



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON

**SUMMER RISING AND SUMMER YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP) 2022**

SUSAN HASKELL, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

OCTOBER 25, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Youth Services Committee.

I am Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services. I am joined by Darryl Rattray, Deputy Commissioner, Strategic Partnerships, and our colleagues Valerie Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Connect and Associate Commissioner Daphne Montanez. We are also pleased to be joined by Mark Treyger, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Education. On behalf of Commissioner Keith Howard and Chancellor Banks, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about our record-breaking summer of 2022.

What started with planning and preparation many months ago turned into a wonderful success story for the City, DYCD, DOE, our providers, and above all else, our families and young people

As you know, on February 15, Mayor Eric Adams announced a record 100,000 summer job opportunities for young people ages 14-24. Over 90,000 of these jobs and work-based learning experiences were available through DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program, making it the largest number of opportunities in the program's 59-year history. We were pleased to be joined by Speaker Adams, Chair Stevens, and other elected officials to celebrate the historic moment.

To recruit youth for the program, we prioritized low-income, justice-involved, foster care, runaway and homeless youth and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents. 91% of participants were from high need neighborhoods, including those that have been most severely impacted by COVID-19, ensuring that youth most affected by the pandemic and its economic effects gained the work readiness skills they need to be successful in their educational and career pathways.

All 100,000 summer jobs promised by Mayor Adams were filled, including over 90,000 slots supervised by DYCD's network of community-based organizations. More than 18,000 worksites were recruited, which is also an all-time high. Placements were across public, private, and non-profit employers across a variety of sectors. Participants engaged with employers such as Microsoft, SL Green Realty, and Google. Members of Mayor Adams' Business Leadership Council hosted 470 participants at leading companies including Accenture, JetBlue, and Paramount Global. At Google, 30 graduating high school seniors participated in Google's Computer Science Summer Institute. At Maimonides Medical Center participants conducted research in emergency medicine and shadowed physicians in every department from surgery to pediatrics. And at Johnson & Johnson, SYEP participants worked in the design studio for the company's Pharmaceutical, Medical Device, Consumer Health and Enterprise sectors.

More than 8,700 young people were placed at City agencies, including the NYPD, Parks Department, NYCHA, and Health +Hospitals. We thank Chair Stevens for promoting placements with the offices of City Council Members for 119 youth. These were all great opportunities for young people to have a valuable summer work experience, while encouraging them to explore careers in city government that can create a pipeline to fill essential city positions in the future.

We provided an unprecedented number of enrichment events, career panels and added opportunities to the SYEP experience.

For example, Mayor Adams hosted a healthy eating cooking demonstration at Gracie Mansion. On the last day of SYEP, we rallied City agency interns to meet Mayor Adams on the steps of City Hall for an end of summer celebration.

Young people were taken on tours including BioLabs at NYU Langone, Con Edison Learning Center electric, gas, and steam labs, City Hall and the United Nations.

We held “A Day in the Life at Wells Fargo” virtual event where over 300 participants heard from different department heads about their work, the companies’ vision and how to apply for an internship or job.

Youth also participated in FDNY and NYPD Career Days at training facilities; and,

We had a “Women in Government Career Panel” featuring First Deputy Mayor Lorraine Grillo, Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright, Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, and Chief Advisor Ingrid Lewis-Martin.

In addition to acquiring valuable work experience, young people received financial literacy training. Participants were given access to Visa branded card with fee-free store transactions, and offered the opportunity to open a bank account to deposit the record \$234.4 million payroll this year. While youth are encouraged to save some money, we know that this money is spent directly in the community, helping families pay bills and purchase school supplies.

Summer Rising

In early March, Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks, and Chair Stevens announced that Summer Rising 2022 would offer a record 110,000 young people an opportunity to participate in the program. Summer Rising offered K-8 students a blend of summer learning and enrichment for an opportunity to engage with peers, caring adults and their community, with experiences to explore skills and interests.

We offered key improvements to the program this summer, responding to input from stakeholders. For Summer Rising 2022, the City:

- expanded the hours of service for middle school students, and included Fridays
- focused on students with disabilities, and students in temporary housing
- streamlined the enrollment process
- identified program locations early
- offered coaching, professional development and TA opportunities
- launched a Collaborative Planning Tool for DOE and CBO leadership on site
- held bi-weekly CBO convenings to maintain open lines of communication
- implemented a single Summer Rising Operations Guide for CBOs and Principals

CBO programs offered an array of amazing enrichment activities, including STEAM, Literacy, Physical Fitness and Health Living. For example,

- At PS 204 in the Bronx, SCAN-Harbor and Directions For Our Youth collaborated to provide young people with science and nutrition activities, including exploring a worm bin and their role in our environment, and discussing the benefits of kale, followed by making a healthy kale salad.
- NYPD supported Friends of Crown Heights at MS 395 in Brooklyn, facilitating a day of outdoor fun for staff and participants, including games, giveaways and guidance.
- 6th graders at the New School for Leadership and Journalism created “Elephant’s Toothpaste”, working in groups to take measurements, make predictions and discuss observations, with support from SYEP workers.

DOE and DYCD are working collaboratively to collect and analyze feedback from Summer 2023. DYCD is working with Policy Studies Associates, who is connected with the DOE evaluation team, and we will share our findings, which will be the result of program site visits, family and student surveys, and CBO focus groups. In addition, Change Impact is convening stakeholder feedback into a Summer Rising “playbook” for the City to reflect on lessons learned and to inform Summer 2023.

- More than 112,000 students were enrolled in the program
- 139 CBOs participated as Summer Rising providers
- Approximately 32,000 students with IEPs enrolled in the program
- Nearly 12,000 were students in temporary housing

We were pleased that on August 16 US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona traveled to PS 7 in Elmhurst to highlight Summer Rising with Rep. Grace Meng and Commissioner Howard. They toured the school and participated in a roundtable conversation with students and parents about the benefits of summer learning and enrichment programs.

While it is too early to discuss plans for this summer in detail, we are looking at what worked well and what needs to be improved this year. We look forward to working with you in the time ahead in offering young people high quality summer experience.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to testify today on our record-breaking summer. We appreciate your strong commitment to New York City’s youth. We would be happy to answer any questions.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES
OCTOBER 25, 2022**

Good afternoon,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Stevens and the members of the Committee on Youth Services for holding this important hearing.

In the past few years, New York City's young people have endured a significant amount of trauma, confusion, and uncertainty. They have experienced isolation, learning loss, and increased housing instability and gun violence. The effects of the pandemic have been particularly hard on those who live in low-income neighborhoods, youth of color, and young people with disabilities. Robust academic and recreational as well as professional development programming have been linked to reductions in violence and crime and positive youth development. That is why city programs like Summer Rising and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) are absolutely vital, especially considering all that our young people have been through.

I first want to express appreciation to Mayor Adams for recognizing the importance of these programs, and for his commitment to expanding access to Summer Rising and SYEP. This past summer, over 100,000 young people participated in SYEP, and 110,000 children attended Summer Rising. This is a great achievement, and I hope to see even more slots offered in the years to come.

The rollout of these programs, however, did not come without challenges. While I am happy that so many families sought to participate in Summer Rising, the demand far outweighed the supply, and 82,000 of available seats for the program were filled within a week of the application opening. We can infer that parents who were able to secure a seat were those who had access to the internet and were able to be online when the application opened, which disadvantages those parents who had to work and parents with limited or no access to the internet, such as those living in temporary housing. The DOE did reserve some seats for students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities who are guaranteed 12 months of support, and those who fail courses and are mandated to take remedial summer classes, but we do not know how many of these seats were set aside.

Even for those for whom seats were set aside, full participation in Summer Rising was not guaranteed. Although programming ran until 6:00 pm, busing service for students with disabilities and students living in temporary housing was not available after 3:00 pm. Students who require busing services should and must be able to participate in the full day just like their peers.

There is also a clear need for improving communication between the administration, Summer Rising provider sites, and families. Many families were left scrambling for seats at their assigned sites; on the first day of Summer Rising, 30 families in Brooklyn were turned away despite their children being assigned to that site. Some parents and caregivers who were reaching out to sites to see if any spots had opened up received no response. For some children who required busing services, the bus arrived without a paraprofessional on board, preventing the child from boarding the bus, or the site did not have sufficient time to ensure that paraprofessionals would be in the classroom.

The Summer Youth Employment Program was able to match 60 percent of applicants across 17,000 work sites, the largest number the program has ever had—but it had its share of challenges, too. As a result of the pandemic, many organizations across the city are struggling to hire and retain staff, which can present a problem when adding an SYEP participant. The city should allow organizations more time to plan how they will best be able to support an SYEP participant.

The seasonal nature of SYEP means that organizations are losing staff at the conclusion of the program. Many organizations would be happy for SYEP participants to join any year-round programs they participate in, but need to know how many year-round slots they will have funding for. As SYEP expands, the city should invest in more year-round programming for young people.

Lastly, it is important to note that participation in SYEP requires a Social Security number, effectively excluding undocumented youth from the program. That is why I have introduced Intro 0188-2022, which would require the creation of a universal youth employment program that is open to all young people in New York City. I would like to thank my colleagues in the City Council and the advocates who have been working with my office to move toward employment equity for youth, and I look forward to working with Chair Stevens to make this bill the best it can be for our young people.

I look forward to working with the administration and the City Council to ensure that Summer Rising and SYEP successfully reaches as many youth and young people as possible, as well as ensures a productive and positive work experience for both the young person and the employer, in 2023 and in the years to come.

Thank you.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services

Re: Summer Rising 2022/ Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) 2022

October 25, 2022

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

Unfortunately, time and time again, we have seen the students we serve left out of programs that are touted as being universal. Merely saying that a program is *for all youth* does not make it so. As the City prepares for summer programming for next summer, there needs to be an intentional, targeted plan to provide specialized support to youth who need it so they can fully participate in summer programming.

Given our limited time, we will give just a few examples of the barriers we have seen in the past and recommendations for change:

- We heard from families whose students with disabilities did not have the accommodations and supports they needed to participate in Summer Rising programs in place for the start of the summer, despite the City's legal obligation. Given how short the summer program is, the City should roll out a process for requesting and approving accommodations with enough time to ensure that the individualized support each student needs is in place for the first day of summer and that no young person is turned away.
- We heard from families whose children were unable to participate in afternoon enrichment activities because the DOE provided bus service only at 3pm—and not at the end of the day at 6pm. While the DOE offered a prepaid rideshare service for



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families to use at 6pm, it was rolled out just before the start of the summer – without time for families to make informed decisions about their children's summer participation – and required a parent to accompany the student in the car. This summer, the City should ensure that all students who need bus service to get to school, including students with disabilities, students living in shelter, and students in foster care who have a right to transportation, have bus service or a comparable door-to-door alternative to get to and from the full day of summer programming that does not rely on parents having to transport their children.

- We also heard about the difficulty of finding available Summer Rising seats for children living in shelters given how quickly seats filled. The City should launch a strengths-based outreach plan to ensure families of historically marginalized groups of students know about summer programs and have needed support in enrolling, including targeted outreach and support to families living in shelters and immigrant families, and should ensure there are seats available for students whose shelter or foster care placement changes after the enrollment period.
- This past summer, the **SYEP application** and instructions were available online only in English —posing a barrier to the thousands of young people whose primary language is a language other than English. The City should ensure that SYEP information and applications are available in at least the 9 most common languages, that the application asks if youth need language support at their placements, and that the City allocates funding to make sure youth receive the language support they need to participate regardless of their home language. The City should also ensure that students who are undocumented have the opportunity to participate.
- We also want to ensure that students get the academic support and the social-emotional support they need over the summer. Fewer than half of NYC students are reading proficiently with alarming disparities by race, disability, language, and housing status. We urge the City to use the summer to provide students with the evidence-based reading intervention they need. As another example, DYCD and the DOE should work together to connect SYEP experiences to the classroom, providing students with academic credit for skills they learn on the job.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to participate in summer programming. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony
New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Oversight Hearing: DYCD Community Center Programming -
Beacon, Cornerstone, and Saturday Night Lights
October 25, 2022 at 1:00 PM

FOR THE RECORD

Submitted by
Eddie Silverio, Division Director
Catholic Charities Community Services
Alianza Division

Good afternoon to Chair Stevens and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services. I am Eddie Silverio, Division Director of Catholic Charities Community Services: Alianza Division. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For over 70 years, Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS) has provided comprehensive, professional human services to vulnerable, low-income City residents in the poorest communities of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Its network of services enables a participant in any of our programs to access a continuum of services which include: case management services to help people resolve financial, emotional and family issues; long-term disaster case management services; eviction and homelessness prevention; emergency food; immigration legal services; refugee resettlement; ESOL services; after-school programs at summer camps and community centers; and supportive housing programs for adults with serious mental illness. Through its programs, CCCS serves thousands of individuals each year without regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

Building on a 25-year history of serving low-income, high-needs, at-risk youth and families in northern Manhattan and the Highbridge and Morrisania sections of the Bronx, CCCS' Alianza Division operates successful, high quality, youth-focused programming in public schools and NYCHA housing facilities. We effectively engage parents, and other school and community stakeholders to improve students' educational outcomes and increase access to much-needed resources. Our Beacon and Cornerstone programs in Washington Heights (Northern Manhattan) and in Highbridge (West Bronx) are community centers that transform local schools or NYCHA housing facilities into thriving neighborhood centers after school and in the summer months. These programs provide a safe, supervised place for youth to go for recreation, cultural activities, homework help, tutoring, and counseling. Many also offer programs for parents, siblings or the whole community including English language classes, recreation or computer training. CCCS has also operates the Saturday Night Lights (SNL) program at our Bacon and Cornerstone sites in Highbridge and Washington Heights as well as at the Brandis High School Campus on the Upper West Side, providing youth a safe, fun and productive space during times when crime and victimization rates are at their peak – on Friday and Saturday nights.

We appreciate the attention the Council has paid to the need for increased resources for youth services in its response to the FY23 Budget. Catholic Charities Community Services was able to provide services through our four Summer Rising programs connected to two of our COMPASS programs and two Beacon sites. We also continued to provide five SNL sites this summer that

open the doors to 5 safe spaces on Saturday afternoon and evening to hundreds of youth in our communities that we serve. Summer rising is a good approach to expand summer services to youth that are mandated to summer school, but we realized that it is best to provide traditional Summer Day Camp Services and provide those mandated participants with a summer experience in the afternoons like the former Summer in the City Model that can accommodate the families need. We also would suggest that the D75 participants have separate activities and will be able to participate in the weekly outings with the support of paraprofessionals as they do need additional support.

The most challenging part of summer rising was the enrollment. Although the idea of creating a portal for parents to complete online applications was good, taking away the enrollment power from the CBO presented its issues. The CBO would need to go through the DOE/school administrator to re-enroll students whose parents received an email confirming their child's placement but would not show up on our DYCD connect page. I believe that allowing CBOs to handle the enrollment process directly can make for a smoother transition to the DOE's System.

Furthermore, additional challenges include the inability of the program to service middle school participants over the summer. As we are in an elementary school building, camps could only provide services to the grades in which the building you're housed in services throughout the school year, thus not allowing us to meet our numbers for middle school participation. This takes away from the Beacon concept of Community Center.

When it comes to SNL we need to continue to work on what role and contributions the NYPD will play during the sessions. It was a good addition to include meals as we continue to see food insecurities in our communities. We have worked with some of our officers at some sites to create a safe passage for our participants on their way home.

SYEP we believe we will have to see if we can do younger youth to in person employment opportunities and see if they can receive an hourly wage. We saw many of our participants seek employment on their own to increase their incomes. We are also looking at going back to in person orientation and enrollment as it allows the CBO to ensure that the paperwork for enrollment is properly corrected.

Equally important is the Council's support of increasing the per participant reimbursement rate for Beacons, Cornerstones, and other DYCD contracted program in parity with any increases in the rates for Summer Rising. CCCS has been proud to partner with the City to operate these programs, but cannot deny that contract delays, insufficient reimbursements, and last-minute regulatory changes have impacted our ability to offer services to as many young New Yorkers as possible. We appreciate the Administration and the Council's efforts to resolve these issues and look forward to further collaboration through the remainder of FY23.

On behalf of New York's most vulnerable and Catholic Charities Community Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and thank you for continuing to serve this great City of New York. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional detail.



Testimony of Lena Bilik, Senior Policy Analyst, Children's Aid

Submitted Testimony – City Council Youth Services Committee Hearing 10/25/22

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Althea Stevens and the members of the Youth Services committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on Summer Rising and SYEP. Thank you to the New York City Council for your leadership on issues that impact the youth and families of NYC.

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

Throughout the challenges of the last few years, youth serving community-based organizations like Children's Aid have stepped up as crucial partners to our schools and communities. The need is still incredibly high for young people and their families, and the pandemic only exacerbated the inequities already present in our communities. Summer programs and workforce opportunities are crucial bridges between school years and provide a touchpoint to keep young people on track with academics, social-emotional growth, and career development. We are still seeing high needs in academics and interrupted learning, mental health, food access, and trauma and grief. Youth programs and summer programming are critical support systems for both young people and families that must be well funded and accessible as we collectively recover from these challenging times.

Summer Rising

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Feedback:

The challenges around Summer Rising were mostly due to operational issues, inequitable funding streams, and a lack of continuity in children served by providers throughout the school year. Our recommendations below go more into detail on those issues, but overall if the operational and implementation issues were resolved, and there was greater collaboration between DYCD and providers and DOE, the model could be successful. We didn't really have the chance to see the model in the way that it was designed because of implementation barriers, programs not being fully staffed, and a lack of clear pedagogy for the day time programming. If we could smooth out the bumps, we are still confident that the idea behind Summer Rising could be implemented to the benefit of young people. We know that academic needs are high, and the idea of weaving academic support into summer programming is still incredibly relevant. But in order for this to be successful, there must be changes made.

Recommendations to make a Summer Rising model smoother and more effective:

- **Plan far in advance and incorporate parent choice:** There must be a dedicated full-time team of staff working on summer rising. This is critical not only for providers and their planning, but for parents, youth, and school staff. By February, parents should know what options are for summer, and schools and youth services providers should start flagging what young people need in terms of support. Ensuring we know what our young people need and want and then providing programming that meets their needs is critical. Our young people are diverse in their needs, therefore, their options for programming should be diverse to handle those needs as well. Some need summer programming that is more like summer camp, some need more academic support. Youth needs and parent choice should be integrated.
- **Contracting delays must be resolved:** In addition, we call on the City for the immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for work done in Summer 2021 and 2022, as contracts must be registered promptly and with as little back-and-forth with providers as possible per the Mayor's promise earlier this year in creating the office of Nonprofit Contracting. Moving forward, all contracts should be year-round, 12-month contracts to make the procurement process as efficient as possible.
- **Return enrollment from DOE to DYCD.** DYCD controlling enrollment will help providers adequately plan for and hire staff appropriately. Additionally, many families who have been served by us for a long time were not able to be in our programs despite wanting to. This kept DYCD providers from maintaining consistent relationships and support, which in previous iterations of summer programming was a great asset to young people and families. This also supported the continuity of learning and academics when it involved schools we were already partners in.



- **Salary parity for summer providers:** Cornerstones and Beacons are open for more hours in the summer, but received lower reimbursement rates than their school counterparts during Summer Rising. Many providers, like Children's Aid, have multiple contracts with DYCD that include center-based programs and school-based, and as a result received inequitable funding across contracts. One of the biggest successes from the last two summers of Summer Rising was our ability to serve more young people than ever before in summer programming, and a lot of the programming was very creative. The rates that providers received were far closer to the true cost of programming than previous summer rates, and those higher rates should remain – they just need to be consistent across all summer programs.

SYEP

We were very glad to see the historic expansion of the enormously impactful Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) in last year's preliminary budget, an exciting step forward in actualizing how important youth employment is to our communities. We applaud the Mayor and the Council for this expansion, and for understanding that early, stable funding is key to the success of SYEP.

Feedback and Recommendations:

- Early investment (and inclusion in the preliminary budget) made all the difference this year by giving the field ample time to prepare.
- DYCD's responsiveness to provider/advocate suggestions was a model that should be followed in future summers. DYCD worked hard to accomplish key reforms to the program that made it better for young people and more efficient for providers, including:
 - Removing requirements for family income documentation
 - More transparency around the audit process, allowing providers to collect fewer documents from young people- though we would like to highlight the need for providers to know what will be reviewed next year as certain COVID-era flexibilities may change.
- Moving to calendar-year contracts was a major accomplishment as well, which helped providers to be more nimble and use more common-sense budgeting.
- Looking forward:
 - Let's prioritize ways to increase access while we scale up SYEP. Changes (and resources for providers) are needed to allow young people who are undocumented, youth who primarily speak languages other than English, and youth with disabilities to also benefit from SYEP.



- Applications still need to be released sooner, and young people should be given more of a choice even in special initiatives if they want to use a trusted provider.
- Changes made to the online portal/application should be made with feedback from providers ahead of time; we should discuss as early as possible what will be on the app next year and allow for provider feedback.
- Continue the flexibility provided during the COVID pandemic; it made things smoother for providers, youth, and work sites.
- Continue options for virtual learning experiences for younger youth.
- Continue expansion of civic opportunities for youth to work in government agencies and elected officials' offices.

As an agency committed to eradicating poverty in the neighborhoods that we serve, we will do all that we can to advocate, protect, and increase funding for the most under-resourced youth and families in NYC. We understand the challenges the City faces to meet the needs of the city's young people, especially given the immense challenges that have been exacerbated through the crisis of the last few years. Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council for their vigorous support of children, youth, families, and communities in New York City, and we look forward to continuing to partner.

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



Written Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti
Policy and Advocacy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Submitted to New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Oversight Hearing on Summer 2022 Programming
October 25, 2022

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

I would like to thank Chair Stevens and the Committee on Youth Services for holding this hearing to review Summer 2022 programming.

Summer programming is an essential part of youth development. These programs create opportunities for young people to make money, gain enrichment, build community, and have fun. It is of the utmost importance therefore to ensure that these programs continue to be well-funded, and providers have the resources and time they need to prepare for the summer.

We were pleased to see the increased investment in youth employment, with the increase of baselined youth employment slots to 100,000; of which 90,000 were for the Summer Youth Employment Program. This was the biggest expansion in the program's history, and it was possible because the plan to expand SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) was early in the budget cycle with baselined funding, giving DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) providers an opportunity to prepare, and the collaboration between DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment. This past summer's success shows how powerful our City can be in improving the lives of young people when we center the voices of youth and providers calling for more opportunities.

Data shows that SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) participation decreases arrests and convictions during the summer months for young people involved in the program.¹ Investments are critical to support young people as we recover from the pandemic. We hope NYC (New York City) can move towards a Universal SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) program, where every young person who wants to participate is able, regardless of lottery status or immigration status.

The second iteration of Summer Rising was an improvement from the pilot year, yet there were still significant challenges that providers hoped would be addressed prior to the summer beginning that were left unresolved; namely, issues with staffing, enrollment, and operational concerns. This is frustrating as providers and families took the time to express the issues of the program to the City but were ignored. While blending academics and positive youth development is a great idea since they can complement each other, Summer Rising 2022 prioritized academics at the loss of more youth development. This

¹ <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28373>



resulted in youth workers not having the agency to offer the curriculum, programs, and community building they hoped to provide. Furthermore, it is not fair nor equitable that youth who cannot afford summer camp must enroll in a summer school program. Given these constraints, CCC urges the City to shift to a K-8 summer programming model that includes the critical positive aspects of summer camp models. This program needs a sustained increased investment in cost-per-participant rates which results in wider access for families.

With this shift in programming, the City must also restore power to CBOs (Community Based Organizations) to complete the following:

- **Design programming such that it is responsive to local needs**
- **Manage their own budgets without having to go through inefficient processes to justify their spending and secure approval**
- **Enroll families, especially families who need additional digital and language support to apply for programming, and**
 - **Maintain their own rosters so that if there are young people who cannot attend the CBO's programming, CBOs have the power to unenroll that youth and give that slot to a young person who can attend so the slot does not go to waste**
 - **Maintain SACC (School Age Child Care) licensing ratios of staff to youth and allow for budgets that account for the additional staff and OTPS costs**
- **Access more robust and comprehensive trainings to support District 75 youth who do want to enroll into summer experiences in addition to having resources available for that child's specific needs (accessibility equipment, consistent paraprofessional staff presence, clear escalation protocols, and additional layers of support)**

Additionally, the following recommendations are for general summer programming changes that we urge this Committee to consider:

- **Beacon and Cornerstone summer programming deserve cost-per-participant rates on par with their school-based alternatives to ensure secure staffing levels across the system**
- **The City must make immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for any work done in Summer 2021 and Summer 2022 and implement procedures that allow for swift registration of contracts and timely payment for services for all future services rendered.**
- **Planning for future summer programming should be modeled after this year's successful expansion of SYEP—by investing early to give sufficient time to prepare and remaining attentive to feedback from providers and advocates**
- **Shift to year-round contracts so providers have greater flexibility and time to prepare for summer programming.**
- **Expedite the screening of staff and clear the backlog of background checks, to not delay program start times.**

It is essential that all children can benefit from arts, culture, sports, recreation, experiential programming, and trips and that older children have access to employment opportunities. No child should be left out, especially those with academic needs, disabilities, or any other factors. To build back from this pandemic we must invest in our children, and we must invest in ways that promote joy, curiosity, fun, and adventure. To do that, we need robust, well-funded, and organized summer programming.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.



**Testimony of Educational Alliance
Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Oversight Hearing on Summer 2022 Planning
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair
October 25, 2022**

Thank you Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Elizabeth Bird and I am the Director of Public Policy at Educational Alliance.

For more than 130 years, Educational Alliance has brought together and partnered with diverse communities in Lower Manhattan, offering individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

In summer 2022, Educational Alliance served as the lead CBO partner for four school communities on the Lower East Side through the Summer Rising initiative. It has been our privilege to serve our community's children and families in this role, providing arts exploration, drama, fitness, cooking and much more. At EA, we fundamentally believe that every person is born with a divine spark of dignity and creativity and this value is central to our youth development philosophy and programming.

The concept behind Summer Rising – to expand access to summer programming – is promising in theory, and demonstrates a commitment to universal access. High quality summer learning experiences are instrumental in improving student outcomes during the school year. Yet low-income students are less likely to participate in engaging summer programming because of limited availability of affordable, quality programs. Universal, affordable summer enrichment programming is an important policy solution to the opportunity gap that disproportionately impacts low-income youth and to ensure that more children have high quality programming to keep them engaged and learning. Summer programming for youth is also a fundamental support for working parents who need reliable childcare during summer months.

In attempting to blend academic achievement with fun and engaging experiences for young people, Summer Rising risks minimizing the importance of positive youth development work. Stimulating activities that encourage positive social interactions and promote fun, healthy ways of communicating and socializing are critical for building communities and for the health and mental health of young people while also providing experiences that enrich their learning during the school year. While the current model may have helped address disrupted learning from the pandemic years, it is important that the City commit to summer programming that is rich and engaging while emphasizing academic learning.

To build upon the existing Summer Rising initiative, the City must leverage the unique skills and talents of contracted providers to design innovative, inclusive programs that are reflective of the community and offer fun opportunities to socialize and enjoy the City's many rich cultural offerings.

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We therefore recommend the following:

Summer program design must emphasize positive youth development. High quality summer programming must not lose its core value of being fun. Rich, experiential learning opportunities balanced with time to connect with peers and to de-stress build a foundation for children to grow. Traditional, mandated summer school – focused entirely on academic remediation rather than enrichment – is notoriously centralized and impersonal, with children assigned to school sites and teachers who may be unfamiliar to them, while reviewing material from the previous school year.

Ensure efficiency in operations and contracting processes. Both contracting and operations processes for Summer Rising need to be centralized and well-coordinated to minimize disruptions and ensure CBO providers have time to conduct collaborative program design and create positive experiences for young people. The City should:

- Increase contract rates for per student costs with additional weight for identified needs of students; costs associated with staffing, trips, buses have all increased with inflation so the current per student enrollment no longer is sufficient to provide high quality programming and staffing.
- Provide additional funding for a ‘floater’ staff position – someone to cover programming if there are staff absences or emergencies and maintain safe student to staff ratios.
- Commit to streamlined communication and collaborative programming between all agencies involved in summer programming. Too often, guidance provided through one agency is not communicated to other agencies, leading to duplicative efforts, confusion, and misaligned program goals.
- Operational issues must be addressed early to achieve program success. Regardless of the programming model, the City needs to have centralized and well-coordinated operations support specific to summer youth programming to manage and respond to regulatory issues between DYCD, DOE, and DOHMH.

Ensure equitable access for students with disabilities. If a student’s IEP requires a one-on-one paraprofessional or any additional services, the City must make these services available. Last summer, families were responsible for sharing information about student IEP needs. The Department of Education should provide greater assistance to ensure families can do this.

Summer Youth Employment Program

The City needs a truly **inclusive youth development strategy that invests in work-based learning opportunities** for high school students and young adults. Traditional SYEP programming, while providing needed jobs and paychecks for teens, does not go far enough to pave a pathway to modern, family-sustaining career opportunities for young people. Innovative work-based learning programs – paid or credit-bearing apprenticeships in a real-world career environment – provide young people pivotal educational experiences that empower them to identify and develop their skills and interests and plan for their futures with confidence. The City should:

- Fund community organizations to contract with industry partners to develop work-based learning programs and school-connected apprenticeships, with a goal towards developing

credit-bearing work opportunities for all New York's high school students that meet rigorous learning standards.

- Align school staffing to support work-based learning programming. High schools should have dedicated staff to develop and coordinate internship opportunities, help connect experiences to classroom instruction, and ensure alignment with course requirements.

We believe the goals of universal summer programming and work-based learning are valuable and achievable. But reforms are needed to make this program truly successful and significant for the young people we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony of John Williams, Co-Founder and CEO
Reel Works before the NYC Council Committee on Youth Services - Oversight -
Summer Rising 2022 / Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) 2022.
Hon. Althea V. Stevens, Chair

October 25, 2022

Thank you to Chair Stevens and the City Council Committee on Youth Services for this opportunity to testify in support of expanded summer and year-round youth employment in NYC.

My name is John Williams and I am the Co-Founder & CEO of Reel Works, a Brooklyn based youth arts and career development nonprofit that has mentored and trained thousands of young filmmakers citywide through in school, after school, and workforce programs for over 20 years. Today my testimony is about bringing our successful career exploration program - MediaMKRS - to additional youth through summer and year round SYEP.

I want to first thank Chair Stevens for awarding Reel Works a CASA grant this year to bring our award-winning filmmaking programs to Jordon L. Mott Middle School 22 in District 16 in the Bronx.

Reel Works' CASA partnerships with community schools are the first step in a continuum of opportunities we provide young New Yorkers to discover filmmaking, tell their stories and to explore careers in film and television. A key component of that are internships - paid internships - starting in high school.

Through MediaMKRS, a partnership between Reel Works, The Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment, CUNY and leading media companies in NYC, High School and CUNY Students explore careers through multiple paid internships over 2-3 years combined with workforce readiness training, 1:1 coaching and industry-backed digital credentials.

We partner with over 80 employers including major studios like Paramount, Warner Bros. Discovery, NBCUniversal, Netflix and Amazon.

What began as a work readiness initiative has become a jobs program with 87% of our graduates securing employment within twelve months of graduation.

MediaMKRS works. Our participants graduate with resumes of success, knowledge of the industry, professional networks and wrap around support as they seek employment.



This year, we will provide nearly 200 NYC youth with paid media internships and will expand our reach to include out of school/out of work young adults.

Currently, MediaMKRS is not a Summer Youth Employment provider. While we wait for an opportunity to become one, we are seeking support to connect with current providers with which we could partner to bring MediaMKRS to more young New Yorkers.

As a year-round program that provides multiple internships over time, we strongly support year-round internship support so that young New Yorkers - whether they are in high school, CUNY or are out of school or unemployed - can earn money while building resumes, professional networks, skills and knowledge that lead to careers with opportunities for advancement.

Our three year partnership with The Mayor's Office and CUNY has proven the effectiveness of our approach and we look forward to expanding our reach to provide opportunities for talented young people to explore and launch careers in NYC's \$82 Billion entertainment industry.

Thank you!



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Oversight Hearing on Summer Rising/Summer Youth Employment Program 2022

New York City Council Committee on Youth Services Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair

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

October 25th, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Stevens and members of the Committee on Youth Services, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA has more than 50 thousand engaged donors in the New York area, supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services, and allocates over \$150 million each year to strengthen Jewish life, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA's network of nonprofit partners hosted Summer Rising programs in every borough of the city in 2021 and 2022. These nonprofits oversaw city funded COMPASS and SONYC summer programs before the creation of Summer Rising and have extensive experience serving children and youth in summer and after school programs. UJA's nonprofits also host some of the largest Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP) in the city. The following details some of challenges UJA's network of nonprofits experienced overseeing Summer Rising and Summer Youth Employment Programs in 2022 and offers recommendations on how to improve the system of supports for children and youth during the summer and beyond.

Summer Rising

Many providers appreciated the increased number of children and youth they were able to reach through Summer Rising, as well as the enhanced rates they received for running programs when compared to previous city-funded COMPASS and SONYC summer programming. The concept of Summer Rising--promising academics in the morning and enrichment led opportunities in the afternoon--intrigued many children and youth summer program providers. However, how the program was implemented created a challenging environment for community-based organizations (CBOs).

First, despite being promised enhanced rates, many providers are still waiting to be compensated for work completed during Summer Rising 2022. Both in 2021 and 2022, CBOs were left out of the planning process for Summer Rising and were ultimately made to oversee a program they were not involved in designing. After the summer of 2021, CBOs were sent surveys by DYCD and DOE that were aimed at better understanding their experiences overseeing Summer Rising. Many providers completed the surveys but ultimately felt none of their feedback was considered or used to improve the program.

One glaring example of this was how children and youth were enrolled in the program. Both in 2021 and in 2022, CBOs had no control over the enrollment in their Summer Rising programs. CBOs were told to accept all children and/or youth who showed interest in participating in their programs, even when many programs were at capacity. In other instances, once programs began and children and youth who were registered did not show-up, CBOs could not fill vacant spots with individuals who were interested in attending their program and were unable to register originally. Children and youth who attend school year programming at CBOs were unable to get into Summer Rising programs hosted by the same CBOs forcing many to attend programs located far from their homes with staff they had no previous relationship with. Transportation was also not guaranteed for the majority of Summer Rising participants meaning families had to locate ways to get their children to sites that were often located far from where they live.

CBOs also had little control over the Summer Rising programs they were managing. The DOE was the lead city agency overseeing Summer Rising implementation. Just getting questions answered regarding operational issues from the DOE was extremely challenging resulting in many CBOs feeling like they received little to no support when they needed it. Community based organizations were often placed in schools they previously never ran programs in. This resulted in providers both having to become accustomed to a new space when they were designing their activities as well as having to interact with principals, they had no prior relationship with.

CBOs also felt that they were inadequately prepared and supported to engage participants with disabilities during the enrichment portion of the day. First, CBOs did not have access to IEPs and received little information on the needs of the participants with disabilities who attended their programs. Updated medical forms were not shared for any of the participants, meaning details like participants' food allergies were not reliably communicated to community based organizations. DOE paraprofessionals were supposed to be available during the enrichment part of the day, but CBOs had no protocol to follow when paraprofessionals were not available to work with participants who needed them. Lastly, CBOs found many paraprofessionals reluctant to listen to guidance from the CBOs and in many instances simply challenging to work with.

Moving forward, regardless of the structure of summer programs in 2023, the CBOs must be able to provide feedback to DYCD on how to improve the enrollment process. When programs are at capacity, there should be processes in place that help CBOs match children and youth to programs that still have space. There should be one enrollment list that both CBOs and schools use to monitor who is in their programs. Whenever possible, CBOs should be placed with schools they already have a relationship with. If CBOs are placed with schools, they do not have a relationship with, these placements should be made as soon as possible to give CBOs enough time to familiarize themselves with the school and the community they will be serving. Lastly, contracts need to be registered and paid promptly for community based organizations to be compensated in a timely manner for the work they completed. Community based organizations are committed to providing a high-quality summer program to children and youth in New York

City. However, the previous issues must be addressed to offer the providers the support they need to accomplish this task.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Increased investment in the Summer Youth Employment Program allowed CBOs to connect over 90,000 youth with meaningful, paid work experiences during summer 2022. The inclusion of increased funding for SYEP in the Preliminary Budget allowed providers ample time to prepare. Advocates and providers appreciated DYCD's responsiveness to their suggestions on what reforms needed to be implemented to make onboarding youth more efficient. Specifically, removing the requirements for family income documentation and requiring in general fewer documents to be collected from youth made the entire onboarding experience run more smoothly. Lastly, transitioning SYEP contracts from three month to twelve-month contracts helped providers be more thoughtful on how they budgeted for their programs.

SYEP providers did experience some struggles. Many providers had difficulty finding employees to oversee the program. Securing diverse worksites proved to be a problem. Completing comprehensive background checks (CBC) in a timely manner was also a huge obstacle for CBOs. The Adams' administration recently released *Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City* committed the city to hire 40 additional staff at DOHMH to oversee the CBC process and transition to an automated system that will hopefully result in more efficient uploading of materials. UJA supports the development of the online system and recommends that the city have this new system up and running by February 2023, and that all pending clearances be addressed by February 2023 before nonprofits begin actively hiring for summer programs like the SYEP. DOHMH must test this online system with providers before it is launched so that end-users can provide feedback before it is live. Lastly, UJA encourages DOHMH to collaborate with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) on any issues at the state level impacting the timely completion of comprehensive background checks. It is imperative that the issues with the comprehensive background check system are fixed by the winter, so SYEP and other summer program providers do not have to deal with an extremely delayed background check process for a fourth summer in a row.

This coming year, DYCD must continue to work with SYEP providers and address the challenges they faced while building on their successes. It is also important to not only focus on increasing the number of youth who can benefit from this program but also focus on increasing access to SYEP for groups who have not been able to participate in the program in the past. Specifically, looking at ways to engage youth who primarily speak languages other than English and youth with disabilities.

Conclusion

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these recommendations. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1338.



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Oversight: Summer 2022 Programming
Submitted by Dante Bravo, Youth Policy Analyst
October 25, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dante Bravo, and I am the Youth Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 46 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

Summer Programming 2022

Summer programming, including summer camps and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), has long been the cornerstone of the positive youth development movement, offering exciting and supportive programs outside of the school year that expose youth to different learning modalities and stem summer learning-loss. A healthy, successful youth services ecosystem that meets the needs of all youth over the summer requires both school-based and community-based programs, and it is crucial that New York City maintain and invest in both to ensure that youth and families have choices and options on how to spend their summer months.

Settlement houses and other community-based organizations (CBOs) are experts in providing responsive services and are uniquely qualified to offer guidance on what must be done for the

benefit of all youth and families across the city. CBOs often lead conversations with the families they serve in their local contexts to decide what programming would be best every given summer, and the City must lean on this wealth of knowledge to ensure that the needs of children and families are met in program design and offerings. Much of this testimony draws on lessons learned from this past summer and feedback from our settlement house members on how to improve going forward. For a successful summer 2023, UNH urges the City to consider the following:

- CBOs need agency over their summer programming offerings to ensure that those offerings are responsive to local need
- Beacon and Cornerstone summer programming deserve cost-per-participant rates on par with their school-based alternatives to ensure secure staffing levels across the system
- The City must register the immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for any work done in Summer 2021 and Summer 2022, and implement procedures that allow for swift registration of contracts for all future services rendered.
- Planning for future summer programming should be modeled after this year's successful expansion of SYEP—by investing early to give sufficient time to prepare and remaining attentive to feedback from providers and advocates.

Summer Rising

This past summer, the City continued Summer Rising—a partnership between the Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) that began in 2021. While there were some improvements over the pilot year of the partnership, there were still major breakdowns and tensions in the partnership between DOE and DYCD that created tremendous operational challenges on the ground. These challenges were especially problematic given the amount of time and energy CBOs had spent providing feedback after year one. Instead of listening to CBO providers on numerous issues around enrollment, staffing, and other operational concerns, the City moved forward with Summer Rising 2022 repeating many of the same mistakes of the previous year to the detriment of New York City's youth and families.

In concept, positive youth development and academics, both essential pillars to the growth and enrichment of young people, should compliment each other well in a partnership of this sort. Unfortunately, the 2022 Summer Rising model deprioritized positive youth development in favor of academic frameworks. The model in practice robbed youth work professionals of their ability to implement community-driven programming, instead being asked to supplement the DOE's mission.

Summer Rising uses a deficit-based approach in understanding the needs of young people, and mandated summer school becomes the cost for attending free camp. This is despite the fact that this generation of young people have survived a collective traumatic event (COVID-19 and its aftermath) and have demonstrated creativity, resilience, and strength throughout this time. To

reduce our young people to academic deficits—and then design programming exclusively on that basis—ignores the urgency for a more nuanced, multi-disciplinary approach in understanding their needs after a disruptive crisis. CBOs, in traditional summer camp, have been using a strengths-based framework for decades, but Summer Rising undermines much of the life-changing work CBOs do because quantitative academic outcomes have been prioritized. The City has yet to provide meaningful data or research to compel New York City's families to continue in this model, which essentially forces low-income families to enroll their children in summer school with few other alternatives. This despite the fact that clear evidence has shown that traditional summer camp had positive academic benefits while *also* helping to develop other core skills that are difficult to attain in a classroom setting.¹

UNH urges the City to shift to a K-8 summer programming model that draws from the best aspects of Summer Rising and the summer camp models that preceded it. Aspects of Summer Rising have been tremendously positive, including ensuring that young people who do participate in summer school can access camp as well (something that was previously difficult with conflicting schedules) and an increased investment in cost-per-participant rates which resulted in wider access for families. However, along with these elements, the City must restore power to CBOs to do the following:

- Design their programming such that it is responsive to local needs
- Manage their own budgets without having to go through inefficient processes to justify their spending and secure approval,
- Enroll families, especially families who need additional digital and language support to apply for programming, and
 - Maintain their own rosters so that if there are young people who cannot attend the CBO's programming, CBOs have the power to unenroll that youth and give that slot to a young person who can attend so the slot does not go to waste
- Maintain SACC licensing ratios of staff to youth and allow for budgets that account for the additional staff and OTPS costs
- Access more robust and comprehensive trainings to support District 75 youth who do want to enroll into summer experiences in addition to having resources available for that child's specific needs (accessibility equipment, consistent paraprofessional staff presence, clear escalation protocols, and additional layers of support)

Non-academic experiences are what our young people's wealthier counterparts get to experience in the summer, and it is fundamentally unfair that low-income students or those whose families cannot afford expensive private camp experiences must therefore enroll in summer school to access something similar. If the City continues to do a one size fits all for K-8 summer programming by only investing in Summer Rising as the end-all, be-all model, then we are complicit with a long, painful history of denying families of less means choice. Working parents of all incomes and backgrounds deserve better options for their families than a program that

¹ Taken from [Socioeconomic Effects of the COVID19 Pandemic K-12 Educational Achievement](#), 2021

essentially amounts to summer school with minimal elements of recreation in the afternoon; this is especially true for Black and brown families whose young people want summers of recreation, play, and meaningful connection with their peers and supportive adults in a non-academic setting.

Beacons, Cornerstones, and the Need for Community Based Summer Programming

Community center sites like Cornerstones and Beacons allow CBOs to create programming that centers the needs of their local community. This style of programming allows young people an intentional space to develop holistically within a supportive community in an assets-based program framework rather than within a deficit model that does not recognize the skills, knowledge, and multiple intelligences our young people already possess.

Unfortunately, despite all of the incredible work and potential of these programs, Beacons, Cornerstones, and other community-based programs have been left behind in the City's rush to fund school-based programming. These programs were already underfunded compared to traditional SONYC and COMPASS rates, and that gap between contracts became a chasm with the influx of investment in the form of Summer Rising's enhanced rates, despite these centers being open for longer hours (including weekends) than their school-based counterparts.

The under-funding of community-based programs is especially concerning in the summer when staffing levels need to be increased so that providers are not forced to work their Beacon or Cornerstone staff overtime, resulting in increased expenses and burnout. The reality is that contract budgets do not cover these basic needs, forcing providers to choose between over-working and under-paying their staff, or moving independently-raised funds—which many providers do not have—into these programs to meet the bare minimum staffing levels and wages required. While some larger, more-established providers have been able to make in-kind contributions to their Cornerstone contracts to offer compelling and engaging programming through the summer months, this is an unsustainable solution that locks smaller providers with less fundraising capabilities out of the program.

Cornerstones in particular also face the challenge of running program within an NYCHA-based spaces which means the same issues with mold, lead, vermin, and crumbling infrastructure that NYCHA residents face in their apartments plague NYCHA community center sites, and those challenges make it difficult to run effective programming.

If the City continues to underfund Beacon or Cornerstones' contracts, it creates a staffing crisis for these programs in a field that is already severely underpaid and in an unprecedented staffing scarcity. Despite the fact that Cornerstone and Beacon staff do the similar work to their counterparts in SONYC, COMPASS, and Summer Rising programs, they are paid at a lower rate, putting a CBO who has many of these contracts in the difficult position of legitimizing wage disparity for staff that serve the same communities.

UNH recommends that Beacon and Cornerstones contracts receive a cost-per-participant rates on par with the rates school-based programs received for Summer Rising, if not higher cost-per-participant rates given that these programs are responsible for facilities maintenance, more hours of operation, and many more concerns not present in a school-based program. This investment should be sufficient to raise wages for existing community center staff so that those with similar jobs to their school-based counterparts receive equal pay for equal work. Allowing this discrepancy in funding is the equivalent of defunding youth and families who could not or chose not to access the Summer Rising program, despite the fact that these young people reside in the same communities the City wants to support through Summer Rising's programming.

Contracting Concerns

In addition, UNH calls on the City for the immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for work done in Summer 2021 and 2022, as contracts must be registered promptly and with as little back-and-forth with providers as possible per the Mayor's promise earlier this year in creating the office of Nonprofit Contracting. Moving forward, all contracts should be year-round, 12 month contracts to make the procurement process as efficient as possible.

Indirect rates must be paid in full, in accordance with the City's Indirect Cost Rate Initiative. As new contracts take effect after a new RFP takes place for SONYC and COMPASS programming that will impact summer programming, the City must allow providers to claim those rates at the outset, not have a placeholder rate that later gets amended. Cost escalators must be included in the contracts, in accordance with inflation.

SYEP

This summer, the City made an unprecedented investment in summer employment for young people, expanding the number of jobs available up to 100,000 baselined slots. 90,000 of those jobs were offered through SYEP. While a 20% expansion of any program, let alone a program that was already serving tens of thousands of people, is always going to be a challenge, this expansion was necessary because each year tens of thousands of young people were turned away from SYEP when their names were not drawn from the lottery. Despite those challenges, the expansion was a success, thanks in no small part to herculean efforts by SYEP providers and DYCD to pull off the biggest single-year expansion in the program's history.

Here are some successes in operations that made SYEP 2022 possible:

- Early investment: The Mayor announced plans to expand SYEP early in the budget process, including baselined funding to cover the expansion in his Preliminary Budget Proposal. This early investment allowed providers and DYCD time to prepare to ramp-up programming and develop partnerships with more employers.
- Collaborative planning: DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE) worked collaboratively with providers and advocates, sourcing ideas for how to streamline

programming and create efficiencies that would allow providers to serve more young people. DYCD worked hard to make key changes to reporting that would save time during enrollment, including eliminating family income documentation requirements and sharing information with providers on how auditing would work to allow CBOs to streamline their own collection procedures.

- Common-sense budgeting: Before 2022, SYEP contracts bridged the City's fiscal year, which meant that providers had to guess how much of their budget would be needed for start-up costs and how much they would use for operational costs. If providers guessed wrong, they would be forced to leave money on the table that could have been used to provide better service to young people. DYCD worked hard to move the program to calendar-year budgets this year, which allowed providers to remain nimble and respond to unanticipated challenges by moving money around to meet current needs.

SYEP 2022 is a great example of what happens when providers, advocates, and the City come together to meet a shared goal. Everyone wanted to see more jobs made available to young people, and the City listened to what providers said would make expansion possible, paving the way towards a Universal SYEP model that makes lottery admissions a thing of the past.

Moving forward, universal SYEP will mean that no young person who wants to work and earn income for themselves or their family is left behind. This will take coordinate effort and thoughtful planning, with a particular eye towards access for youth who are undocumented and youth with disabilities. The City has work to do to ensure that universal SYEP means universal access, but following the same approach taken this summer will go a long way towards making it happen on a timeline that is reflective of the needs of New York City's young people.

Conclusion

It is UNH's ultimate goal that any New York City family who needs quality youth programming regardless of income will be able to access it. UNH hopes to see more program planning processes in youth development move in the direction of SYEP's 2022 expansion: Early investment, collaboration between the City and provider/advocate community, and common-sense programmatic changes to increase efficiency. UNH urges the City to learn from that experience to harness the potential for expansive K-8 summer programming that allows families to choose options that best fits their youth's unique needs by tapping the expertise of the provider community, drawing them into program planning conversations, and listening to youth and families who are asking for choice and flexibility.

As the City prepares for Summer 2023, UNH will continue to be a resource for our partners in City government to continue to build towards universal SYEP and after-school and summer programming of quality that continues to set New York City as the country's leader in youth development. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at dbravo@unhny.org.



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
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FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Presented by Michael Rivadeneyra, Vice President of Government Relations**

**Oversight Hearing – Summer Rising and Summer Youth Employment Program
October 25, 2022**

I respectfully submit the following testimony on behalf of the YMCA of Greater New York.

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. With 24 YMCA branches and more than 100 community sites across New York City, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to older adult — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities. One of the primary ways the Y reaches the community is through our youth programs, which put kids on the path to success by developing skills for life, community, and leadership. Across our various youth programs, the Y helps young people build the social and emotional skills necessary for success. The YMCA engaged 8,000 students in Summer Rising, and the Y Afterschool program empowers nearly 10,000 children and teens each day to develop a fierce love of learning and an excitement to try new things, as well as access information, resources and people that will amplify their potential.

Summer Rising was a well-intentioned, laudable effort to address the learning loss incurred by students during the pandemic. In an effort to ensure the success of the program and provide our students and their families with the most seamless transition, the YMCA and other youth development providers called on the Administration to address the following concerns from 2021 prior to the launch this year:

1. Youth development providers need time to effectively ramp up and plan programming. Notice in April gave providers less than two months to plan for the summer;
2. DOE did not facilitate coordination between school faculty and community-based organizations (CBOs);
3. The parent experience registering their child was confusing and lacked language access;
4. Exclusion of rising kindergarten students;
5. Clearing the backlog of background checks;

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6. Over co-locating schools and providers in one school building;
7. Lack of parity funding between Summer Rising programs and those in center-based, Beacons and Cornerstones; and
8. Lack of coordination between the principal agencies – Department of Education (DOE), Department of Youth and Community Development, and Department of Health and Mental Health (DOHMH);
9. DOE's last-minute communications of student roster changes;
10. DOE and DYCD over-enrolling program sites;
11. Lack of paraprofessionals (paras) to support students with IEPs, including District 75 students, in the enrichment portion of the day frustrated CBO's ability to adequately meet the needs of these children;
12. Insufficient funding for middle school programming, including a model that did not provide full time childcare for working families.
13. Relocating members of vulnerable communities to programs up to 10 miles away from their school year program site: for example, no programming was offered on the Rockaway peninsula;
14. Funding for middle school Summer Rising was insufficient and programming for middle schoolers was 4 days a week and ended a week before elementary school Summer Rising;
15. Workforce shortage; and
16. Payment delays.

In 2021, the YMCA served 5,900 Summer Rising participants, growing to 8,000 in 2022. Despite the increase in participants, the enrollment process remained a challenge for parents and the YMCA. DOE and DYCD created a process that was onerous to navigate and prohibited providers from recruiting long standing participants. Due to the high demand for childcare over the summer from public school and charter school families, slots quickly filled, leaving many families searching for slots. The City's message to families seeking childcare services was to register and that site placements would be adjusted at a later time. Unfortunately, that was not the case. We had families in our programs traveling between boroughs, such as one child attending PS191 in Manhattan who was forced to travel from Queens daily.

Parents expressed frustration that they were not able to keep their child in a Y program over the summer due to site placement. The Y welcomed all participants to our Summer Rising programs, new and returning participants. Still, continuity of service is critical to developing rapport and trust with a child and family. Throughout the pandemic, the YMCA remained a constant for families and students, helping them navigate the transition back to in-person learning. After the trauma of the pandemic, best practice is to prioritize continuity of service to help families acclimate to this new reality.

DOE committed to providing continued support for students with IEPs, including a paraprofessional for all children who needed one. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of paras, coupled with health privacy laws that prohibit DOE from sharing student's IEP information with providers, the Y had to provide enrichment without para support or turn away children. In one of many such cases, a family enrolled at PS54 needed a para for their District 75 student, and

DOE was unable to secure the student a para for the enrichment segment of the day, thus forcing us to deny enrichment services to the child. As for students in general education with IEPs, DOE instructed us to engage with parents to learn about their child's needs because DOE was prohibited from sharing that information. In situations where we knew the family, that was an easy conversation; however, in cases where this was our first experience with the family, it was a more tenuous conversation. This highlights the importance of continuity of services being a key element of youth development, since building a rapport with a family takes time. For cases where we had more insight into a child's needs, we were unable to recruit paras on such short notice. Learning about a student's need well into the program, coupled with lack of support from school staff and a small workforce of paras placed providers in direct competition for paras with DOE. DOE had a significant advantage over CBOs as DOE had the ability to offer higher wages to candidates than CBOs, due to budget levels set by our contracts.

Last fall and winter, DOE and DYCD convened stakeholders to debrief and assess the successes and areas of improvement for Summer Rising. Providers, and high level DYCD and DOE representatives, participated in these conversations. However, the conversation would have been more fruitful had DOE included principals and Superintendents. As a result, partnership and collaboration often felt forced or an afterthought at the school level. In several of our schools, principals and teachers were more focused on academics than the spirit of Summer Rising being a comprehensive experience of academic and enrichments. This siloing of programs prevented our program directors from fully aligning enrichment activities, such as field trips, with the morning academic learning, which was a disservice to children in the program.

The City has yet to provide meaningful data or research to compel New York City's families to continue in this model, which essentially forces low-income families to enroll their children in summer school with few other alternatives. This despite the fact that clear evidence has shown that traditional summer camp had positive academic benefits while *also* helping to develop other core skills that are difficult to attain in a classroom setting.^[1] Non-academic experiences are what our young people's wealthier counterparts get to experience in the summer, and it is fundamentally unfair that low-income students or those whose families cannot afford expensive private camp experiences must therefore enroll in summer school to access something similar.

Previous debriefing sessions did have the positive result of advance planning and the Administration including Summer Rising in the Preliminary Budget, with set numbers of slots available. However, for a second summer in a row, Beacons, Cornerstones and center-based programs were left out of the rate increases. The YMCA served hundreds of youths in Beacon, Cornerstone and center-based contracts, employing over 50 counselors and support staff across those programs. The inequity of funding between programs created pay disparity between programs, and undermined recruitment efforts to fully staff these programs. Inadequate staffing resulted in not meeting ratio requirements, which in turn led to under enrollment of these non-school-based summer programs.

^[1] Taken from *Socioeconomic Effects of the COVID19 Pandemic K-12 Educational Achievement*, 2021

Although this Administration began earnest planning in the spring of 2022 for Summer Rising with all stakeholders, many of the logistical and programming shortcomings from year one remained unresolved.

An innovative, comprehensive response to the disruption in education and lack of socialization our youth suffered during these past years, was and is still critically needed. However, Summer Rising falls short of its intended goals. As an intervention strategy that is solely funded with American Rescue Plan dollars through Fiscal Year 2025, the City needs to rethink the summer youth development experience and create a sustainable system that shrinks the opportunity gap, is engaging, and incorporates the lessons learned from Summer Rising. The YMCA urges the City to shift to a K-8 summer programming model that draws from the best aspects of Summer Rising and the summer camp models that preceded it. Aspects of Summer Rising have been tremendously positive, including ensuring that young people who do participate in summer school can access camp as well (something that was previously difficult with conflicting schedules) and an increased investment in cost-per-participant rates which resulted in wider access for families. However, along with these elements, the City must restore power to CBOs to do the following:

1. A full day enrichment experience open to all children, run by CBO staff. DOE should provide academic services for students in need in a separately managed and staffed program. If a child is also enrolled in DOE academic services during the summer, they could attend DOE services in the morning and join the CBO-run program in the afternoon by accessing slots that have been set aside for these students;
2. Allow CBOs to enroll families, especially families who need additional digital and language support to apply for programming. And, allow CBOs to maintain their own rosters so that if there are young people who cannot attend the CBO's programming, CBOs have the power to unenroll that youth and give that slot to a young person who can attend so the slot does not go to waste;
3. DOE and DYCD should create a registration process, with language accessibility, that offers families the ability to register for either the full-day enrichment experience or register for academic services and one of the set-aside afternoon enrichment services;
4. Students registered for kindergarten for the upcoming school year should be eligible for summer programming;
5. DYCD and DOE should offer families in transitional housing/homeless shelters a Discover DYCD liaison to assist them in accessing all DYCD programs;
6. Restore CBOs' ability to recruit and maintain sole control the enroll process for participants;
7. Allow CBOs to design their own programming such that it is responsive to local needs;
8. DOE should give notice to providers of site placement in early spring;
9. Cap the number of schools and program providers co-located within a building to a reasonable number;
10. Where co-location exists there should be a lead provider who receives additional funding to hire a campus coordinator responsible for facilitating coordination and partnership across the schools and programs;

11. Access to more robust and comprehensive trainings to support District 75 youth who do want to enroll into summer experiences, in addition to having resources available for that child's specific needs (accessibility equipment, consistent paraprofessional staff presence, clear escalation protocols, and additional layers of support);
12. Participant rate equity across all the summer programs: school-based, center-based, Beacon and Cornerstone. The rates must match or exceed the current Summer Rising rates;
13. Allow CBOS to manage their own budgets without having to go through inefficient processes to justify their spending and secure approval;
14. Twelve-month contracts, where funding is consistent and reliable, so that summer planning and hiring can begin without disruptions in the late winter/early spring;
15. The City must restore funding to the indirect cost rate initiative;
16. Maintain SACC licensing ratios of staff to youth and allow for budgets that account for the additional staff and OTPS costs;
17. DYCD and DOHMH must support the timely processing of OCFS-6000 packets; one way is by investing in the necessary staffing at DOHMH to clear the backlog and the processing of SACC licenses; and
18. DOE identify and assign paras and SEITS to summer participants no later than June 30.

We appreciate your support, leadership, and partnership in helping deliver quality youth services, and helping more youth learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you so much for fighting for children and families across New York City. We look forward to working with you to address these urgent school reopening health and safety concerns.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Rivadeneyra, Vice President of Government Relations, at mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org or 212-630-9717.

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/25/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dante Bravo

Address: 45 Broadway, Suite 2201

I represent: United Neighborhood Forces

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/0/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edelir Silverio

Address: 1011 1st Ave N.Y.C. 10022

I represent: Catholic Charities Community Center

Address: _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Haskell

Address: DYCD

I represent: 2 Lafayette St. NYC

Address: _____

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Name: Darryl Rattray

Address: 2 Lafayette St, NY 10007

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

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Name: Daphne Moutance

Address: 2 Lafayette Street, 15th floor, NY, NY

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

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Name: Valerie Mulligan

Address: ~~2 Lafayette St~~ DYCD

I represent: DYCD Youth Workforce

Address: 2 Lafayette, 10007

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Name: Mark Trepper - Executive Director - Center

Address: 52 Chambers Street Governmental

I represent: NYC Department of Education Affairs

Address: _____

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/25/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams

Address: 1 Centre Street, 15th Floor

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/25/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Williams

Address: Harlem Area Bx 5th NY

I represent: Reel Works

Address: 540 Presb't St Brooklyn NY

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