of the pressing issues that we all are aware of, I'd like to

ask a few questions. So, in District 31, the district that I represent is comprised of School District 27 and 29, and we're in two different phases of the 3-K expansion with some students being able to enroll in 2018 to 2019, and 2020 to 2021. Of course, the 2020-2021 roll-out was stymied by the COVID-19 pandemic, but due to the pandemic, former Mayor de Blasio used ARPA [sic] and CRRSA funding to supplement the cost. However, the details were never outlined. So, how do you anticipate continuing to fund 3-K in the out-years, specifically after the 2025 to 2026 school year? How do you continue to fund high performing programs with significant wait lists and increase their capacity? And then, I'm just going to ask my last two questions so you could just answer it all together. My office has been notified by a number of local daycare providers alerting us that contract payments have not been taking place for quite some time. Saint Albans Montessori has been waiting for payments since Fiscal Year 21, and that's just an example of several daycare providers in my district that have not received payment. I want to know why haven't they been paid. What is the action plan and the timeline to address this? Also, we've

1
2 heard that the contracting process under ACS was more
3 efficient and timely. Why have some of those
4 practices not been adopted for our Early Childhood
5 Centers under DOE? And those are my questions.
6 Look forward to hearing my responses. Thank you.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you,
8 Council Member. I'm going to work backwards, if
9 that's okay, from one of the last questions that I
10 heard about Fiscal Year 2021 from Saint Albans. We
11 will look into that and get back to you. We've also
12 identified programs that were owed back-pay going
13 back two, three year-- Fiscal Years. So, this could
14 be the case and we will look into it and see what we
15 can find.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And can my
17 office send you a list?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Because I
20 actually have more than--

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
22 Please.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: a dozen
24 daycare centers right now--
25

1 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]

2 Yep, please do.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: that's
4 faced with this.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And at
7 risk of closing.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, please
9 do. We welcome that for sure. I can't speak to why
10 it wasn't paid out in previous Fiscal Years predating
11 myself or Simone, but we certainly can look into what
12 they are owed.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And some
14 are only from this year. So for the ones that are
15 for this year, can you speak to those, why they
16 haven't been paid.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Again, any
18 individual circumstances please send to us so we can
19 look into it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: You know, we
22 are still receiving invoices from the fall of 2021
23 even this week. So, I wouldn't be able to speak to
24 the actual circumstances of each of individual
25

program right here, but if you send them to us, we can certainly look into it.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I'm sorry. I'm going to go back to your other question, contracting processes. My colleague here, Elisheba, is with the Division of Contracting and Purchasing for the DOE, so I can turn it over to her if there's a specific contracting question. Again, to the payment questions, those tie back to all of the things that we've shared around eliminating some of the burdensome processes and requirements and really trying to streamline the process as a whole and offering as much technical support as we can to providers to help navigate all of the systems across the DOE. Is there a specific contracting question that we have?

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Well, it's not specific. It's a more broad stroke.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: That, you know, ACS is viewed to have a more efficient process, and the success rate of the payout is higher than what DOE is having right now. So, is DOE looking at

the practices of the sister agency to see what can be adopted?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes, yes, absolutely. And so we've done our own research of really understanding what that system used to look like. Again, going back to 2018/2019. So, Simone, you want to go ahead.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Sure. So, Early Learn under ACS, they had a very different payment model than what's currently under the birth to five contract, and there are different contracts for one, which is different from and how Early Learn was structured. Early Learn went through its different types of payment models initially, and you know, I'm thinking of my ACS partners as I answer this. So, please, I'm apologizing if I do a bad job. But initially, I believe, that it was a very similar structure. It was based on enrollment. Then the contract changed, and then it was based on expenses, meaning that a provider can really draw down 100 percent of their contract value, irrespective of their actual enrollment. The birth to five contract, which is really the contract that governs most if not all of our CBOs, the terms are different, and that

was communicated in the request for proposals that providers apply to. And that's done through a base plus model, and I will not go into detail. It's incredibly nuanced and confusing, but for the short of the long is, it considers enrollment and compensates up to a specific percentage as based on that enrollment and offsetting by actual expenses. So it does pay above actual enrollment if you have, you know, the applicable and the allocable expenses, but it does not recognize unless you are at 93 percent or above of your enrollment for each and every service month, will you be reimbursed the full contract value. I think even me sharing that snippet [sic] communicates the complexity in the model. That in and of itself is very different from what and how ACS funded programs, and a lot of our current providers were former ACS providers. So, understanding the nuances of that. And again, looking at any potential future RFPs, we are absolutely committed to reconsidering a different and more healthy reimbursement model, but currently this is what the contract allows for and we are working within the restrictions of that.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And I would just add a more equitable funding model too. And Council Member, I think there was one other question.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: 3-K.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: 3-K and stimulus funding. Yes, you are correct, it-- 3-K has been funded by the previous Administration through stimulus funding. So again, we are facing a really big challenge in front of us, and an impending fiscal cliff that we are looking to solve, and we didn't get here on our own. We got here with help from city, state, and federal dollars, and we are really asking for that same help right now in this moment.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: What's the forecast on the impact, though, right now?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, we're looking at over 430 million dollars, I think, going into the next school year to just to what was anticipated to be funded for 3-K. And of course, if there's to be any additional seats added, even after any kind of seat reconfiguration that could be cost-neutral, we need to plan on an additional cost. The same is going to hold true for our Special Education seats.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
Restler?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
much, Chair Joseph, for your really impressive
leadership here. Thank you to the folks who are
testifying. Just a very simple yes or no question
for the Deputy Chancellor. Do you commit to
fulfilling the plan for universal 3-K in September?
Just yes or no if you don't mind on that one?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We won't be
able to commit to the numbers that were presented
from the previous Administration. We need to--
again, we need to carry out a needs analysis to
understand where that need actually is.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to
express my most grave disappointment that this
Administration is walking back a commitment to
universal 3-K and not-- the families in my district
are in desperate, urgent need of this childcare
service, and our young children, their development is
dependent on this investment, and there is nothing
more important, and I'm-- I know you're trying and I

1 know you're all committed to Early Childhood
2 education. You spend your life-- it's your life's
3 work, but failing to follow through on this
4 commitment to Universal 3-K in September is a
5 travesty, and I just want to say, as a Council Member
6 I am going to do everything in my power to try to
7 fulfil that commitment in September or as soon as
8 humanly possible. We hope to have partners in the
9 DOE. To the subject more explicitly of this hearing,
10 I just have to tell you that in my own district, WB's
11 [sic] is a provider that just launched me a GoFundMe
12 page yesterday for \$100,000 because they're out of
13 luck. Building Blocks has shelled out-- the Director
14 of Building Blocks, Elena [sp?], has shelled out
15 \$50,000 from her own pocket to keep things going
16 because she's not getting paid by DOE. So, folks are
17 struggling in the most profound ways. SeaChange-- and
18 the founder of SeaChange lives in my district as
19 well-- found in July 679 providers were over 460
20 million dollars. Do you have the current numbers
21 today of the number of providers that are owed money
22 and how much they're owed in total?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes, Council
25 Member, if I can just go back to oen thing that you

1
2 said. We are not backtracking on our commitment to
3 3-K. I just want to make sure that we're very clear
4 on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Backtracking on
6 the timeline.

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, that's the
9 critical thing that I just want to highlight. It's a
10 delay in timeline is a delay in the commitment which
11 is to me an open-ended question of whether 3-K is
12 moving forward at all. So, I hear you that you're
13 trying to say you want to get there, but we are
14 trying-- there was a plan and a commitment to get
15 there to Universal 3-K in September. That is no
16 longer happening. That was made very clear, and I
17 want you to know just how angry I am about it, and I
18 am going to do everything I can in my power in this
19 role to prioritize that investment in Universal 3-K
20 at the top of the list for the coming FY24 budget.

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And we will
22 appreciate your advocacy and work on that, because we
23 too are committed to it. There just wasn't a
24 financial plan that was committed to it. So, we need
25

to develop one now, and we need to do it in the most responsible way, and that is going to be our goal.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And I appreciate it. I just-- could we do quick--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: answers on the remainder because I got two minutes and I got 40 colleagues that are going to strangle me if I go a second over.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, number of providers that are owed money and how much as of today?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, again, we have about-- and let me get you the specifics on contract IDs, and I'm sorry that that's the level of detail that we have. It's just different from vendor. So we have about I would say 1,000 contract IDs, again, going across different vendors who have not finalized and closed out the Fiscal Year 22 cycle. Again, we cannot speak to how much that would yield because we would need the actual invoices, having the enrollment and expenses to provide that

data, which we will ultimately provide as per the
Chair.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I mean, I
wish that we could have more specific numbers on how
many-- if it's a 1,000 contracts, so that means that
Sheltering Arms which has six different centers,
that's mean that six times over they're being counted
there. They were not paid in July of 20-- their July
21 contract was not paid, beginning to be paid until
December. Invoices submitted as recently as October
11th just this past week and still not been paid.
When do we expect to see Sheltering Arms receive the
money that they are owed so we can avoid this, you
know, vital program, deeply respected program from
shutting its doors?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: And I think to
add to the complexity, Council Member, they have 11
contract IDs across the--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
Excuse me.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: No, no, no,
again, it's incredibly nuanced. So, Sheltering Arms,
that's a program that we've been and continued in
consistent contact with. I've actually been on the

1
2 phone with them yesterday and we have another meeting
3 with them tomorrow.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We were, too.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: And we
6 committed to standing meetings with them prior to
7 their withdrawal of their contracts, understanding
8 that there was a delay in payments from the prior
9 Fiscal Year. We've been working very closely with
10 all of the leadership there, as well as some of the
11 fiscal staff.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I really
13 appreciate that, Simone, but you know, they publicly
14 announced that they were closing their doors months
15 ago-- that they were discontinuing the programs
16 months ago. I would have thought that would have been
17 an impetus for DOE to step up and actually see the
18 funding dispersed, and we still haven't seen it. And
19 so I appreciate that you're trying and you're meeting
20 with them, but we don't have the funds in the bank
21 account to pay the staff to keep the program running.

22 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: And we want to
23 just say again, there's a process to that, right? So
24 again, we will expedite and prioritize the
25

processing, but we also need the submission of the invoice, and that triggers the process for us.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: They indicated to us they submitted invoices recently as October 11th. I'm out of time, so I'm just going to make my final points, and if you have time to respond, I appreciate it. I'm disappointed that-- I realize-- I appreciate the merging of Early Learn into DOE. I know that there are bumps. I know that this is hard. I think it is a good thing, and I appreciate that y'all are trying, but status quo is really not working for providers, and it's-- there are huge problems in our communities today. So, what additional procurement resources, I'm sorry, Ms. Lewi, have been dedicated to the DOE procurement job to get those contracts registered? You paid out 965 million dollars for FY22, but there was 1.3 allocated, 1.3 billion allocated. Are the rest of those funds available to providers? Any plans to adopt HHS Accelerator and Passport? Because clearly the current DOE procurement system ain't it. And what add-- so, and I'll-- I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Restler. Council Member Avilés?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Any response on that? No, I'll [inaudible]

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh yeah, we didn't hear--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] No, it's fine.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, go ahead, go ahead, Council Member Restler. I want to hear it as well on the record, definitely.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: If it's possible.

ELISHEBA LEWI: Thank you, Council Member. I want to preface any response that I make by saying that I'm relatively new to the DOE. I'm about two and a half months in and I'm new to the public sector, which I think is a good thing, because I have the distinct benefit of being able to look at things from an outsider's perspective. So I do appreciate the questions. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that we're getting these contracts registered as quickly as possible. So I think the question was whether or not we're adapting HHS Accelerator or Passport. I do know that we-- my team is utilizing

1 Passport for some of their-- for the new awards,
2 because it's a new system. There are some learning
3 curves, but the team has definitely done a really
4 good job of partnering with the Mayor's Office of
5 Contract Services to learn the system and figure out
6 ways to integrate it with our current process. Prior
7 to my arrival, my team worked very closely with
8 Deputy Chancellor Ahmed's team to ensure that we were
9 making sure-- we were working through a backlog of
10 contracts, and of course this spotlights the current
11 procurement process. But you know, my goal in the
12 coming months is to do a deep dive into the current
13 process-- processes, identify ways to streamline the
14 processes, and hopefully reduce the cycle times.
15 Other than that, I think that we do this with the
16 understanding that there is a level of urgency of
17 surrounding-- ensuring that these contracts get
18 registered in a timely manner so that the providers
19 of services are paid.
20

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member

22 Avilés?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Hello, good
24 afternoon. Thank you so much Chair Stevens for this
25 hearing, and thank you for your presentation--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Chair Joseph, for the record, not Stevens.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, [speaking Spanish]. I'm sorry, my brain. You're irreplaceable Chair Joseph. I come from District 38, which includes the neighborhoods of Sunset Park, Red Hook, and portions of Borough Park, Decker [sic] Heights, and Windsor Terrace, and some report I have seen that there were certain seats unfilled, and I will tell you that our community desperately needs these seats, 3-K, childcare, 4-K, and we find these seats not being filled, and it's huge segments of our community not even knowing they exist. So, I'd love to know like what is the support that the DOE actually provides for these, you know, small providers that don't have marketing departments? They're barely making it through the day. And I'd also like to know at the Education Committee hearing on Special Education on 9-21, the DOE had stated that they expected to have 568 preschool seats in place for students with special needs, seats that the DOE is mandated to provide. So, as of last spring, 800 children with special needs were denied a preschool seat due to lack of capacity. What is the status of

opening of those 568 seats over the next three months? How many site have been brought online, and what is the plan to open the seats at contracted sites versus DOE buildings? How many of those seats will be in bilingual settings, and you know, what's the progress of all the 410 money that is sitting there that needs to be deployed?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you, Council Member, and we appreciate all of those questions. I'll start and then I'm sure Simone will jump in here as well. So, in terms of just the portfolio of seats under their Early Childhood Division, it does include over 10,000 infant/toddler seats which is often not discussed. You really do hear mostly and mainly in the public around 3-K and Pre-K. And so quite often communities, neighborhoods, even people within DOE are often-- they don't know that there's an entire infant/toddler world out there that we absolutely want to make sure we're expanding and supporting families across neighborhoods. So, to your point, it is not surprising to us to hear that some families aren't even accessing under-utilized seats, because they're not even aware that they exist. And so what we have

been doing is we've been working closely with our Office of School Enrollment to make sure that there is greater awareness brought to the seats that are available, but not just the age of those seats, but the types of seats. Because as you've heard me say now more than once, we are looking to make sure we understand family need and preference. So we have a variety of settings, right? Center-based programs in our CBOs, which many families often prefer to smaller, more intimate feel, somewhere that is deep-rooted into the community or neighborhood in which they may live. There are family childcare providers which we often know as homebase providers, which are also something that's much more preferred by some families. In their apartment building, it might be someone that they're very familiar with, family member, etcetera. There are charter schools that some families choose to go to for Pre-K, and there are obviously our district school settings, many which have families who have siblings that end up going to the same school. point being is that there are many different settings, and it really is about family preference, and we have to do a much better job at making our communities and our families aware

1 of what they have access to, from age group to their
2 preferences. And so that work is being done with our
3 Office of School Enrollment to really publicize all
4 of those pieces much greatly-- much more widely, and
5 also developing enrollment and outreach plans with
6 each and every one of our providers. Recognizing
7 that enrollment has suffered, but also recognizing as
8 we reconfigure seats that we are supporting providers
9 in that kind of outreach and publication of what they
10 have to offer and their unique characteristics. Many
11 of our providers do offer year round programming and
12 extended day. Can't get that in many of our district
13 schools, right? And for working families, they
14 don't stop working on June 30th and they don't stop
15 working at 2:20 each and every day. So that's a
16 special thing, and that's an added benefit, and we
17 need to make sure that that's widely publicized. You
18 asked a question, Council Member, about our Special
19 Ed seats.

20
21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And absolutely,
23 you know, again to my earlier point, we aren't back-
24 tracking on 3-K for All or Pre-K for All, because it
25 has not yet been universal, because our children with

disabilities and with IEPs have not had seats. So there hasn't been a "for all" yet.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: That's correct.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, we are not back-tracking on it.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We are moving forward with our com--

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: [interposing]
What's the progress--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: so far? What's the progress with filling the seats--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing] So there was a complete delay in the 4410 contract enhancement, and we moved quickly to push that through. And so I'm going to turn over to you to speak to the specific numbers, because we've made a lot of progress in terms of where we are with that contract enhancement already having been delayed and where we're going to be headed to meet the regional need data, and to really ensure that we have seats for the 800 that you mentioned very soon.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, it's based on the most recent regional need data that the Deputy Chancellor just mentioned. There's a need for approximately 800 additional seats. And Chair, I know you mentioned this at the Special Education hearing. So, by January we expect to have 400 new seats to be created as a result of the 4410 enhancement that we pushed through with great urgency, and an additional 284 seats resulting from converting underutilized class types, specifically 12, to eights and six's. Combined, we hope that this will create 698 new seats by January for an additional eights and six through newly added and converted seats. To fill the remaining 102 seats we plan to continue to engage providers to explore additional conversions and run another 4410 enhancement process, not necessarily a solicitation, but potential a negotiated service to help onboard additional providers or expand existing ones who didn't put in, kind of throw in their hat in the original solicitation. And where 4410's are not able to fully meet that demand, we want to leverage Pre-K centers or elementary schools to close the outstanding gap.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, the contracts that we talked about in September have moved through the system, but those seats won't be coming online until January. Was I misunderstanding? I'm sorry.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: No, no, no. So there are some operating-- what we call at risk right now, right, as their contract is going through the registration process. There are about 20 that will have a registered contract within another month or so, and then the rest we hope to actually process and get them registered and on-boarded by January.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And just how many seats will the 20 contracts provide [inaudible].

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: We can grab that number and get back to you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member Menin?

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair Joseph, for holding this incredibly important hearing. So I'd like to talk about the CBO payments, because I am incredibly concerned about this. just last week the Council passed the Universal Childcare Act, and we finally have a comprehensive plan to get to universal childcare

1 which is tremendously exciting, but if we cannot get
2 the CBO payment issue under control, we will not get
3 to universal childcare. We've had 1,400 childcare
4 facilities that have closed in recent years, and yet
5 the demand for childcare is higher than ever, as you
6 now. And so could-- I want to really drill down on
7 some of these specifics. You mentioned in your
8 testimony that you've processed 70 percent of the
9 invoices. How much-- what percentage have you paid
10 of that 70 percent?
11

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Close to one
13 billion dollars.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: No, but what
15 percentage?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Oh.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: The 70 process,
18 are you saying that all 70 percent have been paid.

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: No, so--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: [interposing] What
21 is that number?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: 70 percent of
23 invoices have been processed, but again, not all have
24 resulted in payment.
25

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Right. So how many have resulted in payment?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Sure. We've got about 62 percent have actually resulted in payment.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Right, so 62 percent, I mean that's a woefully inadequate number. How are you going to get to the-- really to 100 percent payment, and how can you get there quickly. And the other question I have is how many staff members do you have working on this issue?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, again, I-- each invoice doesn't necessarily result in a payment, right? And so for those that still outstanding, the 4,000, we hope to get them as quickly as possible from providers. Again, the outreach, we are asking for them to submit. Unfortunately, not every provider is going to be incentivizing. They said this very directly to us. They're not going to be incentivized to submit an invoice at this point. If they know that they haven't had the enrollment or their expenses would meet what would allow for payment. And they know that they were issued an advance, and that has not yet been recouped. There

1 isn't an incentive to submit an invoice at this
2 point. So we've heard that very directly from
3 providers. Some have said that they're ready to move
4 on into Fiscal Year 23. We've urged them to stills
5 submit that invoice for auditing purposes, for them,
6 for us. So it's hard to say that we're going to get
7 to 100 percent of any kind of payment. We're open to
8 get 100 percent of the remaining invoices actually
9 submitted so that we can release any payments that
10 are still due and also reconcile any other payments
11 that are needed. As we heard the other former Council
12 Member say that was here, about any back-invoices
13 going back to previous years that we've also had to
14 reconcile and to resolve. So those are still coming
15 and those still will be addressed as well.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Can we just get--
18 can I ask the Chair if we could get up an update then
19 from you on that?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: [interposing] So
22 that we can really have a full picture of that. On a
23 different issue, the proposed PEG. Can you speak
24 with specificity? How is the proposed PEG going to
25 affect 3-K, Pre-K, and the CBO issue?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Not at this time, I don't think we can speak to that.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. When will you be able to give the committee some update on that? Because that's obviously of great concern.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Understood.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I mean if we're having these issues, and I understand what you're saying in terms of the funding plan for 3-K. I share my colleague's concerns about that and want to really urge the Administration to come up with that plan for universal 3-K, but the PEG is of great concern to me because I just want to understand the specifics in all of these different areas, how it's going to effect the Administration of these various programs.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: so, just to clarify, we're having those conversations agency-wide. So as those details are finalized, we are absolutely sure and committed to sharing those particularly.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, great. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much, Council Member Menin. Council Member Krishnan?

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: First, thank you so much, Chair Joseph, for today's really important hearing and pressing on this issue. I do want to thank you all for coming and echo the point that Council Member Menin just made which is both as a Council Member and also as a parent of young children, too, that were just in the early education system. I'm extraordinarily concerned about what's happening with 3-K, and I think that we need to be in the work of expanding 3-K without delay every step forward. I also know-- I had a daycare center in my district where my child went some years ago before the pandemic that also closed unexpectedly, and I saw firsthand, in organizing with the parents around that at the time, how extraordinarily bureaucratic and difficult it is, especially once the daycare center closes to reopen one, especially in communities that are childcare deserts. So, the question of the paycheck delays and childcare workers who are essential workers, and-- you know, because of whom our whole city is functioning right now, especially for young parents. It concerns me a lot, and I know that those bureaucratic delays are extensive when it comes to the early education system. so I know there

1 have been a lot of questions about that, so I just
2 want to use a few of my minutes to focus another
3 issue that's come up within the early child
4 education, and that specifically it's been brought to
5 my attention that there were instructional
6 coordinators and social workers who worked at the
7 DOE's Early Childhood programs that received letters
8 informing them they were excessed [sic]. I was very
9 surprised to hear that, too, and again, we should be
10 in the work of expanding support and services for our
11 early education. So I'd like to understand exactly
12 what happened there, why were they excessed. When
13 will they be returned to their position which are so
14 crucial? It was just communicated to me recently
15 about one of the teachers in my district about how
16 difficult it is to get social workers as an
17 instructional coordinators for early education? And
18 so I'd like to hear more about that.

19
20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you,
21 Council Member. I appreciate that. There is a
22 reorganization happening as I shared in my testimony,
23 and we've relied on the voice of our stakeholder, and
24 primarily that is of our leaders, our school leaders,
25 and there concerns and their questions around the

1 support that they were receiving from our central
2 office. And so let me just clarify, no one is out of
3 their position. No one has been out of their position
4 since September. All social workers and all
5 instructional coordinators are still in their role.
6 They will remain in their role until any other next
7 steps are happening. That's happening in
8 collaboration with our labor partners. And even
9 after any reorganization or reallocation of resources
10 happens between Early Childhood and shifting
11 resources directly to students across where we're
12 seeing some urgent needs. Chair Joseph raised those
13 in many of her comments opening around asylum-seeking
14 families throughout New York City and throughout our
15 public schools, and the needs that are there as well.
16 And so these things are very, very important, but as
17 those shifts happen, not one person, not one staff
18 member will be losing a job, losing pay, losing
19 benefits. But there will--

20
21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: [interposing]

22 But I think--

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I'm sorry.

24 Yeah.

25

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure. Only because I'm [inaudible] time. I just want to focus on the specific question. You know, and putting aside the technicalities. I know how the excessing works, and so--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
Yep.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: in their positions, but the fact of the matter is they're not actually in their classrooms in their programs. What we're hearing is they've been moved out. They-- and so where are they being moved to, if they're in superintendent's offices? What will it take to get them into their classrooms?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Nobody has been moved out, and the expectation is that everyone is continuing in their role and in their work, just as they left school on June 30th. So that is-- it's just to correct that. That is absolutely not true. That support is meant to continue. What's going to happen is there'll be a shift in the type of support that's happening in Early Childhood. And that support's going to shift simply from classroom teacher to program leader and school leader. So,

1 we're not shifting resources away from kids, because
2 none of the adults that were working as coaches,
3 working as social workers, were giving direct
4 services to our children across Early Childhood, but
5 we will be shifting resources closer to children in
6 our district schools.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I just
9 encourage you to have the conversations with the
10 instructional coordinators and social workers,
11 because what we're hearing from them, and what I'm
12 hearing from them is the exact opposite. They don't
13 know where they're going to be placed. They want to
14 get back to their classroom. And so if your
15 testimony today is that that has not happened,
16 there's clearly a large contradiction there, and I'm
17 very concerned about that. And so my other question
18 is, so right now if there are children who are
19 experiencing behavioral challenges who need the
20 support of social workers, how are they supposed to
21 get them if they're not-- if their social workers or
22 IC's are not in classes?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So I appreciate
24 both of those points, because hold-- we've held town
25 halls with both unions, CSA and UFT and their

members, and this has been reiterated both by the unions and by us and our Administration of indicating exactly what the current role and current status is, which is everyone's' expected to continue in their work in supporting classrooms and supporting programs in school. None of that has changed.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Chair, if you'll permit [sic] me just one more question?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: So, I just-- with the restructuring, if and when that happens, what will be the difference between the instructional coordinators now versus after the restructuring? Will they remain the same, or how many-- how many-- how will it change?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you. So the shift will really be from that of coaching of the teacher and a real focus and deep and effective shift centered on leadership coaching. And so there will be a shift to coaching the program leaders and our school principals and AP's to support their own capacity building around instruction to be the best that they can be to support the instructional capacity of our teachers. And that's going to be the

1 shift of our instructional coordinators, and as I
2 stated in my testimony, the shift in the expected
3 role of the social worker will be there to support
4 the point people at each of our schools and programs
5 who are already there centered on family engagement
6 and family partnerships. And so we want to maximize
7 resources, not duplicate efforts. We want to make
8 sure that we're going really deep and effective
9 leadership coaching so that we have very strong
10 leaders feeling they're at the best that they can be
11 and supported with all of our resources essentially
12 while we do shift other resources to support children
13 directly.
14

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. And
16 I just again urge that that discussion happen,
17 because on the ground level we're hearing something
18 very different and coordinators and social workers
19 who are saying, "We just want to get back to our
20 classroom, and we're not in it right now." So--

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
22 Yeah. And I appreciate that, and that's unfortunate
23 to hear because there have been multiple
24 communications in collaboration with their union to
25 make sure that that message was reiterated very early

on, and that is absolutely the expectation, and it's been reiterated from this Administration multiple times.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Shekar. Council Member Gutiérrez?

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair Joseph. Good to see you Doctor Ahmed, Simone, and Ms. Lewi. I have a few questions, and so I'm just going to read them off, and hopefully you can answer them because I only have five minutes. I do-- I do just want to acknowledge that you have all put in a lot of work in uncovering I think what a lot of knew on the ground, which was that there was absolutely no systems in place, and you know, you-- I welcomed you in my district. I think you've taken a significant amount of time in working with our childcare providers, centering the fact that they are majority women and people of color and immigrants and they're serving these communities. So I just want to recognize that because I know that that really matters to you, and so I thank you for that. I just want to get some clarity on a couple of things. If

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Do you want to
19 speak to the invoices.

20 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Sure. So those
21 that don't result in a payment can be due to two
22 reasons, either no enrollment, right? No kids, no
23 payment. Or they had an advance, which most of the
24 providers had a 40 percent advance in FY22, and as a
25 result of the recoupment process, actually owed the

Department of Education money back. So, those would be the two scenarios in which invoice wouldn't result in a payment.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Got it. And then will you be reflecting the change in no attendance and enrollment to those backed invoices, as far back as when?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, the system change went into effect in FY23 and the associated communication went out to providers to inform them of that. FY22, again, you know, the Deputy Chancellor and I came in at the latter part of the Fiscal Year. It would be unfair of us to fully shift the process, and also that required a system change to the system that CBOs use which is called pre-kids. So the linkage of enrollment, attendance, and invoice still applies to FY22, but it does not apply to FY23.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. So I'm encouraged by hearing that there is a mechanism at the DOE that does advance payment to some of these centers. Is that a practice that will remain at the DOE? Okay. Because I'm just concerned that a lot of what I'm hearing is penalizing these centers, right? For whatever reason. I mean, I'm shocked, but you

1 know, you all have the data, that centers are not
2 providing-- that invoices are not being submitted on
3 time. I know in District 34 my providers, I think
4 it's a challenge for them that they actually can't
5 submit more than one at a time. I'm hoping that that
6 will change. That is also a huge challenge, because
7 they're kind of just sitting and waiting until they
8 get the green light to submit a following one. So
9 I'm encouraged. I want to understand how the advance
10 works a little bit, but that-- you can do that
11 sidebar [sic], because I just want to get through
12 these questions. I'm sorry. I just need-- I would
13 like for y'all to clarify what is the kind of support
14 that the for-profit centers have? I know the non-for-
15 profits are being encouraged to take out bridge
16 loans, which are no interest or low interest. I hate
17 that that's even a system, you know. I don't think
18 that especially in communities of color that we need
19 to encourage these nonprofits to take out loans to
20 make payment when we should be paying them on time,
21 but what is the-- what is the plan for the for-
22 profits. I know don't qualify. I have daycare in my
23 district that the director personally took out a
24
25

\$150,000 line of credit. So, if you could answer that, quickly, sorry.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, do you want us to do the for-profit or the prior advance one, first?

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Let's do the for-profit.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: I'm itching to do the ad-- alright, you want to do the for-profit.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, unfortunately, from what I understand in regards to city resources, there are minimal to no-- I would believe interest-free loans extended to for-profit organizations. But I just want to be clear, we want to get to a point where no one has to depend on a loan, to your point Council Member. We want to process and register their contract so they can easily access in advance and begin invoicing immediately. But to your prior question, you know, I want to say and make it clear, it's no blame game here. There were issues on the side of the Department of Education and we had to improve

process, create structures and infrastructure, and deeply improve customer service.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: The Deputy Chancellor has been providing Early Childhood services and education for over two decades, and many of those years have been in the City. I'm from the City. I was-- gone to New York City public schools and so is my 10-year-old.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Me too, girl.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, this is a personal and professional vested interest of ours, so we understand the urgency. So I just wanted to share in that and state that we are equally frustrated.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

Chair, can I ask one more question? I'm so sorry.

I'm going to ask this question, but you don't need to answer it. I just want to understand if we've learned any lessons from the COLA dispersement [sic] that was not made in 2020, and how are we planning for it in the future, but you can submit that later. But the question that I would like to understand is there was funding allocated in this year's FY23 budget for providing 10 million dollars in childcare for

1 undocumented families. I-- as I know it, my
2 providers have no idea what is going on with that.
3 So, I would love to understand if those funds have
4 been allocated. If not, what is the plan to serve
5 this population, especially, you know, while we're--
6 if we haven't already-- some of our daycare centers
7 and childcare centers are likely going to enroll a
8 lot of these migrant families. So I just want to
9 have an understanding of how the dollars are going to
10 make it to our centers and how that's going to look
11 like. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

13 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, the
14 Administration is very grateful for the Council's
15 partnership on that effort with the 10 million
16 dollars, and those dollars were actually appropriated
17 to ACS. So, ACS is committed to and actively working
18 with community-based organizations, organizations
19 with strong ties to immigrant communities to
20 administer those funds to those programs. They
21 expect to actually launch in early 2023. Children
22 receiving assistance through this program will be
23 able to attend licensed Homebase or registered Center
24 Base programs across the City, including those that
25 are DOE contracted programs that also accept private

1
2 pay, if that's the nuance. As you know, undocumented
3 children also have access to 3-K and Pre-K programs
4 funded by us, mostly through our school day and year,
5 but any particulars, we would have to actually refer
6 to ACS as we-- as again, those funds are not
7 administered through DOE.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
9 Dinowitz?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you,
11 Chair. First, Dr. Ahmed, I want to thank you. You
12 know, it's not always that we have educators in these
13 important positions. So I want to thank you for
14 being an educator, being a principal beforehand and
15 taking those experiences to the DOE. I imagine that
16 when you were a principal, you'd have a hard time if
17 the DOE didn't give you the money to do what needed
18 to be done. You know, so many of us became educators
19 because, you know, we love education, we love our
20 students, but that doesn't pay the bills. And so
21 we're in a situation right now where so many of our
22 schools aren't able to pay the bills. I have a little
23 issue with the invoice, the way that's being spoken
24 about, because what I'm hearing is that CBOs are not-
25 - I'm speaking [sic] specifically, CBOs are not

1 submitting invoices. But I have CBOs in my district
2 who haven't gotten paid since January. I know in
3 other parts of the City it's since before then. So,
4 I really just want to first ask, is it that they
5 don't pay the invoices? Is it that they don't pay
6 the invoices? So school, let's say, who's owed money
7 from January, waiting for the invoice money, can't
8 pay February, March, April, etcetera, or they're
9 unable to pay the invoices. Do you differentiate
10 between those two numbers? Between CBOs who can't
11 submit invoices, because they didn't get paid for the
12 previous one, or choose not to for whatever reasons
13 you said earlier? Do you differentiate it? It's
14 just yes or no.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So--

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]

19 So, again, you know, we won't be able to speak to the
20 earlier part of the Fiscal Year where there were
21 absolute delays in payments, right? And so--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

23 Okay, so--

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing] in
25 that process--

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

Okay, so if you can't, you can't, but I'll just tell you that it seems across the city schools aren't being paid, and I understand that you recognize that there are issues. I appreciate you for recognizing that, but we got to do more, because it's a cycle of problems, alright? And I-- it seems questionable, but between Council Member Shekar's question was one of mine about instructional coordinators and social workers, I've been told some of them have been asked to reapply for their jobs, and then we're told-- and then we're just sitting in the office for a month, and then we're told they would do classroom visits without getting clear guidance as to what they should be doing in the classrooms. So while you call it reorganization, I call it mismanagement, and it just sounds like you should be spending more time actually talking to the people providing instruction and providing care. But I hope you understand that so many of the CBOs in my district go through this process. They are told to submit a budget by the end of June. They submit it on time. In the case of one of my CBOs, let's say they submit it in June of 2021.

1
2 It wasn't approved until March of 2022. So, they
3 couldn't even begin getting payments until then.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That's correct.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And so they got
6 paid September, October, November, December, and I
7 appreciate you nodding your head, but they reached
8 out to the Operations Analyst and have gotten no
9 support and are still waiting for that money. They
10 can't get the start-up cost, the start-up money for
11 this year. And part of the problem that they're
12 saying is that they submit a budget to you, besides
13 the fact that it takes months for your to get back to
14 them, you come back to them saying that they need
15 certain supporting documents. Oh, you need to
16 provide this teacher's graduate degree, and their
17 transcript and whatnot. Okay. So I have two
18 questions. One, are you unable to provide a
19 checklist beforehand so the schools could just
20 understand what documents that they need to submit
21 beforehand, before going back and forth, not to
22 mention that so many of these schools submit the same
23 documents over and over again to you. But secondly,
24 and more to a systemic solution, you know this. Our
25 public schools, our K-12 schools rather, don't submit

1 teacher certification, right? I guess you talk to
2 the state. The teachers submit something one time,
3 and that teacher's understood to have their
4 certification, understood to have their degree. Are
5 you unable to engage in the same process for our pre-
6 k programs so that our CBOs don't have to submit that
7 over and over again, and don't have to have their
8 budgets delayed because of documents that they didn't
9 know in the first place they had to submit, and that
10 honestly they probably shouldn't have to, because as
11 agencies of a government, you probably should have
12 the information to begin with. Checklist-- can you
13 talk to other agencies? Go. Thank you.

15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Sure. So,
16 again, we cannot speak to what happened at the
17 beginning of FY22. We agree with you. Systems were
18 shot or non-existent at all, and that is why we are
19 actively working to create them. It is not a win for
20 us when a program has to close, or they cannot pay
21 their staff. So we understand the urgency. But
22 speaking to--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]
24 But just to be clear, we're in FY23.

25 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: and these schools have already submitted their budget, and they're also dealing with last year's thing. So I just want to make that clear that we are in-- they've already submitted their budgets.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: They've submitted their budget, and they have been issued an advance, and we've already been paying out invoices for FY23. So, I do not want to overpromise and under deliver, but I am going to go out on a limb and say 23 is already off to a better start than 22. But to answer your questions around checklists and clearly delineating what documents were needed, again, we can absolutely improve systems. We can absolutely make that clearer. We cannot speak to what was said at the beginning of FY 22. We are still getting invoices now for the beginning of last Fiscal Year, and that could be due to a host of issues and a host of reasons, late contract registrations, late budget submissions and approvals, and the late submission of invoices. But I think what we are all saying is the same thing. We want to get providers paid and we want to get them paid timely.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Look I think you should-- for your analysis and or us to be able to have proper oversight, you should differentiate between those CBOs that aren't submitting invoices, because I guess they don't want to for whatever reason, and those that are submitting late-- because necessarily have to be submitted late because they haven't been paid by you, the DOE, not-- you don't have the wallet to do that. And you know, for 1.9 billion dollars I'd expect the system to be run a little better, but can you commit at least to making a checklist so that the CBOs know what documents to submit when they need to submit the supporting documents as they submit their budget. Is that something you could just say, yeah, we'll do? That's easy enough?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And just to--

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. And--

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: [interposing] clarify, CBOs, their employees are not that of the DOE which is very different from a public school. So, provide--

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]

But they have the same certification, right?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Not in all instances, no.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: They have degrees?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Not in all instances, no.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So I'll ask it differently. Can't you just keep a list? Because these CBOs are submitting the same employees year after year. Are you on-- are you barred from keeping a list of these employees and not asking year after year for the same things over and over again, multiple times in the same year? And I know my time's up, so I'm just going to leave that question at that. And also, my friend gave the great example, the operation in my district, the operations analyst is the only person that can really talk [inaudible] about issues. That person's out. They only found that person was out because they ran into someone else from the DOE and happened upon that information. That's somewhat unacceptable that there's only one person. And as my friend said, she's like, you know,

1
2 at my kid's school, we have a magnet that we put on
3 our fried, you know, head of the parent coordinator
4 is this. If you need to talk about bus service, call
5 this number. You need to talk about academic,
6 whatever, social work, call these numbers. Can you
7 also make a magnet with phone numbers on it so that
8 our CBOs have more than one person to call when there
9 are different issues, checklists for the budget
10 submissions, and other phone numbers to call so we
11 can actually work through these issues, because I
12 believe you when you say you want to work through
13 these issues. They have been worked through, and
14 it's not getting worked through in the current
15 system.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We don't have a
17 magnet, but we have sent out communication with a
18 list of people that providers should speak with.
19 They have a respective analyst. Analyst have a
20 supervisor, and supervisors have a supervisor, and so
21 we've provided all of that information so that at any
22 point you're not getting the service you need, you
23 deserve, or there's a lack of service-- analyst is
24 out and they don't know-- there are multiple people
25 after that that you can contact as well as contacting

us directly which many providers have and we welcome,
right? So--

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing] I
highly-- I know my time's up. I highly recommend--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
The magnet?

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: [interposing]
No, not the magnet, it was just an example. Well,
yeah, class list, whatever you call it. I highly
recommend you spend more time visiting these CBOs
that are doing incredible work--

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: [interposing]
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: in debt because
of mismanagement, and I just think you need to hear
directly from them because there's a lot that's being
lost in translation. It sounds like you're being
told things that aren't true or are painted with a--
you know, looked at with rose colored glasses. So I
highly encourage you to do those visits. All of us
have highlighted problems here. Highly encourage
you-- you're welcome to come to my district, any one
of our districts, and you will see it firsthand.
Thank you for your time. Thank you, Chair Joseph.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Dinowitz. Council Member Hanif?

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much, Chair Joseph, and thank you all for joining us and being super patient, and thank you to the admin for your patience as well as we ask you some of these touch questions and coming prepared. Thank you for that. So, I'd like to just check in a little bit about asylum-seeker school-aged children. We know that thousands have arrived over the last several months. Could you share if you have a number of how many school-aged children have arrived?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We don't have a number, specifically, for birth to five. We do know, though, a number of our programs in our schools with the 3-K and Pre-k have been enrolling children of families that are seeking asylum at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you share how many asylum-seeker children are currently enrolled in Early Childhood programs?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Again, we don't-- we don't have that information. So, when we enroll even in any of schools specifically for-- again, to the point of different funding sources

1
2 equal different types of seats which equal different
3 type of eligibility for families, but for many of our
4 seats there isn't a requirement for information
5 necessarily about citizenship or documentation, and
6 so they're-- that number's not being tracked in that
7 way. The DOE, though, is tracking the numbers of the
8 families that are seeking asylum that are coming into
9 our schools and that we're enrolling, and so when we
10 have more data specific to our birth to five
11 population, we'd be able to share that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: When might you
13 have that information?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: We would hope
15 sooner than later, I think. You know, enrollment is
16 in flux and enrollment is happening on a daily basis.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. So, just
18 to clarify, the data on asylum-seeker children are
19 not being tracked, and so you wouldn't be able to
20 give me like how many are currently enrolled, wait
21 listed?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Okay. So the
23 DOE's tracking students in temporary housing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.
25

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Right? So that is happening, but obviously we don't track students without documentation of citizenship.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood. So, is it right to say that the students-- the newly-arrived asylum-seekers, school-aged kids that are in shelters are being tracked?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: The families who are being housed at the Row Hotel, are they being tracked? The humanitarian relief center that's been set up?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So this would be any of our students that would be temporary housing, specifically, but not immigration status.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. And so I received some reports that Pre-K age asylum-seeker children in my district, the 39th, which includes Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Windsor Terrace, Kensington, have been unable to secure placement in pre-k programs for weeks due to limited spots or long wait lists. What is being done to expedite this process and ensure that students are able to enroll in a timely fashion?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I'm sorry, Council Member, can you just repeat where that was, because we'd want to look into it.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I don't have the school here, but I'm happy to follow up about that.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Please, please do. We're working closely. We have a-- sorry. Thank you. There is somebody who is leading this work for our agency, for the DOE, with Project Open Arms to really work closely with all the divisions and in close collaboration then with the Office of School Enrollment to make sure that availability and accessibility is made readily available to any other programs or organizations that are referring families to school and throughout or family welcome centers in the DOE. So, if there's a place where there is limited space or it's already at capacity, there are other seats and space available. And so if there is any question or anyone's finding a barrier to that, we'd like to know so that we can address it as quickly as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great. And then given the lack of sufficient bilingual related services providers in the DOE, could you share what

steps the DOE is taking to provide schools with additional resources around bilingual related services?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, for our portfolio and particular for Early Childhood Education, we are very accustomed to having classrooms with a number of children whose primary language is not English, and for this age group who is developing language in the moment both in English and/or their home language, there are several approaches and stances that we take within the classroom of teaching practices to really support the language proficiency and development of language for our multilingual learners, and so that is ongoing. That hasn't changed. That won't change. That'll only get enhanced with greater professional development supports for our classrooms. So if additional supports or resources are needed with any change in population or influx, that's something that obviously we would be looking at and be very centered on, but for the birth to five population, having multiple languages represented in one classroom is not uncommon and especially at a time when many of

our pre-verbal children are just developing their language.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Member Council Hanif. One of my colleagues who had to leave had a question. She wanted to know-- we know that you've been hearing enrollment decline. She said, what are the marking plans for recruiting and retaining students in the system?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: It's two-fold. There's certainly a marketing piece I think we spoke about earlier, and really being able to support specifically many of our providers and small business owners who may not afford to have the resources to do additional marketing. And so that is some of our work in the DOE of making sure that we are publicizing all of our programs in all of our settings. We've heard multiple concerns from providers that they feel that they're programs aren't being included in some of the outreach that's done throughout and across our agency. And so we are working closely with our Office of School Enrollment to make sure that that is certainly never the case, that there is current and new information being

provided consistently of where providers are located the seats that they have available, and then again, the types of seats. So, in terms of all of the marketing that happens throughout the DOE, all of that is included for birth to five as well. So, media and press and advertisements, and then again, a very dedicated outreach team through the Office of School Enrollment that is dedicated to the birth to five portfolio. So any kind of neighborhood events, community events. Chair Joseph, you held one that we had our team members at, right? Ready to serve families and be in service to. That work will continue and does continue and often we find some of the most helpful work because you're really meeting families right in their neighborhood and right where they're at to support them. And then in addition to that, to support with enrollment outside of marketing is really around portfolio planning and reconfiguring seats, so if Simone wants to speak a little to that.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Thank you.

Yes, so sometimes the needed supports extend beyond marketing. So what we have been doing within the parameter of the contract is based on again community and family need and provider preference in

1
2 conversations-- in conversation with providers,
3 reconfiguring their slot types to best meet the needs
4 of the community. And we're committed to looking at
5 that and evaluating that on an annual basis because
6 the needs will change. It's not static. So where we
7 could-- you know, and I believe the Deputy Chancellor
8 mentioned this, converting seats to infant/toddler
9 seats or converting to 3-K seats or otherwise in
10 order to serve families in the now, and that has in
11 turn allowed providers to maximize enrollment.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. the data
13 released by DOE the evening before your hearing on
14 students with disability last month show that more
15 than one in four children were IEP in 3-K and Pre-K
16 for all the programs did not receive their full
17 mandated service by the end of 2020-2021 school year.
18 In other words, these children did not receive a
19 single session of at least one of their mandated
20 service such as speech therapy, counseling or part-
21 time special education teacher services. What step
22 is the DOE taking to ensure that young children with
23 developmental delays or disabilities receive all of
24 the mandated services at their Early Childhood
25 programs as the DOE is legally required to do so?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you, Chair Joseph. The DOE is committed to meeting the needs of all preschool students, including those with developmental delays and disabilities, and so programs mandated by students' IEPs across all of our settings and where there are related services needed. The division that manages and leads that work is working actively to ensure that those services are in place. As I mentioned previously, earlier in the spring upon our tenure and at the onset of our transition into these roles, we transferred 13 million dollars specifically from central office hires to move it to ensure that we have related service providers hired to support children with IEPs specifically in our CBOs where we saw a lacking of mandated services. And so that work will continue to ensure that we have the resources and supports needed to support all of our children with IEPs that are in inclusive settings.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: At our last month hearing I stressed that it was important that it had to get done sooner rather than later, because these students have been waiting. And I heard of the numbers that you spoke earlier about your goal for

1 568 numbers of new seats to be modified. You said
2 January. How do you plan to fill in the gap to
3 ensure that seats for every preschooler with IEP that
4 requires one? As you know, students are usually
5 identified as needing preschool classes. They
6 usually increase during the winter and the spring.
7 So, what's the plan to anticipate the needs?
8

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, we will
10 keep relying on the data that we do have available,
11 and we're also going to make sure that we're doing a
12 lot of work. This is two-fold work. It's about seat
13 planning to ensure that there are sets available for
14 our children with disabilities that require a six or
15 and eight or 12 class, but there is also a large
16 emphasis on ensuring that our children are offered
17 the least restrictive environment per their IEP,
18 which all of our classrooms through our birth to five
19 portfolio would be considered inclusive classrooms,
20 and so there would be seat availability. So this
21 work is multilayered. It's not a one-size-fits-all,
22 obviously, and it requires a shift in many different
23 areas of the work, from our own division to their
24 divisions internally and externally, and working
25

1 together to really uphold that commitment to children
2 and to their families.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. At our
5 September hearing you pointed out 88 million dollars
6 in the City allocated in the Federal American Rescue
7 Plan for FY23 Preschool Special Education initiative,
8 including in the contract enhancement. Within the
9 next month, will you as the Chair, you'll provide me
10 with details planned for how the DOE is using that
11 fund? I would love to see a report, a breakdown on
12 how it's using it, where's it going, who's being
13 serviced, and the whole nine yard.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Noted. I will--
16 this is dire. It's on the record, because I will
17 call. I-- parents are concerned about their young
18 children development, having the right preschool
19 special education evaluation, but we've heard some
20 significant wait time for children to be evaluated.
21 What are you doing on your end to reduce that?
22 Because I've known, for example, even bilinguals
23 provide services for students take as long as two
24 years. Parents call. They email me. As the Chair of
25 Education, whatever's happening in education, they

1 don't necessarily have to be my constituents, but I
2 hear from them. They email. They call my office.
3 They set up meetings. So, when I have these
4 hearings, it's not just to benefit my district, but
5 this is New York City. That's the commitment I made
6 to New York City children, to be their voice and
7 their ally and their champion in this seat. They
8 sent me with a mandate to speak up for them because
9 they can't. So when I reach out, I don't want anyone
10 to think I'm annoying, but this is for New York City
11 kids. So, I really want to know why does it take so
12 long for a child with special needs to get evaluated.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: That is not
15 annoying. That's the right question to ask, and
16 thank you for your advocacy and for your commitment
17 to children and to their families. The DOE is
18 committed to this work, and I think they do
19 recognize, and as we've mentioned even in other areas
20 the backlog, right, and the delays, and so I know
21 that I am working closely with my colleague Deputy
22 Chancellor Quintana who oversees the Division of
23 Teaching and Learning and oversees the work that's
24 happening to evaluate and to issue those evaluations
25 and make sure and monitor and track the progress of

1 getting those done in a timely fashion. There's a
2 lot of work that's being done in her division to make
3 sure that that is improved, that families are
4 supported, and that evaluations are absolutely
5 happening in the most timely fashion that they can,
6 and children deserve no less, and we certainly
7 recognize that and we're committed to making sure
8 that that's the case.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. How
11 about our most vulnerable students living in
12 alternative housing? We have a lot. In the last 10
13 years, if anybody wasn't paying attention, we had
14 60,000 when I started as a teacher. As I'm leaving
15 the system, we doubled that number at 114. So that's
16 a series of things that happened that got my students
17 there. I noticed the numbers increased. So, how many
18 of the percent-- how many and what percentage of
19 children living in alternative housing are age-
20 eligible for Pre-K that's currently enrolled in Pre-K
21 programs?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: It's one of the
23 most painful things that I saw as a former principal.
24 In my work as a principal I was working with young
25 parents. So sometimes as young as middle school age,

1 high school age, and their young children as young as
2 six weeks, and we had a number of our families living
3 in temporary housing. And so when you see two young
4 people, right, an infant, a toddler and a young
5 person in temporary housing and being so relentless
6 to be up in the morning, out to school on time and
7 looking to us for our support, it was both inspiring
8 and also very painful. So we certainly understand
9 the urgency around that and around that work. I'm
10 going to turn to Simone to give you some specifics
11 around our children in temporary housing, the
12 supports that we're currently providing for children
13 birth to five.
14

15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Okay. Thank
16 you. So, I think some of-- look, you know, the
17 statements today that resonated with us, much of it
18 has, was around coordination across the City. And
19 we've actually-- we've been in improved communication
20 with our K-12 population within our agency, right,
21 because those coming and starting in Early Childhood
22 will ultimately age up and into our K through 12
23 population. Working with the Department of Homeless
24 Services so we can coordinate data along with HRA,
25 ACS, right, because they too support vulnerable

1 populations, those of course including students in
2 transitional housing. So we are providing direct
3 support to all providers across all age ranges and
4 program settings that are not just, you know,
5 generally struggling with recruiting efforts, but in
6 reaching and doing outreach to families, vulnerable
7 families who are in transitional housing, because we
8 want to find them and ensure that their youngest
9 children have a place in the early care and education
10 system. So, what we are trying to do is really hone
11 in and get some reliable data so we can coordinate
12 service provision, and then I will actually get back
13 to you on the particular data point of how many
14 children we're serving right now. We owe you a lot
15 of data, Chair, and we promise to get it over to you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm an educator.
18 Homework, I'm giving you homework. Another
19 population, students in foster care, how many do you
20 have that are currently-- you know, that's my
21 heartbeat right there. That's my heart.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, that's
23 another data point we have to get to you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You hear that,
25 right, lots of homework.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, lots of homework.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: Lots of homework.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Lots of homework. We're pleased that-- I was very happy to see the Mayor's blue point-- blueprint for Early Childhood Education including increasing outreach for enrolling families with students in temporary housing. What's the status? Are any efforts underway, and how can you tell us about your plan or current efforts?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, you know, we participated obviously in the development of that plan, and we are equally committed just like our sitter agencies to all of the items outlined. One of our major commitments is around the opt-- you know, optimizing and providing care where and when needed, and it's everything we really did outline here. As it relates to workforce development, providing quality care and education, including compensation equity for our workforce. All of those components are-- I believe DOE is tagged as participants and owners of those particular items, and we are working with ACS, CUNY and others so we can actualize those.

1 We don't have an update to provide at this time
2 outside of maybe some particular data points and our
3 efforts, again, which we can provide around
4 conversions and seat changes. But the larger efforts
5 around compensation equity and workforce development
6 are fairly underway.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. This Council,
9 majority women, made sure that we fought to have
10 shelter-based community coordinators to work in
11 shelters coordinating with Office of Temporary
12 Housing. How are you connecting the two with Early
13 Childhood programs, the coordinators from the
14 temporary-- from the shelters with early programming,
15 how are these two connected?

16 CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAWKINS: So, I'm going
17 to put on my former hat for a second, which is I used
18 to work at Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
19 and knowing that they did include those particular
20 settings into Article 47 of the health code,
21 understanding that there was need there and unmet
22 need, and identifying the liaison as one of the
23 particular roles. So mentioning and going back to
24 the, you know, the in-agency coordination is working
25 to, of course, identify which of the population,

1 through using obviously the OATH's [sic] number, our
2 students in transitional housing so we can coordinate
3 care, and those liaisons to your point, the goal is
4 to also find more permanent long-term care for
5 children in transitional housing, especially as they
6 get more sustainable housing. So we are working
7 obviously with the Office of Transitional Housing
8 within the agency and other agencies so we can
9 coordinate service delivery.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. How are
12 we addressing our students that have behavioral
13 challenges? What kind of support are you providing
14 for the providers and the parents and the child as a
15 whole?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Chair Joseph,
17 thank you for that question. When we think about our
18 young children, though, we have to think about their
19 individual developmental needs. And so while some
20 children may exhibit behaviors that feel challenging,
21 we also have to recognize where they are in their
22 development and meet them where they are at. So, the
23 expectation for any effective Early Childhood teacher
24 in any of our programs is to really ensure that
25 they're tuning into what those needs are, they're

1 making those connections with children, and then
2 we're really assessing that child's learning and that
3 growth and that development and using that to plan
4 for them. And then this is where obviously we want
5 them to be able to lean in on their program leader
6 for support and for guidance if there's next-level
7 support that's needed, and clearly our instructional
8 coordinators and social workers in their current role
9 who are going that work to support them as teachers
10 and the shift to supporting leaders. And so their--
11 it's hard to say that if there are behavioral
12 challenges, because I would really look at this and
13 really think about the developmental needs. Children
14 have strengths. They have needs. They have goals,
15 and so we're going to have to look at each one of
16 those children individually and make sure that we're
17 planning appropriately for their individual learning
18 at this age.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. One of my
21 colleagues just text me about dual language programs
22 in early Pre-K. Approximately 40 percent of children
23 in Pre-K came from home with a different language
24 other than English. What are you providing in dual
25 language settings? How is the set-up? And how many

1 families do you have that are currently enrolled, and
2 how many dual languages do you have across the Early
3 Childhood program?
4

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: So, as we spoke
6 about previous, again, no different than when we
7 think about the development of children, their
8 language development is the same, and so all children
9 that are entering our program, even if their primary
10 language or their home language is something other
11 than English, it certainly doesn't mean that they
12 don't have English language proficiency or that
13 they're developing that. So, one size, again, won't
14 fit all, and so when we think about addressing the
15 needs of all of our children, it's no different than
16 when we're thinking about-- from your previous
17 question-- around their development and developmental
18 concerns, and language and language acquisition
19 becomes very much the same. And so there's going to
20 be work that's going to be done to really-- and just
21 based on our own observations, the visiting programs
22 and the approaches, the philosophical stance, really,
23 really revisiting that as a citywide effort through
24 Early Childhood. Understanding what it means for
25 each program, understanding what it means for each

1
2 school, the resources that are needed still to
3 support really highly effective practices to attend
4 to the needs of each of our children, both from
5 language to development of any other area. It's
6 going to be really critical.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm
8 going to end with my questionings. I'll just be
9 waiting for the all of your homework assignments that
10 I've assigned today. Thank you so much.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And we look forward
13 to continuing this work. It's a lot of work, and we
14 have to do it especially for our youngest members of
15 New York City. Thank you.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Thank you for
17 your partnership.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Our next panel will
19 be union, Rosemarie Sinclair, CSA [inaudible] VP,
20 Joyce Mcclammy-- it's been a long day-- Vice-- VP of
21 Local 205, DC37; Robert Ramos, Local President 205
22 DC37; and Barbara Reeves [sp?], Member Local 205
23 DC37. Yeah, we put that extra chair next to Sam,
24 yeah. Via Zoom we're going to have Celeste Bradsher
25 and Linda McPherson, Local 95 DC37, and Celeste is

from Local 205 member. Thank you. Rosemarie, go ahead.

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph. As you know, my name is Rosemarie Sinclair. I'm the First Vice President of CSA, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators. We represent the thousands of professionals who provide leadership in our public schools, central office, and in our city-funded Early Childhood Centers. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors. As we all know, Early Childhood Education provide a strong foundation for the development of our children. Extensive research have confirmed how Early Childhood programs positively impact our students and communities. Unfortunately, there is a contradiction between what our city says is paramount and the resources given to support these priorities. So as we've heard and you've mentioned before, at this moment we have Early Childhood programs unapproved budgets which lead to unmet payrolls, and prevent centers from getting necessary resources to support their daily operations. We respectfully request that the City Council exercise oversight,

what you're doing now, to expedite budgetary and invoicing approval process to centers so that they can get the needed resources in a timely manner. In addition, the leaders of these centers still earn far less than their DOE counterparts. Even though virtually all have the same administrative duties, many have the same credentials. The historic pay inequity is especially troubling because 92 percent of Early Childhood directors or assistant directors are women of color. Since the City would not bargain in good faith to resolve this inequity, CSA was forced to file a discriminatory lawsuit against the prior Administration in 2021 on behalf of our 172 Early Childhood directors. This disparity is particularly egregious, given all that our Early Childhood directors and of course the teachers have done for our City throughout this pandemic. Since March of 2020, Early Childhood educators have been a lifeline for our city's families. They epitomize the term that was given to them, essential workers, as they have worked in-person over 10 hours each day serving students at a great risk to their own health. As they did this all without a contract since September of 2020. In November of 2029 [sic] the

1 City embarked on a pay parity initiative to ensure
2 that teachers in city-funded centers were paid
3 equally to those working in district schools, which
4 is surely good, yet they have left out the directors
5 of these same organizations. We know that pay equity
6 and particularly pay equity for women of color is a
7 priority for this City Council. We ask that you
8 stand with CSA to demand equity for thee leaders who
9 have been taken for granted far too long. We ask
10 that you urge the Mayor and his team to finally
11 settle our lawsuit and do not pass another budget
12 unless it includes funding to resolve this disparity.
13 And also, thank you Chair Joseph for all and all who
14 attended the Early Childhood rally today. That was
15 awesome. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Joyce
18 Mcclammy?

19 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: Good afternoon. Thank
20 you Chair Joseph for hosting this hearing. It is much
21 needed and working with our community-based daycares.
22 I'm coming to each and everyone on behalf of
23 community-based daycares. Since we've been under the
24 umbrella of DOE, community-based centers have been
25 suffering and going through hardship time and time

again. We have gone to the Mayor's Office. We have had conversation with DOE, but to no avail did we get satisfactory answers. Directors have complained about no start-up money. Now, I get it. They say that if you don't have your invoices in, if you don't have this and that, then your money is being recouped, but in the meantime, we still there working providing a service for women of color, single parents in our neighborhoods. Daycare is a fundamental necessity. This is the foundation of our children, that they will go through daycare, they will go on to be lawyers and doctors and whatever they decide, but it's their foundation. It's what is needed in our neighborhoods. Our communities serve children of color. They serve working parents. They serve single parents. It's much-needed. Now, they-- DOE says that bookkeepers, whatever, don't know-- they not sending in the invoices properly. They were never trained. They were never told how to submit these invoices. So if they don't know how to submit them, how are they supposed to do it? Now, my bookkeeper gave me an email that was dated August 24th, 2022 stating that the invoice is not being prepared properly. If you don't know how to dot the

1 T's and cross-- dot the I's and cross the T's, how
2 can you do it? And we-- we need to get paid. Do
3 they go without a paycheck? No. No. Do they go
4 without paying their rent, car fare, feeding their
5 children, taking care of their necessities? My
6 center, we're in a four-story building. In the budget
7 they gave-- I'm the cook. They gave half a cook and
8 one janitor, which is outrageous, totally outrageous.
9 So, something needs to be fixed within getting
10 funding for these community-based daycares. We do
11 exist. We do provide a service, and we need to be
12 taken care of like everyone else. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Barbara
15 Reeves?

16 BARBARA REEVES: Good afternoon, Council
17 Rita Joseph. My name is Barbara Reeves. I work 27
18 years at the daycare, and I work at Omega Daycare
19 Center. My center with three months without getting
20 paid, for the month of July and August and September
21 this year. We finally received the money that was
22 owed to us, but the month of October just came. We
23 only received half a paycheck and there's no money
24 that came in to pay us next week when pay period
25 comes. This is not the first time this had happened

1 to us. It happened to us starting in February of
2 this year. It was four paychecks then, and then skip
3 two more months, it was two paychecks. Now we got in
4 August-- July and August and September, six
5 paychecks. I was unable to pay my bills and rent. I
6 had to take out a personal loan to make ends meet.
7 This never happened when we was under ACS, missing a
8 paycheck. We want to know why these-- there's a
9 problem sending money to these centers. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Robert
12 Ramos?

13 ROBERT RAMOS: Good afternoon Chair
14 Joseph and fellow Council Members. My name is Robert
15 Ramos. I am the President of Local 205, District
16 Council 37. I am here on behalf of my members in
17 Local 205 represented by DC37. Our union represents
18 more than 2,000 workers at Head Start Centers, 6,000
19 workers in 350 community-based organizations operated
20 in childcare centers. These centers care for
21 infants, toddlers, three-year-olds, four-year-olds,
22 and so on. New York City Department of Health data
23 shows that there are at least 1,600 childcare centers
24 operated across the City by a mix of religious,
25 private, for-profit, and not-for-profit

1 organizations. We are here to speak about several
2 issues related to childcare, timeliness of payments
3 by Department of Education to providers, room and
4 diversion by Department of Education that starves
5 community-based organizations, and extremely low pay
6 for childcare workers in payments. In January-- in
7 July of 2019 the functions of ACS Early Learn
8 Childcare including enrollment and payment was
9 transferred to Department of Education. City Council
10 must hold them accountable for the stated goal of
11 strengthening the center-based and family care
12 network in New York City. We will submit an attached
13 PDF from 2019 with our testimony. City Council
14 approved this functional transfer of responsibility.
15 While prompt payment was never ideal under ACS, it
16 was not as critical as it has been under Department
17 of Education. This summer we are aware of a majority
18 of centers represented by DC37 that were owed
19 payments. This caused workers to go without pay for
20 anywhere between two weeks and eight weeks and
21 longer. This caused tremendous hardship, including
22 threats of eviction, homelessness, late charges,
23 medical emergencies, and more, and you heard some
24 testimony from my fellow board members. No worker
25

1 should be forced to continue to work without pay. It
2 is not 1822; it is 2022. And yet, these workers,
3 mainly women and women of color, continue to come to
4 work and care for our youngest New Yorkers. The
5 Department of Education must improve this payment
6 structure to ensure timely payments. However, we are
7 afraid that that is exactly the opposite of what is
8 happening. Since September, the DOE decentralized
9 [sic] the Early Childhood office staff to bring
10 services closer to the boroughs. The services of
11 payment can and should be handled centrally where
12 staff can consult with each other and not be
13 distracted by providing other services in district
14 superintendent's offices. News reports including the
15 Daily News indicate many staff have left in
16 frustration over decentralization which will further
17 complicate matters for CBOs. Enrollment: center-
18 based enrollment providers rely on a mix of children
19 from 02 to four in order to create a funding stream.
20 The staff ratio [inaudible] we know the staff ratios--
21 my time. the problem is that you have people-- you
22 have families going that want to put their child in a
23 certain center, and they're being diverted to centers
24 that are no in their district, because of-- as was
25

1 testified earlier, this whole restructuring of need
2 in a certain area. But one of the questions I have
3 was, when they restructured this need from a CBO, was
4 it given to another CBO or was it given to a Board of
5 Ed school? And a lot of times that was what is
6 happening. The CBO is losing the child to a school,
7 a public school in another district to fill up those
8 slots, and leaving us starved for children. So you
9 have this cycle where the board-- the Department of
10 Ed is approving the parents so they give us the kid,
11 right? But if they take that kid somewhere else, we
12 then don't have a child which then the DOE is going
13 to say we don't reach don't reach our quota. So now,
14 we're in this cycle of they control it. So you're
15 starving us of not having our kids and taking them to
16 the Board of Ed and not telling us we can't get
17 reimbursements, because we don't have any children.
18 And that's the problem that's going on. Just one
19 more thing about low pay. We know that there was a
20 pay parity, but you know, not all the teachers in our
21 center are qualified. So there are teachers who have
22 worked many years who are not certified but are doing
23 the same job, and we have to work to get their
24 salaries closer to what it needs to be. And that is
25

1 also not talking about our support staff. Our
2 support staff makes 15 dollars an hour, right? I
3 mean, not saying anything about working at McDonalds-
4 - it's a job. But we are taking care of the most
5 precious things that people have. They send them to
6 us, and you have cooks feeding hundreds of kids every
7 day. You have janitors cleaning who came during
8 COVID to clean centers, right? And put their jobs
9 and their lives and their families at risk, right?
10 We came to work. I was there in August. Before Board
11 of Education teachers, my kids were still getting
12 homeschooled. Right? They were still at home on
13 Zoom while I was at work taking care of kids. So,
14 parity has to be across. Our support staff need to
15 get paid more. Teachers that aren't certified need
16 to get paid more, and certified teachers need to get
17 paid to the level of the increases that the Board of
18 Ed is getting. That's my testimony. I want to thank
19 everybody that's here and everybody that was at the
20 rally. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
23 I'd like to call on Celeste Layne-Bradsher and Linda
24 McPherson. Thank you.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Celeste is on Zoom

CELESTE BRADSHER-LAYNE: Yes, I am on Zoom. Thank you very much for allowing me to give you my testimony. My name is Celeste Bradsher-Layne. I am a member of the DC37 Local 205. I am a caregiver, mother, sister, aunt, friend, and a person who cares about people and is willing to share my talents with others without a paytag [sic]. I have worked with daycare centers for over 40 years. I started at age 20. I have worked in the Bronx for 34 years and in Queens for eight years, as a teacher and a student at City College. I believe in planting seeds and sharing knowledge with all kinds of people, helping people to become independent, helping our children to become independent and enjoy the world around them. Constantly, since DOE has taken over responsibility time and time again my employer had to wait to get approval for the necessary documents. They placed those documents in. On June 16th, 2020 I received a memo stating the payment will be delayed. I wasn't paid until July of 2020. Previously, May 4th, 2022 I received another memo about the staff payroll. This memo said, "We regret the info you do to lack of fund provided by DOE. We will likely not make payroll until we receive approval." To be fully

1 paid, I waited eight weeks, eight weeks for
2 nonpayment. The effects of not being paid for eight
3 weeks stopped me from paying all my bills and putting
4 food on my table. I had to make choices paying for
5 mortgage, the gas, the electric bill, and putting
6 food on the table, making sure my husband is not left
7 alone with electricity off, gas off, because he just
8 finished with surgery having a new kidney. Then he
9 fell. He hurt his spine and was paralyzed. I could
10 not fix things in the house and provide for my
11 family. I am an advocate for doing the right thing.
12 I believe in our children future. Therefore,
13 protecting the future of our children is my passion
14 in life. We need to protect our children, the people
15 we work with, the ones that we share our lives with--

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
18 expired.

19 CELESTE BRADSHER-LAYNE: and we cannot do
20 that. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Linda
22 McPherson?

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 LINDA MCPHERSON: Hi good afternoon.

25 Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and all the City Council

1 and everyone that's on the panel and everyone who
2 attended the rally today, I thank you. My name is
3 Linda McPherson. I'm the President of Local 95, DC37.
4 I work with Head Start and my sister local is Local
5 205 daycare, and it is unacceptable that we have
6 [inaudible] and staff that's not being paid because
7 of lack of funding. This-- I don't know about the
8 receipt system, because for the years I've been in
9 Head Start-- I've been here since-- I was a parent in
10 Head Start, that's how I started, and moved up to a
11 Family Service Coordinator. So, I'm-- what I'm
12 hearing here today is really appalling because
13 agencies are not being paid, and agencies are closing
14 because they're not being paid. This means families
15 are not being serviced, and that means unemployment
16 rate is going to go up because then we don't have the
17 staff in the programs where they ought to be. So if
18 we're saying we care about children and families,
19 then this should include the staff that works with
20 the children and families, because if they're not
21 there to provide the services for the children, then
22 how can we have a center or any childcare program? I
23 believe that funding should be upfronted [sic] to the
24 agencies on the budget-- based on their budget, and
25

1 they get that money up front so they can pay their
2 staff and fulfill all the obligations that they must
3 in these childcare programs. It is really not
4 acceptable, and they are not for-profit agencies that
5 can gain money from their enrollments. They're not
6 gaining money from their enrollments. They're being
7 reimbursed based on their enrollment. In Sheltering
8 Arms shouldn't have to be threatening to close or
9 actually close because of nonpayment, because this is
10 federal funds now and these federal funds are coming
11 through for Head Start. It's allocated for that
12 purpose, and it comes in without any invoices being
13 submitted to the Office of Head Start. So,
14 therefore, they shouldn't have to submit an invoice
15 in order to get paid. The staff is already underpaid
16 as it is, because as my brother Robert Ramos just
17 said, the support staff salary needs to be at parity
18 also. So, you see these people come to work every
19 day. They're so committed that they show up to work
20 every day to service these families. That should be
21 credit of itself to make sure that they are being
22 take care of. So not paying staff is very
23 unacceptable, especially for eight weeks. That's too
24
25

1 long. I've been at Head Start for almost 30 years,
2 and--
3

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Expired.

5 LINDA MCPHERSON: this is-- this was
6 unseen. So thank you for listening to me, and I hope
7 this helps, and I hope this pushes for the programs
8 to be funded on time.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

10 LINDA MCPHERSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next
12 panel, Sarita Sub? Sarita? Okay. Sonja Neill-
13 Turner? Joanny Ruiz and Omar Etman. If I butchered
14 your name, sorry. Remind me your name again? Yes,
15 go ahead, please. Turn on your mic.

16 JOANNY RUIZ: Hello? Good afternoon
17 Chair Joseph and Council Members of the Committee on
18 Education. I'm Joanny Ruiz, the Director of Early
19 Childhood Programming at Sheltering Arms. I have 22
20 years of experience working with children under the
21 age of five. Ten of those years have been with
22 Sheltering Arms. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 testify today about the ongoing challenges in the
24 City's early education system and the City Department
25 of Education. I speak with you all today after a

1 long period of struggle as a City contracted provider
2 of Early Childhood Education Services, and after our
3 agency had made the-- has made the heartbreaking
4 decision to relinquish all ECE contracts effective at
5 the end of the calendar year. We are an agency with
6 a long legacy of providing Early Childhood care and
7 education which extends back two centuries.

8 Sheltering Arms Daycare Services, our organization's
9 namesake actually predates the New York City
10 Department of Education itself. Only in 2021 and
11 2022 the funding environment for these essential
12 citywide services for the most marginalized families
13 among us has been so dire to do such significant
14 damage to the Sheltering Arms overall fiscal health.
15 Since the summer of 2021, our ECE programs contracted
16 to the City Department of Education have struggled
17 with serious budget deficits. This is not due to
18 overspending or poor performance on the part of
19 Sheltering Arms, quite the contrary. Our programs
20 have always performed incredibly well by all
21 measures. The program management has worked within
22 the constraints of DOE's flawed funding model to best
23 support continued operations and balanced budgets.
24

25 Just a few weeks ago the DOE team led by Deputy

Chancellor Doctor Karen Ahmed visited one of our sites and highlighted our program in the citywide bulletin that they send out, the email blast, emphasizing how Sheltering Arms Fatherhood Program, our mental health support, our quality teaching and our social/emotional focus made us a program that was so successful. In communities hit hard by the pandemic and where parents were hesitant to send their unvaccinated children to ECE centers, and these include the South Bronx, Harlem and Queens neighborhoods where we work. The DOE has imposed unfair funding penalties on all ECE providers for decreased enrollment. This year, the total funding made available to Sheltering Arms to run our programs was only 75 percent of the full contract amount, leaving us with a budget deficit in the millions of dollars. This funding model just doesn't work. We cannot pay 75 percent of the rent, and we cannot pay 75 percent of infrastructure expenses. I assure you it's not an anomaly. As reported by Gina Belafante [sp?] in the New York Times last week, in September, an organizations called SeaChange, which I think was mentioned before, which specializes in financial services for nonprofits, examined billing and

contracts for EC organizations in the City as a result-- at the request of the Daycare Council of New York. SeaChange found-- I think it was mentioned before, that 679 nonprofit organizations which provided services through the ECE centers across the City this July, nearly 90 percent of them had not been paid their full contract values and were carrying program deficits. These deficits reached the staggering 463 million dollars by the end of June this year. According to SeaChange analysis, 400 million dollars of this amount has been accrued under the current administration alone in just six months. SeaChange included this prediction in their brief analysis, and I quote, "Unless they quickly raise more philanthropy or borrow funds, both of which seem unlikely, or the City promptly improves the amount of timeliness of its payments. Nonprofits may be forced to give back the contracts to avoid financial ruin despite a mission-driven desire to continue the work." Sheltering Arms did not make the decision to close our program lightly, but we found ourselves in an extraordinarily difficult situation. We do not want any other nonprofits working to serve young children and their families to have to make this

impossible choice either. Chair Joseph, I want to thank you in particular for recognizing the growing crisis in these past few months, and you called it a "moral imperative" that the City and the DOE must address. The marginalized families of this city deserve support and services. The tireless workers and professionals who teach and care for young children deserve to be paid and supported as well. The need and moral mandate for these universal services exist today and they will never go away. Undoubtedly it will take a lot of hard work to address the crisis that now faces New York City's ECE system. We believe the community-based organizations providing high quality Early Childhood education in the some of the highest need communities in the City should be saved because all children deserve a high-quality public education. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next person. Thank you.

SONJA NEILL-TURNER: Good afternoon. I'm Sonja Neill-Turner, Founder and Executive Director of Brooklyn Sandbox, a newly contracted school with the DOE. Our preschool serves 40 families with children ages two to five in Brooklyn. In addition to my role

as Executive Director, I also serve as a Board Co-Chair of the Brooklyn Coalition of Early Childhood Programs, a nonprofit dedicated to the sustainability of 35 of Brooklyn's small and medium sized Early Childhood programs. So I'm here today to speak for my school and the many schools that our coalition represents. I come before you today on the cusp of having to close our preschool. This morning I broke the news to our teaching team, that as we wait for funding we have just enough money to last two pay periods. We were told in advance that 35 percent of funds would be deposited prior to the start of the school year. Our contract was signed in July. It was just registered on October 13th. Still, we don't have a status update as to funding. We were excited to be awarded a DOE contract. Many area preschools were signing on with the DOE and our enrollment had slowed as a result of this as families opted for these publicly funded program, understandably so. We believe that a DOE contract with the City meant that we could finally turn our full focus to programming rather than marketing budgets and endless open houses to solicit enrollment. Instead, the contract has brought us to the brink of permanent closure. We

1 consider ourselves fortunate to have lasted this
2 long. Two of our neighboring schools have lost the
3 battle. We still get phone calls every day from
4 bewildered parents scrambling for available 3-K
5 seats, since those two schools have closed, all
6 because these programs didn't have the money to wait
7 the funding process. Brooklyn Sandbox has provided
8 high-quality Early Childhood services for 10 years.
9 We are proud to see that we have thrived and are even
10 sought after, even 200-seat DOE district UPK center
11 in a former high school opened just blocks away in
12 the same year that we opened. Our strong programming
13 and talented, certified, degree teachers made that
14 happen, despite compensation. We survived a global
15 pandemic even after losing 30 percent of our families
16 and refunding 50 percent of our revenue amid a
17 fourth-month government-mandated closure. After many
18 years of successfully keeping our doors opened, it's
19 a simple contract with the City that poses the
20 greatest existential threat. By losing more of these
21 neighborhood-based centers, childcare is being taken
22 out of the community which further creates inequity
23 and issues of access for all families, but deepens
24 the racial divide for brown and black children.
25

Families should be able to have community-based childcare within stroller distance. No families should have to travel outside their neighborhood to a large institutional building poorly outfitted for a three year old. A delay in contract funding is exacerbating New York City's childcare deserts at a rate similar to the 400 early education centers permanently closed during the pandemic. Small community-based programs help to build racial and economic equity and access to in-community childcare. We are the solution to childcare deserts. The attached article highlights that a majority of these underfunded contracts are from the DOE. We are told that in order to enrollment and attendance certified, our contract has to be registered. We don't have access pre kids [sic] unless the contract is registered. So there's this crazy catch-22 that happens in order for these small schools to participate. Other coalition members say that their contracts were funded as late as February of their first contracted school year, others in November. How can a small preschool survive delayed funding? There is a way forward. We recommend strongly option one. Immediately reinstate bridge loans for smaller

1
2 childcare providers so that they can stay open during
3 the funding process. Bridge loans are the lifeline
4 to ensuring in-community childcare access, and based
5 on the spaces, CBOs provide 50 percent of the space.
6 The City cannot do it without us. Currently,
7 programs are being told that bridge loans are only
8 for those that have problematic contracts or for
9 nonprofits only. Action two, create a separate
10 contract que for essential service providers like
11 these small community-based childcare programs.
12 Remove bureaucratic hurdle that threaten their
13 viability and delayed funding. Expedite DOH
14 permitting and DOB resolutions. If community-based
15 childcare is essential to this city and ensures that
16 racial and economic access, build in these
17 protections. How many childcare seats have to fall
18 because of bureaucratic inefficiencies? How many
19 more centers have to close while waiting for funding?
20 And how do we explain that New York City childcare
21 deserts are expanding because we're waiting for
22 federal and state funding money earmarked to prevent
23 this very blight of scarcity from occurring. On
24 behalf the Brooklyn Coalition of Early Childhood
25 Programs, we invite our DOE colleagues to our monthly

1 meetings to really understand what's happening on the
2 ground, because based on their testimony this
3 morning, this day, it is not reflective of what's
4 real. And I thank you very much for hearing us and
5 listening. Thank you so much.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Maybe I
8 need to be on one of those tours, too. Thank you
9 Sonja. Next, [inaudible] Omar.

10 OMAR ETMAN: Good afternoon and thank you
11 Chair Joseph for calling this hearing. I'm Omar
12 Etman. I'm speaking on behalf of the Early Childhood
13 Anti-Racism Coalition. We're a group of current and
14 former DOE workers who since the start of the
15 pandemic have organized for a more just Early
16 Education system. We stand with teaching staff and
17 social workers, instructional coordinators who make
18 Early Childhood possible in New York City, and the
19 families who depend on access to universal public
20 care. We shouldn't have to wonder if their child's
21 teacher is getting paid. The Early Childhood Anti-
22 Racism Coalition, we were big critics of the last
23 Administration. We advocated for fair pay for
24 teaching and CBOs and a true end to Gifted and
25 Talented. We remain committed to those goals, but

our disagreements with the current Administration under the leadership of Chancellor David Banks and Deputy Chancellor Kara Ahmed are foundational. It's why so many of us have been chased away from work we care about. The facts of their destruction bear repeating. Since the start of this Administration, over 100 staff members have left the division of Early Childhood Education. There's no one left on the Finance team. The invoicing process is complex as they say, and we should simplify it. But what Doctor Ahmed didn't say is that the staff who understand the complexity of the system have gone. The CBOs need support completing those invoices. Central support for Operations Analysts, the front line for CBOs, has been gutted. Nearly 400 IC's and social workers have been reassigned or excessed, taken from the classrooms they support and placed potentially and it's still unclear in district office, which don't have historic relationship with community-based organizations. The outreach team that was based on the Division of Organization has been gutted. The new seats for 4410's, the Request for Proposal that was intended to open those seats was set for January, and this Administration without

1 explanation pushed it to July. It was a manufactured
2 crisis. In terms of instructional support for
3 children who speak a language other than English,
4 there is no one at the Division of Early Childhood
5 Education who provide that support. I used to be on
6 that team. Unlike Early Childhood classrooms inside
7 of school buildings, community-based organizations
8 which disproportionately serve low-income communities
9 operate without historic infrastructure and onsite
10 support. it's these programs which we all know are
11 overwhelmingly staffed by immigrant women and women
12 of color that rely most on the support central
13 employees provide. For eight years we've provided
14 instructional and emotional-- social/emotional
15 support that makes it easier for teachers and
16 programs to do their jobs well. We find operational
17 support that ensure programs get their money on time.
18 We recognize that building and Early Childhood
19 Education system that is high-quality and where
20 teachers are paid fair wages is an enormous,
21 expensive undertaking. It's what's needed if we are
22 to create a system that lasts. What we have-- what
23 exists is a foundation for a truly-- for truly
24 universal access to Early Childhood education for
25

children birth to five. We're really encouraged by recent legislation that's focused on increasing accessibility to childcare for New York City families. But first, we think it's imperative to focus on the Adams' Administration that is systematically dismantling existing 3-K and Pre-K for All programming which includes thousands of infant and toddler seats. The children and families in our Early Childhood programs need more free universal high-quality education, and we all know they need it now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

SARITA SUBRAMANIAN: Good afternoon Chair Joseph. I am Sarita Subramanian. I'm the Assistant Director for Education at the New York City Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this Oversight hearing. In my testimony I will discuss the City's Early Education expenditures which included 3-K, Pre-K, Early Learn, and Head Start Programs. The second part of my testimony will focus on 3-K enrollment and funding, given the City's large expansion efforts in the past years, and the use of federal COVID relief aid to fund the program. Lastly, IBO tracks students

attending public 3-K over two cohorts, and I will report on how many students have remained in the public school system through Pre-K and Kindergarten. The DOE's expenditures for Early Childhood programs have more than doubled since the 2017-18 school year. Based on the latest available expenditure data for the 21-22 school year, we estimate DOE expenditures for Early Childhood were just less than two billion, up from about 911 million in 2017-18. Almost half of last year's Early Childhood spending funded the City's Universal Pre-K program. As 3-K expanded to citywide, although not universal access, during the last school year, it comprised about 30 percent of the Early Childhood budget. Early Learn and Head Start accounted for 18 percent and five percent respectively. From 2021 to 2022, 3-K enrollment more than doubled from 15,500 students to 34,300 students based on the city's audited enrollment data. As with Pre-K, 3-K is offered in the City's traditional public schools and in contracted Early Education Centers, which include programs operated by community-based organizations, Early Learn programs and Head Start programs. However, the City's 3-K expansion has relied increasingly on participating

Early Education Centers. Last school year, 74 percent of 3-K students attended Early Education Centers. In contrast, only 51 percent of pre-K students attended such centers. Also, unlike Pre-K, where the city secured additional state funding for universal access, the City's 3-K expansion relies on federal COVID relief aid that will expire by the 24-25 school year. Last school year, two-thirds of 3-K expenditures were funded by federal relief aid, and a similar share expected to pay for 3-K this year. In the 23-24 school year, when access is planned to be universal citywide, more than three-quarters of the one billion dollar 3-K budget is projected to be federally funded. With additional City funds included for 24-25, about 39 percent of 3-K budget will be supported by the federal aid. After the expiration of those relief funds, a gap of 393 million remains for the 25-26 school year, based on projected expenditures. In the last school year, 34,300 3-K students were enrolled in about 2,400 sites across the City. IBO examined the geographic distribution of students by school district and found that seven of the City's 33 school districts which includes District 75 each had enrollment of about

1,500 or more 3-K students, about five percent of total 3-K enrollment for each district. We provide a table in the testimony with the breakdown by school district in the particular areas where that increase happened. With the expansion of seats citywide to all district last year, 10 districts experienced increases in 3-K enrollment by more than 1,000 students. Some of the largest increases were in Queens and Brooklyn. District 25 in Queens experienced the largest increase of any district, with 1,540 additional 3-K students, up from just 75 students the previous year. Comparing 3-K enrollment with Pre-K enrollment from last year, there are about 22,600 more students enrolled in pre-K than 3-K across the school district. The difference might suggest that there is greater demand for 3-K if the City continues to move towards universal access by next fall or conversely, that families are not seeking out 3-K seats as much as they did for Pre-K. On average across districts, 3-k enrollment is about 60 percent of Pre-K enrollment, but there is variation by district ranging from about 40 percent to 86 percent in particular school districts. Finally, because 3-K was also intended to provide

greater continuity of curriculum and instruction for young children, IBO tracked the almost 17,600 3-K students from the 19-20 school year to see how many remained in the public school system the following two years. We found that after one year, 86 percent of students attended the public school system, and two years later, 75 percent remained in the public school system, progressing from 3-K through Kindergarten. We found a similar pattern for the 2021 cohort of pre-K students, but with higher attrition. Around 78 percent of students remained in the public school system, eight percentage points lower than the one year change we found from the previous cohort. Because much of the City's 3-K expansion took place over the past two years, it's difficult to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted these retention rates. Although other IBO research has found that attrition was highest in the earliest elementary grades. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for the data. Give me your testimony. The next panel will be Tara Klein, United Neighborhood Houses, Gregory Brender, Daycare Council of New York, Rebecca

Charles, Citizens Committee for Children, Lillian Fincher.

TARA KLEIN: Great. Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the Committee for having this hearing today. My name is Tara Klein. I am the Deputy Director of Policy and Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses. UNH is a policy and social change organization that represents 40 New York City-based settlement houses, and our members run a variety of Early Childhood Education programs, including 70 DOE-contracted center-based programs and others. I want to touch on-- just, we heard a lot about late payments and late contract registrations today, and you've heard how dire this is. We really appreciate the attention to it. I want to highlight again the SeaChange analysis that we heard about earlier. They found that 464 million dollars is owed, is delinquent from the City to Early Childhood Education providers at the end of FY22. One UNH member in our network that operates six 3-K and Pre-K programs found that they were owed at the end FY22 4.6 million dollars. And so this is a crisis and any system expansions that the City is considering really can't take place without reforming the payment

1 system. Providers have reported cash flow problems,
2 issues making their payroll and insurance payments
3 for employees and deferring payments to vendors. And
4 as we just heard, one large provider has already
5 reported that they'll be giving back their contracts
6 at the end of this year leaving 400 children without
7 services, and we fear that this could happen to other
8 providers as well if there are not serious reforms
9 from the DOE. So we have to make sure those payments
10 happen immediately. Next, I want to touch very
11 briefly on salary parity for the Early Childhood
12 Education workforce. This is a historic challenge
13 that the City has faced, and we're at a point now of
14 a staffing crisis due to low wages and salaries, and
15 the main obstacle for hiring and retaining staff and
16 CBOs is that these low salaries are not at parity
17 with salaries for similar positions for-- similar
18 positions within the DOE. And so my written
19 testimony highlights a couple of specific
20 shortcomings of the 2019 pay parity agreement that
21 the City Council helped negotiate, and that we need
22 to address moving forward, immediately. This
23 includes that that agreement did not account for
24 regular increases or longevity bonuses, didn't cover
25

special education teachers, that we need to look at program directors and support staff, as well as family childcare providers. And the last thing I'll focus on right now, and there's more in my written testimony, is around supporting asylum-seekers and their families. I was really glad earlier to hear the discussion around the 10 million dollars that the Council allocated for undocumented children, and we have a sense that that funding will go out soon. This is really important because there are citizenship requirements for certain extended day/year programs, and this is due to some state funding restrictions. So in addition to advocating for more funding to meet this increase in capacity, we hope that the City will help us advocate to the state to loosen some of those requirements moving forward. And then I just wanted to put in a plug for a great initiative that the Council supports which is Children Under Five. This is a DOHMH initiative that provides Early Childhood mental health services to children and their families in community-based settings. So that, thanks for your time.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

GREGORY BRENDER: Alright, thank you so much Chair Joseph for this hearing and also for your leadership at the rally today and for fighting on this issues. I'm Gregory Brender. I'm here on behalf of the Daycare Council of New York. We are the membership organization of New York City's Early Childhood Education provider organizations. And you know, this is not the testimony I hoped or wished I was giving now. There's a lot of-- there are reasons for optimism in Early Childhood and things like the largest state investment recently, the Mayor's Blueprint containing many good things, but on the ground, the people who are doing the hard work of providing Early Childhood education are not feeling this optimism, and it is primarily because of this issue we've been discussing today around late payments. In our own network, the survey that we did found 29 percent of respondents had one unregistered contract, 13.2 percent of respondents were unable to-- on 13.2 percent were able to submit an invoice through PreKids vendor portal on their June 2022 expenses, and 41.5 percent of respondents have missed payroll or delayed vendor payments due to the late payments of DOE. I won't go over the SeaChange data, but we

do think it's an incredibly important piece of data, but several other folks have talked about it. We make the following recommendations in regards to the late payments. First, pay all providers their contract values for FY2022 immediately. My great invoicing and payment processes from the DOE PreKids system to the MOC system in line with other human service contracts, which would simplify that process for providers and hopefully for the DOE staff. Pay FY23 invoices promptly, assuring the ability for providers to bill for more than one month at a time, and that the lag between invoicing and reimbursement never exceeds 30 days. And hold providers harmless from enrollment penalties as long as DOE controls enrollment. Finally, one important point, when providers apply for these contracts, they did so with a guarantee of 75 percent of their contract value being paid regardless of enrollment. The DOE needs to keep that commitment. And my testimony has two other points that I'll just go over briefly. One, which Tara mentioned, continuing the unfinished work of salary parity. We have some stuff in the written testimony about that, but then also related to a lot of conversation today, allowing community-based

1 enrollment. Because one of the things we keep hearing
2 is payments are lower because of under-enrollment,
3 but Community Board organizations are not able to
4 utilize the strong connections that they have with
5 their communities and enroll those families who
6 already want to be in those Community Board
7 organizations. And so, we would urge Department of
8 Education to bring back community-based enrollment.
9 There's more in the written testimony, but thank you
10 very much for this opportunity.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Rebecca
13 Charles?

14 REBECCA CHARLES: Yes, thank you so much
15 Chair Joseph for calling this hearing and also for
16 organizing the rally earlier today. We really
17 appreciate your advocacy around this issue. My name
18 is Rebecca Charles and I'm a Policy and Advocacy
19 Associate with the Citizen's Committee for Children.
20 We have served as an independent multi-issue child
21 advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that ever
22 New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe
23 since 1944. We do not accept or receive public
24 resources, provide direct services, or represent a
25 sector of workforce. Early Childhood Education plays

an essential role in the social/emotional and mental growth of our youngest children while also providing a safe and secure childcare option for parents and caregivers as they participate in the workforce.

Currently, as mentioned many times today, contracted center-based Early Childhood Education providers are owed more than 400 million dollars for services rendered last Fiscal Year. The glacial pace of payments from the DOE to contracted center-based providers has gone on for more than a year and has caused providers to leverage loans and credit lines leading to missed payrolls and disruption of employee health insurance and we've heard from other speakers today. The situation has become so dire that many providers are contemplating closing their doors and shutting centers altogether if they have not already.

This is 10 months into Mayor Adams' tenure, so the blame for this crisis can no longer be placed on the previous Administration. In order to stabilize the Early Childhood workforce and ensure that high-quality childcare is both continued and expanded for children and families, we urge the city Administration to immediately pay our childcare providers that they are contractually owed.

1 Additionally, CCC, alongside the Campaign for
2 Children, calls on the City to do the following. I'm
3 going to echo some of the things Gregory said.
4 Migrate invoicing and payment processes from the
5 Department of Education PreKids payment system to the
6 Mayor's Office of Contract Services Passport system.
7 Pay Fiscal Year 2023 invoices promptly to ensure that
8 the lag between invoicing and reimbursement never
9 exceeds 30 days and allow providers to bill for more
10 than one month at a time. And lastly, hold providers
11 harmless from enrollment penalties as long as the DOE
12 controls enrollment. We are also submitting a
13 written testimony for the record and we'll have a
14 more expansive list of our Early Childhood education
15 priorities there and recommendations in that
16 testimony. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

17
18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Lillian
19 Fincher?

20 LILLIAN FINCHER: Thank you, Chair
21 Joseph. I am a former central office employee who
22 worked for the Division of Early Childhood Education
23 for almost three years. I resigned in September
24 because my role at the DECE, which was my dream job a
25 year ago, changed drastically when our new

Administration started. I resigned because of a failure of leadership. When Deputy Chancellor Doctor Ahmed began in January, she had all she needed to succeed. While our systems were not perfect, she had a dedicated, passionate group of staff that was excited to meet her, excited to work alongside her to improve our systems, and had demonstrated flexibility and openness to change during the pandemic. Instead of leaning into excitement and taking the time to learn about the work we did, sit in our meetings, and genuinely listened to our perspectives, Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks and Doctor Ahmed chose to dismantle our division. In the time allotted to me I want to share three issues I've experienced, and can attest that these failures are not the fault of DECE staff members who have been earnestly trying to do their best work for our city. Our system is not functioning well for children, families, and educators because of the chaos created by our new leadership. First, lack of strategic planning: Designing programming for thousands of teaching staff and children requires collaboration and strategic planning. Instead, our new leadership is in a constant state of reactivity. DECE staff members have

been asked repeatedly to stop what they're doing, to visit this school, or the like, but without context as to how this work fits into a collective mission. This constant state of reactivity has meant that very little long-term planning or strategizing has occurred, and explains why our programs have received very little concrete guidance from our division.

Second, appointing friends to leadership. To be in my title, I had to get a second Master's Degree and take leadership exams. My title should be supervised by a manager with more leadership experience than I have. Instead, Doctor Ahmed appointed a former staff member of hers who to my knowledge does not hold any leadership certificates. She is in charge of making decisions that impact every classroom, including choices about curriculum, systems for assessing children's growth and learning, professional learning and much more. Banks continues to blast the bureaucracy, and yet, he selects leaders who brings on friends who are not fully-qualified for their positions. Third, lack of transparency. Our new leadership makes sweeping policy changes in closed rooms. One example, my colleagues and I work closely with program support staff, but we're not consulted

1
2 around changes to their roles. Instead, our new
3 leadership hastily excessed hundreds of staff who
4 almost two months later are still unclear on what
5 their roles are. City Council Members, I urge you to
6 stop Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks, and Deputy
7 Chancellor Ahmed from further dismantling the
8 Division of Early Childhood and demand they return
9 transparency and full funding to our division and
10 programs. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Our next
12 panel, Jia Lou-- Lee, sorry, Nantasha Inez [sic],
13 Allison Demas, and Noelle Mapes. Alright, first
14 witness go ahead.

15 JIA LEE: Hi, my name is Jia Lee. Thank
16 you so much Chair Rita Joseph for this opportunity.
17 I'm a Special Education teacher of 23 years. I'm on
18 sabbatical this year. I'm also a parent and a member
19 of the movement of rank and file education, MORE a
20 caucus within the UFT. We have a big disconnect
21 between what leadership is saying and what's actually
22 happening on the ground. I happen to be privy to a
23 lot of this information because of friends,
24 colleagues who've trusted me, and I was completely
25 taken aback. On September 6th, it's true, nearly

300+ Early Childhood instructional coordinators and social workers, policy support specialists, inclusion specialists-- mind you, inclusion specialists were created this year because of Special Education lawsuits, and I think you're very much familiar with that. They were told on September 6th, an emergency meeting at 9:30 a.m., that their positions were being eliminated, two days before school's starting. They were completely blindsided. That is not a transition. That's not a restructuring. That's called shock doctoring [sic]. A former central employee told me, and she it put it so well-- she was also from the Division of Early Childhood Education and was one of the many people who left. She said, "The way you dismantle programs is by first removing the supports and resources." We have a public letter of support despite what Doctor Ahmed says when she went around to do some "listening and learning." We put out our own survey. When she was unable to provide data on the administrators and program site directors who she claimed said they are not in need of IC's and social workers. We did our own. We received over 550 signatures, which I can provide-- I was unable to print them all out-- 550 signatures

from site directors, principals, and Early Childhood educators who all stated that they were blindsided as well. They were not communicated with the excess. I have some quotes from them. I included comments in the testimony, but also will provide the actual letter of support. "We would be lost without our social worker and IC. Ultimately, the children and families will pay the cost if they're cut from programs." Executive Director from Imagine Early Learning Centers. "We need both the IC and social work to be reinstated in full capacity. The teachers need their in-classroom support." That's from Concourse House Daycare Center in the Bronx. I will not read all of them because of time. Because program directors and principals had not received any communication about this excess decision, they started to reach out to DECE, and that's when Doctor Ahmed and her team started to backpedal. They had a meeting with the IC's and social workers and they were gas-lit and told, "Oh, you're not really excessed. Those letters were sent out prematurely. You should be going to sites." It wasn't until the following week that they received instruction in a very hushed way, a rushed way, to go back out to

1 sites, and without the usual systematic programming,
2 all of the things that they provide. How have the
3 site visits been going? Well, in all of that chaos,
4 many ICs and social workers have left because they're
5 uncertain. They're still "in a restructuring
6 process." So they feel they need job security. Many
7 have left. Like in Queens, there were something
8 around 58 IC's. They're down to about 38, and no
9 posting to rehire. They're reporting-- we have
10 weekly check-ins. They're reporting going out to
11 sites with asylum-seeking families, where the
12 administrators have said they receive zero guidance
13 from the DOE, let alone resources and funding,
14 additional funding. It's not true. It's not
15 happening in schools. Another thing is dual language
16 person in their Early Childhood Division is no longer
17 there. There are no services. Staten Island is in a
18 big state of crisis around that. Because of this
19 uncertainty, also there's misinformation coming
20 around special education referrals. The inclusion
21 specialists have stated they're getting told by some
22 people that, oh, you need to go to the IC for special
23 education referrals. There's students not receiving
24 their services as has been stated before. And I would
25

1
2 argue that mayoral control is a dictatorship. This
3 is-- there is no democratic decision-making process
4 for oversight. I've been an educator in the system
5 for 23 years. With each new mayor, we're at the
6 whims of whatever private interest in this case and
7 corporate interests there are, because CUNY PDI and
8 Quality Stars [sic] somehow are showing up as
9 "coaches" almost replacing the positions of ICs.
10 They're nonunion, cheaper labor. This is a
11 charterization [sic] and privatization of the DOE
12 from the inside out, and we have to stop it. I would
13 argue that Fair Student Funding formulas, enrollment
14 figures as I'm hearing in the Early Childhood world
15 for funding is not equitable. Why? Because we have
16 contracts where people should be paid fairly. In the
17 past before we had Bloomberg and Klein, before we had
18 Fair Student funding we had budgets. Schools
19 received budgets based on average teacher salaries
20 and operational costs. Because we value experienced
21 educators who are not stressed, who are able to
22 provide these resources. So I'm calling on us to
23 please as a body hold this Administration accountable
24 for what's really happening. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next witness.

NATASHA JONES: Hi, my name is Natasha Jones. I'm here as a parent. My two-year-old son-- there's so many experts in this room, and I'm thankful first to invite the public and to invite parents and to hold this hearing. I think we're all here for the same reasons, and I think having this kind of dialogue is awakening and actually just very encouraging as well. I'm by no means an expert in this field. I did study public policy and education policy. I work in healthcare.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Bring the mic up.

NATASHA JONES: Yeah, oh, sorry about that. We recently moved to New York. I'm a native New Yorker, product of the New York public school system. Moved here from Japan. I had a COVID baby and he's in Universal 2-K program, and we have found just the most magical home and community there, and I can't imagine a world without it. Just the teachers, the staff, the admin, everything. Like, I've never seen a two-year-old be so excited to go to school. Like, he brings all of us our shoes at the door to go and like it just feels like a family and everyone

1 there is so caring and attuned, and he's part of the
2 University Settlement programs. So, I think Tara, I
3 don't know if you're involved with Park Slope North
4 for the Helen Owen Carey Center, but they've really
5 just helped. They say a happy family makes a happy
6 child, and the happy child is the future of our
7 world. They can be responsible and take care of
8 others, and I see this in every interaction that goes
9 on there. It's from the other students, the parents,
10 and I feel for all of you guys being here. It's--
11 it's hard to be optimistic when you're not being
12 paid. Yes, you can't be. But I see my son's
13 teachers, and I drop him off and they smile, because
14 they're doing it because they love it. Like, they
15 get joy out of it. I get joy out of it knowing he's
16 taken care of. And because of programs like this I'm
17 able to take a mini sabbatical now with a two-year-
18 old to kind of maybe be more involved in policy.
19 Realizing that this is a crisis, an urgency, and so I
20 guess I'm not here to present any solutions, but I'm
21 here to help. If there's anything I can do to help--
22 I know there's empty seats. So I've been canvassing
23 neighbors, friends, to see if they have two-year-old.
24 There's seats for them in the program. But thank you

for listening to me, and thank you for helping our kids and our families, our communities.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Next witness.

ALLISON DEMAS: My name is Allison Demas. I am an instructional coordinator. I'm on of those almost 400 instructional coordinators and social workers who was excessed on September 6th. So, hi, I exist. There is the matter of the privatization of public school, the late payments to contract providers forcing them into debt and out of business, the closing of programs causing disruption to families lives, inadequate preparation for and care of the influx of migrant students, the excessing of Early Childhood Instructional Coordinators and social workers two days prior to the opening of school, and the denial of that excessing and refusal of reinstatement, the removal of an Early Childhood support system without having a replacement, the creation of a toxic rudderless work environment, the punitive, intimidating, retaliatory, and demoralizing tactics of the current DOE senior leadership, the expansion of senior leadership while simultaneously cutting school funding, the approval of a three

million dollar contract for charter preschool in August, the backing away from Universal Preschool in September, the misuse of the Panel of Educational Policies, a rubberstamp, the approval of contracts with vendors with questionable practices, the disregard for members of the PEP, the disregard for parents advisory committees, the sending of Charter school promotional material to public school parents, fiscally responsible spending requirements, these are all items that need to be addressed, but I'm not here to talk about them other than to say it's shameful that these are all current issues negatively impacting children that desperately need to be addressed. I'm here to talk about what public education is and what it is not. First and foremost, it is not an avenue for profiteering, although it is being used as such. Public education is at its very core a promise, a promise to the children of the city, to the future of the City. That promise means that everyone, every educator, administrator and political leader who enters that arena owes a debt. It is there-- our obligation to honor those children and provide what we promised, an obligation to learn what real education is, the true meaning of literacy,

the distinction between academic and intellectual goals and had a focus on one to the detriment of the other and undermines both, which is the reason this system has failed children for decades, to understand what developmentally appropriate means and looks like, an obligation to fulfill that promise by making truly informed decisions, decisions informed not by special interest groups, but by those educators doing research on best practices. Those educators are on the ground sharing their observations and experiences and not just from sources that confirm what we think we already know. My hope is that this could be the start of real communication about public education, not led by edu-crats [sic] or real estate developers, and to having yet again decisions about education being made and influenced by people whose sole qualification seems to be that they were once students when they were children a long time ago, but including a broad spectrum of real educators and leaders who have accepted the responsibility to learn more, whose only special interest is the children. If we want the children to become lifelong learners, then it's time the adults adopt the same goal. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Joseph.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you very much. I have a question for you. Those who were excessed, where are you? You're in the ATR pool or?

ALLISON DEMAS: Okay, that it's-- it's a complicated thing. There's no direct guidance coming from up above, and anything that is said is said in a nebulous way and never in writing. So, actually we were directed by lawyers to then put everything back in writing. So that's what we've been doing.

There's seven offices across the City. Each has been given different information. Now, for a while, once the educational administrators, our supervisors, they were-- they weren't really excessed. They were just sort of gone but still there. We were down to one, from three to one. Two of the offices didn't have anyone. So there were getting no guidance. Then there-- we sort of reinstated temporarily. At first, we were just sitting in the office. We had that morning meeting that day on September 6th, and then at 3:18 we all received the email. We were told in the email within the letter to go on to Open market, which is now called Excess Market, but we couldn't get in. So we were sort of trapped in this. The lawyers then advise-- so then what happened was the

1 EAs were supposed to be supporting the sites. Our
2 sites were getting more and more upset because not
3 only were we not responding to them. We weren't
4 allowed to respond. We weren't allowed to reach out.
5 So, they kept reaching out and they're used to us
6 responding right away. We-- they weren't getting
7 anything. So then they were reaching out even more.
8 And this year, we're seeing children like--
9 [inaudible] I'm sorry. These pandemic kids, it--
10 there's so much help that needs to be out there that
11 isn't out there. And-- I'm sorry. Right? So, they--
12 more requests started coming in, and we were told to
13 put them into a spreadsheet that would go up to
14 central and someone would reach out to them. Then it
15 became that the supervisor would go out, the EA's,
16 but we were down to only one EA, and she was running.
17 She was trying to get-- she said let me at least go
18 to the newest 3-K. There were 40 new ones within our
19 division, our section. We're south Brooklyn. And
20 she was running to try to get to them. In some of the
21 other offices we heard that the EA's were trying to
22 then-- I don't want to say coerce, but coerce is
23 probably the word-- encourage the IC's to go out to
24 the schools, and they went for the untenured IC's
25

1 first, which was just distasteful. So then they
2 said, well, you have to go out. I'll also-- our
3 concern also is liability. We're excessed. You
4 know, we would love nothing more than to be on the
5 floor with those kids, but we're excessed. Are we
6 even allowed in those buildings? Where do we stand
7 with this? So then they started back peddling and
8 said we weren't really excessed, but we wouldn't
9 reinstate us. And then that's spread in other
10 directions. I told some people we weren't excessed.
11 So we showed them the letters. It just spread all
12 over the place. Then we eventually got a letter from
13 Peggy Dirks [sp?] saying that we should continue
14 going out as if we had never-- you know, as if we had
15 never stopped. For about a month we weren't going
16 anywhere, and we were trying to support without
17 supporting. Finally, September 30th I made my first
18 visit, and I'm still making my first initial visit.
19 I got site-- yeah, yesterday. Monday, I got a site.
20 We didn't even know they had a program. They weren't
21 even in the system. They have a brand new 3-K, and
22 their administrator kept reaching out to other AP's,
23 and then finally it got down to me, and I was like,

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many sites you have in your portfolio?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many sites do you have in your portfolio?

ALLISON DEMAS: Well, that's the other thing. IC's haven't actually been given caseloads. We were told someone named Deano is up in Central and will be creating caseloads for everybody. We don't know anything more about Deano other than that. I don't know that every office is the same. Our supervisors, when they heard that we could start going back out said, well, okay, we're not waiting for Deano. They pulled our caseloads from last year and they gave them back to us. They gave us the 40 new ones, said, okay, you choose which ones you're going to do. Maybe you have a prior relationship. Maybe it's within your other-- you know, your other sites, and that's what we did. And so we've gone out to support them. Can't say the same is for every other-- there's no guidance on this. There's no

1 guidance. Social workers were in a slightly
2 different category, because the lawyers explained to
3 us the way the wording was they said, "Well, if
4 you're not excessed, you're instructional coordinator
5 so you go and support your sites." But the way the
6 letter was worded it said to report back to your
7 assignment at the time you were excessed, which was
8 an instructional coordinator, so then you're going
9 out to sites. He said you could be-- we could be
10 found in subordinate if we didn't. So that's why
11 they just said keep putting everything in writing.
12 The social worker clinicians, they have different
13 categories of licenses, and they were in a far more
14 tenuous situation. So at least in my office they
15 were going out on a consultancy only, not generally
16 going into the rooms. Now they've just gotten
17 approval only because we keep going back saying we
18 need more than just us. I need someone else looking
19 at these three children in this one room other than
20 because I can't start any process. I can offer
21 whatever I can offer, and I know about PECS [sic]
22 boards and everything else, but I also need other
23 support. They need other specific support from the
24 social workers, and if there is indeed an evaluation
25

process to happen, we need that, and we need the inclusion team, which is--

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] I did ask that question. I did ask that. Next witness. Thank you so much. I have to find Deano now.

NOELLE MAPES: Good afternoon. I'm Noelle Mapes. I live in your district, and I voted for you, and I know you're a teacher, too. I'm a student at the CUNY Graduate Center in Urban Ed and adjunct at NYU and Brooklyn College and a former second and third grade teacher in the DOE. In my classroom with second and third graders and out of my classrooms with pre-service teachers. Our work is always centered around the big question: what kind of world do we want to live in? And it always-- no matter the course, no matter age, comes back to wanting to live in a world where people have what they need, people have what's essential, not in a radical way. There's shouldn't be anything radical about people having what they need. It should just be a baseline. So, I won't talk about excessing, because Allison-- everyone's done a great job of that. I will just emphasize that they're working until further notice, which I know Doctor Ahmed said,

1 and it's impossible to long-term planning until
2 further notice when your plans are supposed to be
3 over the course of the year, right? But I do just
4 want to talk a little bit about the retaliation
5 that's been steady against them. Typically, DOE
6 workers have a bank of sick days. I know you know
7 this. It's called CAR. You use sick days when
8 you're sick or your children are sick, and for DEC's,
9 IC's, and social workers, the DOE has ceased letting
10 them accrue CAR days this year. So they're not
11 accruing those sick days anymore. And instead of
12 using CAR days when they have been sick this year,
13 they've been docking their pay, which is unreal to
14 me. When I was a classroom teacher, you know, when we
15 had funding for it we had teacher's choice. So it's
16 some money to offset the cost of what I'd spend out
17 of my own pocket, and IC's and social workers have to
18 travel to multiple sites each day, and historically
19 they've been compensated for their travel through
20 something called TRAC [sic]. This year, they have
21 yet to be compensated for that, so it hasn't happened
22 at all. And so finally, IC's have been going to
23 their sites. This has been touched on a little bit,
24 but their uncertainty has been multiplied because
25

1 there are coaches from PDI and Quality Stars doing
2 their jobs, and as Jia said, admin and program
3 directors have expressed that they'd prefer to work
4 with their original IC's because they've had
5 meaningful relationships with their sites for years,
6 but they're replacing them with contracted coaches
7 which is a clear path to privatize public education.
8 And I just want to say-- I know Doctor Ahmed left,
9 but the focus in her speaking on customer service,
10 fiscal responsibility, financial stability, it's
11 emblematic of how the DOE is currently run, which is
12 like a business with the Mayor as CEO and DOE
13 employees looking out for themselves and the bottom
14 line at the cost of students. And I would think that
15 if I had a job where I was supposed to serve
16 children's needs, I would evaluate the needs then
17 find or fight for the money instead of prioritizing
18 saving money and then sacrificing children's needs,
19 because education is a public good. And to
20 paraphrase Doctor Gloria Ladson [sic] Billings,
21 education is a debt that is owed to the public. The
22 kind of world we want to live in should recognize
23 that all children, whether as Chancellor Banks said,
24 need some water thrown on their face to wake up or
25

not deserve a quality education. Many Council Members pledged they work to restore the cuts to education and fighting for this is one way to show us that you mean it. There's nothing radical about fighting for the youngest, most-vulnerable in our city. That should be a baseline. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for that. The next panel-- thank you so much for your testimony. If I butcher your name, forgive me please. Sasha Maslouski? Am I saying it right? [inaudible] Thank you. Lupe Hernandez. I know Lupe. Hi. Andre Farrell [sp?]? He left? Okay, Lanny Cheuck, you're here. Esther Morrison? Esther, are you here? Okay. And Thelma Richards? Yeah, give it to the Sergeant. Did you give us your testimony? I'm listening to the youth. I'm listening. I'm listening. That's how I got here, I listened to them. Alright, good afternoon. Thank you for patiently waiting. As you know, this is my heartbeat. Lupe, you can start for me, please, and then we'll just work our way down. Thank you so much.

Okay. Thank you, Chair Joseph, for holding this hearing, and the Council Members, I hope

they're able to listen to all the testimonies today.

My name is Lupe Hernandez, and I am a parent of

District Two. I actually serve on the Community

Education Council, and I Chair the Students with

Disability Committee. My testimony today is as of a

parent of a two-year-old that was very much looking

forward to my three-year-old being guaranteed a

Universal 3-K seat, particularly in my district come

fall of 2023. I think what Doctor Ahmed failed to

realize when she discussed the zero to five childcare

options is that there are many families working,

families that don't qualify for Head Start and live

in gentrified communities. Mine in particular, when

I've looked for preschool options for my son, even as

a two-year-old, they want 20 grand up front, zero

payment plans available. This is unacceptable. And

I don't like to hear when the DOE says that they are

not backpedaling on this promise of every three-year-

old being guaranteed a seat when they're not willing

to admit to a number or even the word universal.

There is even bigger concern when our panel for

education policy has to contract for three million

dollars for charter schools to open up Pre-K

programs, and there are two more contracts already

geared up before the end of this year, all the while taking money from the public school education. Why is funding based on enrollment? Programs should be funded period at a base foundation. I know as a child with a student with disability that went through the early intervention program where he rode a school bus, did not make it to school every day, not by his choice, not by our control by any means. I think we've discussed the many busing issues in previous council hearings. But many students don't make it to school, and why should these programs be held responsible and not get paid when it is out of the control of the child to get the services that they need. Not to mention, the 500 seats of students with disability not being served in any type of early education at this time. This was one of the most successful programs of New York City that the rest of the country is currently trying to replicate as we speak. Under-resourced families struggling, like I said, in gentrified communities, are taking the burden of these financial hardships. And I'd like to say that less than a week, you know,-- two days before school starting when you are excessing close to 400 instructional coordinators and social workers

1 that are probably needed more so now. My son is a
2 pandemic baby. We barely did any socializing these
3 past three years. I know many children that are
4 getting into 3-K and families had no idea that they
5 had learning disabilities. And this excess of these
6 very important people are not there to help identify
7 these students' learning needs and be able to provide
8 them the services to help them be successful. I thank
9 you for this opportunity and I will be submitting a
10 much larger written testimony, but I did want to
11 touch on the fact that there are families that are
12 stuck in limbo in the middle [inaudible] we really,
13 really need those seats. Thank you.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I hear you and we
16 will work. Next witness? Thank you.

17 LANNY CHEUCK: Thank you, Chair Joseph
18 and all that have taken the time to speak today. My
19 name is Lanny Cheuck. I am the owner of wBees Forest
20 School. We are a nature-based Montessori school in
21 Ridgewood, Queens, and we had a vision of providing
22 inclusive Montessori program for all access to all
23 families, because Montessori is unfortunately seen as
24 a very elite philosophy and education system in New
25 York City. So, when we did win the contact or we

1 were awarded the contact for 3-K we were really
2 excited, because we could fulfill this vision. And
3 through the bidding process we submitted what it cost
4 to run our program, and it was very late, and we were
5 told we would get a third of the funds in mid-July
6 was the date I was hearing, and to have three months
7 working capital and reserves to kind of make sure
8 that we were okay. When we did finally get our
9 contract back, it was much lower than what it cost to
10 actually run our program, especially with additional
11 cost that we are-- we have to take on in order to be
12 3-K program such as the hot lunch programs, the extra
13 snacks, and also there is no rate for raises for
14 teachers built in, and we have very highly
15 credentialed teachers with lots of experience with
16 Montessori credentials that aren't being recognized
17 as well. So, we were promised a third of our funds,
18 and we were also told to turn away any of our
19 returning Forest families that we would have stayed
20 on privately with us. We were not allowed to
21 negotiate how many seats we wanted to keep for 3-K
22 versus our private fours [sic]. So I have to return
23 and refund over 65,000 dollars' worth of private paid
24 tuition because we had to uphold our part of the
25

contract. To-date, our contract still has not been registered. We have received not even a dime, and we have been providing amazing care for over 30 3-K families and our-- 75 percent of our school's tuition is being held hostage. Normally schools invoice and receive tuition ahead of time, because we have to-- we have to make sure that the year is fiscally solvent, and we need to know that we can honor our teacher's contracts, we can pay our rent, and we can do all of these things. And it is mid-October, I will be lucky if I see a dime before Thanksgiving at this point. So, we are in dire straits. We had to let our families know. They have put together a GoFundMe, and we are asking for pledges, asking for donations everywhere we can. We survived and thrived during COVID, but this is the worst crisis that DOE is looking to kill small CBOs. It is not okay. We've been treated negligently, unfairly. They need to release the funds and make us whole, because we need to uphold the entire community. The institutionalization of Early Childhood is not right. They do not know how to take care of young children who are not toilet trained. And we are the experts, and we are operable. We have the staff. The entire

1 United States is suffering of lack of teachers, but
2 we have teachers willing to work, highly
3 credentialed, and the parents want to be with us, but
4 they're making it so hard for us to do our job and to
5 provide the service that our community needs. This
6 is not okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.
9 Thank you. It's your turn.

10 SASHA MASLOUSKI: Thank you. I'm in your
11 district. I have a small group family daycare--

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [interposing] Tell me
13 your name.

14 SASHA MASLOUSKI: Sasha, my name is Sasha
15 Maslouski, and yes, I'm your constituent and our
16 program is actually located in your district. I so
17 appreciate that you're doing this for us. And you
18 know, I'm so happy that we are hearing both sides of,
19 you know, of the issue. So my-- we're in a very
20 similar situation, except I'm not a commercial
21 daycare. I'm a homebased daycare, so I'm just one
22 classroom. So we are serving 12 3-K children, and
23 this is our first year. I applied last November, and
24 I've been in this process since November. It's a
25 very, you know, tedious process with lots of

1 trainings and seminars and paperwork and a lot of
2 things to complete. There's a lot of standards that
3 we were asked to meet, including meals and certified
4 staff, and all the clearances and trainings that we
5 have to have in compliance with DOH and DOE. So
6 there was a very clear high standard that was set for
7 us that we actually have been following through. And
8 so I never thought that I would be sitting here, end
9 of October begging for money, you know, and basically
10 hoping for local journalists and local media and
11 local City Council to help us get there. You know,
12 we're-- we're the richest city in the world, like
13 this is despicable, and I used to work in a Pre-K
14 program myself when it just started. I've worked as
15 an assistant teacher and a head teacher and I've,
16 you know, decided to start my own homeschool, and you
17 know, coincidently pandemic happened and we worked
18 the whole time. We never shut down. We were an
19 essential provider the whole time for our community
20 and we applied for 3-K to be accessible to our
21 community. And just to give you a heads up, like, we
22 serve 12 families. Our wait list as of three weeks
23 ago was 60 people. I have people coming and knocking
24 on the door with children asking if they can have a
25

spot with us, and I wish I can accommodate, but I can't accommodate any more. And we've been paying rent on time, payroll on time. Lunches, everything has to be provided. In terms of social workers and, you know, all that support, we've had someone assigned to us. Then they got pulled out. Then we heard from someone again, and then we have never seen them again. So we're supposed to meet someone soon, but it's very-- you know, it's non-existent. And my point-- the biggest issue that I've had is being a new provider and you know, looking for-- being a very small provider, you know, looking for support and trying to like understand how the system works. Our budget analyst that was assigned to us is wonderful and super supportive, but they're not allowed to release money to us. So we're waiting for the contract. We're waiting for the money to be allowed to come out to us, and paying for everything out of pocket. I was told there will be a bridge loan just in case there is a delay. I remember specifically on the phone asking in August what if there's a delay, and we have no money? Because we spend money for start-up costs. I had money for September and potentially October, but what if something happens?

1 And I was told we could apply for the bridge loan.
2 First week of September I demanded a meeting with the
3 analyst and Christopher McCay [sp?], and two other
4 supervisors, and they said there's-- the bridge loan
5 is not accessible to us anymore. So how do you not
6 inform your staff at DEC? How do you not inform us?
7 You know, I was completely unprepared, and I was
8 told, "By no means, we're not trying to discourage
9 you, but you haven't signed the contract yet. So if
10 you really want to pull out, you could do it." And I
11 said, school started yesterday. How am I going to
12 fail 12 families? Okay, it's a small number, but
13 it's 12 families that have planned for childcare. How
14 am I going to do this to my staff? We're all
15 immigrants. Most of my teachers, they're all women.
16 They're all women of color, as well. How am I going
17 to do this to them? Like, I am not-- I can close the
18 doors tomorrow. I can scratch it off, whatever. I
19 can go and cry in the corner and start over, you
20 know? But I'm not going to do this. And I said to
21 them like, just because you're not being professional
22 and on-time doesn't mean that I'm not going to be
23 professional and on-time. But we're in the position
24 right now where I have to take out a private loan.
25

1 Thank God I have my family supporting me, because I
2 haven't been paying my own rent. You know, like I'm
3 just basically-- all my-- all my thoughts every
4 single day are just about like how am I going to have
5 the meals? Am I having enough for the meals?
6 Because I'm also preparing them because it's a home-
7 based program. You know, so like, I'm one of one,
8 you know? So I'm managing everything on my own. And
9 so the problem has been with DEC that there are
10 people who are super supportive, including my budget
11 analyst who's been super reliable, but even she told
12 me, she's like, "I'm so sorry. I did not know this
13 bridge loan has been eliminated." And so that put us
14 in a complete shock, because they said it was going
15 to be there. And so we demand-- we're from the same
16 call list [sic], and you know, we demand for the
17 bridge loan to be reinstated because the-- you know,
18 it's interest-free. Why should I go get a whole
19 personal line of credit at an interest rate-- We all
20 know how crazy they are right now-- to pay for your--
21 for your-- whatever you're not promising. You know,
22 like you're holding us to the standard, but you're
23 not holding yourself accountable to the same
24 standard. And I see collective effort from the
25

1 current Administration I would say, maybe. I'm not
2 trying to call names I don't know. I don't have
3 specifics, but I see kind of a discouraged-- like,
4 there's a way to kind of discourage providers.
5 There's a lot of people who are hearing our
6 experiences and they're just saying we want to pull
7 out. We don't want to be part of it. I'd rather
8 stay private. I'd rather not get the funds. I'd
9 rather go have my scholarships or figure out my own
10 way, and I feel like this is a collective issue, like
11 you know, mood coming from above. So, you know,
12 let's discourage 3-K providers to get into it so that
13 it doesn't grow. And there's a lot of conversation.
14 My last point is, you know, Mayor Adams was quoted
15 that they really want to focus on-- get focused on
16 quality versus quantity. Well, there's no quality.
17 Like, how can we provide quality and live on the
18 street? Why? I really appreciate you doing this,
19 like, just thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. The next
22 witness, please?

23 ESTHER MORRISON: Thank you so much for
24 doing what you're doing and having this meeting. My
25 name is Esther Morrison. I am a certified teacher at

the North Bronx National Council of Negro Women Child Development Center in the northeast Bronx, and I'm also part of the Local 205 Board. I'm the treasurer. I wanted to tell you a story. You guys in the meeting you was talking about enrollment and attendance, and we've been saying Joyce, the Vice President, who pushed this through-- we been talking about how enrollment is affecting the invoice and them getting paid, but throughout this whole conversation today, people touched on the problems that was happening in enrollment, but I just don't think it hit home like it needs to. That's such a major factor in getting the paid-- getting to the paid part. I remember when they first-- when DOE first did the transition and our FCE Department was trying to learn that system and all the struggles that they went through and they was looking for support and emailing and calling and wasn't getting that support back from the DOE, and as I look and I assess what's happening now at our center, we have nine classrooms at the North Bronx. Three of them are closed, and none of the classrooms-- the six classrooms that are open, five 3-K's and three 4-K classrooms we have at that center, none of them are full. So when you're sitting here and you're

1 talking about you just did some reallocation and all
2 of that, I want to tell you about the North Bronx.
3 Been there for almost 50 years. We have families
4 that bought their grandchildren and the whole five
5 other families and the grandchildren came and grandma
6 bringing them and all kinds of stuff. So we had a
7 mother whose son came there. He's in fifth grade.
8 Her daughter came there. I guess she's in third
9 grade. She had her son there last year in 3-K and
10 she was denied coming back this year for 4-K. And
11 she done brought her whole family through that
12 program, okay? We had a situation this year where a
13 mother was coming down the street and she was in
14 domestic violence, and she begged us. She said that
15 her job only gave her 'til Monday to find a daycare
16 center, and we could not-- because of this-- all the
17 steep different things you have to do just for
18 enrollment, and she's coming out of domestic
19 violence. So I also just wanted to mention as well
20 that you ask them about-- I got the number of
21 children in the CBO, and PS103 which is down the
22 street. We got PS103, PS21, PS111. They-- we went
23 over there as a transition program to get our kids.
24 They were so excited. I got one 3-K class and one 4-

1 K class opening, and I'm looking at this Assistant
2 Principal, and I said to myself, we got nine
3 classrooms and get them full, and your one 3-K and
4 you're one 4-K cannot service the community. we got
5 parents that live next door, down the street around
6 the corner and have to go someplace else, but yet our
7 center is not fully enrolled, and then you want to
8 say you can't pay us because the enrollment and
9 attendance don't match, but then we're getting
10 problems with enrolling them because of your system
11 that you put on us, okay? So my point is, when you
12 ask her the number, most of your service is in the
13 CBO. Most of your children are in the CBO, because
14 we can hold them, and we're not even fully enrolled.
15 There's like three children in one class, five
16 children in another class in the 3-Ks. And well, you
17 know, they mentioned about the teachers at our
18 center, and I know we coming up to renegotiate our
19 contract. We have-- and like I said, I'm a certified
20 teacher and a lot of the other teachers that did get
21 certified, they left for the money, okay? I stayed
22 to support my center, because I knew they needed a
23 certified teacher in there, and I like the setting
24 and some parents like the setting, but like Robert

1 said, there are teachers that been there that may not
2 have the certification and all of that, but they far
3 better teachers than-- I go to them as my mentor
4 because they went to so many trainings. They have
5 years of experience, and I look to them. So I would
6 really try to make sure that we can look at all that.
7 And I want to say it's a smacking in the face because
8 I'm a certified teacher and that pay parity that they
9 talking about, and I talk with DC37, that's for a
10 teacher coming out of college with little experience.
11 We need the steps. I have years of experience. I
12 have, you know, all of that, and our custodians are
13 tired too of getting 15 dollars an hour. People
14 getting COVID. Children getting COVID. Teachers
15 getting COVID, and they're getting exposed and
16 they're not getting nothing extra.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

19 ESTHER MORRISON: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
21 you. Esther-- no, Thelma Richards? Thank you so
22 much. Bye constituent.

23 THELMA RICHARDS: Good afternoon
24 [inaudible]. I'm Thelma Richards. I'm talking on
25 behalf of parents. I'm a parent. [inaudible] my

1 kids is now young kids. But I work at the Center.
2 They've been operating for over 40 years providing
3 childcare. My kids attend there. They have so many
4 programs going there in all different centers,
5 including even the gifted program. They close out
6 the gifted program. Most of the kids that leave the
7 center cannot even go into that gifted program like
8 they generally have. I have two kids in area from
9 that gifted program. But one of the main issue with
10 the childcare is not only paying the centers.
11 Parents-- I do enrollment, and there's a lot of
12 parents out there cannot go to work because of
13 childcare. They are not qualified to get childcare.
14 One of the big main-- it's eligibility. They do
15 everything to knock the parents down so they cannot
16 get the kids in school. Generally, here's in the
17 community, parents for generations to generation
18 attend the school. They just keep sending [sic]. We
19 have seven classroom, but this couple year before
20 this new program come in, we already full enrollment.
21 Now, we just four classroom, not full enrollment. I
22 do a lot of application and DOE been closing them
23 down. They don't grant the opportunity to the parents
24 for the kids to go to school. So now if they make X
25

1 amount, oh no, you cannot get in because you don't
2 reach eligibility. If you don't make any money, oh,
3 no, you have to go to the process. HRA is even
4 giving the parents a hard time even to get into
5 school, their children, because they claim they're
6 not working, they're not attending a program. But
7 how can they attend a program or go to school if the
8 parents go to work with the children at home and
9 they're not in school. There's a lot of parents out
10 there who like to get into the school settings, but
11 they cannot get in because of eligibility. And
12 that's not a big piece of the puzzle. That's why lot
13 of school is not fully enrolled, because they don't
14 have the total amount that the birth to five give
15 them permission to enroll the kids. So, and no
16 matter what you take [sic], you don't fully enroll,
17 you don't get the money. You get the money, you
18 don't fully enroll, you have to pay it back. So
19 it's-- they have to do a lot of changes over into
20 this new school system. Parents not working because
21 they have nowhere to leave the kids. Kids not coming
22 to school because even if you do online, parents have
23 to be home to assist their young kids for the teacher
24 to teach them. So we thank you very much for your
25

1
2 help and your assistance and your devotion that you
3 take to open this case to help us move forward in
4 childcare. Continue doing a good job.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We're
7 going to turn to Zoom witnesses now. The first panel
8 we'll hear from will be Lois Lee, the Chinese
9 American Planning Council, Carol Flores of JCCA,
10 Kayereathea Boyd from Kaye's Cubs Family Daycare,
11 Merna Hughes [sp?] Laurelton Academy [sp?], and Andre
12 Farrell from the Katmint. First we'll hear from Lois
13 Lee.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 LOIS LEE: unmute are you-- can you-- can
16 you hear me?

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

18 LOIS LEE: Okay, thank you. Thank you
19 Council Member Rita Joseph. I saw you at the rally.
20 I am Louis Lee, Director of CPC Queens Early
21 Childhood Center. After 52 years in Early Childhood
22 Education, I have never seen such a crisis in Early
23 Childhood Education. I am also CSA VP for Early
24 Childhood, and I'm on the CSA Advisory and Executive
25 Board. Now, I work for Chinese American Planning

1 Council, CPC. We have six Early Childhood Centers,
2 21 afterschool programs. So we know how to do
3 budgets and invoices. CPC is a social service agency
4 that creates positive change for Asian Americans,
5 immigrants, low-income individuals, and anyone who
6 walks through our doors. On the issue of back
7 payments, CPC was owed 4.6 million dollars last year.
8 We submitted our budgets in early 21, but it was only
9 approved in May of 22. Then we have to scramble for
10 all the enrollment and attendance in Pre-K kids.
11 These kids have been sitting in our program since 21.
12 Okay. Now, the invoices are still stuck in September
13 21. We can't even move on to October 21. So what's
14 the problem on the DOE side? Don't blame us because
15 we know how to invoice. We know how to put in our
16 budgets, and I always hear the frustrations when I
17 listen to CSA meetings and Daycare Council meetings.
18 The next issue I wanted to bring up is the-- well,
19 actually, I really want to thank City Council for its
20 support of Universal Childcare because by Universal
21 Childcare, we will take away the EDY income
22 eligibility requirements and that backlog that the
23 women before me just spoke. Please put back
24 community-based enrollment. Now, the other thing I
25

1 wanted to talk about is we really want to change the
2 birth to five contracts, because we need to reach
3 down to our two's [sic], but we can't. Our licenses
4 are for two's, but the birth to five contract will
5 not allow us for blended classes, two's and three's.
6 We really like DOE to look at this and advise us on
7 how to move forward on changing the seat type on that
8 case. Pay parity-- after 50 years, I say-- other
9 people said why am I still making the salary of a
10 first year DOE teacher? You know, it's because I
11 chose, I know, to stay on the ground with-- and be
12 grounded with my community, but why am I being
13 penalized with all these long hours? We can't be
14 give-- I guess, situation room. We have all these
15 COVID cases, and yet we don't get compensation, not
16 like the DOE administrators. They get compensated.
17 While we've been providing essential services
18 throughout the entire pandemic, right, and the entire
19 time. We can't even use our vacation times. We are
20 short-handed on staff. Twelve of my people left to
21 go to DOE. So we are short-handed on staff. We have
22 staff right now. We have to increase number of
23 children on disability spectrums. I just don't know
24 what to do. I can't go see my grandkids in Japan,

because I can't use my vacation days because I'm at the center.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

LOIS LEE: But why don't-- why don't we just give back-- this is the one last thing. You know what? Pay our difference. If we don't use our days, then make a direct payment to us and so that way we don't feel that we are neglected and that you will give the respect and dignity that we deserve. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Lois.

Next, we'll hear from Carol Flores.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

CAROL FLORES: Hi, good afternoon everyone. Good afternoon, Chairperson Joseph. My name is Carol Flores. I am the Early Literacy Coordinator at JCCA. I have been with JCCA for approximately five years. In my role I serve families with children who are under 10 years old throughout New York City. JCCA is a Child and Family Services agency that works with about 17,000 of New York State's children and families each year. We provide mental and behavioral healthcare services, preventive, foster, and residential care and

educational assistance and remediation to ensure that no child gets left behind. In our 200th year serving New Yorkers, JCC has grown and evolved to serve a diverse population of children and families. Through our Leadership, Education Achievement Pathways Division, LEAP, JCCA's education services provide youth with support to foster long-term academic success. Among these programs, one of them is City's First Readers, and through City's First Readers, we work with families to promote learning and literacy enrichment for children age zero to five years old. Now, as an Early Literacy Coordinator I work with families enrolled in City's First Readers. I have seen the impact we have on our children when we encourage literacy at a young age and give the necessary tools to the family. One example that comes to mind is a foster parent who had challenges engaging with her two-year-old foster child. When talking to the foster parent, I suggested that she read books daily, to sing lullaby, and explain what she was doing in everyday activities. We encourage her to be patient and not lose hope as it would take time to establish trust with her foster child. She hoped to improve her dynamic with him and was keen on

following through with the suggestions, and to help her guide her throughout this, with CSR we supplied her with books. We helped virtual read-alongs with her and her foster child, and we also had a training with her in collaboration with La Fuerza de Familias Latinas to provide tips on how to make reading with her foster child more interactive. After a few months the foster parent reported improvement, seen communication with a child as he began to express that desire to read. This helped the child build confidence and self-esteem, and he had a stronger relationship with his foster parent. The foster parent was thrilled with the outcomes and enrolled him in daycare so that he could continue interacting with other children and adults, and today, her foster child is enrolled in Pre-K and is meeting the expectations and milestones of reading at age level. Many families have expressed similar satisfaction with City's First Readers. Just this past year we sent out about approximately 1,000 books to families in preventive, and 2,000 books to families in foster care. So we believe that reaching children before they enroll in school is the best way to ensure that they are prepared. We encourage the Council to

continue investing in City's First Readers and other Early Childhood Education programs.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CAROL FLORES: That our youth will be equipped with the tools need to build relationship with their families and peers. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Carol.

Next up we have Kayereathea Boyd. Forgive me if I butchered your name Kayereathea.

KAYEREATHEA BOYD: It's perfectly fine.

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Kayereathea Boyd. I'm a licensed childcare provider in Crowne Heights. I've been operating for four years, but I've been in the care of taking care of children for many years. I used to be a paraprofessional in the DOE. In July 2018, I opened Kaye's Cub Family Daycare with knowledge and passion and passionate intentions. The opportunity was something that not only I needed, but my community needed as well. I knew that with opening a daycare I would encourage young children to reach far beyond what is expected of them, and the rewarding part for me is seeing the curiosity and the potential of each-- of such little bright stars. At the start of school in 20, the Kaye's Cub Family

Daycare was fully enrolled and doing well. However, as the pandemic hit, all my parents pulled their students out of the program. While I remained opened to offer support to any family that needed, income was not guaranteed, and I was struggling to stay afloat. I had one parent who called me to ask if I was open because even though she was working remotely, she was struggling to focus on her job with the young child. I offered that parent the care that they needed for operating a business [inaudible] hard. I was able to access grants from SBA, Kaplan, New York City Housing, Stabilization grant, EDIL for relief. Kaye's Cub is a licensed family childcare program. Family childcare programs are the largest supplier of childcare to New York City infants and toddler that serve working parents who need flexible, non-traditional options. In addition to care, family childcare programs like mine offer school pick-up and drop-off for older children, provided healthy meals and snacks for kids, and teach them academics and social/emotional skills so they need to thrive. I also helped parents access services and support they needed, including helping them apply for vouchers. In reviewing the Mayor's Blueprint and the plans for

Universal Childcare, I want to see the modality of childcare put in front and center. I am here to ask that family childcare programs like mine are made priority, not an afterthought. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your testimony. Next, we'll call on Merna Hughes from the [inaudible]

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time starts now. Merna, you're on. Merna, we cannot hear you. I don't know if you're muted. Okay, Merna if-- we'll go on and come back to you and hopefully we'll be able to resolve the problem. Net we'll turn to Andre Farrell.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ANDRE FARRELL: Yes, hi, good evening. I'll be brief. My name is Andre Farrell. I'm an Early Childhood School Leader and Executive Director representing our program the Katmint Learning Initiative in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn. I'm also here speaking on behalf of members who you have head from earlier, the Brooklyn Coalition of Early Childhood Programs. My program serves children ages six months up to age five. We are Community Board organization that is on the ground in Bed-Stuy in District 16.

1 We're a trusted program that has been meeting the
2 demands of working families for over nine years as of
3 today. I was told that this might not be the
4 platform to share this, or might not be the right
5 time, but when is the right time? I want to share a
6 wider lens on the impact that this initiative is
7 having indirectly and directly on all programs in
8 Early Childhood Education. As we are on the ground,
9 our program is one of the few programs that is led by
10 black males in a female dominated industry. And I'm
11 also speaking on behalf of also schools that we have,
12 you know, that we have worked with. My concern is
13 that our program which is located in Bed-Stuy did
14 not-- or was not able to receive a city contract
15 which is predominantly in an area that is highly
16 funded by programs that do have DOE-funded programs.
17 This year, through the RFP, the RFP was not issued in
18 our district even though our district is considered a
19 childcare desert. A lot of the students that have
20 left our programs have left our programs and gone on
21 to institutions that are not adequately fit to
22 service children who are between the ages of three
23 and four. We are now being asked by those same
24 school programs to help support and fill these gaps
25

1 for families who have now made the transition into
2 big institutions that are not adequately fit to help
3 support them in their transition and making it
4 smoother because it is [inaudible] and because they
5 have not been fully prepared on doing things. I want
6 you guys to know that you guys mentioned earlier
7 about talking about oversaturation and allocation in
8 moving, you know, programs into other districts but
9 you guys are directly impacting a lot of first
10 generation ownership and entrepreneurialship [sic]
11 through black and minority women-owned businesses.
12 This is something that I felt that you guys had
13 initially sought out to protect. In collaboration
14 with members of my coalition, it does sometimes feel
15 like this might be politically driven instead of just
16 passionate and passion-play exercise. What I would
17 like to see done for actionable steps is that we
18 would like to see that pay parity--

19
20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
21 expired.

22 ANDRE FARRELL: [inaudible]. Sorry, that
23 pay parity is provided for programs that bridge loans
24 are accessible for programs that do not have the
25 financial capacity to not receive funds in an

adequate time, and that you know, again, thinking about future RFPs and wanting to work with CBOs, that this is something that is taken in full consideration. Otherwise, it could be very detrimental, too. This-- what could be a really great initiative and do a lot of great work all over the City. Thank you, and have a good day.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Andre. Before we try to go back to Merna, I'd like to announce the next panel will be Acasia, Jeremy Kaplan, Stephanie L. Yeung, Steven Morales and Maria Pia Belloni. So, now let's try to go back to Merna Hughes, if you're available, Merna.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Merna, we can't hear you. Can you speak into the microphone or turn it up? I'm sorry, we must be having technical difficulty with Merna. We'll try and come back to you later. So we'll go onto the next panel. Acasia followed by Jeremy Kaplan followed by Stephanie Al Young, Steven Morales, then Maria Pia Belloni. Okay, Acasia, you're up.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ACASIA HENRICK: Okay. Sorry, I'm a little nervous. Oh my gosh. I'm a hair dresser. I don't usually deal with like Zoom.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You're fine.

ACASIA HENRICK: Okay, I'm just going to read my prepared statement. I don't know if you can see me. My name is Acasia Henrick and I live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. I'm a hair dresser and my husband is a [inaudible]. I just want to testify how 3-K has helped my family. For the first two years of my son's life, my husband and I didn't have any days off together because [inaudible] childcare. I was definitely looking forward to 3-K. When my son was unfortunately wait listed, I went around the neighborhood to get a quote for childcare for he and my younger son. I went to a local franchise daycare center, and the center also has a location about a mile and a half down the avenue that is registered for the DOE and serves in the Universal 3-K. This location is new and hadn't been able to register in time for that school year. The center quoted me \$5,800 a month for my two children, \$2,800 for my two-year-old, and 3,000 for my infant. I was

1 astonished. Nearly \$70,000 a year for childcare.

2 This was-- this is families are up against in--

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] That's
4 fine. That's fine. We understand.

5 ACASIA HENRICK: Sorry, it's kind of--
6 sorry. Oh my God. This is what families are up
7 against in the free market. Just as rents are too
8 damn high, so is the cost of childcare. I know this
9 city is full of wealthy individuals, but \$70,000 a
10 year for childcare and \$48,000 a year for rent, it
11 just doesn't add up. Sorry. I have so many friends
12 who have left the City before their child's second
13 birthday because the cost of childcare, and that just
14 [inaudible] our city. Universal 3-K gives people
15 options and deserves not only to not be cut, but to
16 be fully funded and to be thoroughly woven into the
17 fabric of our city's education system, to be an
18 inspiration to all America, because I think what we
19 don't-- what we've gotten away from is especially
20 with de Blasio, he really wanted to stress this to be
21 a national program. Like, literally the whole nation
22 is looking at us to like succeed, and I really,
23 really want us to, not just for my own personal
24 benefit. Okay. It's been an amazing resource and
25

1
2 it's helped bridge the incredibly challenging gap
3 between birth and school. Since my son has started
4 to attend 3-K, my husband and I have been able to
5 have a day off together every week, and be able to
6 find a much more stable financial footing. Please
7 understand how much this means to me and family and
8 to a lot of New York City families. For the City to
9 go back on this promise now would be heartbreaking
10 and incredibly devastating to New Yorkers and
11 families, especially mine. That's all pretty much.
12 Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
14 testimony Acasia, and for your child in the
15 background. That's why we're all here after all.

16 ACASIA HENRICK: Thank you. I'm trying
17 here.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: next we'll move on to
19 Jeremy Kaplan.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 JEREMY KAPLAN: Hey, I am-- hi, sorry
22 about this. I'm actually picking up my four-year-old
23 form 4-K. I'm on the train. But I just wanted to say
24 emphasize that 3-K has been absolutely necessary for
25 parents. It's been a godsend. Like the former

parent just said, you know, a lot of parents can't make do without it, and it's all income ranges, because you're hearing how expensive it is. I'm incredibly distraught to hear about, you know, the CBO's that aren't being paid. I think what it demonstrates in a lot of ways is that in the long-run we need to, you know, unionize those teachers. We also need to pay them properly, but unionize them, and also it just shows that this was a patchwork system that, you know, we need to do better. I live in Sunset Park. We expanded our 3-K and 4-K options, but a lot of it was through CBOs like CPC, and I think in a lot of ways what we need to do is expand the public school 3-K and 4-K seats, and this time it demonstrates-- hold on, hold on, hold on. You have to wait. Hold on, I know. We have to wait. So, as you can see we're dealing with kids right now. This is parenting. So, I think it's incredibly important that it stays universal, that I think Adams Administration is forcing austerity notion on people, and we're seeing how they're messing with the Administration and messing with teachers, and I think it's incredibly important to push back, especially since we know that the federal funding is there

1 through 'til 2025. And so I think we have three
2 years to figure it out. I think the bureaucracy of
3 figuring out paying, you know, CBOs is a mess, but
4 it's also the DOE has never dealt with that before.
5 So, I get that sort of learning curve, but it also
6 seems like it's being made so much harder. But okay,
7 Judy, Judy, we missed the train. Sorry, I missed my
8 train so now my child is very upset. But I think
9 it's important enough to testify that--

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [interposing] We
12 understand, okay.

13 JEREMY KAPLAN: that this is essential to
14 keep this universal, and also to do as much outreach
15 as possible to immigrant communities. I heard, you
16 know, that the Bronx was having 1,200 seats. I think
17 that was basically outreach-- lack of outreach to
18 immigrant communities. I live in Sunset Park. We
19 have a desire, like a huge need for it, but there's
20 less outreach to the Chinese and the Spanish speaking
21 Latino communities. So I think it's a matter of
22 that the program has flaws, but we need to fund it
23 better. We need to find better sources for funding.
24 So, I'll let go. Sorry about all the distractions.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Not at all. Thank you very much, Jeremy. We'll now go to Stephanie L. Yeung. Stephanie?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

STEPHANIE L. YEUNG: Hi. I'll try and keep this short. I'm a mother of a 17-and-a-half-month-year-old, and I live in Jackson Heights. My partner and I were counting on 3-K so we could afford for my partner to go back to work so we could afford to live in the best city in the world, or what may be the best city in the world. New York City's an amazing city with a lot of social services, and I think 3-K is an essential service that we need so parents can afford to go to work, and please continue to offer free 3-K to all. That's all I wanted to say. I'm really sorry to hear about everything that's happening with 3-K, and I just-- I hope this can be resolved. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much, Stephanie. We'll turn now to Steven Morales.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

STEVEN MORALES: Good evening, Chair Joseph, members of the Council, and thanks for hosting this important hearing and for sticking

1 around this long. My name is Steven Morales. I'm the
2 New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin
3 is a nonprofit organization that supports over 400
4 home-based family childcare educators in the Bronx
5 and across New York City as business owners and as
6 educators. At first, I want to start by saying that
7 All Our Kin joins our partners across the City in
8 calling for all outstanding payments to be made
9 immediately. Whether center-based or home-base, all
10 childcare programs must be able to rely on on-time
11 payments to serve our communities. At All Our Kin,
12 we primarily serve independent family childcare
13 providers who are not with DOE networks, but delayed
14 payments also deter childcare providers including the
15 ones we serve from joining DOE networks and undermine
16 the City's ability to expand access to more families.
17 So, I thought it was important to start there. For
18 the rest of my testimony, I want to talk about
19 ensuring that home-based family childcare providers
20 who make up 37 percent of licensed childcare capacity
21 and care for over half of infants and toddlers in our
22 city are fully represented and supported in the
23 City's plans for our childcare system, because we
24 need a complete system that's made up of CBO's, small

centers, and family childcare in order for parents to have the option that they need. Anyway, I spent a lot of time talking to educators, and not only are they some of the hardest working members of our community, but they're motivation to continue refining their craft is truly exceptional. Just this past week I was speaking with a group of educators with over 40 years combined experience, and after we talked about the challenges of being among the lowest paid workers in our society, I was blown away when the conversation shifted to their commitment to their children. They each shared in different ways how they constantly seek out knowledge and new practices that will benefit the children in their programs. One provider told me that on top of her 60-hour work week, she's studying full-time for a bachelor's degree, and this is someone who already has a CDA and decade of experience, and at other talk about how hard it is and how hard it has been over the years to find professional development sessions that fit into our schedule. I tell you all of this to illustrate that when we talk about family childcare educators, we're talking about dedicated professionals who love children and create learning opportunities while they

1 fight to make ends meet. And that our city can take
2 action to ensure that this workforce that cares for
3 over half of infants and toddlers in our city can
4 continue to serve our children and families. We urge
5 the City Council to ensure that family childcare
6 educators are always brought into planning and
7 decision-making about our childcare system. In
8 addition, the City must prioritize equitable pay and
9 benefits for childcare providers by incorporating
10 family childcare into the City's pay parity work
11 between Early Childhood educators and public school
12 teachers. Third, the Council should work with DOE to
13 correct--

14
15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
16 expired.

17 STEVEN MORALES: a longstanding inequity
18 by ensuring that family childcare providers have
19 equal access to contracts of all ages and seat types,
20 and that means pre-K, 3-K, and Early Learn and
21 infant/toddler contracts. And last but certainly
22 not least, family childcare educator sin our city
23 must have access to professional learning with no
24 out-of-pocket costs, tailored to their needs, in
25 their home language, and that fits their busy

schedules. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and All Our Kin looks forward to partnering with the Council to support Family Childcare providers, children and families across our city. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks much, Steven. Next we'll hear from Maria Pia Belloni followed by Devora Cafiero. Maria?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MARIA PIA BELLONI: Thank you so very much for the opportunity to give my contribution. I'm Maria Pia Belloni. I'm the former Chair of NGO Committee on Migration, an umbrella organization of more than 50 NGOs operating all around the world, and I am Co-Chair of the Subcommittee on Children Immigration, and I represent the [inaudible] the Work Organization of Early Childhood Education, present in more than 60 countries. So, we advocate for the protection of migrant and refugee children rights, in particular the right of early childhood education and care. And thanks to our advocacy, the UN Member States committed themselves to facilitate implementation of early childhood education and care for migrants and refugee children. And I start with

1 direct personal testimony. One of my grandchildren
2 is number 171 on the waiting list for the Pre-K, and
3 another is in the Pre-K only thanks to the persistent
4 and insistence of my daughter who fought against this
5 organization and lack of communication between the
6 DOE and the preschool, the Pre-K school. And this
7 school is not enough teachers. My two grandkids is
8 to study on photocopies, because the school didn't
9 provide [inaudible] books. This is the reality in
10 Manhattan. With the influx of thousands of migrants
11 from Latin America, this equation you will see this
12 has become critical and it's urgent to take action
13 right now to protect the migrant refugee asylum-
14 seeker children's rights, in particular the rights of
15 the youngest one, and we are [inaudible] zero/three
16 years old, because they are not only incredibly
17 vulnerable to the impacts of possibly displacement,
18 but they also have the most to lose because the early
19 years are such a critical time in their development
20 when their brain is developing faster than any other
21 time in their life. And I have to stress this
22 really, clear, clear [inaudible] doesn't last
23 forever, but repeated exposure to traumatic events
24
25

can inhibit brain development with long-term repercussions for--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time is expired.

MARIA PIA BELLONI: the equal [sic] and entire society. So, first of all, we need more disaggregated data: sex, age, language, country of origin, special needs, regarding asylum seeker, migrant, and refugee children in New York City. Essential to put in place [inaudible] program to meet their need. We are discussing future programs. We don't know the reality we are facing right now. I think it's not a smart thing to do. We need a more efficient and less pragmatic [sic]. We needs the system to save money and to serve in a better way the clients. And we are eager to explore the possibly to work together in a whole of society, whole of government approach to share our knowledge, good practices, good policies to promote social creation, development, and more peaceful society using teaching strategies starting with the youngest children. Thank you so very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Maria. Before we go to Devora Cafiero, we want to announce

the next panel which will be Ashleigh Ide, Gabrielle Cryan, Christopher Treiber, Betty-- from Interagency Council of Development Disabilities Agencies, Betty Baez Melo from Advocates for Children of New York, Ellen McHugh, and then Jolene Gunther-Doherty from the Guild for Exceptional Children. Okay, now we're moving to Devora Cafiero.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DEVORA CAFIERO: First, I wanted to thank everyone who did stay on, and I do want to point out it is extremely upsetting that Doctor Ahmed and her team has left. I will address that initially. And just to say today, I began my day by bringing my three-year-old daughter to a DOE contract community-based childcare center where she is attending school for the very first time. Taking her there, I think about what her and all other three year olds have a right to. As they begin their school experience, I hope they flourish in a safe and loving space, a place where their teachers get to truly know, understand, support, and build on their abilities, talents and strengths. I want all these children to learn new things, explore and play in an environment where they will thrive. As an educator, a teacher,

former director, and now as an instructional coordinator in IC, I know the support, dedication and hard work it takes to provide for high-quality classrooms. My fellow ICs and I use strategies with the teaching teams and their leaders that ground them to support students and families which used to be on a bi-weekly basis. Together we craft and share goals which memorialize our coaching interactions and details our collaboration. We reminded leaders and teachers of their vision and their dedication to continuous program improvement, all while holding leaders accountable and building teacher capacity, something which cannot be measured by data. In addition as an IC, I support the Early Childhood program teams with strategies to process their emotions and manage their stress. We feel confident and capable as they incorporate tools to manage the many hats of Early Childhood education, and most importantly to feel that they are not alone. These children, their families in the programs deserve quality educational support from the DOE. I know the US Department of Ed promotes ongoing dialogue to improve our education system for all students. So this is why I am here to express of lack of clear,

timely, quality from our leadership, specifically calling out Chancellor David C. Banks, First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg-- which no one is mentioning his name because he's a big factor too-- Deputy Chancellor Early Childhood Education, Doctor Kara Ahmed, and the teacher that she appointed that was one of her previous colleagues, Senior Executive Teaching and Learning Peggy Derrick [sp?]. The DECE has historical supported sites in creating child-centered, welcoming environments that are developmentally appropriate for all learners inclusive of children's cultural diversity and supported by a community of professionals that advocate for these young minds. This reputation along with the pay is why I joined the DECE in 2021. All children were seen and heard until the arrival of this new leadership. This academic school year started with the folks hope us being able to continue our community building with our programs. When we returned to the office on August 29th we were told to not reach out to programs despite the need and request for leaders and teachers. On Tuesday September 6th, at 3:19 pm., approximately an hour after the first Day of--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time expired.

DEVORA CAFIERO: teachers returning to work. Two minutes, two minutes-- two days before the students would come in, that's when we were excessed you heard already it took nine days for us to get an email statement that during this transition it is expected that we continue to support our programs in schools, implementing high-quality Early Childhood education, but by then the damage was done. Some departments were on already being reassigned. Some departments that we depended on were already being reassigned. Some colleagues took other positions, and I think you guys got the intention that other people were pushed out. And most importantly, the ICs were not given security to go back to work because we have nothing in writing, that we can be held liable. We need an email that clearly states that we can be rescinded or we need documentation to be fully reinstated. I wish Doctor Ahmed was here because I would want to ask her directly. I would like to ask why am I hearing about her plan for the first time during this meeting when she started 10 months ago. My colleagues and I are back to work,

1 but the quality and value of our work is being
2 stretched thin, and we are expected to do this while
3 waiting for the DOE to post reimagined new positions
4 that will then quadruple our caseload and take us out
5 of the community which counters what the Mayor and
6 the Chancellor's vision. If you can hear the stress
7 and anxiety that I am undergoing, please imagine how
8 the programs we support must feel, and there's added
9 stuff that everyone here has been talking about.
10 There's day guidance from the new leadership, and we
11 all know-- we know this new leadership is working to
12 outsource and privatize our job. That intends to
13 support program leaders only. Aiding to their work
14 load and taking away the safe space for the staff,
15 specifically the teachers to reflect and process in a
16 way that allows them to show up and be truly parent
17 for our children. These programs rely on us, on our
18 expertise, and they value our experience because they
19 know that are part of the division of Early Childhood
20 Education from the ODE, not being an outsourced
21 contracted program that has a contract maybe for one
22 year. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you very much
25 for your testimony, Devora. I'd like to remind

witnesses that you can submit your testimony in writing through the Council's website if you haven't already done so. Thank you. We will now proceed to what is the last Zoom panel. Again, that's Ashleigh Ide, Gabrielle Cryan, Chris Treiber, Betty Baez Melo, Ellen McHugh, and Jolene Gunther-Doherty. We'll turn next to Ashleigh Ide.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ASHLEIGH IDE: Hi, thank you. Yeah, my name is Ashleigh Ide. I live in Brooklyn. My daughter attends a brand new 3-K in a private center, and we pay for additional extended care. She has absolutely flourished and 3-K has allowed us to stop using our savings to pay for childcare, and allowed me to work more hours as a social worker and mental health professionals, which has greatly improved our lives as a family. Now, we don't know if 3-K will be open next month. We don't know if her amazing teachers and helpers will have their jobs in another month. This incredibly complicated situation placed on early education centers that are trying to better serve their communities feels sadly indicative of a greater problem in US society, which is a demoralizing regard of families and the educators who give so much to

1 their jobs. New York prides itself as and purports
2 itself to be a city that values the quality of life
3 of all its residents, which would of course include
4 its smallest residents. How can we plan for the
5 future of our kids' lives and our everyday lives
6 feeling tossed around within a system that operates
7 under head-spinning bureaucracy, making it so
8 difficult for families, teachers, and small childcare
9 businesses to nurture the City's children, thus the
10 City's future. I think of the hot-button issues that
11 receive most of the media coverage and political
12 attention in New York, crime, prisons, mental
13 illness, homelessness. As Chair Joseph and the DOE
14 leadership panel mentioned, we know that a healthy
15 start in life consisting of parents and guardians who
16 feel supported financial security, good education,
17 equitable social conditions, and proper nutrition
18 leads to greater outcomes and a better quality of
19 life over the lifespan. City-funded early childcare
20 education for all provides all of these things. I
21 hope that the DOE will do all it can to pay these
22 invoices, but also do what it can to reopen the 3-K
23 centers that have been forced to close, especially
24 those that served families living in childcare
25

deserts and under-resourced communities. As well as to the 3-Ks that remain open, but only by a hairsbreadth [sic]. Having to resume paying for childcare will mean that I can afford less care hours, and I will have to greatly cut back on my work serving clients to take care of my daughter. I'll always choose my daughter over my work, but to be forced to choose feels like a gut punch. To imagine her teachers, all women--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time expired.

ASHLEIGH IDE: languishing under the uncertainty of their employment is heartbreaking. We admire the DOE and the people who work there within that system, but we are all so outraged and pleading for relief from the uncertainty of this disastrous situation. Thank you so much for having this meeting.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony, Ashleigh. We will now hear from Gabrielle Cryan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

GABRIELLE CRYAN: Good afternoon. Thank you to all the amazing panelists who already

presented today. I am a parent of two children under the age of three. I'm also a member of IATSE 764 New York City Theatrical Wardrobe Union. Not one of the contracts that I work under provides any kind of childcare alliance, nor did any of the employers provide on-site daycare. My earnings are above the median income earnings for New York City, but I still can't afford daycare for my kids, so my elderly mom takes care of them. She lives an hour away from me. So that's an added two hours every day to my commute dropping them off and picking them up, and even though she's a wonderfully loving grandmother, she doesn't have the capacity or the skills to provide the education that my kids would get in a professional childcare setting. I'm a third generation New Yorker. Many members of my family are in the NYPD, including my dad and grandfather, so I understand the sacrifices that police officers make for the City. However, New York City has 5.53 billion dollar police budget. That's more than the military budget of many countries. It's shameful that our Mayor has increased the police budget while at the same time walking back on his commitment to Universal 3-K. You know, as the previous panelist showed, many

1 studies-- many studies show that early childhood
2 intervention prevents crime in the long-run right?
3 So-- and as this panel was started, it started with
4 the discussion about fiscal crisis, how Early
5 Childhood education is in a fiscal crisis in New York
6 City and it's not sustainable. So is there any
7 consideration when talking about economics of this to
8 reallocate some of our hard-earned tax dollars away
9 from the NYPD's budget, away from their ever-
10 increasingly, you know, complicated system of toys
11 that they have, that they use to kill people, and
12 reallocate some of the money towards toys for our
13 kids to play with. It's not rocket science. Thank
14 you.

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16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Gabrielle.
17 Next up is Chris Treiber.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 CHRIS TREIBER: Hi, good evening, Chair
20 Joseph and members of the City Council Education
21 Committee. My name is Chris Treiber. I'm the
22 Associate Executive Director for Children's Services
23 at the Interagency Council. I'm testifying here today
24 on behalf of the 4410 Preschool Special Education
25 providers who are struggling each day to continue to

1 provide special education services to New York's
2 youngest children. I'm here today to speak on behalf
3 of the preschool children with developmental
4 disabilities and their families. I will submit a full
5 copy of the testimony, but I just want to highlight a
6 few important points. First, I want to say thank you
7 to Chair Joseph and the members of the Education
8 Committee for your leadership and advocacy helping to
9 ensure that 41 million dollars was included in the
10 final city budget for salary parity for our 4410
11 preschool teachers and staff. We know how critically
12 important your voice was in achieving this victory.
13 However, I'm here to tell you that the funds have not
14 reached the teachers and staff in our 4410 schools.
15 The New York City Department of Education has tied
16 the increased funds for salary parity to contract
17 enhancement. Contract enhancement process has been
18 delayed, and most of our 4410 preschool providers
19 will not implement the enhanced services until
20 January 2023 and more than likely not receive funds
21 for the salary parity until February 2023 at the
22 earliest. I'm here to tell you that the staffing
23 crisis in our 4410 programs has not improved and that
24 most of our preschool directors are still reporting
25

1 that they're unable to recruit new teachers. They're
2 still losing staff each day for New York City public
3 schools and our preschool children continue to lose
4 their teachers. The most recent Mayor's Management
5 report from September 2022 documents that 4410
6 preschool providers educate 85 percent of the
7 preschool students in New York City who need special
8 education services. It's very clear based on the
9 report that our 4410 preschools are the Early
10 Childhood Special Education providers for New York
11 City. You heard testimony before that last year at
12 the school's year-end, 800 preschool children still
13 needed education placements. We believe that there
14 are more children that need them now. IAC did a
15 survey two weeks ago of our preschool providers and
16 we found out that there are currently 94 preschool-
17 approved classrooms that could be opened that are
18 closed because our schools do not have staff to
19 operate them. Eighty-seven percent of our New York
20 City 4410 providers reported having at least one
21 approved classroom closed. I have one more number to
22 share with you from the Mayor's Management Report,
23 26,590. This is the number of preschool children who
24 are currently receiving special education services in
25

2022. That number is down by 5,742 preschool children who before the pandemic were receiving services. What happens when those numbers climb back up to pre-pandemic levels? We know they will. Our evaluation sites are overwhelmed with request for evaluations. If New York City needs an additional 5,000 preschool special education seats instead of the 800 that--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time expired.

CHRIS TREIBER: they're planning to address, it will be a major crisis for every family who has a child with developmental disabilities in New York City. In conclusion, we ask the Council to continue to advocate on behalf of our Early Childhood Special Education providers and the children and families who depend on these critical services. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your testimony, Chris. Next we will hear from Betty Baez Melo from Advocates for Children.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

BETTY BAEZ MELO: hi, good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Early

Childhood education in New York City. My name is Betty Baez Melo. I'm an attorney. I'm the director of the Early Childhood Education Project of Advocates for Children of New York. We appreciate that the City has increased access to Early Childhood programs in recent years, including most recently by allocating funding to help ensure undocumented children can attend the same Early Childhood Education programs as their peers. However, we echo many of the concerns raised by others here today, and in particular we are extremely concerned about the 800 preschoolers with significant disabilities who are waiting for seats in their legally mandated preschool special education classes as of June 2022. Many of these children are diagnosed with autism, are non-verbal or have delays in multiple areas of development, and these are children who stand to benefit significantly from Early Childhood education programs, and the City cannot leave these children behind. The DOE announced plans to open more seats including by offering contract enhancements to preschool special education programs run by CBOs. These contracts are significantly behind. Of more than 130 sites that applied for preschool special

education contract enhancement that was set to take place in-- or set to take effect in July of 2022, only eight sites [inaudible] approval in the September pep meeting with another [inaudible] site scheduled for tonight's pep meeting agenda. While more programs are expected to move forward in the coming months, the City must act with urgency to ensure that no child is waiting for a seat in January when we anticipate that the need for special class seats will increase. The City must ensure that there is a preschool special class seat for every child who needs one this year, either by expediting the contract enhancement process and ensuring that CBOs open the needed classes or by opening additional classrooms in DOE public schools and pre-k centers. The City must also ensure that it's properly serving the thousands of preschoolers with disabilities with less significant needs who can attend the same classrooms as their typically developing peers. The City must build the capacity to promptly evaluate students full time in the IEP meetings and secure service providers who can work with students in their 3-K and pre-K classrooms. Despite legally mandated timelines, we've heard from families who had to wait

months for an evaluation appointments, an IEP meeting, or the start-up services, causing children to miss out on needed interventions. According to DOE data, one in four children with IEPs and 3-K and Pre-K for All program did not receive their full mandated services by the end of the 2020-2021 school year in violation of their legal rights. We're also concerned that while the DOE announced that it would hire 38 inclusion specialists to help programs support children with disabilities, the inclusion support team launched in the spring with only 17 individuals, and is now down to four specialists for the entire City. We thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and we're happy to answer any questions that you may have.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much, Betty. We will now move to Ellen McHugh.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ELLEN MCHUGH: Hi, good afternoon, or should I say good evening. I am-- my name is Ellen McHugh and I am one of two Co-Chairs of the Citywide Council on Special Education. As one of those co-chairs on the citywide council we often hear from families who are begging for services for their

disabled child. In the past few years of COVID, Early Childhood providers were called on to provide supports and services for our disabled children. It was not unknown for agencies who were both unaware of the number of disabled infants and toddlers who are here in New York City and not well-staffed to address their child's needs, to send a child home. During the first summer of Summer Rising, children were sent home due to a lack of service providers, upsetting families and in some cases causing a parent to lose his or her job in order to stay home to care for the child. I'm am your warning, essentially. My son was born well before it was mandated to have Early Childhood or even before it was mandated to have three year olds in school getting services. At the time he was born, school was from five to 16 for him. He was-- we were left unaware, unprepared, and certainly without resources. We had to dig, scrape, scruffle [sic] for services and pay thousands and thousands of dollars despite having medical coverage to address his disability. Years later, now, it was a joy to see that families like ours wouldn't have to be-- have the added burden of paying for preschool education, therapies, etcetera, etcetera, as well as

1 all of the other cost of raising children. We
2 eagerly support your advocacy for the range of
3 programs for our youngest and most vulnerable
4 children and offered to help in any way. we are in
5 some ways untrusting of the Department of Education,
6 especially given the Chancellor's recent comments
7 about throwing water on the face of a child or
8 accusing parents who put their children or pay for
9 their children to go to private school, a gaming the
10 system. After years and years of trying to get
11 through to the DOE and then giving up and going the
12 legal route. I don't know what to say to you about
13 how to advocate for our children except maybe to
14 follow the advice of a four-year-old who says daily
15 to his mother, "But Mommy, I want to go to school.
16 Mommy, I want to go to school." And he is home
17 waiting, unable to get to school because the DOE's
18 processes --

19
20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
21 expired.

22 ELLEN MCHUGH: has taken such a toll on a
23 family and the child. The mother has just about
24 given up. We've helped her get her act on the road,
25 or get her act together, get her documents together,

but it's kind of complicated and certainly cold.

Administrative assessment that the child's worth is not helping this parent serve her child well or give us the edu-- give that child the education he or she so desperately needs. Thank you for your time.

Please remember us.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your testimony, Ellen, appreciate it. And lastly, we'll call Jolene Gunther-Doherty from the Guild for Exceptional Children.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JOLENE GUNTHER-DOHERTY: Hi. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jolene Gunther-Doherty, and I'm the Director of the Guild for Exceptional Children's Preschool 4410 Program. We thank the City Council for their support in addressing the salary disparities faced by 4410 preschool special education teachers. Our 4410 programs that serve New York City's preschoolers with disabilities for 12 months a year are still facing staffing challenges as teachers are still opting to work for a 10-month salary rather than the 12-month salary. Last year we had four classrooms closed due to lack of staff. We had a child who sat home from

1 October waiting for a seat to open. In July we were
2 finally able to have the child join us for our six-
3 week summer program, and then the child went on to
4 kindergarten. This year again, our school has had to
5 keep four classrooms closed due to staff shortages.
6 Children with autism are sitting home waiting for
7 seats to open. The Ling family has a child sitting
8 at home right now with autism waiting to get into our
9 school. They're just 10 blocks away from us. We
10 can't take them, we don't have-- we have a classroom
11 but we don't have staff. Advocacy efforts are still
12 needed to work towards full 12-month salary parity or
13 classrooms will continue to close and New York City's
14 preschoolers will continue to sit home. We hope that
15 the DOE will work to make sure that 4410 programs
16 receive the contractual finances promised in a timely
17 fashion so that we do not face insolvency like some
18 of our other Early Childhood programs are currently
19 facing in New York City. We hope New York's Council
20 will continue to work to ensure that New York's
21 preschoolers with disabilities will continue to have
22 programs to go to. Thank you very much.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you very much,
25 Jolene. We appreciate your testimony. There were

others who signed up and registered to testify who we have not heard from. We don't see them logged in, but we're going to call them to see if any of them are logged in and wish to testify, and if there's anyone else who's still on the Zoom and wishes to testify, please use the raise hand function at the bottom of the screen. These are the people who registered: Aaron Gonzales [sp?], Aaron are you there? Sare Mills? I may be butchering the name, S a r e, Sare Mills. Chrissa Corbit Cavoras [sp?]? Kaylin Madden [sp?]? Daniel Valdez? Jamal Rivers? Laís Cuelo [sp?]? Paulette Healy? Luna Ray? Ruth Horey [sp?]? Tanyoka Severino [sp?]? Lanny Cheuck, she did testify in person. Diana Diaz [sp?], the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families? Jane McCall Polite [sp?], Subcommittee on Children and Migration of the NGO Committee on Migration? Xiomara Dunning from Sheltering Arms? Maria Victoria Luzeriaga [sp?], wBees Forest School? We did have someone testify. Sonja Neill Turner, Brooklyn Sandbox? Sonja did testify in person. If any of you are here or there's anyone else on the Zoom who wishes to testify, please use the raise hand function at the bottom, and we will call on you to testify.

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Okay, seeing none, I'll turn it back to the Chair to
close out the hearing.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for all
those testified today. We are now closing this
hearing. Thank you.

[gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 2, 2022