



**Jess Dannhauser  
Commissioner**

**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Children and Youth Service Committee and Finance Committee  
May 10, 2024**

**FY 2025 Executive Budget**

Good morning Chairs Stevens and Brannan and members of the Committee on Children and Youth and members of the Finance Committee. I am Jess Dannhauser, the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). I am pleased to be joined at today's hearing on our Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget by Winette Saunders, First Deputy Commissioner, and Margaret Pletnikoff, the Deputy Commissioner for Finance.

Throughout our work in child welfare, juvenile justice, child care assistance and supporting the well-being of communities, we remain committed to helping build a New York City that is more safe, just and equitable for New York City's children and families. I look forward to sharing our progress with you, and am eager to continue partnering on our ongoing efforts to deepen our work in the coming year.

### **Our Progress This Year**

At ACS, we take our responsibility to keep children safe very seriously. We believe that essential to keeping children safe and families strong is working to provide families and communities with access to the supports they need to thrive. This is the work we do each and every day throughout our continuum and the work of our dedicated providers and their staff.

Affordable child care is critical; it allows parents to work or pursue training, knowing their children are cared for in a setting that supports their healthy development. We have continued to increase access to child care assistance. There are now over 37,000 children enrolled in child care with a low-income voucher helping offset cost to the family, an 105% increase from this time last year. We have also worked hard to



ensure families in the highest need neighborhoods can access affordable child care; we've seen a 582% increase enrollment with low-income vouchers from the 17 high need community districts since June 2022.

We have also continued to support families and communities by investing in our 11 Community Partnerships and now 12 open Family Enrichment Centers, with eight more FECS already working with their communities to open new sites over the coming fiscal year. We have deepened our efforts to build awareness among parents, caregivers, and child serving professionals about how to prevent unintentional child injuries, including by promoting infant safe sleep practices, medication safety and safe storage of cannabis-infused edibles. May is Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Awareness Month so we are working to ensure New Yorkers know that supporting parental health and well-being is a critical part of keeping children safe and preventing injuries like Shaken Baby Syndrome.

We are also continuing to strengthen our work to promote family-driven solutions to keeping children safe. We have increased CARES, our non-investigatory child protection response, so that now 25% of incoming reports receive this alternative approach that includes an assessment of child safety but importantly empowers the family to identify needed supports for themselves and their children. In addition, after a successful pilot, we are now nearly citywide with providing a translated notification form to better help parents understand their rights at the outset of a child protection investigation. To date, we have trained over 1,100 staff and anticipate all child protection staff will be trained by Memorial Day.

As a parent, I know that raising a child is enormously rewarding and can also be challenging. Along with our new (Acting) Deputy Commissioner for Prevention Services, Luisa Linares, we are focused on getting the word out so that families who are in need know how to access our continuum of prevention services. April was Child Abuse Prevention Month, so we used that opportunity to collaborate with our prevention provider partners through social media, a gathering at City Hall, and press coverage to spread the word about the free, voluntary services we provide to families regardless of immigration status, all across the city. Information about these services can be found on our web site at [www.nyc.gov/ForFamilies](http://www.nyc.gov/ForFamilies) and through calling our prevention hotline at (212) 676-7667.

Our goal, to increase the number of families receiving services without the need for a child welfare investigation, is resulting in promising outcomes. In the first three months of this year, we received more than twice as many referrals to prevention services from community sources than in the first three months of 2023. This means schools, hospitals, NYCHA, shelters and families themselves are learning how to access supportive family services without any involvement from child protection. Meanwhile, our new school-based early support program contracts go into effect in July.

While the number of children in foster care has continued to decrease to historic lows, we are also working with our providers to strengthen services and supports for children in foster care, their parents and their foster parents. We continue to emphasize kinship placements, where children are placed with relatives and close family friends. Today, approximately half of the children entering foster care are placed with kin. In addition, as part of our new foster care contracts, new foster parents are trained in the



Trauma-Responsive Informed Parenting Program (TRIPP), and 60% of these foster parents were trained as of May 1, 2024. In addition, over 4,000 NYC young people between the ages of 11-26, including 524 over 21 and 167 justice-involved youth people, are receiving Fair Futures coaching and/or tutoring.

We are also seeing tremendous success with our College Choice program, which was launched in 2022 and provides youth in or leaving foster care with support for college including tuition, housing assistance, coaching, and a \$60 per day stipend. When the program was launched in 2022, there were less than 200 youth participating and today it is almost double with over 300 youth participating in College Choice.

We are eagerly planning for the upcoming summer. As in past summers, ACS collaborates with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DCYD) to enroll youth involved with ACS in paid summer internships through the Emerging Leaders Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), a six-week program that emerges youth in supervised project-based learning and work experiences. Thanks to the commitment of our foster care providers and Fair Futures coaches, ACS leads all city agencies with over 1,200 applications so far. ACS also offers our Commissioner's College Internship Program where 40 college- age youth participate in an 11-week internship, paying up to \$6,737.50 for undergraduate students and \$9,521.05 for graduate students to intern at ACS work sites. Finally, this summer ACS is collaborating with iFoster to create ACS worksites for 6 AmeriCorps Volunteers internships.

We are also strengthening supports and programming for justice-involved youth. Launched this past July, our new Alternative to Detention contracts have served over

120 youth in the first 6 months and we are currently developing a pilot program to serve older youth with cases in the Youth Part of Supreme Court. We recently announced the recommended awards for our new Close to Home contracts, which will strengthen the Close to Home system of care by rightsizing the system while allocating additional resources for the provider agencies to enhanced services for the young people in their care. The new contract budgets were increased to fund specific lines to help improve the overall programming and offer a more robust treatment approach. These lines now include funding for Fair Futures staff, aftercare staff, a recreational specialist, an intake coordinator, and a mental health team, all while reducing the staffing ratio down to 3 to 1 and increasing staff salaries. Tutoring and workforce development services will also be expanded for youth in Close to Home. Vocational training is underway in secure detention and our tutors have enhanced the academic successes of our young people. Our young people across the continuum will be engaged in summer school and SYEP. In June, we are looking forward to celebrating the graduations of our young people in secure detention, non-secure detention and Close to Home.

### **ACS's FY 2025 Executive Budget**

ACS's Executive Budget for FY2025 is \$2.7 billion, of which \$843 million is City Tax Levy. The Executive Budget does not include any new reductions to ACS, while including funding for foster care that will address the shortfall we currently have in our budget due to a reduction in federal funds.

The Executive Budget also includes actions realignment actions that move funds into appropriate budget codes, such as moving Fair Futures money for juvenile justice



into the corresponding budget codes and adding in state and federal funding, where applicable, for various programs such as adoption subsidy, Nurse-Family Partnership and KinGAP.

More programmatically, in the Executive Budget there is a cost-neutral action where ACS is moving 27 staff (and the corresponding funding) from the Family Service Unit (FSU), which conducts Court Ordered Supervision, to the Family Preservation Program (FPP), which is an intensive prevention program aimed at addressing high-needs families while preventing court filings and/or foster care.

Finally, our budget includes funding for both Workforce Enhancements and the human service provider COLA, which will both help to strengthen the work of our providers and increase the wages of their hard-working staff.

### **Conclusion**

ACS remains committed to a New York City where children and young people are safe and thriving and where families are supported as their most important resources and protectors; and where our staff/provider staff are supported as they carry out this critical work. As Commissioner, I continue to be inspired and moved by the deep commitment and passion the ACS teams and our providers have to our mission of making New York City a better place for children and families.



# **TESTIMONY**

**Before the Council of the City of New York  
Committees on Children and Youth and Finance**

**Hearing on**

**Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget**

**Presented by**

**Commissioner Keith Howard**

**May 10, 2024**



Good afternoon, Chairs Stevens and Brannan and members of the Committees on Children and Youth and Finance. I am DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Alan Cheng and Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal 2025 Executive Budget.

The budget stands at \$1.17 billion. It is composed of:

- \$926.8 million, or 78.54 %, in city tax levy funds;
- \$141.2 million, or 11.97%, in intracity funds;
- \$99.5 million, or 8.43%, in federal funds; and
- \$12.5 million, or about 1%, in state funding.

We are pleased that the Mayor's Executive Budget invests in an array of services for young people, including education, childcare and cultural services, and adds funding for DYCD.

As we discussed in March, the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) officially joined DYCD in Fiscal Year 2024. This office includes the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, the Office to Prevent Gun Violence, Atlas, and related employment services. These programs are aligned with DYCD's mission and improve community-police relations, reduce crime and incarceration, and diminish contact with the justice system. The Executive budget includes new and additional programming in ONS including:

- \$15 million for a new workforce development program that will offer work readiness and occupational training, internships, and job placement to 500 New Yorkers ages 18-40 who have been involved in the criminal justice system or impacted by community violence.
- \$8.6 million for the Crisis Management System to support Cure Violence services and mental health services in gun violence safety precincts.
- \$2.5 million to support the Neighborhood Safety Alliance, which fosters collaboration between communities, actors, law enforcement agencies, and city services to reduce gun violence in six-gun violence safety precincts.

The launch of the Summer Youth Employment program is in less than two months. DYCD and our providers have been busy at work to make it a successful year. The 2024 application for participants and worksites was released on January 22. Marking the earliest release to date, it underscores the commitment to program quality by providing participants ample time to prepare for their summer experiences and allowing providers to work with the NYC business and non-profit community to develop additional worksites. We are grateful for the Council's support of early, baselined funding for SYEP which made this possible. The application period closed on March 15, with a record number of young people applying to the program. A significant portion of these applicants reside in the six priority police precincts and targeted NYCHA developments.





DYCD organized targeted recruitment events in priority precincts with CMS groups, utilized NYC Public Schools communication channels for direct outreach to students and parents, and coordinated special recruitment events at NYCHA developments and Cornerstone community centers. SYEP enrollments are currently underway and progressing smoothly. We expect to be fully enrolled in the coming weeks.

Enrolled young people are currently completing their work-readiness training, including financial literacy and mindfulness, to prepare for their summer experiences. All SYEP participants will receive at least two hours of financial literacy education. DYCD also launched a financial empowerment peer mentoring pilot. SYEP participants who attended a CUNY College Now course on Financial Literacy will serve as peer mentors to youth in traditionally under-banked communities.

We are expanding initiatives piloted in previous years, SYEP Pride, Credit Pilot and Pathways, and serving more youth in program slots set aside for youth with barriers to employment, residing in targeted precincts and public housing.

We successfully completed this year's Work, Learn and Grow program serving more than 7,000 youth, thanks to Mayor Adams's and the Council's major investment. Over one-third of participants resided in or attended school within the six priority police precincts identified in the Mayor's Blueprint for Community Safety.

We are on track to serve 100,000 young people and are working with our providers to develop new and engaging worksites that meet our young people's interests. We thank Chair Stevens for enlisting Council Members offices to serve was worksites.

We successfully completed this year's Work, Learn and Grow program serving more than 7,000 youth, thanks to Mayor Adams' and the Council's major investment. Over one-third of participants resided in or attended school within the six priority police precincts identified in the Mayor's Blueprint for Community Safety.

Our staff and providers have also been focusing on another successful Summer Rising program. We appreciate the constant feedback from the Council on how to make improvements, and in particular, from Chairs Stevens and Joseph. Since February, DYCD has led bi-weekly Summer Rising convenings for providers, sharing resources to support quality programming, offering peer-support for best practices, clarifying policies and procedures with key personnel including NYC Public Schools and offering professional development.





**Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development**

The application portal was open March 4 through March 25, earlier and longer than past years. We received 138,000 applications, demonstrating continued interest in summer programming. 110,000 families were offered placement in one of their application choices including:

- 100% of students with a 12-month Individual Education Program (IEP) and 87% of all IEP applicants
- 100% of students in temporary housing
- 100% of students in foster care

Families can still sign up and join the waitlist for programs through MySchools at [nyc.gov/summerrising](https://nyc.gov/summerrising).

We are also pleased that on July 1, we will open our 100<sup>th</sup> Cornerstone program. After being closed for decades, and following significant capital investment, the Gowanus Houses Community Center will be reopened as a Cornerstone program with Grand Street Settlement as the provider. Reopening the center was one of the top priorities for residents and was included as part of the Gowanus Neighborhood rezoning process. We thank the Council for its strong advocacy to get this center opened and for local residents who have assisted in provider selection and the planning process in developing programming.

The 2025 Executive Budget places DYCD in a strong position to accomplish much in communities across the city. Thank you once again for the opportunity to discuss the Executive Budget. We are pleased to answer your questions.

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UFT TESTIMONY

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## Testimony on the Close to Home Program

April 24, 2024 | UFT Testimony

### **Testimony of Patricia Crispino, District Representative for District 79, delivered before the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth**

On behalf of UFT members and our union president, Michael Mulgrew, we would like to thank the Committee on Children and Youth and Chair Stevens for hosting today's oversight hearing on the Close to Home program. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue.

We are proud to represent the staff of District 79, a group of programs that serves families and young people, including those who are in the Close to Home program, facing enormous challenges. We are committed to ensuring that our educational system offers all our city's families the opportunity to complete their education in the New York City public school system.

Close to Home is a juvenile justice reform initiative that was launched in 2012 and is designed to keep justice-involved youth close to their families and communities. We support the program's goals of allowing families to more easily visit and to participate in young people's rehabilitation programs, increasing the likelihood of success for youth once they are released. Particularly for families with limited transportation options or with other barriers to traveling to juvenile justice facilities located outside of the city, the program has been an important and welcome shift in policy and practice.

Over the years, however, we have identified multiple ways in which it must be improved to better serve the needs of our youth and their families. It is imperative that the city and state immediately develop residential and school facilities for the Close to Home program that are specifically tailored to the needs of the young people who participate in it. The Raise the Age legislation's effect of no longer placing most youth under the age of 18 on Rikers Island was critically important, but it was not accompanied by the resources necessary to ensure appropriate placement for these young people in residences and schools that meet their needs. The current facilities used by the program were originally designed and staffed to support the needs of younger students, and the arbitrary placement of justice-involved youth who are in their late teens and older in the same facilities as middle school and younger students simply because those locations are closest to their homes is not in the best interest of either group.

This is especially true in cases where participants may initially enter these facilities at age 16 or 17 but end up remaining in these placements until they age out of the program at age 21 or older due to delays in the justice system's hearing schedule or to other causes. This backlog in the adjudication process is an enormous concern for the staff, students and families who are part of the Close to Home program, and we welcome the Council's advocacy in ensuring that it is addressed. Again, we don't recommend that our older youth be placed in Rikers as in the past, but it is therefore crucial that we prioritize creating facilities dedicated to their needs rather than having them temporarily or permanently share residences and learning environments with much younger students.

In terms of how these recommendations impact the Close to Home program, it may sometimes be necessary to place older youth in facilities that are further away from their homes of origin but that are better designed to meet their needs, and we recommend that these adjustments in placements be made when appropriate rather than distance from home being the primary priority in determining where students are assigned. We also recommend that the city and state invest in updated training and resources for the staff who are assigned to the facilities used by the Close to Home program. The appropriate staff responses to peer-to-peer conflict, academic challenges and other issues that arise in the course of these students' placements are far different for young people in their late teens and early twenties than for younger students. Both instructional staff and other adults in the buildings need better preparation and support both before and during their assignment to work in these facilities.

As always, we would welcome the opportunity to arrange visits to these sites for you and your staff to allow you to see these issues in person. We thank you again for holding this hearing, and we offer our ongoing collaboration as you strive to support the students and families served by this program and the staff who work with them.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
MAY 10, 2024**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you to Chair Stevens and the members of the Committee on Children and Youth for holding this hearing today.

In FY23, the administration increased the number of slots for SYEP to a record 100,000, and that funding will continue through FY26. This is a historic investment in the young people of this city, and I applaud Mayor Adams for guaranteeing it for at least the next two years. However, the preliminary budget for FY25 fails to fund \$5.5 million for SYEP Metro Cards, which was included in the FY24 adopted budget. Especially with the recent fare raise, we should not be financially burdening young people in any way as a requirement to participate in SYEP.

According to the City Comptroller, as of February 18, 2024, more than 178,600 asylum-seekers have gone through the New York City emergency shelter system, with 65,000 currently in shelter.<sup>1</sup> Initially, the city responded with emergency shelters provided through DHS, but over time, other agencies began providing shelter, including DYCD. DYCD provides shelter beds for youth between the ages of 16 and 20, and for young people ages 21 to 24, and these programs provide counseling, education, job training and other services that are not typically available at adult shelters.<sup>2</sup> However, youth and young adults are increasingly turning to the city's Department of Homeless Services-run adult shelters because youth shelters do not have room. As NYC is in an unprecedented housing crisis, funding shelter and homeless services needs to be a priority. Prior to the arrival of migrants, the city did not have enough youth shelters to meet the need; last year, DYCD funded about 800 shelter beds for young people, most of them reserved for youth under the age of 21.<sup>3</sup> That number only accommodates a fraction of the population in need of a youth shelter bed, which in 2022 was estimated to be just over 5,000.<sup>4</sup> This past fall, the Coalition for Homeless Youth counted more than 200 youth in a 12-day period that it had to turn away from its youth shelter.<sup>5</sup> I do want to be very clear: migrant youth are just as deserving of shelter as youth

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<sup>1</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/comments-on-new-york-citys-preliminary-budget-for-fiscal-year-2025-and-financial-plan-for-fiscal-years-2024-2028/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://citylimits.org/2022/09/29/nycs-youth-shelter-system-is-running-out-of-space/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-Final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2022\\_NYC\\_Youth\\_Count\\_Report.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2022_NYC_Youth_Count_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/>



born and raised in New York City or anywhere else in the United States. We can and must do better for our young people.

Youth are increasingly turning to drop-in centers, of which there are eight across New York City, and serve as the formal gateway to the shelter system. In January, 1,600 youth spent time in city drop in centers, a 28 percent increase from July 2023.<sup>6</sup> These drop-in centers provide young people with clothing, food, and showers—they also used to have cots where people could rest temporarily, but the Adams Administration last year issued an order to the non-profits who run the centers prohibiting sleeping, a directive many criticized as inhumane.<sup>7</sup> Despite the overwhelming need for shelter for young people, the proposed FY25 budget proposes cutting \$2 million from the \$52 million allocated for runaway and homeless youth, eliminating 16 positions that help young people access permanent housing options.<sup>8</sup>

Other programs provided by DYCD have also experienced abrupt reductions in their budgets. The Comprehensive After School System (COMPASS) is a network of more than 890 after-school programs that serve NYC K-12 students.<sup>9</sup> These programs are offered at no cost to their participants, and are housed in a variety of locations including schools, community centers, public housing, and religious institutions. COMPASS Explore is smaller and offers more specialized services, with some specifically aimed at serving LGBTQ youth or students with disabilities.<sup>10</sup> School's Out New York City (SONYC) functions similarly to COMPASS, but is specifically for students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. This model is structured like a club, and provides instruction in sports and arts, and requires youth leadership through service.<sup>11</sup> These programs are slated to lose \$7 million in the proposed budget, with the entire COMPASS Explore program to be affected and SONYC to lose a number of seats. COMPASS Explore has nearly 1,900 seats, and SONYC is set to lose 1,660 of their 50,000 seats. These cuts are especially concerning considering that, according to the city's own data, demand for after-school programs is increasing, with participation up nearly three percent in the first four months of FY24, compared to the previous year.<sup>12</sup>

A lauded program that was never actually funded by the previous administration, is addressing homelessness for TGNCNBI and LGB youth. NYC can work to help protect young people most vulnerable to homelessness and exploitation for basic necessities. This administration should also commit to establishing housing vouchers for LGBTQ+ youth, a service proposed by the de Blasio

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2024/03/21/after-school-cuts-to-compass-explore-and-sonyc-due-to-eric-adams-budget-cuts/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/schools-out-new-york-city-sonyc.page>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dycd.pdf>

administration but never actualized. TGNCNBI youths' needs have historically been neglected based on the city's past budgets. Even though there has been an increasing gap of homelessness, poverty, and pipeline to incarceration for those within the TGNCNBI community, the budget does not equally increase to reduce these gaps. Funding in the amount of \$1.25 million would provide the means to launch a housing voucher/rental assistance program catered to LGBTQ+ homeless youth under 24. This initiative is a partnership between the city and the Ali Forney Center; with additional funding, the city could also assist LGBTQ+ adults ages 25-30 by partnering with other organizations that provide housing services such as Destination Tomorrow, Princess Janae Place, and GLITS.

Last year, the number of youth held in the city's detention facilities rose 31 percent, and is expected to admit even more young people this year.<sup>13</sup> Young people are also spending more time in detention, with the average number of days rising 59 percent. The rising number of detainees coupled with inadequate staffing levels has resulted in overcrowded and under-supervised facilities; we saw reports last year that youth in detention were sleeping on the ground, classrooms were being used as cells, and young people were not receiving meaningful education.<sup>1415</sup> However, the solution to this problem is not more detention facilities. While ACS plans to build an annex at Horizon Juvenile Center, we should instead be focusing on decarcerating and investing in programs that give young people safe and supportive environments—schools, after-school and summer programs, arts and employment programs, physical and mental healthcare, violence interruption and credible messengers, and alternatives to incarceration programs. The problem is not that we do not have enough space for the young people we are detaining—it is that we are detaining too many young people.

Lastly, child care assistance is a vital resource for so many families in our city. Currently, however, many income-eligible children are excluded from the state's Child Care Assistance Program due solely to their immigration status, including those with pending asylum cases and other children lawfully present in the United States, but who fall outside the federal definition of "qualified immigrant." New York City should establish a child care assistance fund for these families in this year's budget.

Young people are the future of our city, and this budget should be a celebration of the resiliency they have shown over the course of this pandemic. I look forward to working with this administration and this council to ensure that we are prioritizing and supporting youth and young adults.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/02/11/nyc-locking-up-more-teenagers-holding-them-longer-amid-surge-in-felony-busts/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/teens-in-nyc-detention-centers-are-sleeping-on-the-ground-due-to-overcrowding-staff-say>

<sup>15</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/classrooms-serve-as-cells-at-nycs-troubled-juvenile-detention-centers>

Thank you.



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Testimony to be Delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth and Committee on Finance

### Re: Executive Budget Hearing – Children and Youth Promise NYC and Access to Child Care for Immigrant Children

May 10, 2024

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the need for continued funding for Promise NYC. My name is Diana Imbert, and I am a staff attorney for the Early Childhood Education Project at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to protect and ensure a high-quality education for New York students facing barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the education system, starting from the time children are born.

We were pleased when the City launched Promise NYC in January of 2023 to increase access to early childhood programs for children who are undocumented. Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget does not include funding to continue this vital initiative, and hundreds of children risk being turned away from their programs this summer if the funding does not continue.

Many early childhood programs, including New York City Public Schools' Infant & Toddler programs, as well as 3-K and Pre-K programs that offer extended hours, require families to qualify for subsidized childcare assistance to enroll. These programs have historically excluded children who are undocumented as they are not eligible for this subsidy based on state and federal restrictions.

Since the launch of Promise NYC, hundreds of families of children who are undocumented have been able to access a variety of early childhood programs. From its inception, demand has exceeded capacity, and we know that several hundred other families have contacted agencies seeking care for their young children through Promise NYC but have been turned away due to lack of





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Protecting every child's right to learn

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funding. Unfortunately, all funding for Promise NYC is set to expire in June, which would result in children losing seats in their programs and new families being unable to apply.

At a time when New York City has seen a substantial increase in immigrant families, the City should be increasing – and certainly not eliminating - funding for this initiative so that children are not excluded from programs based on their immigration status. Promise NYC is critical for helping to prepare newly arrived children for success in elementary school and beyond, and it can also be transformative for parents by enabling them to work or study, connect with resources, and settle in their new communities.

We join in the recommendation made by the City Council in its response to the preliminary budget in calling on the City to allocate and baseline \$25 million in the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) budget for Promise NYC.

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



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 [WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG](http://WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG)

**Testimony Submitted by Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin  
for the Executive Budget Hearing  
New York City Council Committee on Children & Youth  
May 10, 2024**

Honorable Chairs Brannan and Stevens and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steven Morales and I'm the New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains over 300 family child care educators who operate licensed child care programs in their homes, serving over 4,000 children.

In my preliminary budget testimony, I talked about the importance of fully funding our early childhood education system, which includes 3K and Pre-K as well as programs administered by ACS and HRA. And while the Executive Budget fills some of the gaps left by expiring federal funding, we urge the City Council to fully restore the roughly \$300M that have been cut over the last few years. We must put our city back on the path to free 3K and Pre-K for every child in our city.

Part of fully funding 3K and Pre-K must include equitable compensation for the 6,000 licensed family child care programs who deliver essential early care and education to our city's children every day.

In addition to broader 3K and Pre-K funding, there are a few key items that are still unfunded and fall under the jurisdiction of ACS and this committee:

- 1. Raise voucher pay rates for family child care providers to the maximum state reimbursement rate.** Voucher payments to child care providers are currently limited by ACS to no more than providers charge to private paying families. These rates are artificially low and do not provide educators what they need to equitably compensate themselves and their staff. The federal government recommends that districts pay all providers the maximum allowable amount and ACS should use this budget as an opportunity to immediately raise all voucher payments. We must end the practice of paying some providers less for the same work. This is a simple way to bolster the earnings of our early childhood workforce.



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## 2. Expand access to child care for families by:

- **Renewing and expanding funds for Promise NYC to \$25M:** PromiseNYC has been a wildly successful program offering much needed child care assistance to undocumented children. Last year, PromiseNYC was funded at \$16M which left hundreds of families without care. The Council must ensure that PromiseNYC is funded for at least \$25M for FY25.
- **Funding presumptive eligibility to provide immediate access to child care and cut down wait times.** While application processing times remain high, presumptive eligibility is a simple way to ensure that families can begin receiving child care assistance without waiting weeks and even months for their documents to be reviewed and approved. This is permitted by both state and federal law and has already been successfully implemented in Monroe County, we just need to ensure that ACS is able to dedicate funds for this purpose.
- **Fully staffing ACS to process child care voucher applications in a timely manner.** This administration has made strides toward improving child care wait times, but families are still waiting weeks and sometimes months from the time they apply for child care to the time they receive it. ACS must be fully staffed to process child care applications within the OCFS mandated 30 day window.

We all know how important child care access is for our city's children and families. As Speaker Adams said in her State of the City address, it is time for the city to double down on its investment in early childhood education for the long term health and sustainability of our families, children, and educators.

We also ask that you consider All Our Kin's full [Legislative Agenda for Family Child Care in New York City](#):

### **Family child care is an essential piece of New York City's early care and education system.**

Family child care — paid child care that takes place in the home of a licensed provider — is one of the most common child care arrangements in New York City. There are roughly 6,000 family child care programs in New York City, which account for nearly 37 percent of licensed child care capacity for children from birth to age five. Thirty-eight percent of children under five in subsidized care in New York City are in family child care programs.

**Family child care needs policy champions in New York City.** Despite their critical role supporting our city's children, families, communities, and economy, family child care programs have been systematically under-resourced and undervalued in policy and practice. Family child



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care educators are trained professional educators and business owners who ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed, yet they are among the bottom three percent of earners in the workforce. At the same time, too many parents struggle to afford child care as they navigate the increasingly high cost of living in this city. It is up to policymakers to make sure our children, families, and child care educators can continue to make New York City their home.

**All Our Kin envisions a New York City where all families have access to high-quality child care in the setting of their choice.** Children should have the opportunity to spend their days in nurturing, educational environments, and family child care educators must be well-compensated and supported for the important work they do.

**All Our Kin urges the New York City Council to take the following actions to sustain the family child care workforce, make it easier for families to access care and promote high-quality learning.**

1. **Ensure family child care professionals, including primary educators and assistants, earn enough to support and sustain their families.** Family child care programs are closing their doors because educators, including those paid by the Administration for Children's Services, Human Resources Administration and Department of Education, are not adequately compensated for the professional early care and education they provide to our city's youngest children. After paying their child care business expenses, the average family child care educator in New York City earns only \$10.61 per hour. Increasing compensation for family child care is the most important step our city can take to turn the tide on closures and maintain and expand child care access for families.

**City Council leaders should:** invest city dollars in permanent wage supplement grants to all regulated family child care programs; ensure equitable distribution of existing city investments in early childhood education; and advocate to state policymakers to increase New York State's Child Care Assistance Program payment rates to meet the true cost of care.

2. **Invest in comprehensive healthcare and retirement benefits for all family child care educators and assistants.** As small businesses, family child care educators and their staff often lack access to the affordable and comprehensive health insurance and retirement plans they need for their physical and financial well-being. Ensuring access to benefits is



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also a key to retaining educators in the field for the long-term. Washington D.C., Washington State, and California have shown it is possible for cities and states to invest in these essential resources for educators.

**City Council leaders should** offer family child care educators comprehensive health insurance and retirement savings plans to help them stay in the field while caring for themselves and their own families.

3. **Reimagine and reinvest in staffed family child care networks to ensure educators have access to high-quality training and resources.** Staffed family child care networks are a research-based way to support quality, sustainability, and community among family child care educators. New York City's existing family child care networks hold the potential to give educators what they need to thrive, but insufficient funding and a complex web of requirements have forced networks and educators to spend more time on compliance than on the quality activities that we know work.

**City Council leaders should** engage family child care educators, parents, and network leaders to reimagine what family child care networks offer educators in NYC so that everyone has access to the training, coaching, and support they need. The Council must also ensure family child care networks are adequately funded to hire the staff they need to effectively implement all of their essential functions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Steven Morales

[steven@allourkin.org](mailto:steven@allourkin.org)

**CAMBA**  
**Testimony Before the New York City Council**  
**Committee on Children and Youth**  
**May 10, 2024**  
**Valerie Barton-Richardson**

Council Member Stevens and Members of the Committee, my name is Valerie Barton-Richardson, and I am the new President and CEO of CAMBA, Inc. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA has been providing quality services to our City's youth for more than 30 years. For decades, CAMBA has been dedicated to enhancing the well-being of New Yorkers through various programs, including education and youth development, community support, economic development workforce initiatives, and housing services. In the wake of the pandemic and the asylum seeker crisis, demand for these programs is higher than ever. We ask that the Council fight to ensure that funding for these programs is not cut.

As CAMBA marks over 30 years of serving New York City's youth, I wish to highlight a critical area of concern: after-school programming at Cornerstone Community Centers. Despite recent measures allowing DYCD to conduct repairs independently at the Cornerstones, the process remains slow, hindering our ability to maintain safe environments for our youth. This issue requires urgent attention to ensure the effectiveness of our programs and the well-being of our communities.

CAMBA's Programs and the Social Service Sector:

CAMBA already provides support and assistance to thousands of individuals and families to ensure that they have the opportunity to live and work independently as contributing members of the New York City community. Although we applaud Mayor Adams' executive budget proposal that restores some previously slashed funding, the PEGs in the FY25 budget, combined with inflation and the increased cost of living, have made it harder to provide essential services to our target population. Increased costs for insurance, food, and utilities, to name a few, continue to reduce our ability to make ends meet in our program budgets. We are grappling with the demand to provide essential services to persons in need, and to do this it is critical that our programs and services are funded at adequate levels.

CAMBA continues to provide quality services to our City's youth through our after school and community programming areas. We previously testified on the importance of maintaining funding for our Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers and the SONYC Afterschool Programs, along with highlighting the need for paying our human services workers competitive salaries to recruit and retain qualified staff in a saturated labor market.

As part of our youth programming, we operate eleven after-school and six summer camp programs in New York City, serving approximately 2,400 children in elementary and middle schools. Further, through CAMBA's Family and Community Support programs, we aid families in developing solutions to the real challenges they are facing on a daily basis.



### Afterschool Programming - Cornerstones:

The Cornerstone Community Centers, situated in NYCHA housing developments, serve as beacons of hope in some of our city's most disadvantaged communities. Operated by CAMBA and other community-based organizations, these centers provide a lifeline for thousands of children, youth, and adults, offering a safe haven and a plethora of enriching activities during after-school, evening, and weekend hours. However, despite the recent transition to Service Now and allowing DYCD to conduct repairs independently, the process remains sluggish, akin to the bureaucratic delays previously experienced under NYCHA's oversight. Notably, the Howard, Brevoort, and Albany Cornerstone Community Centers are grappling with persistent flooding and facility issues that remain unresolved despite numerous tickets, walkthroughs, and site assessments. These issues impact our programming, rendering certain classrooms and areas unusable and consequently limiting the number of youths we can serve. At the Howard Center, the Teen Lounge has been out of commission for over six months due to a ceiling leak. At Albany, a similar leak in the cafeteria forces us to serve supper in the classrooms. Meanwhile, at Brevoort, recurrent sewage flooding on the first floor frequently renders all three rooms there unusable. Urgent action is needed to expedite repair processes, ensuring that our Cornerstone Centers are maintained to the highest standards, thus safeguarding the well-being of the communities they serve.

The testimony we provided from last year's Executive Budget - Committee on Youth Services hearing underscores the indispensable role that CAMBA plays in providing comprehensive support to our city's youth through programs like Beacons, Cornerstones, and SONYCs. The demand for these programs has surged in the aftermath of the pandemic, underscoring their critical importance in fostering resilience and empowerment among our youth.

We urge the Council to prioritize funding for these indispensable programs, ensuring that they not only remain operational but also receive the necessary resources to expand and meet the escalating demand.

In closing, I express my gratitude for the opportunity to testify today and urge the Council to heed our call for action. By prioritizing funding for afterschool programs and addressing repair delays we can ensure the continued provision of vital services to our city's youth, safeguarding their well-being and fostering a brighter future for all.

Thank you for allowing me to testify. I hope that our testimony on these important issues proves helpful to you as you work to craft a Children and Youth budget that will provide for the health, welfare, and well-being of all of New York City's children and youth.

# CARNEGIE HALL

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2024  
May 10, 2024  
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Children & Youth**

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Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan, and Members of the Council Committees on Children & Youth and on Finance:

Thanks for the opportunity to testify about the great need for sustained investment in arts and culture programming for our city's young people.

On behalf of Carnegie Hall and the Cultural Institutions Group, we are deeply grateful to you and your colleagues for your past support of arts and culture across NYC. We join with our cultural colleagues to ask that your FY25 budget reflects the value our institutions bring to our city.

**A commitment to funding the arts and culture is a compound investment in economic resiliency and growth, workforce development, community healing, education, and public safety. Sustained investment in the arts and culture is a statement to each and every person who calls New York City home that their holistic wellness matters, and we urge this sector's outsize impact to be recognized and duly supported.**

Culture is at the very center of our city. We are community anchors for employment, commerce, and social connection. We are the lodestar of our city's economic revitalization and continued growth. We are essential human services providers with our partners in government. Our ranks include some of the most vital cultural, science, and artistic institutions in the world. Our organizations are the core of the cultural economy that makes NY the greatest city in the world.

New Yorkers are at home in our buildings, our halls, our classrooms, and on our stages. The diversity of our offerings is our greatest strength, and we strive to create equitable cultural opportunities for New Yorkers in every borough. Highlights of Carnegie Hall's offerings throughout the five boroughs include many of our partnerships with human services agencies:

- **The Council's \$200,000 allocation through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative and \$25,000 for youth programs** supported the second year of [The B Side](#), a free intensive program for New Yorkers ages 14-22 interested in the business of music, with a focus on those from under-resourced communities. The B Side provides participants an interactive space to learn about the inner workings of the music industry. Curriculum designed and facilitated by teaching artists, guest speaker panels, and field trips guide participants through the many roles and career opportunities across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests are encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.

This year, participants progressed through activities beginning with an exploration of the various career tracks through the music industry and an introduction to key terms and concepts. Activities included engaging in lessons/curricular activities; presentations from guest speakers; field trips to a record label, and the Louis Armstrong House; panels and interactive discussions; and jam sessions/performances.

Through The B-Side, Carnegie Hall draws upon our experience creating meaningful youth development programs in order to deepen our impact and provide young people with the tools they need to thrive, lead, and transform the music industry. **We respectfully request that the Committees prioritize the renewal of Carnegie Hall's \$200,000 Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative allocation with an increase to \$250,000 in FY25.**

- In partnership with NYC's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Carnegie Hall's **Future Music Project (FMP)** creates a space for 150-200 young people ages 14-21 in juvenile justice settings to develop as artists, critical thinkers, collaborators, and individuals. Carnegie Hall's Teaching Artists support young people in creating, producing, and performing music, using songwriting as a vehicle through which they can explore their creativity, develop musical skills, and collaborate with their peers. In addition to direct service workshops customized to the unique needs of secure and non-secure settings, young people in non-secure placement and detention and ACS staff participate in sharing events at Carnegie Hall for family members and peers.

This year, Carnegie Hall and ACS expanded workshops for youth in secure detention. Guest artists representing diverse genres performed concerts for youth and staff at both secure detention facilities. Each performance included a Q&A with the artist. The goal/purpose of these concerts is to infuse the facilities with music and create a space for community-building, learning, joy, and fun. Next year, Carnegie Hall will collaborate with our Musical Connection Advisory Committee, composed of musicians who were formerly incarcerated and who participated in Carnegie Hall's Musical Connections program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. The Advisory Committee will co-facilitate workshops with teaching artists and support young people, specifically young men that have been sentenced to adult facilities once they turn 21, in secure detention workshops, acting as credible messengers on the power of music as a tool for self-expression.

Because our own work has focused so heavily on creative youth development and young artist training, we were very encouraged to hear Speaker Adams' emphasis on supporting our city's young people and investing in key human services among her priorities for the year ahead. Programs like these continue to be critical components of the city's strategy to meet young people directly, effectively, and safely where they are. The Council's continued investment in these partnerships will be absolutely essential in the year ahead to ensure that these essential services for our city's youth and families continue. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall's programming partnerships in your district.

There's no part of NY life that CIGs don't impact. From parks to schools, from businesses to employment, every part of our city benefits from the cultural sector. The return on your investment in our institutions overall is outstanding, and we hope to be able to continue our work with your support. Our sector is struggling, we are not back to where we were in 2019 and we face severe impacts to programs and services if this essential funding is left out of this year's budget and we're left behind.

We stand ready to partner with you to meet the challenges our city faces now and in the year ahead.





May 10, 2024

**Testimony for Center for Community Alternatives**

Before the  
New York City Council  
Committee on Children and Youth  
Jointly with the Committee on Finance  
Executive Budget Hearing

Thank you, Chair Stevens and Chair Brannan for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is David Condliffe, and I am the Executive Director of the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA).

The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) supports and builds power with people across New York State who have been affected by mass incarceration, criminalization, and community disinvestment. CCA works to build a world where everyone has what they need to thrive. CCA provides direct services to communities in New York City, Syracuse, and Rochester. We opened our doors in 1981 and became one of the first community-based alternative-to-incarceration programs in the State of New York. Recognizing the devastating impact of incarceration on low-income communities and communities of color, CCA was founded on the belief that the solution to crime rests in our communities, not imprisonment. CCA has expanded its service offering over the years to provide a holistic array of alternatives to incarceration and reentry services, including person-centered substance treatment and recovery communities, sentence mitigation, court advocacy, workforce readiness, civic restoration services, emergency/transitional housing, violence prevention, and youth mentoring, as well as afterschool programming and career exploration for justice-involved youth.

We are here to request additional funding for our Seeds to Roots Youth Action Center. With the goal of decreasing gun violence and providing extensive opportunity for youth in central Brooklyn, CCA opened its flagship Seeds to Root Youth Action Center in Brownsville in 2023 designed by and for youth in the community. With a vision for empowering over 300 youth annually and supporting 500 community members, the new center aims to provide a platform for young individuals to explore various activities and opportunities. The Center hosts numerous programs such as Justice Community, where Participants work to improve the health, safety, beauty, and sustainability of East New York through a combination of educational, vocational, team, and civic engagement experiences. Other services provide mentoring, career readiness development, and educational opportunities to children and young adults in all five boroughs.

With a discretionary grant of \$250,000, CCA will provide significant engagement and support for hundreds of youth. Our goal is to deepen connections between young people and their



communities through transformative justice services and creative youth spaces. This funding will not only benefit the youth in our programs but also the greater New York City community.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to continuing to provide services that not only help keep our communities safe but allow them to thrive.

David Condliffe  
Executive Director,  
Center for Community Alternatives

**Center for Family Life in Sunset Park**  
**Testimony on the NYC Benefits Program**  
**Committee on Children and Youth 5.10.24**

Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (CFLSP), a neighborhood-based social service organization, has been the principal provider of integrated social and human services in the low-income community of Sunset Park, Brooklyn for over 45 years. We provide a comprehensive range of wraparound family and social services, including food pantry, benefits access, immigration and non-immigration legal assistance, employment preparation and job placement, ESOL classes, free tax preparation, cooperative business development, family counseling, school-based afterschool and summer camp, youth employment, college readiness, and others designed to meet the pressing needs of our low-income, low-wealth immigrant community, serving more than 17,000 children and adults each year.

Sunset Park is a diverse and densely populated neighborhood in South Brooklyn, a home to large Latino and Chinese immigrant populations who make up the majority of our clientele. 23% of residents and 25% of neighborhood children live below the poverty line and 30% of households receive SNAP and other public benefits supports.

Through our organization's work, we have identified a great need for the services as a means to combat childhood poverty. Our neighborhood data have identified that one in four children are receiving public benefits. This statistic does not account for the influx of newly arrived families with children, most of whom do not qualify for public benefits, to our community. Many of these families have young children living well below the poverty line, although their numbers have not been captured by research due to many new arrivals being ineligible to participate.

At Center for Family Life, we work with families to identify barriers and create solutions for increased family stability. Unfortunately, due to social, economic, and political limitations, many children's most basic needs of food security, safe and adequate housing, and a stable place to call home are jeopardized. Our staff work to ensure that the essential needs of our client families are met through providing referrals to multiple wrap-around supports aimed at addressing various areas of need. The majority of our staff members are bicultural, bilingual in Spanish or Mandarin, and possess cultural sensitivity, all of which critical to providing linguistically and culturally responsive services to our diverse client base.

Funding provided through NYC Benefits has been invaluable in allowing us to expand our work in the provision of benefits outreach and enrollment, alongside public benefits-related education for members of our community. The addition of Spanish-speaking and Mandarin and Tibetan-speaking Benefits Specialists through the program has enabled us to continue providing families with personalized, culturally relevant and compassionate support while accessing various benefits and wrap-around supportive services.

The tailored approach offered in our NYC Benefits program is critical in assisting clients with overcoming common language and technical barriers involved with benefits applications. For



those who do qualify for benefits, the form and submission process can pose many hurdles, including the navigation of technology and the website and difficulty with the acceptance of forms and documentation. We often have older adults who are in need of assistance with applying for SSI who find it challenging to file because of difficulty with using computers and websites. Often, our clients are not native English-language speakers and find it a great help to have someone assist them.

Working with newly arrived children presents a unique challenge in addressing child poverty. Many undocumented children and families do not qualify for most benefits, and eligibility criteria can vary significantly between different programs. For example, a person who is a migrant may not meet qualifications for TANF but may meet requirements for SNA. This often leads to confusion for individuals trying to navigate the application process without assistance from organizations like NYC Benefits, which provide services to help access benefits.

Our organization helps new immigrant families apply for programs they are eligible for, such as WIC. However, it's important to note that children over five years old do not qualify for WIC, currently the only nutritional program available to undocumented individuals. To help mitigate other expenses, we assist new arrival families through the Fair Fares program, which provides half-priced MetroCards. This enables families to travel to work, appointments, and their children's school at a more affordable rate.

We continue to address child poverty by assisting new arrival and asylum-seeking families through our pantry services. However, many clients have brought to our attention that food is often taken from them by shelter staff. They reported not being allowed to have canned goods, citing that it poses a safety risk due to a can's sharp edges, and not being allowed non-plastic utensils. We have had at least two incidents reported of children becoming physically sick due to the food given by the shelter being expired or giving them parasites. After working with our NYC Benefits staff to obtain prenatal care and food, one mother staying in a shelter nearby expressed concern following receipt of a notice that she and her family will be relocated to another shelter and moved away from our program location.

The NYC Benefits program affords many families the ability to mitigate various obstacles involved in accessing benefits, through having a trained, bilingual staff member vet documents, assist in the application process and submit documentation for review. We request that funding and resources continue and expand for community service organizations to combat child poverty, irrelevant of a child's legal status, and to work towards stabilizing families in our community.

**Center for Family Life in Sunset Park**  
**Testimony on the Adult Literacy Program**  
**Committee on Children and Youth 5.10.24**

Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (CFLSP), a neighborhood-based social service organization, has been the principal provider of integrated social and human services in the low-income community of Sunset Park, Brooklyn for over 45 years. We provide a comprehensive range of wraparound family and social services, including food pantry, benefits access, immigration and non-immigration legal assistance, employment preparation and job placement, ESOL classes, free tax preparation, cooperative business development, family counseling, school-based afterschool and summer camp, youth employment, college readiness, and others designed to meet the pressing needs of our low-income, low-wealth immigrant community, serving more than 17,000 children and adults each year.

Sunset Park is a diverse and densely populated neighborhood in South Brooklyn, a home to large Latino and Chinese immigrant populations who make up the majority of our clientele. 23% of residents and 25% of neighborhood children live below the poverty line and 30% of households receive SNAP and other public benefits supports.

The importance of adult literacy programming goes beyond basic literacy skills. Supporting adult literacy is vital for creating a better home environment for children. Educated adults can better support their children's development, leading to improved outcomes for the youth. Adult literacy enhances employability and career prospects, improves critical thinking and problem-solving skills, boosts confidence and self-esteem, and helps individuals pursue personal interests and integrate into their communities and societies.

Literacy skills are essential for full participation in society. Adults who are unable to read often struggle to understand important documents such as job applications, medical forms, and legal papers, which can lead to a lack of empowerment and independence, as well as increased reliance on others for assistance. The ability to read and write is a basic skill that many may take for granted, but for millions of adults around the world, it is a challenge that affects every aspect of their lives. Adult literacy is important for personal growth and self-improvement. Literacy skills enable individuals to continue learning throughout their lives, whether it's through reading books, taking online courses, or pursuing further education.

Adult literacy programming is particularly crucial for immigrants, as it helps them learn the primary language in a new country and begin to integrate into the new society they will be a part of. Without these programs, many individuals risk falling into exclusion and struggling to access basic services or find employment. The success of these programs is evident, as they have been implemented in hotels that receive new immigrants, demonstrating their effectiveness in supporting new arrivals. In these spaces, new immigrants realize the challenges faced when arriving in a new country, but they also see the possibilities of improvement provided by these

programs, thanks to dedicated and committed staff. For this reason, the Adult Literacy Program is essential to the city's budget and should continue to receive funding.

The students of Center for Family Life's Adult Literacy Program, all members of the Sunset community, consistently express their gratitude for the opportunity to learn and grow together. Literacy skills are essential for communication, employment, and personal development. What's truly remarkable is the sense of community cultivated within the classroom. Students go beyond just studying, supporting one another, bringing food to share with the class, and engaging in cultural celebrations. As such, our Adult Literacy Program has not only improved literacy skills but also fostered a tight-knit community where everyone feels valued and supported.

Lamy Bertand, a student in our Adult Literacy program, shared with us the following testimony: "Hello and good afternoon. The truth is that I feel very good here because education for us, as adults, is very important. We learn new things that can help us in the future. Education is meaningful to our lives, especially for those who come to this country. Education for adults is special for our lives because we never know everything, so we always need to learn something new."

The Adult Literacy Program at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park is not just an educational initiative; it is a lifeline for thousands of individuals striving to improve their lives and the lives of their families. The impact of this program extends far beyond the classroom. It equips adults with the essential skills needed to navigate daily life, secure meaningful employment, and participate fully in society. Literacy is a powerful tool for personal growth, fostering a sense of self-worth and independence that permeates every aspect of an individual's life. Moreover, the benefits of adult literacy ripple outward, strengthening entire communities. When adults are literate, they can better support their children's education, creating a positive cycle of learning and development that benefits future generations. This foundational support is critical in communities like Sunset Park, where a significant portion of the population faces economic challenges and barriers to integration.

The Adult Literacy Program also plays a crucial role in the integration of immigrants into our society. It provides them with the language skills and cultural understanding necessary to become active and engaged members of their new communities. By helping immigrants navigate their new environment, these programs foster a sense of belonging and community cohesion, which are essential for social stability and harmony. Likewise, the economic benefits of adult literacy programs cannot be overstated. Literate individuals are more likely to gain employment, contribute to the economy, and reduce their reliance on social services. This economic empowerment leads to more stable and prosperous communities, benefiting society as a whole.

By supporting the Adult Literacy Program, New York City can continue to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build resilient, self-sufficient communities. It is an investment in human potential and community well-being that will provide lasting benefits for years to come.

## **Center for Family Life in Sunset Park**

### **Testimony on Promise NYC**

#### **Committee on Children and Youth 5.10.24**

Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (CFLSP), a neighborhood-based social service organization, has been the principal provider of integrated social and human services in the low-income community of Sunset Park, Brooklyn for over 45 years. We provide a comprehensive range of wraparound family and social services, including food pantry, benefits access, immigration and non-immigration legal assistance, employment preparation and job placement, ESOL classes, free tax preparation, cooperative business development, family counseling, school-based afterschool and summer camp, youth employment, college readiness, and others designed to meet the pressing needs of our low-income, low-wealth immigrant community, serving more than 17,000 children and adults each year.

Sunset Park is a diverse and densely populated neighborhood in South Brooklyn, a home to large Latino and Chinese immigrant populations who make up the majority of our clientele. 23% of residents and 25% of neighborhood children live below the poverty line and 30% of households receive SNAP and other public benefits supports.

Center for Family Life in Sunset Park has been proud to be the provider for Promise NYC in the borough of Brooklyn since January 2023 with the support of Administration Children's Services and the City of New York. The Promise NYC program, which offers daycare subsidies to children from undocumented immigrant families, has been highly sought after by members of our community, and we have witnessed an incredibly high demand across Brooklyn for childcare support.

At Center for Family Life, we meet hundreds of new immigrants a week seeking food, legal services and jobs. Many are residing in shelters without services, no kitchens to cook family meals and policies not conducive to the routines for working families with children, such as curfews that don't align with jobs available, or not being able to have a teen in the room alone. Families want to find housing and be independent but need stable jobs. To work, they need child care.

We hear stories about, and witness every day, parents forced to sell goods in the subway with babies and young children in tow. Often exploited in these jobs, parents and children both are not safe. To work in more stable conditions, and to keep children in safe environments, parents need childcare.

The youngest Newly Arrived New Yorkers have endured a perilous journey and experienced trauma, to then suffer the unpredictability of moving from shelter to shelter. To have a safe, nurturing and joyful place with caring adults to attend while their parents find and start work, they need childcare.



Our program, which serves all of Brooklyn, and is the only program in Brooklyn, is enrolled to capacity at 205 children; the entire of City of New York can only serve approximately 600 children through Promise NYC. Thousands of NYC children are waiting for childcare. New York City needs to do what they know is right and continue to invest in all of our children. Please fund Promise NYC at \$25,000,000 to ensure our city's youngest children are safe, fed, nurtured and receive early learning supports, allowing their parents to work to support their families, become economically independent and contribute to our city's economy.



**New York City Council  
City Executive Budget Hearing - Children and Youth Services Committee  
Finance Committee  
Submitted Testimony prepared by Dante Bravo, Senior Policy Analyst**

**Friday, May 10th, 2024**

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Althea Stevens, Chair Justin Brannan, and the members of both the Children and Youth Services committee and Finance committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the fiscal year 2025 executive city budget. Thank you to the New York City Council for your leadership on issues that impact the youth and families of New York City (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 knows that poverty cannot be overcome with a single service delivered at a single point in time. We are a solutions-driven, multi-service agency employing a holistic strategy that serves children and their families at every stage of development, from cradle through college and career, and in every key setting — home, school, and community.

Today our nearly 2,000 full and part time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth and their families through our citywide child welfare and family services and our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods — Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

A healthy New York City requires a robust ecosystem of programs for children, youth, and their families. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) like Children's Aid support this ecosystem, in partnership with government, to ensure our communities remain resilient and vibrant. We care for children on a daily basis and support families in meeting their basic needs. Despite our essential service provision, our work is threatened by governmental decisions that uniquely impact CBOs. Our ability to remain fiscally solvent and operate on a daily basis is consistently undermined by procurement, contracting, background check policies, RFPs, and funding decisions at the city and state levels. These systemic challenges constrain our ability to focus on programs and service delivery.

Children's Aid, a large anchor institution with 170 years in the community, is regularly hindered and negatively impacted by these sector-wide challenges. Our colleagues at smaller organizations face even greater vulnerability putting their essential work in at risk .



We therefore submit this testimony to call on the City to do right by organizations who care for the most vulnerable New Yorkers day in and day out. While Children's Aid can recognize the need for fiscal responsibility in a time of economic instability, these cuts are not the way to demonstrate to children and families that they are the city's priority. The Adams administration has the opportunity to be the champion for our youngest New Yorkers in Fiscal Year 2025 budget by doing the following:

- Expedite payment of any outstanding contract backlogs from FY21, FY22, or FY23 for any Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) contracted program, including Summer Rising.
  - Prioritize the timely payment of contracts for all FY25 programming, including the possibility of advance payments.
- Support the human services workforce through higher wages in government-sponsored contracts. While we thank this administration for the inclusion of a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), this alone is not enough to raise wages to compete in a fierce job market.
- Restore the \$19.64 million cut to Summer Rising in DYCD programming.
  - This testimony also includes additional recommendations urging the city to address the various operational issues standing in the way of Summer Rising living up to its full potential for children and families.
- Immediately release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the SONYC/COMPASS system by the end of calendar year 2024 as well as restore the \$6.9 million cut to the COMPASS system and instead fund the current capacity of the larger afterschool system.
  - This proposed cut initiates a cycle of defunding afterschool programming and does not take into account the need for an RFP to update rates, which have not been updated since the program's inception in 2014.
- Support students with a foster-care background, including the continued baselining of Fair Futures.
- Invest sufficient resources to clear the backlog and expedite the Department Of Health and Mental Hygiene Comprehensive (DOHMH) Background Check process so providers can quickly fill vacant positions with qualified candidates in youth programs.
- Continue supporting the success of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and address the operational concerns providers still have so that our young adults have the best starts to their careers.

### **Contracts and Procurement Must Be On Time**

Human service providers continue to face delayed contracting issues, which harm both the organizations and the communities we serve. The city pays providers once contracts are registered, creating a risky situation where we either have to start the work without guaranteed payment or delay service provision until the contract is registered, which affects the communities dependent on the services of providers. Delays on the city's end stress nonprofits' financial sustainability and jeopardize the quality of services



by diverting funds away from programs to costly stop gaps to keep financially afloat. For some organizations that means diverting program funds to pay interest on lines of credit. This inadvertently means that nonprofits play the role of banks, lending money to the City while still providing essential services to communities across NYC.

The city needs to do more, both in investing in contracts and in fixing systemic issues that contribute to late registration. Nonprofits are forced to compensate for delays by taking out loans, laying off staff, and, at times, scaling back or closing programs. Additionally, delays in registration or in processing contract amendments can mean that we are unable to spend down all the money on a contract. For example, if programming is delayed until a contract is registered, the program starts late, jeopardizing the program's ability to spend an entire year's worth of program funds. In other instances, if an amendment is processed late, providers are less likely to have the flexibility to shift funds to meet an emerging needs. These delays impact providers and have a ripple effect on the communities we serve. Therefore, we call on the city to pay all outstanding contract backlogs from FY21, FY22, and FY23 for any DYCD contracted program, including Summer Rising. It is crucial that the city register contracts and reimburse providers in a timely fashion, especially if they operate summer programs.

#### **Prioritize the Retention of Human Services staff, especially Youth-facing Staff**

Children's Aid, like other providers, is experiencing high turnover rates for front-line staff – including social workers, teachers, and mental health professionals – to agencies and sectors that offer higher pay. The current contracts do not compensate human service workers adequately. Within the youth services system and across the sector, city agencies like DYCD must invest resources and assist providers in implementing staff retention strategies. Without investments like competitive wages, retention bonuses, professional development opportunities, and other incentives, providers cannot compete in this challenging labor market. A departure of youth workers from the field will directly and negatively impact the youth and families we serve.

Moreover, human services workers are overwhelmingly female (66%), over two-thirds are full-time workers of color (68%), and nearly half (46%) are women of color. Investing in this workforce also addresses racial and gender wage gaps and uplifts thousands of New Yorkers close to the poverty line. Currently, government contracts either directly set low salary levels or indirectly establish low rates for services along with required staffing levels on a contract. While we thank the Administration and Council for the recent \$741M investment in human services workers across the next three years, **this is a starting point** towards equitable wages for our workforce. City contracts for social services must provide a living wage for human services workers, ensuring that they can support themselves and their families while fulfilling their vital roles in our community. Ultimately, contracts should allow for pay parity between nonprofit human service workers and their government counterparts.





As an example, Children's Aid supports families through a continuum of services including a spectrum of child welfare services. We provide preventive, family, therapeutic and medical foster care, and adoption services. In 2023, we served 879 youth in family-based foster homes and completed 39 adoptions and 51 kinship adoptions. We also served 2,405 families in our preventive services programs in Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island as a NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) contracted foster care provider.

A qualified foster care workforce is essential to deliver mandated services effectively. Our goal is to keep children and youth safe and support families' varied needs. However, we are experiencing a staff shortage like many human services providers. We currently have an estimated 21% turnover rate in our foster care division and are tirelessly working to find innovative ways to attract new staff, such as using a recruitment agency. Unfortunately, we are competing with corporate companies, hospitals, and city agencies that can pay between \$15,000 and \$30,000 more than we can offer in salaries. In light of these drastic pay disparities, the use of such tools as recruitment agencies has been an essential approach in decreasing our vacancy rate this past year. However, the cost of these tools is not covered by our contracts.

Even with significant progress in decreasing our vacancy rate, continued turnover puts our ability to deliver quality services at risk. Staff vacancies and turnover also impacts the time a youth or child remains in care. Research shows that each time a case manager changes, youth will stay in care for an additional 6-18 months as new staff members are trained and become familiar with their cases.

### **Protect the Youth Services Landscape**

The Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes cuts to various youth-facing programs, including a **\$6.9 million** cut to COMPASS afterschool programs, which would eliminate services for 3,538 youth, and a **\$19.64 million** cut to Summer Rising programs for middle school youth, which would eliminate Friday programming in the summer that would allow for deeper enrichment and engagement. This cut does not take into consideration all of the barriers CBOs face in being able to serve communities with the quality they deserve, and threatens to destabilize the full benefits of youth programming currently available in NYC.

[According to a national study from the Afterschool Alliance](#), nine in ten parents of afterschool students report their afterschool program gives their child time to interact with peers and build social skills; 82% say it helps build their confidence; 73% say it helps their child learn responsible decision-making. [Regular attendance in a high-quality afterschool program is also linked to higher scores on standardized tests and improved school attendance](#). Evidence affirms what providers know from experience to be true: that the programs provided by CBOs in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) must be well-funded and accessible.



### **Support CBOs in Making Summer Rising the Program Families Deserve**

Particularly, the \$19.64 million cut to middle school programming presents operational challenges our frontline staff have to navigate, despite persisting family needs for full week programming. Traditionally, the Summer Rising model has meant five days of programming with days from 8am to 6pm, with Fridays being the days for field trips and other project-based learning for students given that it would be the only day that providers had full control of programming. The \$19.64 million in DYCD's budget means no programming Fridays for funded middle school contracts, as well as programming only until 4pm instead of 6pm. Providers are now tasked with having to assign staff who traditionally would have served in these programs to other sites in order to ensure that staff members can continue steady employment. We are also unable to take students on field trips and other experiences because there is no day that providers have where they solely decide programming.

Even if some slots are partially restored or fully restored, program sites are hiring based on current slots and hours. Any changes that add more hours or days will require recruitment of additional staff on short notice. Staff reassignments are happening now, in real time. Staff will get assigned to another program, and if nothing is available, they may not be offered substitute work. When staff are told their position will not be funded, they understandably begin looking elsewhere for more stable jobs and possibly even leave the youth services field altogether.

For example, our site at Central Park East II is planning to serve 10 fewer kids based on DYCD's most recent messaging. If DYCD canceled that messaging and said that our site must accommodate the additional 10 children that would mean hiring one or two additional staff. The additional staff would be needed to cover Fridays and also cover for additional hours during the week to relieve those staff who may be working more than 35 hours weekly if sites are open later.

On the other hand, our programming at Lexington Academy, which has not been funded at any level, would have a much harder time creating the required program structures in this compressed timeline. If funding is restored, a site like Lexington Academy will have to recruit for every position because any standby staff would have already been assigned elsewhere. Programs that have no funding will not have enough time to recruit and clear staff in time, especially when training begins in June.

Notice later than next week Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> would make it extremely difficult to pivot. Here are some of the risks CBOs face the longer we wait:

- Inability to serve all kids on the first day due to ratio and safety concerns.
- Staff clearance bottleneck at the city level and for CBOs.
- Little to no training and orientation for late hires.
- Difficulties coordinating staff schedules to ensure every hour/day is covered.



- Families do not enroll because they have made alternate plans to attend other camps or leave the city for the summer, which creates a situation in which slots are restored but seats are not filled - making it seem as though the slots are not needed when it is a matter of miscommunication.
- Risk of missing critical information on participants because of the compressed timeline.
  - Staff will not have all necessary information (e.g medical information, emergency contacts, etc.) to be able serve them.

We would also like to highlight that for students given enrollment priority, such as students in foster care, the turnaround times between when providers and families receive necessary information to apply and to accept Summer Rising offers are incredibly tight. These shortened windows do not allow adequate time to make decisions and receive the proper consents necessary to ensure these students successfully enroll in Summer Rising. In all regards, timely communication of information and funding decisions are necessary to ensure Summer Rising fully meets the needs of our city's children and families.

#### **Release Next COMPASS/SONYC Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Communities *deserve* the highest quality programs, which is made possible when providers receive contracts that are responsive to their community's needs and recognize the cost of living in New York City in 2024. The upcoming COMPASS/SONYC RFP represents an opportunity to provide high-quality programming, living wages, and better outcomes for providers and communities. These contracts have not been updated since 2014, when they were first instituted. In 2018, when a new RFP process was introduced Children's Aid, along with the Campaign for Children, flagged that there were serious issues with the budget model. Providers have, time and time again, shared budget models with the agency with a higher, more realistic per-participant rate.

After much back and forth with providers regarding the need for a higher and realistic per participant rate, DYCD decided to pull the 2018 RFP., Conversations continued regarding the ideal per-participant rate, but stalled. Regardless, the need for new contracts at fair rates continues. In fact, it has only intensified, given the rising cost of living in New York City.

This is also why restoring the **\$6.9 million cut** to the COMPASS system is imperative. The field cannot sustain a cut of this size. Sites across the system have waitlists and are unable to enroll students because of the many issues with staffing, background checks, and more. Instead, we call on the city to fund the current capacity of the COMPASS/SONYC system and commit to an RFP that has rates that reflect the many budget models submitted to DYCD by experts in the field. These documents must be **the starting point** for rates, not aspirational goals.



Children's Aid calls on the city to release a new RFP for the COMPASS/SONYC system as soon as possible, and no later than the end of the calendar year 2024. Our communities have waited too long for better services, and every day we delay is a delay in services. We look forward to working with the city to enact fair rates.

### **Strengthening Supports for Youth with a Foster Care Background**

In an effort to advance support for youth with a foster care background, Children's Aid is proud to be a member of Fair Futures, a coalition of over 100 human services organizations focused on supporting young people in and aging out of foster care.

At our Next Generation Center in the South Bronx, Children's Aid operates a Fair Futures program with 242 youth from across the five boroughs (ages 11 - 20). NGC is a community center and Boys and Girls Club serving approximately 300 youth (ages 14 - 26). At the heart of our coaching and foster youth transitional services are trusting and caring relationships. We understand that a sustained relationship is critical to our young people feeling safe, secure, and supported to succeed. This work is focused on two primary goals: 1) connecting youth to positive influences (school, work, relationships with caring adults); and 2) diverting youth from negative influences (crime, incarceration).

We applaud the City for its baselining of Fair Futures and ask that the City Council ensure funding for these vital supports remains intact. It has proven to be an effective program for thousands of young people who have experienced foster care and/or the juvenile justice system.

Additionally, Children's Aid houses the Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA). FYSA is a statewide advocacy group that promotes responsive policies and programs that offer young people with a foster care background every opportunity to strive for and achieve their goals. We appreciate the City Council's partnership on our annual City Council Foster Youth Shadow Day. We look forward to continuing this partnership as it introduces young people to city government and allows them to share their personal experiences of the foster care system with elected officials.

### **Clear the Fingerprinting and Staff Clearances Backlog**

The city must clear the current Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) clearance backlog for child care and youth service providers and their staff by targeting resources and adding additional staff to focus solely on the clearance process. In addition to the difficult labor market and the continued low wages in our city contracts, the delay and backlog in background checks has impacted our staffing shortages.

The backlog is so severe that we struggle to have enough fully cleared staff to supervise provisionally cleared staff. The backlog directly interferes with our ability to serve youth and families, forcing us to put some enrolled families on a waitlist for afterschool programs. To ensure the continued success of



the youth services field, it is imperative that DOHMH to be fully resourced and supported in whatever way is needed in order to clear the backlog as soon as possible.

### **Continue Supporting the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**

We applaud the historic expansion of the impactful Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, an exciting step forward in actualizing youth employment opportunities in our communities. We applaud the Mayor and the Council for their continued support of SYEP. To build on this success, Children's Aid recommends the following:

- Fund Metro Cards for SYEP participants on an ongoing basis. This critical resource allows our youth to fully participate in SYEP programming.
- Provide SYEP participants with childcare needs with for child care waivers and other resources to support their participation.
- Consider incentives that can support employer engagement efforts.
- Expand slots for a SYEP partnership with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).
- Allow younger youth to earn an hourly wage instead of a stipend.
  - \$700 is no longer a competitive incentive for our younger youth, which hurts overall program utilization (as participants will often opt for a different opportunity).
- Provide More resources and partnerships related to AI and potential career pathways.
- For participants who may not be ready or able to work a full 25 hours per week, DYCD should consider making an allowance for a Professional Technical Development up to 100% (it is currently 50%) at the provider's discretion.
  - This would be an added support, particularly for older youth with no work experience, as this population needs additional, targeted support.
  - More ongoing and year-round planning with all the stakeholders is needed for all special initiatives.

As an agency committed to eradicating poverty in our neighborhoods, we are committed to ensuring that the most under-resourced youth and families in NYC have the resources they need to succeed and thrive. 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, the New York City Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, the Human Services Council, the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), and Fair Futures. As a member of these networks and alliances, we support their policy agendas.

We understand the challenges the city faces in meeting the needs of its young people, but our budget cannot be balanced at the expense of our children and families. 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 these crucial issues. Please feel free to contact me at [dbravo@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:dbravo@childrensaidnyc.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.



**Chinese-American Planning Council  
Testimony Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on Children and  
Youth**

**Chair, Council Member Justin Brannan**

**Chair, Council Member Althea Stevens**

**May 10th, 2024**

Thank you Chairs Brannan, Stevens, and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

Across the city, ["126,500 children under the age five rely on city-contracted early childhood programs or use vouchers for subsidized care."](#) CPC operates six early childhood centers through contracts with the NYC Department of Education (DOE), serving over 310 children ages 0-4. While the 2022 fiscal year ended on June 30th and auditors have begun their work, the DOE has only paid CPC 35% of our FY22 contracted amount. This includes 25% of our advance and 10% contingency, so the DOE owes CPC over \$4.6 million.

This is a huge disruption to children's academic journey, families, and the staff of these programs. CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. They are recognized as essential and vital to the reopening of New York City, but this recognition was only in words. **It is imperative that the City immediately pay these programs what they are owed to ensure children are receiving their quality education and that program staff are properly compensated.**

CBO's are funded disproportionately to their counterparts in DOE. We are contracted to serve NYC children under the same capacity; to educate with the same curriculum, credentials, assessments and requirements. It is unethical that the DOE is not equitable in parity still. Support staff without



longevity are paid a mere 70 cents above minimum wage due to the contract negotiated with the City. We are seeing an exodus of staff from the Child care system, due to the disparity, many have left for substitute positions within DOE, which pays a rate of \$33 an hour.

In addition to CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers, CPC holds contracts with DOE to operate Family Child Care (FCC) Networks in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The Networks assist low-income and immigrant families in applying for subsidized child care and help parents find high-quality in-network home-based programs for infants, toddlers, and 3-K children.

Pay rates for child care programs affiliated with Family Child Care Networks are dictated by DOE/ACS and do not promote equity within the industry. All home-based child care providers have been able to provide 3-K services after Mayor De Blasio expanded 3-K for All, which meant that all families living in NYC were eligible to apply for free 3-K services from 8AM-2:20PM September through June. However, if a parent needed extended hours and an extended school year for their child, they would have to apply for a subsidy through the City and be found eligible for the 8AM-6PM care, which includes the summer months. Child care providers are paid a rate of \$37 per 3-K child a day, regardless if they attend from 8AM-2:20PM or 8AM-6PM.

Although they provide high quality instruction to 3-K children with subsidy cases for an extra 3 hours and 40 minutes compared to 3-K children without a subsidy case, they are not compensated extra for those hours. This discourages providers from accepting children with subsidy cases due to the providers' difficulty in making ends meet in an ever-increasing rent market alongside paying for daycare expenses, and would thus rather find families who can afford to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars a month. This in turn impacts the most vulnerable by increasing difficulty in securing child care to work and provide for their families.

The low pay rate to providers fuels their challenge in staying open. These are educators who also follow the DOE curriculum, participate in professional learning opportunities, and follow DOH health and safety regulations. One permanently closed program means one less program in a community, effectively robbing one of parents' and childrens' most vital resources. We will be investing in our children when we invest in our home-based programs and centers. **We urge the City to make equitable investment towards Pay Parity for the staff within Center Based Organizations and further investment towards an increase in child rates for home-based child care providers.**

The lack of support and funding from the city has made it even more challenging to implement creative programming that meets the learning and developmental needs of children during COVID-19, and this has resulted in concerning childhood developmental regression.

The following anecdotal example of childhood regression is about a child with disabilities who enrolled in one of CPC's Childhood Centers when she was two years old. When she enrolled in the program, she was unable to speak any words. Through CPC's support, she was able to speak coherent sentences at three years old. When COVID-19 hit and services shifted to remote, this child was unable to access their teletherapy sessions due to the language, digital, and financial barriers that her family encountered. Once CPC's Childhood Center reopened this fall, this child returned and was unable to speak in coherent sentences anymore. In six months, she had regressed two developmental years - back to speaking single word phrases.



Children with disabilities require paras (paraprofessionals who support students with disabilities with communication, instructional, and behavioral support). Currently there is a severe shortage in special needs staff (SEIT, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, ABA therapists, Speech Therapists to support children. It is hard to get support for children normally but to also ask for linguistic and culturally competent support for these children and families, it is close to impossible. Disproportionately affecting working class immigrant parents, as well as affecting majority working class and Communities of Color, the lack of accountable follow through with providing support staff is yet another systemic barrier that prevents working-class children of color from learning. These systemic inequities impact low-income children of color and children with disabilities, and immigrant-serving CBOs such as CPC end up taking on the mantle to support these children through interruptions to their cognitive development. **CPC calls for equitable investment in community-led Early Childhood services, the integration of intentional community outreach for families with linguistic barriers, and provision of support to search for providers, relying on word of mouth and for community-based childhood centers to adequately support low-income immigrant families with children who have disabilities.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has also been detrimental to children's mental health, which affects their academic performance and long term development. The disruption from in person learning and prolonged isolation has increased students' stress and anxiety. Fourth graders in CPC programs are asking questions such as, "what if it stays like this forever, what if my parents die, what if we don't have any more money, why...why do I need to...nothing will change," and they breakdown in tears from sadness and frustration trying to get answers. The overwhelming sense of uncertainty, grief, and hopelessness weigh heavily on students' minds, leaving them unmotivated and unable to focus in the classroom. Additionally, students carry onto their families' pain and loss, and are unable to receive the proper mental health support to fully process and heal from their traumas. CPC staff are not professionally trained to provide the comprehensive mental health support students need, and may experience vicarious trauma from consoling students as well. Additionally, many staff are living through the same stress, anxiety, and dilemmas the children are feeling. Social Services workers need to be better trained and equipped on what signs to look for in mental illness specifically in young children, in addition to how to address it appropriately. **CPC calls on the City to ensure CBO's receive the same equitable support in mental health for the children they serve as the DOE.**

During COVID-19, AAPI unemployment claims have increased by 6900% in comparison to last year. Lines for free meal distribution events wrap around the block, and CPC staff have supported thousands of families navigate through different relief programs provided by City, State, and Federal level governments. At CPC's Early Childhood sites, without an increase in funding from the City, any increase in meal distribution comes out of the individual site's program budget. The children would rely on the organization and agency's own resources to get fed, rather than from the City they live in. **Therefore, CPC demands increased investment funding for CBO-run Early Childcare Centers, which provide necessary childcare services for working-class immigrant families.**

COVID-19 has exacerbated systemic injustices and has left many of our low-income and immigrant families without adequate resources to navigate unemployment and surface-level relief packages. CPC staff remain on the frontlines of the essential workforce, and have prepared and adapted to the



ever-shifting policies throughout the past six months. However, critical information is still getting lost through the cracks, and CBOs such as CPC are left out of crucial communication around school guidelines.

Updates are not reaching CBOs in a timely manner, but there is also no transparency regarding current allocated funds or current issues within the vendor portal system. We continue to face confusion as new protocols, guidelines and procedures are provided but information is not guided and we do not always have a point person to get answers from. By not ensuring a grace/transition period for the change. Example: This year they provided an update on timeliness of ensuring our invoices are in the system, we must certify our student attendance by the 5th of the following month. This means my Sept 2022 attendance needs to be certified by Oct 5th. However, DOE's Vendor Portal was not active for FY 2023 until after August 15th, 2022, this ultimately meant uploading enrollments was delayed until after August 15. DOE still did not start processing our student enrollment package until this week, which means without the enrollments approved July 2022 attendance is inaccurate and we are unable to claim the accurate amount from DOE. It is currently October 2022, and yet we are still receiving deadline notifications but we are unable to reclaim any funding for this year's service thus far. Due to the community in which we service, we understand our working class immigrant families need holistic support with transitioning their kids back to learning, including culturally competent and language accessible mental health services, investment in youth employment, funding towards Community Schools, and more. However, these programs will not reach working class immigrants without proper communication from DOE to CBO providers that serve marginalized communities. The delays and hurdles faced by CBO's make it harder for leadership to focus on the needs of the children. DOE needs to provide transparency, also enough support and update their system timely, their delays cause us to chase for information and for change that is impossible.

**Therefore, the City needs to pay CBO providers for the service currently being provided, and treat CBO's with equal respect. The City also must hold DOE accountable to providing communications in a timeline that allows for CBOs to respond and prepare sustainable quality programming that NYC children deserve.**

Furthermore, CPC is one of the organizations that has partnered with Promise NYC to ensure that undocumented children are receiving the care and support that they need. CPC focuses on serving Queens-based applicants and selecting eligible families based on their income, children's ages, and immigration status. Undocumented families in Queens with children ages 6 weeks to 13 years old and earn less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible to apply to this program through CPC. We have enrolled over 200 community members into the program and many more have expressed interest. However, they have been unfortunately placed on the waitlist as we were told by the City to cap enrollment and did not know about renewal.

During a time where we are seeing an influx of migrants entering our city, we need to live up to our values and provide the resources needed as a sanctuary for our immigrant communities. These families have been forced by socio-political factors beyond their control to flee violence, unrest, and dire circumstances in their home countries in search of a safe and stable future for their children.





The families that we serve need to access employment in order to sustain themselves and contribute to our city. In order to work, parents need affordable childcare. Access to affordable child care saves lives and creates futures.

One mother enrolled in our program explained that she and her children came to the US in order to escape life-threatening shortages of medications that they faced in Venezuela. Her oldest child would have died without access to medications and treatment. There was no time to wait for immigration processes. Now, undocumented in the US and seeking asylum, she is relying on PromiseNYC so that she can access childcare for her children, and thus access employment and income to support her family while also making sure that her oldest child receives the medical attention that he needs. This is just one of many stories.

In summary, we call on the City to consider the following:

- Ensure that city contracts with Early Childhood programs are paid in full.
- Make equitable investment towards Pay Parity for the staff within Center Based Organizations and further investment towards an increase in child rates for home-based child care providers.
- Make equitable investment in community-led Early Childhood services, the integration of intentional community outreach for families with digital and linguistic barriers, and provision of training on school reopening guidelines for community-based childhood centers to adequately support low-income immigrant families as NYC schools reopen.
- Ensure CBO's receive the same equitable support in mental health for the children they serve as the DOE.
- Increase investment funding for CBO-run Early Childcare Centers, which provide necessary childcare services for working-class immigrant families.
- Needs to pay CBO providers equitably with DOE teachers, and treat them with equal respect. The City also must hold DOE accountable to providing language-accessible communications in a timeline that allows for CBOs to respond and prepare for the quality programming that NYC children deserve.
- Pass Universal Childcare so that all children regardless of immigration status are able to access quality and comprehensive care and in the meantime allocate \$20 million to Promise NYC in this upcoming budget.

Our Early Childhood Programs are a lifeline to many of our low-income and immigrant communities, and we urge the City to take into consideration these recommendations. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

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

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

**Submitted to the New York City Council FY'2025 Executive Budget Oversight Hearing  
Children and Youth Services Committee  
May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

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

We would like to thank Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan and all the members of the City Council Finance and Children and Youth Committees for holding today's important hearing on the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget. Below we include recommendations for how our City can improve access to youth programming that is so essential to ensuring youth can access development and professional opportunities, economic support, and community networks.

**Invest in Youth Services and the Youth Service Workforce**

The scope of afterschool and youth services cuts facing New York City is staggering, and it is urgent that our city leaders protect these supports that are critical to the immediate and long-term wellbeing of New York city's children and families. The November Budget Modification and Preliminary Budget include a \$6.9 million cut to COMPASS Afterschool, as well as a \$19.6 million cut to Summer Rising. These cuts are devastating and will dramatically disrupt the lives of families across the city. The Executive Budget has not restored any of these cuts.

Access to free and affordable afterschool services has never been more important for New York families. Citywide, 80% of families cannot afford after school for their children, and across the city families pay up to 63% of their annual income on child care and afterschool.<sup>i</sup> The \$6.9 million cut to COMPASS afterschool will result in a loss of over 3,500 seats for youth, preventing them from accessing community and positive youth development experiences. The \$19.6 million cut to Summer Rising will reduce the program to only 4 days a week and eliminate field trips. **Our youth deserve better – we urge you to restore \$6.9 million to COMPASS Afterschool and \$19.6 million to Summer Rising.**

Our City must also address the operational issues plaguing the youth services system. Therefore, in addition to restoring funding, we join our partners in the Campaign for Children (C4C) in urging the city to implement the following recommendations to address operational challenges:

- Increase the cost-per-participant rates for COMPASS and SONYC to set a wage floor of no less than \$22/hour for staff and ensure year-round contracting.
- Prioritize consumer-centered outreach and enrollment, including by enabling CBOs providing youth services to directly enroll children and youth onsite, and by taking immediate action to stand up community-rooted application and enrollment facilitators that prioritize expediting access to youth services (afterschool and summer programming) in partnership with CBOs

- Establish year-round, 12-month youth services and shift to a K-8 summer program model
- Pay youth service providers on time and catch up on payments owed
- Fully staff DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) divisions responsible for invoicing and payment and make permanent the ability of youth service providers to batch multiple months of invoices.
- Release a new RFP for the SONYC and COMPASS contracts that covers the full and actual cost of care.

By restoring the cuts and addressing the current operational shortcomings, we can build a stronger youth services system and ensure all young people who need services are able to receive them.

### Invest in Youth Employment

Youth services provide essential opportunities, employment, and connections for young people in New York City. Youth programming helps maintain relationships among peers, keeps families connected to support systems, and provides financial opportunities and independence. CCC's Keeping Track of New York City's Children found that 62% of youth aged 18 to 24 reported a loss of employment income since March 2020, and nearly a quarter of youth aged 16-24 are out of school and out of work in New York City.<sup>ii</sup> This data shows too many young people facing barriers to accessing education, employment, and other community supports.

We appreciate the Executive Budget's inclusion of \$33 million to support the Learning to Work Program, which will prevent this program from being cut in the next fiscal year due to the impending expiration of the COVID-19 stimulus dollars. **We urge the administration to baseline Learning to Work funding in order to continue to build young peoples' networks and skills.** Youth across the City have made clear that investing in youth services is the best pathway to achieving community wellbeing. Therefore, we must continue this practice and restore the funding to programs experiencing cuts.

### Invest in Runaway and Homeless Youth

Numerous challenges currently face Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) in New York. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is mainly responsible for supporting this population; however, it is not uncommon for RHY to also be involved with ACS (Administration of Children's Services) DHS, (Department of Homeless Services) and HRA (Human Resources Administration) in the efforts to find housing or social services. We must ensure that Runaway and Homeless Youth have access to more beds and more support. The system capacity is insufficient, driving youth to the street or into dangerous living situations because there are not enough beds for young people (especially older youth). We therefore join the Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth in supporting the following priorities, which are also reflected in the City Council's Response to the Preliminary Budget:

- **Restore and baseline** \$1.6 million for Housing Navigator positions to assist and connect homeless youth with safe housing.
- **Restore \$1.6 million** for Runaway and Homeless Youth Peer Navigators at DYCD funded Drop-in-Centers
- **Invest** \$6.2 million to fund 100 additional shelter beds to house RHY and young adults

These investments provide safe, temporary housing for youth who otherwise would be without a stable option and ensure that youth have a trusted support person to offer advice, resources, and answers for the complex housing system. We urge these investments to continue so that we can ensure the safety and care of all young people.

### **Promote Community Safety and Wellbeing by Investing in Community Services and Resources**

To promote community safety and wellbeing, we must invest in community services and resources. Unfortunately, the FY24 November Plan and the FY25 Preliminary Budget include cuts to probation programs that have proven to be successful in supporting re-entry and connecting young people to mentorship and services. Failing to provide robust reentry services or supportive probation programs will harm our youth and is counterintuitive to building safe communities.

We need creative, non-carceral solutions to violence, and we urge the Mayor and the City Council to utilize the city budget to invest heavily in community programming, parks, housing, youth sports, employment, and behavioral health. **CCC therefore recommends the following:**

- **Treat** gun violence as a public health crisis by investing in transformative community programs, including expanding investment in Cure Violence, credible messenger programs, youth engagement programs and other community-rooted programs that employ a public health approach to community safety
- **Restore** the \$17 million cut from nonprofit programs provided in NYC jails
- **Restore** the \$1.6 million cut to the Arches program, a transformative mentorship program to support 16–24-year-olds, from both the November plan and Preliminary budget
- **Restore** \$2.6 million cut from the Next Steps program from the November plan
- **Renew** and continue investment into the ACES program, an intensive mentoring program serving young men in East Harlem and the South Bronx who are at high risk for being involved in gun violence
- **Close** Rikers and ensure the City remains on track with the closure plan
- **Redirect** the funding from school policing into opportunities for young people in schools and communities
- **Restore** the \$22 million cut for New York Public Libraries
- **Reject** the restoration of the Uniformed Police Academy Classes (\$62.3 million in FY25, increasing to \$75.7 million in FY26, \$77.9 million in FY27, and \$79.4 million in FY28)

We also demand an end to the Quality-of-Life Violations policing initiative that began around March 2022 from the Mayor's office and NYPD (New York Police Department). To be clear, this is a new iteration of [broken windows policing](#), a policy that we know does not work and further criminalizes Black and Brown New Yorkers. We are already seeing the impact of this policy with increasing arrests and detainment, specifically and disproportionately targeting Black New Yorkers. This policy should be immediately halted. This is a pivotal moment to shift how we approach community safety, and we must commit to resourcing systemically neglected communities and building support networks. Furthermore,

while cuts to youth services remain, police academy class funding has been restored, again perpetuating a cycle of criminalization over community investment.

Lastly, we urge city leaders to prioritize child care support for immigrant led households.

### **Support Immigrant Families in Need of Child Care**

Promise NYC was initiated in December of 2022 to provide childcare assistance to low-income families with children whose immigration status makes them ineligible for other, federally-funded subsidized childcare. The City Council was instrumental in making this program happen. Last year, the City Council ensured that Promise NYC funding was restored, and today, we must ensure that this vital program is not eliminated. All parents want a safe, high-quality, and culturally responsive place for their children to learn, and Promise NYC provides this option for undocumented families. **We strongly urge city leaders to invest \$25 million for Promise NYC to ensure that immigrant families can access child care, as written in the Council Response.**

Youth services and programs must be fully funded because young people deserve to live in a city where there are opportunities and resources for their growth, development, and joy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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<sup>i</sup> Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (2023). CCC Brief: From Birth to Age 12. The (Un)Affordability of Child Care and Out-of-School Care in New York City. Accessed: <https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/from-birth-to-age-12-child-care-and-out-of-school-care/>

<sup>ii</sup> Keeping Track Online: Youth. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. 2020. <https://cccnewyork.org/datapublications/keeping-track-of-nyc-children-2022/?section=Youth>





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Testimony by

Coalition for Homeless Youth

on

The FY25 Children and Youth Executive Budget

Submitted to

The New York City Council's Committee on Children and Youth Services

By

Jamie Powlovich  
Executive Director  
Coalition for Homeless Youth

Verbal Testimony Given: May 10, 2024  
Written Testimony Submitted: May 13, 2024

## Introduction

The Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) welcomes the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Children and Youth Services Committees' FY2025 Executive Budget Hearing. CHY was disappointed that the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) did not adequately amplify the needs of their contracted Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers during their testimony. However, we greatly appreciate the Council's support in highlighting their needs during their questioning of DYCD. We also applaud City Council for echoing many of our asks in their New York City FY2025 Budget Response.<sup>1</sup>

As stated during the verbal testimony of Lauren Galloway, CHY Advocacy Coordinator, on May 10, 2024, we are submitting this written testimony to amplify the needs of the DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers, and the runaway and homeless youth that they serve.

## Who are Runaway and Homeless Youth?

RHY are generally defined as unaccompanied young people who have run away or been forced to leave home and now reside in temporary situations, places not otherwise intended for habitation, or emergency shelters. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines the population as being between 12-24 years of age. As of April 2017, New York State redefined RHY to be anyone under the age of 25 years<sup>2</sup>.

On a single night in 2023, 5,927 unaccompanied and parenting youth under age 25 were counted as experiencing homelessness in the NYC Point in Time (PIT) count.<sup>3</sup> In NYC Fiscal Year 2023, 3,182 RHY, were served in DYCD RHY residential programs, including 326 minors.<sup>4</sup> 37,125 RHY received non-residential services at a DYCD RHY drop-in center or through street-outreach<sup>5</sup>. In 2021, DHS reported a total of 4,051 unaccompanied or parenting youth between the ages of 18 and 25 entering either single adult or family shelters,<sup>6</sup> and the Department of Education (DOE) reported that during the 2019-2020 school year, almost 7,500 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness attended NYC public schools.<sup>7</sup>

Like all other segments of NYC's homeless population, RHY experience harm that disproportionately impacts their health and creates roadblocks to long-term wellness. This is most recently detailed in "*Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness (OSH)*."<sup>8</sup> In the OSH report, it details the myriad of harms that confront RHY, include: increased mental health problems and trauma, substance use, exposure to victimization and criminal activity, and unsafe sex practices. More specifically that almost 50% of youth served at New York State RHY programs reported needing mental health services, and in NYC over 90% of homeless youth have reported experiencing trauma, 92% self-reported having anxiety or depression, 69% reported using drugs and 60% specifically self-reported that they had been diagnosed with having bipolar disorder.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, homeless youth also experience increased levels of criminalization and discrimination due to their intersecting identities. In NYC, over 90% of homeless youth identify as a race other than white (non-Hispanic) and LGBTQ/TGNC youth are also overrepresented in the RHY population<sup>10</sup>.

## Youth-Specific Shelters and Services Make a Measurable, Positive Difference

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has been designated the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2024/04/FY25-Prelim-Budget-Response.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EXC/A19-H>

<sup>3</sup> [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_PopSub\\_CoC\\_NY-600-2023\\_NY\\_2023.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2023_NY_2023.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-Final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2022/NYC-Community-Plan-DIGITAL.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

county youth bureau for NYC and is responsible for serving RHY under the NYRHYA.<sup>11</sup> While many RHY also seek services within the DHS and HRA continuum of shelters, homeless youth, advocates, and RHY providers agree that the outcomes for many homeless youth improve with increased access to youth-specific shelters and services. This was proved in a groundbreaking white paper was released by the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing in with the Coalition for Homeless Youth. One of the most significant findings of the study is that high quality RHY programs not only meet basic requirements, but “address higher order relational, psychological, and motivational needs... fostering a sense of resilience among RHY” and providing long-term benefits to a youth’s functioning.<sup>12</sup> ***In short, well-funded, high quality RHY programs make a positive impact on a youth’s ability to stabilize and successfully transition from crisis to independence.*** While more research is needed to evaluate the long-term benefits of RHY services, understanding that these programs make a proven difference to the youth they serve gives further support to why we have continued pushing for more shelter beds and services for youth experiencing homelessness.

### Funding Recommendations

Under the previous Administration the City did put forth more resources to increase the number of beds that are available to youth experiencing homelessness, including a system-changing package of bills passed by the City Council over five years ago, but overall, there is still room to go. CHY understands the financial difficulties of this year and we are grateful that funding for RHY programs is largely being kept whole. However, despite baselined funding being maintained, there continues to be vital supports and services that remain underfunded or not funded at all. **As such, we present the following recommendations that total an additional \$17,155,000 in funding and other considerations that will significantly improve the financial stability of the RHY programs and the quality of services for youth themselves:**

- **Fund Support Services for Youth New Arrivals and Unaccompanied Minors: \$1.63M**  
DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers have been going above and beyond to meet the growing needs of newly arrived youth and unaccompanied minors without any additional support. DYCD’s data reflects an almost 40% increase in total utilization, and an almost 16% increase in more intensive case management at the Drop-in Centers from FY22<sup>13</sup> to FY23<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, we are asking for a one-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts. This additional funding will support meeting the basic needs of young people and fund more appropriate staffing across the sites.
- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth service provider contracts: \$5.5M**  
DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded Crisis and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Program contracts be increased to \$55,500. This will cover the baselining of all residential bed rates across contract years, plus a 10% increase for all current DYCD-funded residential RHY contracts.
- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M**  
The funding for the Housing Specialists in the DYCD-funded drop-in centers were cut in the FY25 Preliminary Budget. This funding must be maintained. Since housing navigators were

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<sup>11</sup> New York State FY 2018-19 budget included amendments to the NYRHYA that expand the age range for RHY services and youth-centered beds to 25 years old. The amendments took effect January 1, 2018. (SFY 2018-19 Budget, Part M S2006-c/30060c; see [https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/press/2017/pressRelease17\\_enactedPassage.html](https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/press/2017/pressRelease17_enactedPassage.html)).

<sup>12</sup> Gwadz, M., Freeman, R., Cleland, C.M., Ritchie, A.S., Leonard, N.R., Hughes, C., Powlovich, J., & Schoenberg, J. (2017). Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth. New York: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. See page 16.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY22\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY22_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-final.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-Final.pdf)

funded in the DYCD system in FY21, available data shows that there has been a 6% increase in youth exiting homelessness from the DYCD shelters into their own apartments from FY21<sup>15</sup> to FY23<sup>16</sup>, and this does not include the hundreds of youth that have exited homelessness into their own apartments from Drop-in Centers with the support of Housing Specialists using Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV). These are amazing outcomes for RHY, and maintaining these positions will ensure RHY continue to successfully transition to their own apartments and support the Administration's goal to address the homelessness crisis. This ask is echoed by the [\*Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness \(OSH\)\*](#) Steering Committee, in the attached correspondence to the Administration.

- **Restore funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M**  
In response to the priorities set forth in [\*Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness\*](#), and based on the success of the CHY Homeless Youth Peer Navigator Pilot (HYPNP), funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across the DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers in FY23. These critical positions were held by individuals who had lived experience, and provided peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults. Unfortunately, this funding was cut in FY24. This led to not only people with lived experience losing their jobs, but also has prevented countless other youth from benefiting from peer-on-peer support. This ask is also echoed by the OSH Steering Committee, in the attached correspondence to the Administration.
- **Fund 100 additional DYCD-RHY beds: \$6.2M**  
There are simply not enough DYCD-funded RHY shelter beds to meet the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. There are currently only 813 funded RHY beds in NYC, 752 beds for runaway and homeless youth ages 16-20yo, and 60 for homeless young adult ages 21-24 yo. DYCD data shows that from the first six months<sup>17</sup> (January 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>) of 2023 to the last six months<sup>18</sup> (July 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>) there was an almost 7000% increase in the amount of young people that were “turned away” to the streets due to lack of available youth beds. This is unacceptable. In order to ensure that youth can benefit from the safety and security of youth specific shelter supports, we ask that funding be made available for an additional 100 DYCD-RHY beds, 60 beds for youth ages 16-20yo and 40 beds for young adults ages 21-24yo.
- **Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services: \$625,000**  
Young people in DYCD programs have been excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and most young people qualify for youth-specific immigration relief (i.e. SIJS) that the city does not currently fund. Funding should be made immediately available for five positions for full-time experienced lawyers, who will be awarded to DYCD-funded RHY programs through an RFP based on the documented need for such services.
- **Make youth categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers**  
Youth experiencing homelessness in the DYCD-funded Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) programs continue to not be eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without having to first enter a Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter, despite being legally eligible since the CityFHEPS laws passed by City Council went into effect on January 8, 2024. The Administration must implement these laws, not only because they are legally required to, but because youth in DYCD programs are homeless. Period.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY21\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY21_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-Final.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23\\_LL86\\_RHY\\_Demographics-and-Services\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/FY23_LL86_RHY_Demographics-and-Services_Report-Final.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/Local\\_Law\\_79\\_Runaway-and-Homeless\\_Youth\\_Shelter\\_Access-January-to-June-2023.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/Local_Law_79_Runaway-and-Homeless_Youth_Shelter_Access-January-to-June-2023.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/Local\\_Law\\_79\\_Runaway-and-Homeless\\_Youth\\_Shelter\\_Access\\_july\\_to\\_December-2023\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/Local_Law_79_Runaway-and-Homeless_Youth_Shelter_Access_july_to_December-2023_Final.pdf)

- **COLA for Human Services Workers, echoing the [#JustPay Campaign](#)**

We thank the Administration and the City Council for including a 9.27% wage increase for City-contracted human services workers as this \$741 million investment is a significant step in fairly compensating frontline workers. By committing to meaningful, yearly increases in salaries to help workers keep up with cost-of-living, the City has supported the sector in undoing decades of underfunding for human services. More must be done to achieve true livable wages and fair funding on government contracts, but this is a remarkable investment and acknowledgement of how important these workers are to New York. We look forward to working with the City for a seamless COLA implementation so that organizations receive their funding on time to distribute to the 80,000 City-contracted human services workers.

*For questions please contact:*

**Jamie Powlovich**

Coalition for Homeless Youth, [jamie@nychy.org](mailto:jamie@nychy.org), (347)772-2352

The Coalition for Homeless Youth

Founded in 1978 as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, The Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) is a consortium of 65 agencies whose mission is, as a membership organization, to use its collective voice to promote the safety, health, and future of runaway, homeless and street involved youth through advocacy, authentic collaboration with youth and young adults (YYA) with lived expertise and training and technical assistance.

CHY is primarily an advocacy organization, leveraging the expertise and experience of its membership as well as YYA with the lived experience of homelessness to shape the landscape for runaway and homeless youth across New York State. This is achieved by increasing public awareness, coalition building, policy work and public advocacy campaigns for pertinent legislation and funding. Notably, in 2015, CHY was instrumental in the advocacy efforts that resulted in the doubling of the State budget for runaway and homeless youth services. CHY's advocacy also contributed to the development of NYS statutory and regulatory changes that became effective in 2018, permitting localities across the State to extend length of stay and increase age of youth served by RHY programs in their communities. Most recently, we passed state legislation this session that will grant decisionally capable runaway and homeless minors the ability to consent to their own health care, including gender-affirming care.

Lastly, and most importantly, as a coalition and voice for a community that is often overlooked, underrepresented and under-resourced, CHY prides itself on ensuring that the majority of our staff have the lived experience of youth homelessness. Our commitment to giving power to those with lived experience is also prioritized through our support of the New York City Youth Action Board (YAB), as well as our annual Youth Advocacy Fellowship Program, Project UNITE and our now concluded Opening Doors Pilot Program with the NYC Department of Education (DOE). These initiatives not only expand the way that CHY is authentically collaborating with young people who have the lived experience of homelessness, but it also awards us the ability to work together with directly impacted youth, to give them the tools and supports needed so that they can effectively create change. Combining the leadership of YYA with the long-established advocacy efforts of CHY has fundamentally changed the socio-political landscape for runaway and homeless youth.



## NYC FY25 OSH Budget Letter

March 20th, 2024

MAYOR ADAMS

The Opportunity Starts with a Home (OSH) Steering Committee is writing to urge you to **include \$5 million in funding to support the Financial Literacy Programming, Housing and Peer Navigator positions, and youth and young adult mobile platform in the New York City FY25 Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) budget.** These were all priority interventions, initially funded in FY23, attached to the NYC Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).

In September 2021, New York City was awarded a 15 million dollar [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program](#) (YHDP) grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to create a plan and fund initiatives to address youth homelessness. In August 2022, after an eight-month planning process, "[Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness](#)," (OSH) was released.

The OSH plan was the result of an intensive multi-sector community planning process that brought together fifteen city agencies, youth with lived experience, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and philanthropic and research partners and culminated in a plan for how to invest the grant, implement policy changes, and spearhead new city initiatives towards preventing and ending youth homelessness.

The leadership of youth with lived experience through New York City's Youth Action Board (YAB), was instrumental in ensuring that the plan was written in collaboration with young people who have lived experience with homelessness. Throughout the process, the YAB members served as key collaborators in developing a plan that is intersectional in its approach to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and led to the prioritization of many projects that were funded by the city, HUD, and philanthropy. Initiatives included:

- City Funded
  - The city's first-ever financial counseling program tailored to youth experiencing homelessness.
  - 16 full-time Peer Navigators positions, for individuals who have the lived experience of homelessness, that provided peer-to-peer support, at each of the eight DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) drop-in centers; and offered aftercare services to Youth and Young Adults (YYA) placed in permanent housing.
  - Sustain Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program Housing Navigators at each of the eight RHY drop-in centers.
- HUD Funded
  - The city's first-ever Host Home and Shelter Diversion Program, primarily serving the LGBTQ+ ballroom community of New York City
  - 102 new units of rapid re-housing (RRH) for YYA
  - New street outreach programming developed specifically for youth.
  - Creation of jobs specifically for individuals who have lived experience across all HUD-funded projects.



- Philanthropy Funded
  - Funding for additional research and assessment
  - Creation of the first Housing and Peer Navigator Training Institute
  - Development of *YourPeer*, a mobile platform to connect youth to services.

Although there has been much success in implementing many of the funded initiatives, funding has been cut for a number of the city-funded initiatives and funding needs to be restored to ensure that the goals outlined in the OSH plan can be met. More specifically, the Opportunity Starts with a Home Steering Committee is asking that funding be included in the adopted New York City Fiscal Year 2025 budget to:

- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.5M**  
The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through the end of the fiscal year (June 2024). Data already demonstrates their success through the record number of youth that have exited homelessness into their apartments, since their inception. Since 2021, almost 600 YYA have moved into permanent housing with the support of the Housing Specialists who utilize their rapport with real estate brokers and landlords to assist YYA. Defunding these positions eliminated the only housing-specific jobs at DYCD programs. Maintaining these positions will ensure RHY successfully transition to their apartments and support the administration's goal to address the homelessness crisis.
- **Restore funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M**  
In response to the priorities set forth in [\*Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness\*](#), funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across the DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers. During FY23, 425 youth were supported by peer navigators in their housing search, post-move-in support, connection to mental health services, employment, education, and daily living skills. Unfortunately, these critical positions that provide peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults, were cut in FY24 and should be restored. This funding ensures that these functions continue and that peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults can be provided.
- **Restore funding for the Financial Literacy program in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.4M**  
During the planning process of the Opportunity Starts with a Home plan, YYA advocated for the need for financial literacy education. Many RHY do not have bank accounts and have low/poor credit scores, making it difficult to secure safe, stable housing and achieve independence. As a result, DYCD, in partnership with the Department of Consumer Welfare and Protection's Office of Financial Empowerment, was funded to implement a Financial Empowerment program at the DYCD RHY Drop-In Centers. Each Drop-In Center has one full-time coach who hosts workshops and provides individualized one-on-one services. During Fiscal 2024, as of January, the financial coaches have offered 126 workshops with 694 participants. They also offered 320 one-on-one counseling sessions to 119 youth. DYCD has had to self-fund this program for FY24. This funding should be restored as it paves a pathway for RHY to become housed and, more importantly, remain housed.
- **Restore funding for the NYC Public School's commitment to fund a YYA mobile platform for services: \$500k (\$250k/year)**  
In the Opportunities Starts with a Home plan, funding was allocated by Philanthropy and the NYC Department of Education (DOE), also known as NYC Public Schools (NYCPS), to create a mobile

platform for YYA that connects them to social services such as shelter, food, clothing, personal care, health, and more. The YYA mobile platform lost half of its funding when NYCPS was unable to follow through with its funding commitment of \$500k over two years. In its pilot stage, the mobile tool has connected 1,497 users to information on food, 1,067 to clothing, 1,052 to shelter, and hundreds more to information on personal care and health services. Restoring this funding would allow the mobile platform to increase the accuracy of information and accessibility features among other key needs dictated by persons with lived experience.

It is imperative for us to prioritize the restoration of funding for these positions and programs within the runaway and homeless youth space. By investing in these positions and programs, we are investing in the futures of young people in need. The inability to restore funding for these positions exacerbates the hardships faced by runaway and homeless youth and undermines the progress made through the efforts and partnership of the NYC CoC's Opportunity Starts with a Home Steering Committee. Every young person deserves access to the support and resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

The Opportunity Starts with a Home Steering Committee



**NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth Joint Hearing with the Committee on Finance  
FY 25 Executive Budget Hearing  
Friday, May 10, 2024**

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

Thank you, Chairs Stevens and Brannan, and the Committees on Children & Youth and Finance, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 25 Executive Budget. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, is a non-profit organization with a 42-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age. CHCF continues to deliver our services through a holistic approach, supporting high quality, culturally responsive and sustaining early learning and school-aged education, and addressing the comprehensive needs of families and the wider communities we serve across NYC.

**School-Based Youth Development Programming**

During a school year, CHCF provides after school programming at three different schools in the Bronx, with a capacity to reach 550 students, and by extension their families: 250 students at PS 59 (about 55% of the K-5 school population); 140 elementary students and 100 middle school students at PS/MS 279 (roughly 33% of the school population); and 60 students at PS 226 (18% of the K-5 population). During the summer of 2023, we continued to extend our services at PS/MS 279 to deliver Summer Rising programming for over 200 students (137 elementary students and 65 middle school students).

With our nearly 25 years serving the Bronx in this capacity, and in our work as a Child Care Resource & Referral agency that families can reach out to for support in accessing child care across NYC for their children from birth through school age, we continue to attest to the large demand for safe and affordable spaces for families to send their children to be positively engaged during after school hours and summer months. We support system expansion towards universal access to safe and high-quality care and educational spaces for all New York Families who need it, from birth through school-aged including out of school time. Investments towards that end would benefit children in their development and education, support parents'/caregivers' ability to engage in the workforce or their own education, and ultimately strengthen our communities and economy. For this hearing, we wish to focus on the critical importance of Summer Rising programming.

The successful launch of Summer Rising in response to the pandemic has further underscored the long-felt difficulties faced by families seeking safe spaces for their children during the summer months. Over the most recent summer, we experienced growing waitlists in response to the reduction in available slots, and the expressed frustration of families who felt the loss of access to this support as the city pulled back its investments and the availability of the program. Community partners and advocates





have continuously spoken to the need and impact of this programming, even beyond its initial purposes in response to the pandemic.

While we appreciate the mayor's restoration of \$80M in NYCPS funding towards Summer Rising for FY 25, there remains the matter of the DYCD Summer Rising PEGs. **We call on the city to fully restore Summer Rising in the DYCD budget to sustain programming at its previous levels, and for Council leaders to continue moving the city towards universal out of school time programming, for both after school and summer programs.**

### **Early Care and Learning Programming**

As one of four Child Care Resource & Referral agencies in the NYC CCR&R Consortium, we are funded by New York State through Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds to support families in accessing child care that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule, and particular child needs; and support their navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to access free/affordable child care. Parents/guardians can be connected to CHCF or any of the CCR&Rs through 311 if they are looking for care, birth through school age, and if they need support in determining potential eligibility for subsidy/vouchers and in navigating city systems of access.

Additionally, through our work as a NYC CCR&R, CHCF supports child care providers with linguistically responsive technical assistance and intensive coaching. CHCF predominantly (but not exclusively) delivers supports to child care providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), overwhelmingly providers whose primary language is Spanish, across all five boroughs of New York City.

CHCF knows the importance of supporting and sustaining childcare programs in all modalities. We understand the unique value of residential-based, licensed programs that are embedded in communities, reflect the culture and language of families, and offer unique and effective learning spaces. FCCs deliver mixed-age programming, which supports child development by allowing children to engage across age groups to learn from one another; supports families who have children of different ages by providing primary care for their children at one location, including school aged children who attend program outside of school hours; and are the programs most likely to care for infants and toddlers and to offer nontraditional hours of care – two specific types of care that experience high demand with inadequate supply. To put it simply, it is crucial that we are actively working to safeguard and grow these programs that are so valuable to the communities that they serve.

FCC programs have historically faced inequitable funding and resource support which has led many of these programs to function on razor thin margins and ceaselessly on the verge of closure. We need city leaders to end the cycle of harmful stigma and neglect, which not only harms this historically women, women of color and immigrant women led sector, but the children served in these quality programs as they are impacted by systemic under resourcing – an early start to educational inequity that often follows them into the PreK-12 system and can have lifelong effects.

While NYCPS has taken a small portion of this sector under their Birth to Five system, through FCC Networks, there remain many independent programs that rely on a patchwork of supports that are not



75 Broad Street, Suite 620 | New York, NY 10004 | (212) 206-1090 | [info@chcfinc.org](mailto:info@chcfinc.org)



equally accessed. Essentially, the city has established tiers of resource and support access that perpetuates inequities faced by the FCC workforce and the families and children that they serve. Make no mistake that these programs – and those organizations, like the CCR&Rs that work to support them – work tirelessly to deliver quality, but the city system itself is designed to maintain harmful inequities. There are many ways that the city could act to equitably support all programs that make up the NYC childcare sector, but one specific action that could be taken in the FY 25 budget is to ensure that there is funding to pay the maximum allowable rates to all FCC providers who accept vouchers. Contracted providers receive the maximum rate, and so should independent providers.

Additionally, CHCF joins advocates city and state-wide in continuously pushing to ensure all New York families are supported in accessing affordable, quality childcare. Of particular focus are immigrant families that would be eligible for childcare vouchers and are only disqualified because of their immigration status. We deeply appreciate the Council's efforts to establish Promise NYC, which has successfully supported 600 immigrant children that are ineligible for federally funded programming in enrolling in childcare. **We ask that the city baseline Promise NYC and grow funding to \$25M so that we can better meet the growing need for childcare in immigrant communities.**

Our work on both the family and provider sides results in critical awareness of bureaucratic bottlenecks and flaws in system design and administration that ultimately harm the sustainability of our valuable child care sector, and the ability for families to readily access affordable child care that reflects their particular needs. Knowing how important ECE programming is for the healthy development of NYC's children, particularly those who are from communities that have been historically under-resourced; and for the stability of parents trying to navigate work and family needs, we want to ensure that agencies tasked with supporting family outreach, understanding of program options, and awareness of and access to funding support that supplements the high cost of care, are funded and staffed appropriately to effectively and efficiently deliver those supports and services.

Systematically, there is continued insufficient outreach to families, particularly those in high-needs communities and demographics, to ensure they are aware of and have seamless access to free or low cost extended day/year care and early learning for which they are eligible – which further perpetuates a grossly inaccurate narrative that there is not a demand for what is available. Additionally, even with the new MyCity system to support family access to care options, there continue to be central system design flaws and malfunctions that are causing a confusion of care options for families, which increases the likelihood that they will not be connected to the care option that best meets their need (including hours/days of care reflective of need and program type that would best support family and child need).

**CHCF calls for the safeguarding of investments towards universal PreK, 3K, and child care in NYC, and we further wish to highlight the need for appropriate central staffing and structured system supports to ensure equitable and timely access to programs that best meet family and child needs and ensure sufficient support for city child care programs (contracted and independent) to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality, evidence-based best practice programming for *all* child care settings.**





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



75 Broad Street, Suite 620 | New York, NY 10004 | (212) 206-1090 | [info@chcfinc.org](mailto:info@chcfinc.org)



**New York City Council****FY 25 Executive Budget Hearing****Committee on Finance & Committee on Children and Youth****May 10, 2024**

Good morning. My name is Lisa Crook, and I am the Chief Program Officer at Covenant House New York (CHNY), where we serve youth experiencing homelessness ages 16 to 24. I would like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Finance and the Committee on Children and Youth for the opportunity to submit testimony today and for your ongoing recognition of the critical needs facing migrant and unhoused youth.

Covenant House New York stands as a beacon of hope for over 1,600 young people annually, providing more than just shelter—we offer a pathway to stability. Our comprehensive approach includes essential services such as food, shelter, medical care, and crucial legal assistance, alongside educational and vocational training. This holistic model is crucial, now more than ever, as we witness a significant rise in the number of migrant youth seeking refuge in our city due to ongoing global crises.

We are deeply grateful to the City Council for its continued support and acknowledgment of the challenges faced by these vulnerable populations. Your commitment has been instrumental in empowering organizations like ours to make a significant impact. As the demand for our services grows, particularly in legal support and comprehensive care, our resolve to meet these needs with your support is more vital than ever.

**Rising Needs in Legal and Supportive Services for Migrant Youth**

In recent years, New York City has seen an unprecedented increase in migrant youth arrivals, many of whom are escaping violence, poverty, and political instability. These young individuals arrive with profound needs - language barriers, lack of documentation, and often, a history of trauma. Their situations are compounded by their ineligibility for work, which severely limits their ability to sustain themselves. At CHNY, we strive to address these challenges, but the demand far outstrips our current capacity.

We continue to see an increased demand for specialized legal services, crucial for this group of migrant youth. These challenges range from immigration issues, such as applying for asylum or navigating SIJS processes, to more routine legal needs that can impact their ability to work, study, and live securely in our community.

Given the increasing complexities of these legal challenges, combined with the broader supportive services required to ensure that these young people do not just survive but

thrive, CHNY is calling upon the City Council to prioritize and increase funding for these essential programs. We propose the following critical investments:

**Fund Support Services for New Youth Arrivals:** This funding is crucial to enhance our capacity to provide multilingual support and direct legal services, ensuring that our residential and supportive programming, not just at CHNY but city-wide, can meet the growing needs without compromise.

**Right-size Runaway and Homeless Youth Residential Contracts:** Adequate funding for residential services is essential for maintaining safe and nurturing environments where our youth can recover and grow. This adjustment reflects the real costs of high-quality care, an investment in their future, and in the future of our city. Specifically, we are requesting that all current DYCD-funded Crisis and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Program contracts be increased to \$55,500 per bed. This will cover the baseline of residential bed rates across contract years, plus a 10% increase for all DYCD-funded residential RHY contracts.

**Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services:** Immediate funding for dedicated immigration legal services will fill a critical gap, allowing us to provide targeted, expert legal counsel to those who are most in need, thus safeguarding their rights and facilitating their integration into society. We continue to see young people being excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and these services should be made immediately available for youth who need them.

## **Conclusion**

With these targeted investments, Covenant House New York and other youth-serving organizations will continue to serve as a vital resource for New York City's youth, offering not only immediate shelter but a pathway to a brighter, more stable future. We ask for your continued partnership and support in prioritizing these funds to ensure our services remain robust and responsive to the evolving challenges these young individuals face.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to advocate for the needs of our city's most vulnerable youth through my testimony today.



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Children and Youth  
Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair  
At the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Prepared by Gregory Brender, Chief Policy and Innovation Officer and  
Shelby Lohr, Policy Analyst**

**May 10th, 2024**

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

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

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

Most DCCNY member organizations operate with contracts with the New York City Department of Education (DOE), while a smaller portion work with federally funded Head Start contracts or through private funding. DCCNY member organizations seek to provide quality early care and education services to New York's children and families across all five boroughs. DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers— the majority of whom are Black and Brown women.

Day Care Council of New York is an active member of Campaign for and the Empire State Campaign for Child Care.

The early childhood education system engages multiple city agencies. We start our testimony with Promise NYC which is managed by ACS and overseen by this committee. We also include urgent recommendations around early childhood education programs working under contract with NYCPS.

## **Promise NYC**

Promise NYC was among the most important new investments that the City made in its FY 2023 Budget. Promise NYC expands access to Child Care Assistance to families who continue to be denied access due to discriminatory requirements.

Promise NYC funds child care for families who otherwise would be denied and partnered with community based organizations to ensure that families could access the funding. It is not just an important investment but also a statement of the City's values showing a commitment to ending discrimination and expanding access to education.

As Mayor Adams said,

Navigating obstacles in a new city and a new country are tough, and coupling those issues with a lack of childcare can prevent parents and families from achieving the dream they so desperately set out to achieve. By launching Promise NYC, we are alleviating the stress from those concerns, supporting children and families, and creating a fairer city for all New Yorkers.”<sup>1</sup>

DCCNY was disappointed that this important program was eliminated from the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. We urge the City to restore and baseline PromiseNYC \$25 million in line with the recommendations of the City Council Budget Response.

## **Early Childhood Education and the FY 2025 Budget**

The FY 2025 Budget is a perilous moment for New York City's early childhood system. Despite the partial restorations included in the Executive Budget, it still includes the most drastic cuts to early childhood education in the City's history and fails to take action on the workforce crisis impacting early childhood education. Without major changes, this budget will leave many New York City families with access to child care and contribute to an exodus of working families out of New York City.

## **Cuts to Early Childhood Education**

In the announcement of his Executive Budget, Mayor Adams repeated that every child who wants a seat in an early childhood education program will get one. We acknowledge and appreciate the \$92 million restoration of sunseting Federal funds for 3-K expansion and \$56 million in Preschool Special Education funding. However, these restorations exist within a larger context of immense scale-backs of Pre-K For All programs, including a three-year succession of \$170 million PEGS to Pre-K and 3-K

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/909-22/mayor-adams-rolls-out-promise-nyc-provide-childcare-assistance-low-income-families-with>

programs, which are slated to take effect in the upcoming fiscal year.

Without further investments in the child care system, the City will not be able to fulfill the Mayor's crucial promise. Notably, while Mayor Adams baselined a number of critical education programs, he implemented single-year funding in his proposed \$92 million for Pre-K restoration. One year of funding—particularly in the context of continued \$170 million cuts year after year—places early care and education providers in a precarious financial position. Families need stable early childhood education programs, and this one-year investment falls short of the needs of providers and families alike.

The City must act NOW to make the investments and reform its current 3-K system so that all children in New York City have the opportunity to access early childhood education, not only a select few.

DCCNY urges the City to immediately enact the following recommendations:

- Commit to fund current 3-K program levels and restoring the timeline for the 3-K expansion.
- Implement the conversion of 3-K school day / school year seats, to extended day, year round seats which the City Council funded in its FY 2024 budget;
- Invest a robust level of resources in linguistically and culturally appropriate on the ground and multimedia marketing, community engagement and enrollment efforts for 3-K.
- Reform enrollment procedures so that community based organizations have the option of directly enrolling children whose families apply for 3-K, Pre-K or child care.

## **PAY PARITY**

As the representative of New York City's early care and education provider organizations, DCCNY works with the City and our partners in organized labor to come to labor agreements that reflect the skills and hard work of the teachers, staff and directors who work every day to make high-quality education available to the youngest New Yorkers.

The early childhood workforce is drastically underpaid and the gap between their salaries and those of their counterparts in public schools is stark. In our report with the City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, we found that directors at CBOs lose more than \$2.2 million over the course of a 25-year career by remaining at a CBO. Further, certified teachers lose out on \$1.7 million over a 25-year career, and assistant

teachers sacrifice over \$235,000 across a 25-year career.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, many of the teachers, staff and directors in community based organizations work for longer hours and a greater number of days than their counterparts in public schools.

In the FY 2025 Budget, the City must act to ensure that these essential but underappreciated workers receive salary and benefits on par with their counterparts in public schools.

DCCNY urges the City to fund a new labor contract that advances childhood education parity between center and school based services by including

1. Baseline salary increases for all titles to par with counterparts in NYCPS with a \$25/hour base hourly wage for support staff
2. Restoration of longevity differentials
3. Per diems for Extended Day/Extended Year Programs

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions and can be reached at [gbrender@dccnyinc.org](mailto:gbrender@dccnyinc.org)

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<sup>2</sup> New York City Council Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and the Day Care Council of New York. *The Enduring Value of the Early Childhood Workforce: Why New York City Must Complete the Path to Parity for the Community-Based Child Care Workforce* September 2023 <https://www.dccnyinc.org/our-work/public-policy/publications/>





**SASKIA TRAILL**

**PRESIDENT & CEO EXPANDED SCHOOLS**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE & THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

**FISCAL YEAR 2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING: MAY 10, 2024**

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My name is Saskia Trill and I am the President/CEO of ExpandedED Schools. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan, and the Committee on Finance, as well as the Committee on Children and Youth, for the opportunity to testify here today. It's a pleasure to work collaboratively with you all to create effective strategies to increase access, equity, and quality in expanded learning opportunities for young people across New York City.

ExpandedED Schools is an afterschool intermediary that supports direct service community-based organizations (CBO's) across the five boroughs to cultivate positive relationships with school leaders and deliver high-quality afterschool programs to students and families. Investing funds from City Council Citywide Discretionary allocations, we distribute subgrants to CBO's, provide robust professional development to afterschool staff, have a team of program managers that conduct site visits and provide day to day support to site directors, and convene site directors to learn from one another's practice. We also provide a similar level of technical assistance support to CBO's for which we do not directly provide funding, but which receive funding from the state Empire afterschool program through New York City Public Schools' Office of Community Schools (OCS). We manage 74 partnerships through Citywide Initiatives with 41 distinct CBO partners in those portfolios and 67 partnerships with 30 distinct CBO's through OCS's Empire contract.

First and foremost I want to take the time to extend a major thank you to members of this chamber, as well as the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs - a group that ExpandedED Schools is a proud member of - for significant budgetary wins ahead of the preliminary budget announcement. The over \$500M infusion in the Department of Education to avert some of the impacts of the COVID-19 fiscal cliff is a critical lifeline for children and families across the city. In addition to this, many of the programs and initiatives that were saved including - but not limited to - Community Schools, Early Childhood Education, Social Worker presence in schools, are all correlated to the positive impacts of afterschool and summer enrichment. Therefore, these funds have a profound impact on the work ExpandedED Schools does with its partners. However, there is still more to do. There is still a wide gap as it pertains to the aforementioned fiscal cliff, as the total chasm was north of \$1B, and there has been no mention of restoration to cuts that have been enacted under the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) budget.

The administration's cut to COMPASS in the November Plan remains vague and sets an ominous precedent for the upcoming RFP. The November Plan called for a reduction of over 3,500 underutilized slots. The process of identifying said slots, and the process behind the subsequent removal of them, hasn't been clear. Looking ahead, there are almost \$7M reductions in the outyears, years that are supposed to be



served by the upcoming RFP. We strongly believe these reductions will create a greater strain on providers to deliver services, resulting in students and families at given schools no longer having access to afterschool enrichment programs. We call for a full restoration of those dollars in FY25 and beyond.

Additionally, also in the November plan, Summer Rising enrichment funding was slashed by almost \$20M in FY25 and the out years - setting a precedent for major reductions in program hours overall and Friday hours for middle schools students. This is a dangerous divestment from a vulnerable group of students in this City that need our community's support and care. Fridays are historically a full day of enrichment for these students and an incredibly popular aspect of the program overall, drawing students into the full program. We stand with our partners in the Campaign for Children in calling for a full restoration of the funds cut from the DYCD side of the Summer Rising program.

Also, during a time of questionable decision making at the state level around afterschool, the City can ill afford to not only continue to delay the release of the concept paper for COMPASS/SONYC programs, but children and families cannot afford to have enrichment programming divested from.

A recently released RFP at the state level - Learning and Enrichment After School Program Supports (LEAPS) - has some significant blindspots that will affect service in New York City. The concerns that we have are as follows:

- 1) The contracts cover students up to the age of 12 - excluding most middle schoolers and all high schoolers. This automatically cuts state level funding for a significant amount of students that are currently being served by those dollars.
  - a) The new LEAPS program combines the current Empire Afterschool and Advantage Afterschool programs into a singular initiative. In a conservative estimate - there are at least **35 Empire sites** currently serving either middle and high school students and at least **25 Advantage Afterschool sites** serving such students.
  - b) While NYCPS included technical assistance, the new RFP awards funds to CBOs directly. There has been no release of a Technical Assistance RFP so programs will not have support for quality implementation, which ExpandedED has been providing Empire-funded sites in New York City for more than five years.

We are grateful and proud of what we have been able to do in partnership with the council through our **\$4.0M Afterschool Enrichment Citywide Initiative Award in FY24**. Programs mostly leverage the subgrants we distribute to fill gaps that either enable them to fortify their staffing, serve more students, or engage in other inputs around program quality. At a small number of programs, the subgrant is their primary public funding stream. For that reason, unless pushed by the CBO partner, we never take funding away from a given site. We know first hand the impact to families and communities of cutting services. Therefore, to scale our work, we require additional funding. **With our FY25 request of \$6.0M**, we would have greater capacity to serve middle and high school programs where there are newfound gaps and support DYCD-funded programs with diminished funding. We welcome partnership with each council



member to identify school partners in need of our support because you know your constituency and districts best.

Thank you again to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Stevens and the rest of your respective committees for holding this hearing and for all the work that you do for children and families across the City. I look forward to continuing to be a partner in services to young people and community, particularly when it comes to extended learning time enrichment programming and the cultivation of the safe and validating spaces that they deserve.

Send to: [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)

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

Submitted by  
**Denise Taylor, Program Director of Prevention Program**  
Good Shepherd Services

May 10, 2024

**Thank you, Chair Stevens and the Committee on Children and Youth Committee, for the opportunity to testify on Mayor Adams Executive Budget as it relates to New York City Administration for Children Services (ACS) and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development.**

My name is Denise Taylor, and I am a program director for Brooklyn Transitions Family Treatment Rehabilitation Prevention Program with Good Shepherd Services.

My testimony will focus on the urgent need to address the ongoing workforce crisis severely impacting prevention worker, working in child welfare agencies and our call for greater investments to create salary parity with ACS positions.

We are all aware of the “great resignation” that took place during and post pandemic, which drastically impacted many fields including the human service worker in the child welfare field. While other field and sectors have regained their workforce, in Prevention we continue to struggle significantly.

Personally, for my program, among other positions, I have had 6 social worker/ case worker vacancies for over 1 year and it's not as a result of lack of recruitment efforts. I have gone to over 6 job fairs and have had several qualified candidates who have declined the positions due to low salaries, which are not competitive or manageable for the current cost of living in New York City.

The low workforce has significantly negatively impacted programs and resulted in the closing of our Family Functioning Therapy prevention program in Brooklyn as well as the decrease in family slots for our FTR prevention program. These closures are a result of low utilization which is due to staff vacancies not based on lack of family service needs. We have not been able to accommodate the need of the community based on not having adequate staffing. Currently, in my program, I have 6 families waiting to start services due to staff vacancies.

Regarding salary parity, there continues to be a high turnover and vacancy rate for NYC Prevention caseworker. Sadly, the average starting salary for Prevention caseworker is \$48,000 compared to \$58,000 thousand for the public sector. It is a shame that provider agencies cannot compete with the starting salary, 5 years increases, and bonus offered by the ACS because their contract does not allow us to do so.

I urge the city council and administration to provide greater invest in Prevention services workforce and provide salary parity so our Prevention workers can continue to provide quality services to our NYC children, youth and families.

**Thank you for the opportunity to testify.**

Testimony re: Budget Hearing

Submitted to

New York City Committee on Children and Youth

Submitted by Francesca Perrone, Senior Policy Analyst at Hispanic Federation

May 10, 2024

Thank you, Councilmembers Brannan and Stevens, and all other committee members, for taking the time to read this testimony presented by Hispanic Federation; a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy.

### **Addressing the Needs of the Latino Community Across New York City**

My name is Francesca Perrone, Senior Policy Analyst at Hispanic Federation, and I am here today to advocate for Latinos across New York and ensure that Latino serving institutions are well supported. We are thankful to the administration for including a range of priorities that support our vulnerable communities and families in the preliminary budget.

Our network of 650 member and partner organizations, over 200 of which are in New York City, are front-line service providers for our neighborhoods and communities. Despite being significantly undercapitalized, and under-resourced, local community-based organizations remain the heart and soul of our ever-changing and ever-growing Latino families. They are deeply embedded in our neighborhoods, providing the most vulnerable residents with food, shelter, and clothing, helping at-risk youth succeed academically, low-income families obtain health insurance and workers gain the skills they need to be more socially mobile. Additionally, CBOS uplift communities that would otherwise be voiceless to advance equity and opportunities that improve everyone's quality of life. Today we take the time to advocate for the expansion of key funds for the incoming year to support our ever-growing Latino families, and ensure that the City prioritizes the allocation of resources that can improve the well-being of vulnerable communities.

### **Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF)**

Hispanic Federation is thankful for the \$3.7 million in continued support for the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF) in the FY'24 budget. This initiative has grown to support over 700 capacity building projects for community-based organizations across NYC that work directly in communities of color disproportionately affected by the pandemic and now serving as the frontline social services to the influx of migrants. In light of concurrent crises, it is vital that the CCNSF receive funding to address the growing needs of our communities. As such, we respectfully ask for your continued support for the CCNSF with a \$7.5 million budget allocation in the FY'25 budget.

Protecting and expanding the CCNSF is vital. Due to overwhelming need, our organizations are working around the clock to provide services for communities of color across New York City.



Larger, more established nonprofits rely on endowments, affluent board leadership, and development teams to provide stability and expansion to their work. Communities of color-led nonprofits do not have access to these safeguards and staples due to historical funding inequities. Thus, the CCNSF funding is crucial in protecting nonprofits and saving critical service providers from succumbing to the economic fallout of the pandemic and the current times.

Not only are our nonprofits crucial to the social well-being of the city, but they also play a substantial role in the city's economy. The community-based organizations within our network proudly employ thousands of professionals and support staff across our five boroughs: from social workers and immigration lawyers to after-school program staff and health navigators. They serve the most vulnerable populations in our city and keep millions of our residents afloat financially, socially, and mentally.

Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. As nonprofits are feeling the brunt of the harmful budget cuts in the City and State, we are providing services to those most affected by the crises, including but not limited to the immigration crisis, and economic crisis. An allocation of \$7.5 million for New York City's Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund is essential to ensure that organizations that are led by and serve people of color survive during these critical times.

### **Hunger Relief**

With the funding you provided in FY '24, Hispanic Federation was able to distribute over 244,000 culturally responsive meals including, directly impacting over 12,000 families, and distributing over 296,000 pounds of food. We are grateful for the Council's commitment to address food insecurity that has been felt throughout New York due to economic deficits. Additionally, we are thankful for the support that has been provided to our new neighbors.

One of the underlying basic needs for overall health and safety of any population is food security, and this is most deeply impacting Black and Latino New Yorkers. According to the 2023 Food by the Numbers report by the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, 39.5% of adults in New York City lived in a household at risk for food insecurity in 2022, compared to 34.7% in 2021, jumping to 48.4% for households with children. As New Yorkers are still struggling with food security, Black, Hispanic, and Asian residents are two to three times more likely to be food insecure than their white neighbors. In 2023 and 2024, food insecurity has been additionally exacerbated by the high cost of food in New York City.

Tackling food insecurity is complicated, but not impossible. And the stakes could not be higher. Supporting community-based organizations that provide culturally relevant hunger relief services truly help to provide effective nutritious food support. Although they are working expeditiously, our agencies have seen demand for their services increase tremendously since the pandemic.

Hispanic Federation is requesting a reinvestment of \$1 million for Fiscal Year 2025 to continue our successful hunger relief operations through NYC's Food Pantries initiative.

With these funds, Hispanic Federation will continue to develop its unique reach into Latino neighborhoods, via Lucha Contra El Hambre, by focusing nutritious food support to families in need throughout New York City. HF will tap into its network of 200 non-profit member and partner organizations across the city to engage in this effort to combat food insecurity.

### **Supporting Our Most Vulnerable Population**

Currently, more than 170,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City. The women, children, and families arriving are fleeing violence, civil strife, and other unimaginable atrocities. As they arrive in New York, this vulnerable population lacks basic needs, from housing, food, diapers, health services, and more. Additionally, they urgently need legal assistance to kick-start their asylum-seeking process. With more than 1.6 million pending immigration cases before the court, the odds of being granted asylum without legal counsel are much lower (17.7%) than for represented asylum seekers (31.1%). Because of this deficiency, thousands of asylum seekers are deported each year despite the circumstances of their case warranting asylum protections.

In response to this reality, and prior to the surge of asylum seekers arriving in New York, Hispanic Federation launched a national \$1.1 million initiative to provide grants and resources to twelve non-profit organizations that support immigrants and asylees. Through this critical funding, HF was able to offer screenings and consultations to 3,000 individuals and provide direct legal representation to 550 individuals in asylum, removal proceedings, and special immigrant juvenile cases. Our model has enabled HF to communicate with community-based organizations on the ground that serve this population daily. As conveners and coordinators of these organizations, we have access to on-the-ground information and have a deep understanding of the needs facing this population.

Early in 2021, on the heels of the arrival of asylum seekers to New York, Hispanic Federation anticipated that our network of culturally and linguistically competent organizations would be the first to respond – with or without resources. In turn, HF launched a \$100,000 emergency assistance grant to 10 organizations throughout the State and New York City, assisting over 2,400 individuals by providing housing assistance, health, hunger relief, direct cash assistance, clothing, transportation, and communications vouchers. This funding quickly dissipated due to the outstanding need of the population. Thus, an investment from the City Council to this effort will ensure that our new neighbors are supported throughout the asylum seeking process.

### **Hate Crimes and Partners Against the Hate (P.A.T.H.) Forward Initiative**

Hate crimes are a direct assault on our values and threaten the sense of security in communities across the city. Crimes motivated by bias, whether based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender identity are violations of our most cherished values as New Yorkers and Americans. We are grateful for the generous support for Prevention of Hate Crimes outreach and education during FY'24. Thanks to your commitment we were able to engage with a range of

populations including young people from elementary schools to high schools, immigrant workers, tenants, low-income individuals, and more.

Hispanic Federation, along with its subgrantees, have helped reach over thousands of individuals through social media, virtual and in-person workshops, presentations, and other forms of outreach. With the goal to build awareness, Hispanic Federation launched a social media campaign targeting the Latino community encouraging them to take action and report hate crime incidents. As we build awareness on Hate Crimes, HF has taken a holistic approach to educate our community on critical services that are important to them and incorporates the topic into our everyday programs and events. To effectively tailor our outreach and messaging, two focus groups were designed to reach subgroups in the Latino community such as the youth, undocumented workers, and/or LGBTQ+ individuals.

As an anchor organization, it was important for Hispanic Federation to fund organizations that were connected to the prevention of bias and hate crimes. In choosing our grantees, we focused on ensuring not only diversity in geography but in the populations served. Each of our five grantees are committed to using education as a strategy for identifying, preventing, and treating hate crimes and discrimination in various ways. Individuals reached through this initiative received a variety of programmatic services including healing circles with staff and young people, workshops targeted to the day laborer and other cash workers, anti-bias, and anti-racism training, and more. Our grantees engaged in culturally appropriate hate crimes outreach, workshops, and training. NYC needs trusted messengers within the community to work with community members to decrease hate crimes. Providing resources to community organizations that have established meaningful inroads with local residents, and that facilitate culturally and linguistically relevant information and events to combat hate crimes.

### **Conclusion**

The ongoing crises are having a disproportionate impact on Latino lives, and are threatening to destroy the very institutions that are on the front lines of caring for our people. More and more, Latino nonprofits are less able to confront issues at hand because they lack critical funding resources. The needs of Latino community-based organizations are complex. With the support of our City Council we can continue to build on the vibrancy and diversity of our city by ensuring that we prioritize equity and access in dire times of need. An investment in a Latino led CBO is an investment in a more equitable and prosperous New York.

As it stands, we need philanthropic partners to join us in creating a robust and equitable response to rebuild and strengthen the Latino nonprofit sector. We call on private and government funders to:

1. Prioritize support for locally rooted nonprofits with a track record of service and commitment to communities.

2. Direct support for general operating expenses to ensure that the organizations can meet the needs of their communities.
3. Provide assistance that will help our nonprofits build their core capacities in key areas such as fund development and financial management.
4. Invest in new programmatic initiatives that address the inevitable challenges that will emerge once the worst of the current moment is past us.

These efforts will require philanthropic leaders and their program officers to work in partnership with organizations that are in the trenches of the Latino community so that investments can be made where they are needed the most. History offers numerous examples of well-intentioned philanthropic endeavors that, unfortunately, fell short of fortifying our sector. However, in facing this unprecedented challenge, we can learn from the past and chart a new, positive course. By drawing on these lessons, we can ensure that our efforts are not only well-intentioned but also effective in strengthening the Latino nonprofit sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our budget recommendations for Fiscal year 2025. These investments are of vital importance to the well-being of the Latino community in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## **TESTIMONY**

New York City Council Joint Hearing  
Committee on Finance and Committee on Children and Youth  
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing

Delivered by:  
Sierra Kraft, Executive Director, ICARE Coalition  
May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Good afternoon, thank you Chair Stevens and Chair Brannan for inviting this testimony. My name is Sierra Kraft, and I am the Executive Director of ICARE, a coalition of legal service organizations dedicated to providing free representation to unaccompanied immigrant children facing deportation in New York City, while advocating for universal access to counsel. Our members include Catholic Charities Community Services, Central American Legal Assistance, Human Rights First, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Legal Aid Society, The Door, and Safe Passage Project.

Today, I am here to request additional funding for the ICARE Coalition through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative. Many of the young people we serve are eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a critical form of relief that provides a pathway to permanency, work authorization, and a green card. However, this relief is available only until their 21st birthday. Our complex immigration and family court systems necessitate skilled nonprofit attorneys to support these young individuals with their legal applications. It is crucial that we increase our capacity to deploy trained attorneys who specialize in youth cases to ensure timely and effective submissions in family court.



Thanks to the support from the City Council through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, ICARE has successfully stood by over 12,000 young immigrants in the past 10 years. The children represented by ICARE attorneys achieve a success rate exceeding 90%, which opens doors to higher education, meaningful careers, and leadership roles in the city they now call home.

Despite this success, our funding has not increased in over five years, even as the demand for our services continues to grow. Thousands of young people in NYC are in urgent need of legal support to avoid deportation, and the current funding levels are insufficient to meet these needs. In FY2023 alone, over 138,000 unaccompanied minors were arrested at the border, and New York continues to be one of the top destinations for unaccompanied children released to sponsors.

Access to an immigration attorney can mean the difference between life and death. Without ICARE's representation, these children would face a trained government lawyer alone, with only a 15% chance of success, despite having viable claims for relief. Loss of access to legal counsel could result in the rapid deportation of children and families to countries where their lives are endangered.

We are calling upon the City to prioritize and increase funding for ICARE. We urgently need \$5.7 million this fiscal year to serve over 1,800 children through comprehensive legal screenings, know-your-rights training, direct representation, and referrals to essential city and social services. This funding is critical not only to maintain but to expand our capacity to meet the overwhelming need for our services.

The necessity for this funding cannot be overstated. Now, more than ever, we





must stand in solidarity with these children who seek refuge, safety, and a chance at a new life in our city. With your continued support and advocacy, we can ensure that no child has to face immigration court alone.

We look forward to our continued partnership to ensure that our values as a sanctuary city are not just upheld but strengthened. Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to supporting these vulnerable members of our community.

In Community,

Sierra Kraft  
Executive Director,  
ICARE Coalition  
[skraft@icarecoalition.org](mailto:skraft@icarecoalition.org)  
701-866-3922  
[www.icarecoalition.org](http://www.icarecoalition.org)

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

**The Challenge:** Every year, thousands of children—some as young as infants - appear in immigration court in NYC without an attorney. New York continues to rank 4th in the country for highest number of unaccompanied arrivals released to sponsors. Although the current federal administration has changed some harmful immigration policies of the previous administration, there's still much that needs to be undone. ICARE attorneys routinely experience challenges when assisting children facing deportation, but our coalition continues to serve as a critical resource for these young New Yorkers.

Many of the children we represent are escaping extreme violence and trauma in their home country, in search of protection and safety. Without City Council's ongoing support, thousands of children will be left to represent themselves, resulting in rapid deportation where their lives are at risk.

**Without legal support: Children stand a mere 15% chance of winning their case.**  
**With ICARE attorneys: Children have more than 90% chance of winning their case.**

**What We Do:** With the City's help, ICARE provides free legal services for immigrant children and families fighting deportation in NYC. We offer know-your-rights trainings, legal screenings, direct representation and connections to city & social services, ensuring vulnerable New Yorkers don't face court alone.

## OUR IMPACT

Since 2014, we have:

**Screened over 12,000  
children for relief**

**Represented over  
2,800 children**

**Obtained relief for  
1,200 children**

**Secured over \$20M in public  
funding for legal services**

**FY25 Discretionary Funding Request: \$5,754,317**

Continued support from the New York City Council will ensure we can keep fighting for over 1,800 children and families this year.



**No child should face  
the immigration process alone**



**In partnership with:**

CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE



**THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY**



**KiND**  
KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE

**Human  
Rights  
First**



Committee on Youth Services  
TOPIC: Executive Budget Hearing  
Friday, May 10, 2024

Testimony by  
Kinia Gonzalez  
Director of Leadership, Education, Achievement, Pathways (LEAP)  
JCCA

Good afternoon Chair Stevens and members of the Youth Services Committee. Thank you for calling this hearing and inviting JCCA to testify on behalf of the children and families we provide with educational assistance.

My name is Kinia Gonzalez, Director of JCCA's Leadership, Education, Achievement, Pathways (LEAP) division. I oversee JCCA's city-based education and workforce development programs. I am here to testify on behalf of our City Council funded programs that so many of our children received life-changing supports.

#### **A. Wraparound Services for Transitional Aged Foster Youth**

Since 2018, JCCA has received City Council funding for its Wraparound Services for Transitional Aged Foster Youth. Administered by ACS, the program provides enhanced career

supports that focuses on in-demand, higher paying/non-traditional employment such as automotive, construction trades, green technologies, and information technology for youth aging out of foster care. Youth are also provided with paid internship opportunities in JCCA divisions and local community partners. Each program cohort consists of approximately 40 youth participating in the Wraparound program. JCCA provides tailored services and supports to youth based on their needs and interests. Recently, our staff assisted youth in entering more lucrative career fields such as real estate and covered expenses needed to take required training and exams.

Hundreds of youth have benefited from this program and I'll provide one example. There was a foster youth who graduated from high school but faced challenges in college. When she enrolled in the program, she started an internship with us that allowed her to work with our staff and develop her resume. She gained skills and explored different vocational opportunities during our group sessions. Our program covered expenses for her to complete a security training program, assisted her in purchasing work uniforms, and provided transportation assistance to begin employment. She was so satisfied with the program that she enlisted as a guest speaker for future program cohorts. As she built stable income, she was able to secure an apartment where she is living in a safe environment.

We encourage City Council to preserve and enhance funding for Wraparound Services for Transitional Aged Foster Youth. These critical services have helped youth aging out of foster care to build skills to secure employment in a competitive job market and build a pathway towards a stable future.

## **B. City's First Readers**

I would also like to take the time to discuss City's First Readers, another City-Council funded program that is administered by DYCD. As part of a coalition of providers, JCCA is the only foster care agency that fosters the early literacy development of NYC children, ages 0-5. We work with families in low-income communities citywide to provide equity for marginalized communities. Last year, JCCA distributed over 3,000 early literacy kits and books to foster care and preventive families, held six multilingual virtual storytelling sessions with families, and three trainings and educational programs for parents and foster parents to promote the development of early literacy. The supports provided through City's First Readers help youth achieve academic success. On behalf of the coalition, I ask that City Council preserve and enhance funding for City's First Readers so that children will continue to have the tools and support to grow their literacy skills and read at grade level once they are enrolled in school.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for taking the time to consider the needs of children and their families in our city. We hope that the Mayor and City Council can work together to pass a budget that is equitable and fair for young New Yorkers.



**Testimony of the Article 10 Family Defense Organizations:**

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

**Presented Before**

**The New York City Council Finance Committee**

**Jointly with City Council Committee on Children and Youth**

**Executive Budget Hearing**

**May 10, 2024**

This testimony is submitted jointly by the Bronx Defenders (BxD), Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS), Center for Family Representation (CFR) and the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) (collectively the “family defense organizations”). Our offices are the primary providers of mandated legal representation to parents who are eligible for free representation in Article 10 cases filed in family court in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Together, we have created a nationally recognized model of interdisciplinary representation for parents charged with neglect or abuse and at risk of family separation and termination of their parental rights. Our model, which provides comprehensive representation to low-income parents through teams of attorneys, social workers and parent advocates, has been recognized as the most effective model of representation of its kind.<sup>1</sup> Together, we have prevented thousands of children from needlessly entering and languishing in the foster system and have reduced the foster system census in New York City by over 50%<sup>2</sup>. This translates to nearly \$40 million in annual savings in foster system expenditures for New York City<sup>3</sup>, and the preservation of family bonds that are priceless

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<sup>1</sup> See Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore 27-28 (February 2019); see also Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, *A New National Movement in Parent Representation*, 47 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 44, 45 (2013), available at <https://cfmny.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-New-National-Movement-in-Parent-Representation-Clearinghouse-Review.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Guggenheim and Susan Jacobs, *Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children’s Time in Foster Care*, American Bar Association (June 3, 2019), available at [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/january---december-2019/providing-parents-multidisciplinary-legal-representation-signifi/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/january---december-2019/providing-parents-multidisciplinary-legal-representation-signifi/)

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*



to our clients, their children, and society at large. We thank the Children and Youth Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony about the critical services our agencies provide to low-income New Yorkers and the need to ensure that these services are fully funded to ensure their effectiveness.

The family defense offices have followed the leadership of directly-impacted people and adopted the phrase “family regulation system” or “family policing system” to describe what has traditionally been called the “child welfare system” or the “child protection system,” to reflect the system’s prioritization of and roots in surveillance, punishment, and control rather than genuine assistance to and support of families living in poverty.<sup>4</sup> The primary goal of our work is to provide high quality legal representation to parents in high-stakes investigation and family court cases and ameliorate the underlying systemic barriers that drive families into this system, such as lack of access to quality health and mental health treatment, material supports and appropriate education and services for children with disabilities. We also aim to reduce the harm of the consequences of system involvement, such as criminal charges, housing and income loss, education issues and inability to adjust immigration status. Collectively we represent thousands of parents each year. Since 2007 when New York City first contracted with family defense organizations to represent parents, we have represented more than 50,000 parents in family court, touching the lives of close to 110,000 children, the vast majority of whom are Black and Brown and live in the most marginalized, low-income communities in New York City.

Since fiscal year 2020, we have also provided two critical services to low-income parents, in addition to our mandated legal representation in court, made possible only with City Council funding of the **Right to Family Advocacy Project** through the Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative:

- **Early defense:** We provide support, guidance, and legal representation to parents during an investigation by the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), with the primary goal of preventing family separation and unnecessary family court filings.
- **SCR advocacy:** We provide legal representation in administrative proceedings to help parents clear or modify (amend or seal) their Statewide Central Register (SCR) records that result after ACS investigations, thereby preserving and expanding low-income New Yorkers’ employment opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> See, Dorothy Roberts, *Abolishing Policing Also Means Abolishing Family Regulation*, The Imprint (June 16, 2020), <https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/abolishing-policing-also-means-abolishing-family-regulation/44480>.

The City Council plays an important role in monitoring the provision of ACS services and in ensuring that the families affected by ACS involvement have legal representation that is adequately funded to achieve fair and positive outcomes for families. This testimony addresses the importance of adequately funding the City Council's Right to Family Advocacy Project and the family defense organizations' provision of legally mandated representation to parents charged with abuse and neglect in family court. Specifically:

**We ask the City Council to continue supporting the Right to Family Advocacy Project and increase the funding from \$2.6 million to \$3.3 million to increase capacity based on need and address increased costs.**

### **City Council Should Continue to Support for the Right to Family Advocacy Project**

The Right to Family Advocacy Project, funded through the City Council's Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative, is a crucial support system for parents and caregivers navigating the complex, traumatic family regulation system. By providing vital legal and social work representation at two pivotal stages, this initiative is a lifeline to families in need:

1. During an ACS investigation, the project strengthens family stability, avoids court intervention, and crucially prevents family separation.
2. In administrative proceedings to amend and seal parents' and caregivers' records with the State Central Register, the project fosters expanded employment opportunities and economic stability for already vulnerable and marginalized families.

This project provides desperately needed due process protections and advocacy, particularly for the predominantly Black and Brown families disproportionately targeted by the family regulation system. Without this initiative, many of these families would face the loss of their children and the permanent fracture of their family without access to legal counsel - a glaring injustice that the City Council's funding is necessary to begin to rectify.

**Our organizations are requesting \$3.3 million (\$825,000 each) for FY25.** City Council funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Project is paramount. These essential services are not funded through our Article 10 contracts with MOCJ. With this in mind, we request \$3.3 million (\$825,000 per organization) for FY25. This increase from the current \$650,000 per organization will enable us to meet the needs of a greater number of impacted families while also accommodating rising costs, including salaries, OTPS, health insurance, and space expenses. This support is not only an investment in families - it's an investment in justice, equity, and the future well-being of the communities we serve.

**A. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel during ACS investigations, but this project provides access to counsel through our organizations.**

Currently, parents embroiled in family regulation matters, unable to afford legal representation, are not provided attorneys until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in family court. Yet, critical decisions with far-reaching consequences are made before a case reaches the courtroom. These decisions can have generational consequences, determining whether families will be directed to prevention programs, whether cases will proceed to court, and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents and, if so, who will care for them. Without access to counsel during this crucial investigative phase of an Article 10 case, parents are left to engage with ACS alone, make pivotal decisions impacting their family's integrity, address allegations against them, and navigate state intervention without formal support. In stark contrast, ACS enjoys legal representation throughout their investigations.

Because families are too often separated by the family regulation system, the Commission on Parental Legal Representation established in 2018 by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore recommended that parents be granted access to counsel during a child protective investigation.<sup>5</sup>

“Giving parents representation when it matters – before they appear in court - is consistent with principles of equal protection and due process; can prevent unnecessary and prolonged separation of children from their parents; and can mitigate the disruption and trauma that accompanies State intervention into the family. Timely access to counsel may also help reduce the disproportionate percentage of children of color in New York’s foster care system.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the standards of practice for parents’ attorneys, adopted by the American Bar Association in 2006, recommend that attorneys actively represent parents during an investigation.<sup>7</sup> Recently issued eligibility standards by ILS also recommended assigning counsel to parents during the investigation stage of a case. These standards were recently codified as a court rule by the Office of Court Administration. Fam. Ct. Rule 205.19. Representation at the investigation phase serves as a crucial and much needed bulwark against a multitude of avoidable harms to the low-income, predominantly Black and Brown families, who are most often the targets of the family regulation system.

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<sup>5</sup> *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore.*

<sup>6</sup> Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge Defiore, 16 (February 2019), <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/doc/15446>

<sup>7</sup> See American Bar Association, Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases 10 (2006), available at [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child\\_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf)

This project of the City Council is a critical element in preserving family unity whenever possible. Our staff meet with parents, discuss allegations, explore potential solutions, and guide parents through the intrusive and often humiliating investigation of their family. Additionally, social workers funded by this project can facilitate the implementation of services, potentially dissuading ACS from filing a case altogether.

In all, this invaluable funding accomplishes much more than its face value, yielding far-reaching benefits that extend beyond mere reductions in court filings and child removals. It empowers individuals who are unjustly targeted by ACS, providing them with the support and resources they need to effectively navigate legal challenges that threaten the stability of their family.

**B. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel in SCR hearings and are unjustifiably denied opportunities in employment and to care for their relatives' children.**

At the conclusion of an investigation, ACS determines whether the report should be “indicated,” resulting in the parent or caretaker’s name being placed on the State Central Registry (SCR). This listing then precludes them from many employment opportunities, despite the fact that whether a case is indicated is not always subjected to external review because the case never undergoes judicial scrutiny with ACS held to a burden of proof. Indeed, the majority of indicated cases are never brought to court for review, yet the consequences are profound, lasting for decades and disproportionately impacting families of color.

In New York City, Black and Latinx children represent 88% of all SCR reports.<sup>8</sup> Unsurprisingly, given their gross overrepresentation in SCR reports, 48% of all indicated reports in New York City involve either Black or Latinx children.<sup>9</sup> When considering the rate of indication for children of color, including Asian/Pacific Islander and multiple races, a staggering 91% of indicated cases in New York City involve children of color. New York parents listed on the SCR are routinely denied employment as daycare workers, nannies, teaching assistants, substance abuse counselors, home health aides, medical supply delivery people, drivers for the disabled, an array of positions in hospitals, and more, based on unproven allegations of child abuse and neglect.<sup>10</sup> Black and Brown New Yorkers are disproportionately impacted by the loss of opportunity in these professions: eighty-five percent of care workers, such as nannies and health aids, are women of color.<sup>11</sup> SCR records, accessible to employers for years, severely limit parents’ ability to secure employment that can provide economic stability for their families.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://familypolicynyc.org/report/scr/>; <https://nysba.org/new-york-state-bar-association-finds-child-welfare-system-replete-with-systemic-racism-pushes-for-reforms/>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2023/demographics-children-fy-2023.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> See Nikita Stewart, The Child Abuse Charge Was Dismissed. But it Can Still Cost You a Job, N.Y. Times (Feb. 25, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/nyregion/ny-child-abuse-database.html>.

<sup>11</sup> See N.Y.C. Dep’t of Consumer Affs., Lifting up Paid Care Work (2018).

The ramifications extend far beyond employment, affecting custody determinations and kinship care arrangements. Courts frequently consider indicated reports from the SCR in custody determinations, often favoring parents without an indicated report. Moreover, an indicated report may pose risks for individuals seeking custody of children through kinship care—an alternative to the traditional foster system where relatives provide care. While kinship care is widely acknowledged as the next best option when parental care is unavailable, arrangements are often rejected based on indicated reports, even if the report is outdated. This situation forces children into foster placement with strangers, despite the availability of caring relatives.

Despite the existence of a process to challenge this outcome through hearings with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), parents generally lack access to counsel in these hearings necessary to amend or seal an indicated case from the SCR. Yet, ACS is always afforded the benefit of counsel during these hearings. Decisions in these hearings often hinge on the interpretation of statutory and legal terms, such as “person legally responsible,” “collateral estoppel,” and “dismissed on the merits.” However, parents are not provided with an attorney to advise them of their right to challenge their listing on the SCR or to advocate on their behalf. In January 2022, the laws governing SCR hearings were overhauled, introducing a new legal standard and process. The interpretation of many of these new provisions is currently under active litigation in nearly every hearing.

By funding this program, the City Council is profoundly transforming the lives of hundreds of people who are eligible to have their names removed from the SCR, so they regain the ability to access employment opportunities and restore custody rights for their children. This is especially crucial for Black, Brown, and low-income parents, to begin addressing the systemic racial inequities, economic disparities, family separation and instability perpetuated by ACS targeting.

**C. The Right to Family Advocacy Project avoids unnecessary family separation and removes barriers to employment for hundreds of low-income NYC parents.**

Through the Right to Family Advocacy Project, low-income parents in New York City gain access to attorneys via hotlines, emails, and walk-in hours when confronted with an ACS investigation and when employment opportunities are denied due to an indicated case on the SCR. During ACS investigations, teams comprising attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents regarding their rights, choices, and the consequences of decisions. This proactive, client-centered engagement results in better-informed and a more nuanced understanding of family circumstances by ACS. Our teams aid parents in providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance, and addressing underlying issues. Our advocates accompany clients to conferences with ACS, schools, and with medical providers, often leading to resolution without the need for court involvement.

In challenging indicated cases on the State Central Registry, our multidisciplinary teams represent parents and caregivers in administrative reviews and hearings, drafting affidavits, negotiating with ACS attorneys, securing necessary discovery, documentation, and court orders, and litigating cases based on the most current legal standards. This holistic approach ensures clients have access to employment opportunities to support and strengthen their families without facing discrimination.

Our success in having SCR reports amended or sealed during FY23 — which ranged from 90% to 100% among our offices—has enabled parents to access employment and support their families. Data compiled from the four family defense organizations demonstrates the effectiveness of the Right to Family Advocacy Project. With City Council funding in FY23, the family defense organizations collectively assisted over a thousand parents and caretakers during ACS investigations and SCR administrative proceedings.

Through early advocacy and identification of appropriate services and resources, we avoided unnecessary and traumatic family separations, often preventing family court filings. This has led to significant fiscal savings for the city by minimizing removals and reducing court filings, thereby conserving valuable court resources for cases where complex interventions are necessary. For instance, in FY23, approximately 84% of cases represented by BxD during ACS investigations did not proceed to court. BDS and CFR similarly saw rates around 83% while NDS witnessed nearly 94%.

In cases where Article 10 proceedings were initiated, early advocacy influenced the outcomes. In the Bronx, 84% of cases filed in court in FY23, where BXD had represented the parent during the pre-court investigation, resulted in children remaining at home or being placed with family, rather than in the foster system. At CFR, 88% of children avoided foster care, equating to 112 children. At NDS, nearly 86% of children were spared the trauma of the foster system. The Right to Family Advocacy Project not only prevents family separation, reducing acute and systemic trauma, but also delivers substantial cost savings for the city.

We deeply value the opportunity to emphasize the vital need for increased funding to ensure that parents confronting the possibility of losing their children have the support they need to preserve their family bonds. The Right to Family Advocacy Project goes beyond just providing legally mandated representation—it involves delivering high-quality, holistic, and zealous advocacy and social work services that have been demonstrated to make a real difference. A difference that is only possible through the City Council’s support with an increased investment in funding that will enable us to continue serving all those in need while meeting rising expenses.

**Family Defense Offices Have Proven to be Highly Successful in Providing High Quality Legal Representation to Families and Reducing the Time Children Spend in the Foster System**

Family defense organizations play a pivotal role in fulfilling the city's legal obligation to provide legal representation in family court, in Article 10 and related cases, for parents unable to afford



legal counsel. In the face of the catastrophic prospect of losing parental rights, these organizations not only provide essential legal guidance to safeguard these rights but also serve as a crucial bulwark for families facing the threat of separation, which disproportionately harms families of color. Through comprehensive, zealous advocacy and social service support, the preservation of family bonds takes precedence. This approach leads to a notable reduction in the time children spend in foster care, resulting in significant savings for the city.

In New York, parents charged with abuse or neglect in family court are legally entitled to legal representation if they cannot afford it, as mandated by statute and the New York State Constitution. In 2007, New York City began funding parental representation by contracting with multidisciplinary organizations. These organizations employ lawyers, social workers, parent advocates, and investigators with expertise spanning various legal fields such as housing, public benefits, mental health, criminal justice, educational law, and immigration defense. Since then, our offices have represented most parents in Article 10 proceedings and all related matters, including interim appeals, custody, visitation, family offense, paternity, and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings.

Over the last almost 17 years, our offices have honed family defense practices that serve as a state and national model, recognized as the most effective approach to advocacy for parents in family regulation cases. The Commission on Parental Representation, established by Chief Judge DiFiore to examine the state of representation for indigent parents in New York State, issued an interim report in February 2019 following extensive hearings. It recommended the adoption of New York City's parent representation model in family regulation cases statewide. The Commission concluded that:

“the best chance of successful implementation of its recommendations is through statewide expansion of institutional providers and attorneys specializing in child welfare law. The use of attorneys dedicated to, and proficient in, such representation would improve the quality, efficiency, and cost effectiveness of parental representation statewide.”

The benefit of New York City's contract with family defense organizations to fulfill the mandate of parent representation cannot be overstated: our work dramatically reduces both the number of families separated by ACS, and the amount of time children spend in the foster system. As the Council evaluates funding requests for the Administration for Children's Services, it is critical that our offices receive adequate funding to counterbalance the agency's tremendous reach and power. Our interdisciplinary model ensures protection of parents' due process and legal rights while holding ACS accountable to its obligations, preventing unnecessary family separations and minimizing foster care stays.

Throughout Article 10 cases, our interdisciplinary teams work tirelessly to achieve and maintain family reunification through advocacy at case conferences, active motion practice, investigation of the facts, and the litigation of fact finding, disposition, visitation, and permanency hearings. Adequate resourcing of interdisciplinary family defense representation is essential for ensuring that the court receives all information necessary to uphold the law in maintaining family relationships. The experience of institutional, holistic family defense over the past 16 and a half years in New York City has proven that zealous in-court representation combined with crucial advocacy and family support outside of court is the most powerful method to safeguard the rights of parents and children, ensuring fairness and effectiveness of the family regulation system.

Our effectiveness in reducing foster care involvement is well documented. The most comprehensive study of parental representation in family court ever conducted reveals that holistic, interdisciplinary institutional representation in New York City significantly reduces the time children spend in the foster system. This study compared length of foster stays for the children represented by BxD, BDS, and CFR's with those of children whose parents were assigned solo attorneys pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law, Indigent Defense Legal Panel Plan. The findings indicate that representation by interdisciplinary offices reduced children's time in the foster system by nearly four months over the 48 months following the filing of the petition, leading to earlier reunification outcomes, and translating into nearly \$40 million in annual savings in foster system expenditures for New York City. Of critical note, these outcomes were achieved without compromising the safety of children.

More than 90 percent of our clients face allegations of neglect, not abuse. These cases typically stem from poverty-related issues, with allegations often including poor or unstable housing conditions, food insecurity, income instability, concerns about children's education attendance, domestic violence, excessive discipline, or inadequate childcare. Additionally, many of our clients struggle with untreated mental health and/or substance use disorders which are exacerbated by the stress of poverty, or confront other challenges, such as cognitive disabilities. A significant portion of our clients have experienced periods in the foster system during their childhood or are young parents currently navigating the foster system.

Less than 10 percent of our cases involve more serious allegations of abuse, often resulting in immediate removal of children from their families. These cases are among the most complex, requiring extensive litigation, expert testimony, and thorough investigations to demonstrate innocence, provide medical explanations for apparent injuries, or present mitigating factors. In cases of such complexity, our responsibility to safeguard the due process rights of families escalates, demanding the expertise, skill and passion of our highly qualified and experienced attorneys to litigate these intricate, high stakes claims effectively.

The foster system disproportionately punishes, controls, surveils, and forcibly separates low-income Black and Brown families. Just as our modern police systems descend from slave patrols,

the family regulation system is deeply rooted in our country's history of separating Indigenous, Black, and low-income children from their families.

When the communities we represent are investigated by ACS, caseworkers often use misinformation and the threat of family separation and police involvement to coerce vulnerable families to relinquish their constitutional rights before a court is even involved. Hospitals target pregnant low-income Black and Brown parents to drug test them without consent, regardless of whether there are any actual child safety concerns, a legacy of the now-debunked racist “crack baby” myth. The family regulation system has become a weapon used by landlords seeking to harass tenants, jilted lovers, and vengeful family members by allowing anonymous reports to be filed with little accountability, leaving families to pick up the pieces after the resulting intrusive investigations.

All these processes create a dynamic that entangles low-income Black and Brown families into a system that, often, tears them apart. For the people who find themselves in these horrifying circumstances, their attorney is the lifeline to bring their children home, which is why our services are so critical.

## **SUMMARY**

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

Zainab Akbar  
Managing Attorney  
Family Defense Practice  
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem  
[zakbar@ndsny.org](mailto:zakbar@ndsny.org)

Emma Ketteringham  
Managing Director  
Family Defense Practice  
The Bronx Defenders  
[emmak@bronxdefenders.org](mailto:emmak@bronxdefenders.org)

Tehra Coles  
Executive Director  
Center for Family Representation  
[tcoles@cfrny.org](mailto:tcoles@cfrny.org)

Lauren Shapiro  
Managing Director  
Family Defense Practice  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
[lshapiro@bds.org](mailto:lshapiro@bds.org)

NYC Council FY 25 Executive Budget Hearing Public Session:

Finance Committee –  
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair  
&  
Children & Youth Services Committee –  
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

Health Committee –  
Hon. Lynn Schulman, Chair

Parks & Recreation Committee –  
Hon. Shekar Krishnan, Chair

Submitted on behalf of:

New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL) 36-36  
33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 504  
Long Island City, NY 11106

Udai Tambar  
President and CEO

Presented by:

Scott Daly  
Senior Director, Community Tennis

On behalf of the Board and Staff of **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL** (legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**), I thank you for the Council's over five decades of funding support. With the Council as our partner, we have become the nation's largest tennis and education organization.

**With the city's finances in much better shape than expected in January, we ask that the Council continue their support by increasing our funding in the FY 25 Budget.** This year we are seeking **\$1M** under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness* Initiative – an increase of \$200,000. **This would be our FIRST INCREASE in 16 years.**

During the past 16 years:

- The minimum wage in NYC has more than **DOUBLED** from \$7.25 per hour to the current \$15 per hour
- Permit fees and indoor court costs have more than **TRIPLED**
- Equipment costs for nets, racquets and balls have more than **DOUBLED**
- Bus transportation to and from tournaments/special events have more than **TRIPLED**
- **\$1 today only buys 69% of what it could in 2008**
- **Prices in 2024 are 1.44 times higher than in 2008**

Given the current state of inflation and the years of rising costs, it has become increasingly challenging for NYJTL to provide the level of programming that it is known for to youth across ALL five boroughs at its current level of Council funding, **ESPECIALLY since discretionary programs funded by the Council have not benefited from any COLA increases through the years unlike youth programs funded directly by DYCD.** In order to keep up with these costs, to continue to pay our staff a livable wage and to prevent cuts to programming, increased funding to NYJTL is **VITALLY** needed.

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

- Continue to pay our staff a livable wage and keep up with rising staffing costs due to NYJTL's **minimum wage of \$18 per hour (above NYC minimum)**;
- Allow us to purchase sufficient equipment and cover additional site costs (permits/indoor court time);
- Enable us to continue serving youth in **EVERY** borough;
- Allow us to bring programming to **NEW LOCATIONS** throughout the city;
- Allow us to bring **ADDITIONAL HOURS** of free tennis instruction at existing sites;
- **INCREASE SATURDAY** programming to increase access for kids who cannot attend during the weekdays;
- **INCREASE ENROLLMENT** throughout the city as a result of additional program hours and new locations.

**It is our belief that talent IS universal BUT access and opportunity IS NOT.** That is why we have strived over the past 53 years to introduce the sport of tennis to **ALL** children, including those with special needs. NYJTL programs offer the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. They have the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

Studies have proven that the sport of tennis offers young people numerous developmental benefits. Regular tennis play has been demonstrated to improve physical fitness in the following areas (including but not limited to):

- **Aerobic & Cardiovascular Fitness**
- **Anaerobic Fitness**
- **General Body Coordination**
- **Bone Strength & Density**
- **Hand-eye Coordination**



Tennis has also been demonstrated to improve:

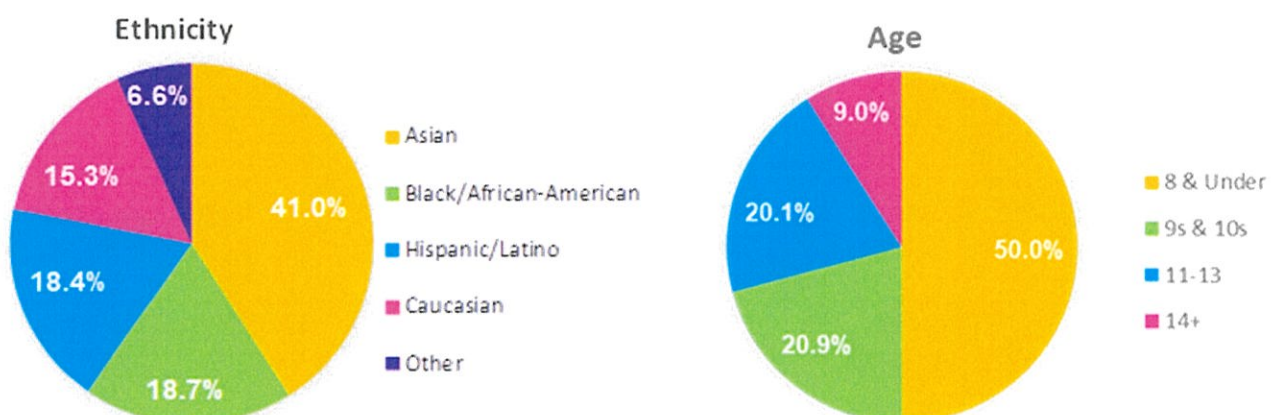
- **Work Ethic**
- **Discipline**
- **Sportsmanship**
- **Teamwork**
- **Social Skills**
- **Resiliency skills**

Council citywide funding under the *Physical Education & Fitness Initiative* enables us to provide **SAFE, ENGAGING and MUCH NEEDED physical activity to youth in ALL 5 boroughs**. Through our programs, we are reaching more than **90,000 under-resourced youth** year-round at over **100 sites**, including **24 parks** across the city, developing the character of young people for a lifetime of success on and off the court.

Over **80%** of young people served by NYJTL are **Black, Latino, Asian and from immigrant populations**. Over **70%** are **10 and under**. Many are from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people typically lack access to the opportunity to learn the sport of tennis.

Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school juniors & seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various times throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter).

#### CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>1</sup>.



## CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS <sup>1</sup>

|                         | %     | Age       | %     | Gender     | %     | N/R       | %     |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Asian                   | 41.0% | 8 & Under | 50%   | Male       | 51.4% | New       | 67.4% |
| Black/ African-American | 18.7% | 9s & 10s  | 20.9% | Female     | 48.3% | Returning | 32.6% |
| Hispanic/Latino         | 18.4% | 11-13     | 20.1% | Non-binary | 0.2%  |           |       |
| Caucasian               | 15.3% | 14 +      | 9.0%  |            |       |           |       |
| Other                   | 6.6%  |           |       |            |       |           |       |

<sup>1</sup>Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics

During the pandemic when the youth of this city needed us, NYJTL was there. Due to the very nature of tennis – **NO DIRECT PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT IS REQUIRED** – NYJTL was uniquely positioned to provide NYC youth with a SAFE and FUN physical outlet to help relieve the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic. **Recognizing the need for its programming, NYJTL stepped up to the task. Our coaches were back on the courts by August 2020 providing NYC youth with FREE youth tennis programming.** Since then, our in-person programming has been operating uninterrupted without incident and with participation rates exceeding all expectations.

**We now need the help of the City Council.** Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 25 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe, who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

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



**KCS**  
WWW.KCSNY.ORG

THE KOREAN COMMUNITY  
SERVICES OF METROPOLITAN  
NEW YORK, INC.

뉴욕한인봉사센터

**Written Testimony of Teresa Baik**  
**Director of Education at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc.**  
**(KCS)**  
**Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance (Jointly with the Committee on**  
**Children and Youth)**  
**Regarding**  
**Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025**  
**May 10th, 2024**

Good morning Chair Brannan and Chair Stevens and members of the committees. My name is Teresa Baik and I am the Director of Education at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS).

Since 1973, KCS, a 501(c)(3) organization, has been serving underrepresented populations with an emphasis on the Korean immigrant and broader AAPI communities. KCS is committed to ensuring individuals remain grounded in their heritage but develop the capacity to thrive in their daily lives. In response to the significant cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers immigrants face each day, KCS provides a comprehensive array of client-tailored services in the areas of Aging, Education, Immigration, Workforce Development, Public Health, and Mental Health. Our holistic services enable Asian American immigrants to navigate through any challenges that may arise in their journey towards becoming more dynamic, healthy, and confident members of society. KCS is also a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCAAL).

For over 20 years, KCS has provided adult literacy classes through city and state funding. Each year, the number of students that we serve has increased and the number of classes we now provide is evidence of the success for our ESOL program and the constant need for adult literacy programming in our communities. We operate our in-person classes from Monday - Friday with flexible class times in the morning and afternoon to best accommodate our students and their busy schedules.

Even though the application deadline for the newest DYCD RFP has passed, there is still great uncertainty about the future regarding the state of our ESOL classes for the next fiscal year. We hope that the committee can continue to push DYCD to find ways in which they can continue supporting organizations that ultimately will not receive funding in the new fiscal year.

**HEADQUARTERS**  
(ADULT DAYCARE  
EDUCATION | HR  
IMMIGRATION |  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
RESEARCH CENTER |  
WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT)  
  
203-05 32nd Ave,  
Bayside, NY 11361  
Tel: 718-939-6137

**OLDER ADULT  
CENTER**  
  
42-15 166th St,  
Flushing, NY 11358  
Tel: 718-886-8203  
  
37-06 111th St,  
Corona, NY 11368  
Tel: 718-651-9220  
  
633 W 115th St,  
New York, NY 10025  
Tel: 718-886-8203,  
347-923-0124

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
RESEARCH CENTER**  
  
315 5th Ave, #705,  
New York, NY 10016  
Tel: 212-463-9685  
  
2460 Lemoine Ave, #400P,  
Fort Lee, NJ 07024  
Tel: 201-364-8375  
  
103-04 39th Ave, #103,  
Corona, NY 11368  
Tel: 917-396-4149

**WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT**  
  
325 West 38th St, #1107,  
New York, NY 10018  
Tel: 929-300-8630,  
929-341-8302

**MENTAL HEALTH  
CLINIC**  
  
42-16 162nd St, 2FL,  
Flushing, NY 11358  
Tel: 718-366-9540



**KCS**  
WWW.KCSNY.ORG

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NEW YORK, INC.

뉴욕한인봉사센터

We at KCS are extremely grateful that the City Council has continued to support our Adult Literacy classes throughout the years and want to draw specific attention to the Adult Literacy Pilot Program that the Council has so graciously funded these past few years. It has been a tremendous help to our programs and ultimately to our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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

203-05 32nd Ave,  
Bayside, NY 11361  
Tel: 718-939-6137

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Tel: 718-886-8203

37-06 111th St,  
Corona, NY 11368  
Tel: 718-651-9220

633 W 115th St,  
New York, NY 10025  
Tel: 718-886-8203,  
347-923-0124

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
RESEARCH CENTER**

315 5th Ave, #705,  
New York, NY 10016  
Tel: 212-463-9685

2460 Lemoine Ave, #400P,  
Fort Lee, NJ 07024  
Tel: 201-364-8375

103-04 39th Ave, #103,  
Corona, NY 11368  
Tel: 917-396-4149

**WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT**

325 West 38th St, #1107,  
New York, NY 10018  
Tel: 929-300-8630,  
929-341-8302

**MENTAL HEALTH  
CLINIC**

42-16 162nd St, 2FL,  
Flushing, NY 11358  
Tel: 718-366-9540



Literacy Assistance Center

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

**May 10, 2024**

**Testimony of Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), a 41-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the adult education system and to advancing adult literacy as a foundation for equal opportunity and social justice. I am also a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL).

Today in New York City, there are over 2.2 million adults with limited English proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma. Last year, DYCD funding provided classes to approximately 16,000 of these adults, less than 1% of those in need.

As you know, DYCD is currently reviewing proposals under an RFP that will fund community-based adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs for the next three to six years. Yet at a time when the need for services in our communities is only expanding, this RFP cuts DYCD funding for adult literacy education by 30% -- from \$16.83 million in FY24 to \$11.85 million in FY25 through FY27. This dramatic cut in funding will mean that only 9,118 students will be served through DYCD-funded classes annually, less than ½ of 1% of the 2.2 million adult New Yorkers in need -- and a decrease of somewhere between 25%-45% of the number of students served through DYCD-funded programs over the past few fiscal years.

Given all of the above, the Literacy Assistance Center and New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy are calling for the FY25 Adopted Budget to **baseline \$21.8 million for DYCD**

**RFP-funded Adult Literacy programs to restore cuts and maintain services for over 16,000 students. This requires adding \$11 million to the \$10.8 million in the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget, which will:**

- Restore the \$6 million that the FY25 Executive Budget has cut from the \$16.8 million in administration-side funding in the FY24 Adopted Budget, and
- Provide an additional \$5 million to sustain community-based adult literacy services for 16,769 students at the new per-student rate that will take effect in FY25.

In addition, we call on the City Council to renew and expand its crucial funding initiatives:

1. Maintain the \$4 million in City Council Discretionary Funding for the Adult Literacy Initiative.
2. Double the funding for the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project from \$2.5 million to \$5 million and expand the number of programs that receive this funding.
3. Change the name of the City Council Adult Literacy *Pilot* Project to the City Council Adult Literacy *Innovation* Project to better reflect the purpose of this funding going forward.

Thank you for your attention.

Ira Yankwitt  
Executive Director  
Literacy Assistance Center  
[iray@lacnyc.org](mailto:iray@lacnyc.org)





151 Lawrence Street, 5th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
212-437-3500

463 Hawthorne Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10705  
914-375-8700

[RisingGround.org](https://RisingGround.org)

NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing  
Finance and Committee on Children and Youth  
May 10, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Brennan, Chair Stevens, Committee members, and thank you for your time and this opportunity. My name is Nancy Hruska and I am the Vice President of Rising Ground.

Rising Ground is one of New York City's oldest human services organizations, with more than 190 years of service to the most vulnerable New Yorkers, supporting more than 25,000 youth and families across all five boroughs of the City. We hold several contracts with ACS and DYCD, including being one of the largest providers of child welfare and juvenile justice services and the largest provider for runaway and homeless youth Transitional Independent Living residential (known as TILs) and RHY supportive services.

Thank you for acknowledging the importance of our workforce by supporting the inclusion of the Cost-of-Living Adjustment increase. Our workforce is our greatest asset. To do our best work with the vulnerable populations we serve, we need a stable workforce that is valued, well training, and earning more than just a living wage. We urge Council to continue to work with providers to build a pay equity with City agencies. As you know, there is a huge disparity between what non-profit provider contracts fund and City agencies pay for similar positions. This has led to providers being the training ground for City agencies, increasing our staff turn-over and onboarding costs, which are barely covered in current City service contracts. Within this morning's testimony, ACS spoke about the hiring and training of new staff, yet did not address the Council's question if these new staff were recruited from non-profits, nor did they address a plan for pay parity. Simply put, they do not have a plan for pay parity for provider workforce. ACS remains focused on their agency workforce only, losing sight of the bigger service environment.

Over the years, Rising Ground and our fellow service providers have demonstrated how effective and cost-efficient supporting children, youth, and families can be. We are able to reach and stabilize more families with therapeutic supports, connect youth to a positive educational path or gainful employment, provide a safe place to live with community networks. We have seen what happens when these services are not available – increases in foster care, increases in youth homelessness and an increase in juvenile justice involvement. Therefore we urge Council to continue to support these programs with adequate funding and no further reductions are taken. This is also a critical point with the influx of immigrant populations. We need to be able to assist with their adjusting to life in New York City without jeopardizing the families we are already supporting.

We would also like to thank members of the Children & Youth Committee and Chair Stevens for their review and focus of ACS's juvenile justice services and the capacity to support youth in detention. As a provider of non-secure detention, non-secure and limited-secure placement programs, Rising Ground urges Council to closely track the number of young people in secure and non-secure detention and Close to Home placements to ensure cross-agency collaboration is successful in the creation and implementation of a de-incarceration plan. We recommend that providers of Close to Home and Alternatives to Incarceration be included in the development team and not solely City agencies.

Finally and most importantly, we ask the Committee to remain vigilant in restoring and increasing DYCD funding for Runaway and Homeless programs. Rising Ground provides transitional and subsidized housing for youth, runs drop-in centers, a mental health clinic, and a crisis shelter – all supporting RHY teens. We thank the Council for acknowledging the need for increased funding and share your concern that the Council's recommendations were not included in the Executive Budget. We have experienced a significant increase in our drop-in centers and crisis shelter; historically we have supported more than 1,900 youth a year in drop-in centers, we have already reached that number in Jamaica and will exceed it by fiscal year end in Far Rockaway. We are also experiencing an significant influx of new immigrant youth coming to our centers and shelter to avoid involvement in the DHS system. There was a time where we were feeding 50+ people per day breakfast, lunch and dinner. An additional challenge in support this population; as the migrant youth have fewer options for housing, they are staying in our programs longer and the beds are becoming less available.

Within the next year, an RFP is anticipated for these critical services, namely TILs, crisis shelters and drop-in centers. It is essential that these programs are appropriately funded; staff need to be earning more than a living wage, sufficient food and beds are needed, and housing and peer navigators should be included. We are concerned that the RFP will not be timely and each service component will not be adequately funded nor procure an appropriate capacity. We urge the Committee to fight for appropriate funding for this vital programming in the coming fiscal years.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted:

Nancy Hruska  
Vice President, Program Development & Advocacy  
Rising Ground, Inc.  
151 Lawrence Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
TEL: 914-375-8879  
Email: [NHruska@RisingGround.org](mailto:NHruska@RisingGround.org)



2 Lafayette Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10007  
T 212.577.7700 F 212.385.0331 [www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org)



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

On the Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget

Committee on Finance  
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair

Committee on Children and Youth  
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

New York City Council

5.10.2024

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

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

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

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need. To be frank – our sector is in crisis. Nonprofit human services organizations are shuttering as a result of delayed contracts and payments. And nonprofits across the sector are struggling to hire and retain staff as a result of an unjust wage structure largely determined by government contracts.

The City of New York contracts with nonprofits to deliver the essential services so many New Yorkers rely on – for food, for safety, for shelter, etc. However, the City too often asks our community of nonprofits to do more with less and to accept the bare minimum. This means that many - too many - nonprofit human services workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color, are barely surviving on the wages paid by underfunded City contracts. Because many survivors come into victim services work to help other survivors, City funding for the nonprofit victim services sector is an economic justice issue for survivors. To live up to our shared values of equity, equality, and supporting communities, our City must commit to fully funding a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and other fair and just investments to our sector, to fully funding city contracts at appropriate levels to allow non-profits to offer competitive living wage salaries, and to paying organizations on time for the work we have already done. Pay equity is a racial justice issue, a gender justice issue, and an economic justice issue.

My testimony today focuses on the needs of the nonprofit human services sector, with specific focus on the #JustPay campaign. I also write about a \$3M MOCJ PEG we are deeply concerned about. I will highlight the City Council discretionary and initiative funding contracted through ACS and DYCD that Safe Horizon relies on to provide essential services to survivors of violence and abuse across the five boroughs. Lastly, Safe Horizon is a proud member of the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), and we wholeheartedly endorse their budget recommendations.

## **#JustPay - COLA for Human Services Workers**

Safe Horizon is a proud member of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers. The #JustPay campaign is demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%).

**We thank the Administration and the City Council for including a 9.27% wage increase for City-contracted human services workers, as this \$741 million investment is a significant step in fairly compensating frontline workers.** By committing to meaningful, yearly increases in salaries to help workers keep up with cost-of-living, the City has supported the sector in undoing decades of underfunding for human services. More must be done to achieve true livable wages and fair funding on government contracts, but this is a remarkable investment and acknowledgement of how important these workers are to New York. We look forward to working with the City for a seamless COLA implementation so that organizations receive their funding on time to distribute to the 80,000 City-contracted human services workers.

During the pandemic, Streetwork increased our services for street homeless youth and worked to build important connections to other essential services that helped our clients survive the multiple health crises happening at once. And we did this all while facing major staffing and capacity issues. It is difficult to recruit qualified candidates and keep staff when our contracts underpay positions. This is especially heart-breaking for our programs because we know that staff turnover severely impedes continuity of services and relationship-building with youth. Our clients often distrust authority figures and have often experienced trauma related to being abandoned by caregivers. Trust is built over time, through serious work by both clients and staff members. When staff leave, the young folks we work with experience setbacks, which makes it that much harder to build further trust. If our contracts not only adequately but abundantly covered staff lines, we would not experience the staffing and capacity issues that impede this essential work.

## **Restore \$3 million MOCJ PEG for "Crime Victim Services Re-estimate."**

The Mayor's FY25 Preliminary Budget inexplicably slashed services for crime victims by **\$3 million**, even as concerns about the impact of violence and abuse continue to be on the minds of many New Yorkers. And the Mayor did not restore this funding in his FY25 Executive Budget. The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) explains that the PEG is tied to underspending by contracted providers, when in reality the City either imposed a hiring freeze or was so delinquent in processing contracts that providers were unable to hire staff. Safe Horizon strongly urges the City Council to advocate with the Mayor to restore this PEG in the final budget.

## **Initiative and Discretionary Funding**

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

### **Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)**

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

For many years now, child victims in New York City who experience severe physical or sexual abuse are brought to Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which are at the forefront of the city's response to child abuse. At our CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers are all under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response that significantly reduces the number of times children must disclose details of their abuse. This coordinated, trauma-informed response to abuse helps to prevent the re-traumatization of the child during each re-telling of the violence that took place. In FY23, our CACs provided services to over 9,200 children and over 3,500 caregivers throughout the five boroughs. The City Council supports our CACs through the **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault**, contracted through ACS.

We are requesting a restoration and an enhancement to **\$1,250,000** in FY25 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs so we can continue to provide healing and support to child victims. Additionally, we are seeking for this core funding to be baselined to ensure the City's continued investment in the CAC model.

### **Streetwork Project**

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and so much more, in a therapeutic harm reduction



community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Streetwork has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed. Over the past several months, Streetwork has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of migrant young people seeking help and having nowhere else to go.

In FY23, our Streetwork Project provided services to 999 clients across our drop-in centers and overnight shelter, while our overnight street outreach team engaged in nearly 13,000 contacts with homeless and at-risk young people. The City Council supports Streetwork Project's work through the **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative**, contracted through DYCD.

The **Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** bolsters Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. Safe Horizon is seeking a restoration of **\$456,697** to continue to bolster our response and offer critical services to this vulnerable population navigating homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

### **Immigration Law Project**

Safe Horizon's Immigration Violence Law Project (ILP) provides expert legal advice and representation to victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist them in VAWA self-petitions, petitions for U nonimmigrant status and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), applications for asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. ILP receives referrals internally from Safe Horizon's other programs, such as our domestic violence shelters and our Crime Victim Assistance Program, as well as externally from the immigration courts, law enforcement agencies, other community-based organizations, legislators, and from former and current clients. ILP strives to provide the highest quality services to a very vulnerable population. Clients live in all five boroughs and experience a multitude of victimization including domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. As a result of the steady transfer of recent arrivals at the southern border to New York City, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen a dramatic increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, the overwhelmed systems have left countless in tenuous circumstances—food and housing insecure and desperate for work—making them even more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking and in need of our support and services. The City has prioritized assisting migrants with completing asylum applications, but nonprofit civil legal providers with expertise in complex immigration cases have not seen equitable

investments in our services, namely more comprehensive legal screenings and longterm representation and assistance. Without additional resources, we are simply unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

In FY23, ILP provided full representation, advice, and consults to over 800 clients and also provided over 5,800 telephonic information and referral services. The City Council supports ILP through the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)**, contracted through DYCD.

The City Council's **Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative** – part of the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)** – allows Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project to provide full representation to immigrant victims of domestic violence. The majority of these cases include clients or families where there is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence and where the victim is between the ages of 16 and 24. To help ensure that our Immigration Law Project has the capacity to respond to pressing legal cases for immigrant and undocumented survivors, including those who submitted an asylum application but now need representation and/or screening for additional immigration options beyond asylum, we are seeking an enhancement to **\$100,000** to Safe Horizon through the YWI - Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative in FY25.

### **SafeChat**

Safe Horizon offers a continuum of service for all victims of crime through telephonic, live chat, and/or in-person supports. Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists by visiting [safehorizon.org](https://safehorizon.org). Live Chat Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. Live Chat Specialists conduct safety assessment, safety planning, crisis counseling, supportive counseling, psychoeducation, information about and referrals to supporting resources. In FY23, SafeChat responded to over 1,000 chats from survivors.

The City Council supports our SafeChat through a **Speaker's Initiative**, contracted through DYCD. In FY22, Safe Horizon was awarded **Speaker's Initiative** funding to launch a SafeChat microsite intentionally directed towards young men of color. The site provides educational materials related to trauma and provides access to our live chat platform. We again received Speaker's Initiative funding in FY23 and FY24 to support the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist and enhance our ability to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help. This year, we are seeking a restoration to our FY23 funding of **\$150,000** in Speaker's Initiative funding to continue to support SafeChat's operations and the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist. This support allows us to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help and intentionally build avenues for young men of color to access supportive services and healing.

### **New York Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) Recommendations**

Safe Horizon wishes to thank the Coalition for Homeless Youth for continuing to be a champion for runaway and homeless youth across the city. We join the calls of Runaway and Homeless

Youth (RHY) and RHY advocates across NYC in urging the City Council to work with Mayor Adams and all elected and government officials across our city to meaningfully support RHY, connect them to safe, stable housing, and end youth homelessness. Safe Horizon is a proud member of the New York Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), which is a consortium of over 60 agencies working to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, and street-involved youth across New York State. We work to recognize and uphold the plight of homelessness among young people across ethnicities, genders, and orientations and promote the safety, health, and future of unhoused youth across New York State. CHY has crafted a list of policy recommendations that our government partners can implement this year to meaningfully address and end our youth housing and homelessness crisis.

To meet the needs of RHY, the following must be prioritized in FY25:

- **Fund Support Services for Youth New Arrivals and Unaccompanied Minors: \$1.63M**  
DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers have been going above and beyond to meet the growing needs of newly arrived youth and unaccompanied minors without any additional support. We are asking for a one-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts. This additional funding will support meeting the basic needs of young people and fund more appropriate staffing across the sites.
- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Residential Contracts: \$5.5M**  
DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded Crisis and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Program contracts be increased to \$55,500. This will cover the baselining of all residential bed rates across contract years, plus a 10% increase for all current DYCD-funded residential RHY contracts.

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

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

- **Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services: \$625,000**  
Young people in DYCD programs have been excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and most young people qualify for youth-specific immigration relief (ie SIJS) that the city does not currently fund. Funding should be made immediately available for five

positions for full-time experienced lawyers, who will be awarded to DYCD-funded RHY programs through an RFP based on the documented need for such services.

- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.5M**

The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through federal Emergency Housing Voucher funding which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 2024). Data already demonstrates their success through the record number of youth that have exited homelessness into their own apartments since their inception. Maintaining these positions will ensure that RHY continue to successfully transition to their own apartments and support the Administration's goal to address the homelessness crisis.

Since 2021, almost 600 youth and young adults have exited homelessness and moved into their own apartments with the assistance of a housing voucher and a DYCD-funded Housing Navigator. Data shows the success and return on investment of Housing Navigators. A record number of young people have exited homelessness and moved into their own apartments. Since the creation of the Housing Navigator positions, there has been a 200% increase in youth being discharged from youth shelters into their own affordable apartments. Defunding these positions will effectively close this pathway out of homelessness for vulnerable young New Yorkers. It would be devastating for DYCD programs to lose our only housing-dedicated jobs and return to the status quo of not being able to connect our clients with housing.

At Safe Horizon Streetwork Project, we helped connect over 200 of our clients to housing vouchers in the last three years. Of those, 188 have moved into their own apartments to date. Of the 188 apartments that our clients were able to obtain with their housing vouchers, our program's two phenomenal Housing Navigators found and connected clients to 169 of them. There were 19 apartments that our Navigators did not find but still helped our clients lease up. With the elimination of the only city-funded positions specifically funded and trained to assist homeless youth in accessing permanent housing, how many young people will be able to move into apartments? How many will be unable to find and move into apartments and will therefore lose not only their housing voucher but their chance to exit homelessness? We all know that prolonged homelessness is expensive for the city. Defunding these positions will not save the city any money in the long run as homeless youth without a pathway out of homelessness become chronically homeless adults.

Currently, we have one non-temporary, full-time position, funded by a private foundation, that helps our clients access permanent housing. This staff person does not have the capacity to help every client who needs housing. Streetwork has one of the best reputations across DYCD-contracted RHY programs for assisting clients in accessing permanent housing. With additional housing specialists, we are able to place significantly more clients in housing.

- **Restore funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M**

In response to the priorities set forth in Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness, funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across the DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers. Unfortunately, these critical positions that provide peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults were cut in FY24 and should be restored.

- **Fund 100 additional DYCD RHY beds: \$5.6M**

Over the past year, it has been increasingly difficult to secure a vacant DYCD RHY bed for a young person experiencing homelessness. There simply are not enough beds to meet the need. Funding needs to be made available to add 60 beds for Runaway and Homeless Youth (16-20yo) and 40 beds for Homeless Young Adults (21-24yo), which will expand the current DYCD RHY bed portfolio by 100 beds. In addition, DYCD must prioritize allocating any new beds that are funded to serve populations with the greatest documented need in areas that are easily accessible to young people.

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

- **Give Runaway and Homeless Youth CityFHEPS vouchers**

The Adams Administration must implement the CityFHEPS laws that took effect on January 9th, 2024, which will finally make youth experiencing homelessness in DYCD-funded Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) programs categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without having first to enter the DHS shelter system. As stated above, the DHS system is traumatizing and dangerous for many of the young people we work with. It is unconscionable to require that RHY enter into the DHS system when they should be able to access a voucher through the DYCD programs they already have a relationship with.

## **Conclusion**

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

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

## **Safe Horizon FY25 Expense Funding Requests**



### **Speaker's Initiative – Restoration to FY23 level of \$150,000 for SafeChat (#173080)**

Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists through the Safe Horizon website ([www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org)). Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. One of our goals is to increase accessibility to needed services for young men of color. Research shows that young men of color are more likely to experience harm, yet Safe Horizon has found that young men of color are not accessing our services at a corresponding rate. This funding supports the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist and increases our ability to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help.

### **DOVE Initiative – Restoration of \$12,010,000 gross (\$859,000 to Safe Horizon) (#171946)**

Since 2006, Safe Horizon has successfully administered the City Council's Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DOVE) Initiative. Currently, more than 150 organizations across NYC use DOVE funding to address domestic violence in the community by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, outreach, education, and training. Safe Horizon oversees this entire project and ensures fiscal and programmatic compliance. We provide in-depth training on program development and evaluation to help organizations stay competitive in future funding environments, as well as networking opportunities to help DOVE-funded organizations learn from each other and coordinate services. DOVE has been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and every community who are navigating these uncertain times. As we advocate for options for victims and survivors both inside and outside traditional criminal justice responses, DOVE is pivotal. DOVE directs funds to the organizations rooted in community that provide necessary and lifesaving supports to survivors.

### **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault – Restoration and Enhancement to \$1,250,000 (#172004)**

Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are at the forefront of the city's response to child abuse. At Safe Horizon's CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers are all under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response to abuse. During the pandemic, our CACs remained open as essential programming and continued to provide critical supports to survivors of child abuse and their families. We are now serving more children than before the pandemic. We are requesting an enhancement to \$1,250,000 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs.

### **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade – Restoration of \$456,697 (#173030)**

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 16 to 25. This funding allows our team to respond more robustly to young people both in our drop-in centers and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trades. We connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare as they navigate homelessness, violence, and other traumas.



**Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative – Restoration of \$275,000 (#172938)**

Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLVP) utilizes funding through the Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative to provide direct legal services to indigent victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city. We assist with orders of protection, child support, custody, visitation, and uncontested divorce proceedings. We also run a legal helpline that provides information, referrals, and assistance to domestic violence survivors.

**Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations – Restoration of \$150,000 (#173053)**

The work of the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative aligns with Safe Horizon's commitment to working with young Black and brown men who have experienced harm and violence. This funding increases our capacity to connect community members who have experienced harm, with a particular focus on young men of color, to our continuum of services, including counseling and mental health supports. Our Helpline and SafeChat serve as a first point of contact, linking to our Community Programs for ongoing coordination within Safe Horizon and beyond.

**Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of \$140,000 (#172959)**

The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative allows us to address the impact of traumatic experiences that are so often at the root of behaviors that precipitate involvement in family court of children and youth. There is growing recognition of the many types of traumas (interpersonal violence, community violence, historical racism, systemic violence, and daily experiences of racism and other forms of oppression) that impact young people. Our project enhances trauma-informed care for youth by creating and providing training for a short-term trauma-focused intervention that helps survivors identify trauma reactions and practice coping strategies for managing them.

**Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of \$115,385 (#172970)**

The Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative supports our work with infants and toddlers who are survivors of crime, as well as their families, through training of clinicians and staff in an attachment-based intervention that facilitates healing and supports healthy development. Our Counseling Center uses a curriculum on how exposure to domestic violence, the dynamics of domestic violence, and the systems of oppression families experiencing DV often encounter all come together in ways that can disrupt the bond between infants and their caregivers. By training a greater number of individuals who come into contact with these children, we can prevent lifelong developmental consequences while providing healing and relief.

**Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence – Restoration and Enhancement to \$100,000 (#172108)**

The Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative – part of the Young Women's Initiative (YWI) – allows Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) to provide full representation and consultations to young immigrant victims of domestic violence from across NYC. The majority of these cases include clients or families where there is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence and where the victim is between the ages of 16 and 24. As a result of the steady transfer of recent arrivals at the southern border to New York City, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen an increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, the overwhelmed systems have left countless in tenuous circumstances—food and housing insecure and desperate for work—making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and in need of our support and services. Without additional resources, we are unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

**Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) – Restoration and Enhancement to \$100,000 (#172917)**

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) utilizes funding through the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) to provide expert legal advice and representation to undocumented victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist



them with applications for U-Visas, T-Visas, VAWA self-petitions, asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. ILP has experienced a significant increase in demand for legal assistance over the past several years. The steady flow of new arrivals to New York from border states, coupled with the fact that many New York-area immigration legal service providers are not accepting new intakes, drives many individuals and families desperate for immigration legal help to our office, which has remained open and serving clients even during the height of the pandemic. This funding allows ILP to serve more immigrant survivors. Without additional resources, we are unable to serve everyone who seeks our help.

**Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative – Restoration of \$44,560 (#173001)**

The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative helps Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project increase our capacity to connect potentially Hepatitis C-affected clients to testing, medical care, treatment, and infection control services.

**Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative – Individual Member Awards (#173099)**

These awards support Safe Horizon's client-centered trauma-informed response to victims and survivors in individual districts. Awards in FY24 supported our Court Programs, Counseling Center, and Community Programs. We are seeking additional support for our Immigration Law Project (ILP) and Anti-Trafficking Program (ATP), given the dramatic increase of requests for our legal services and supports.

*For more information, please contact:*

*Michael Polenberg at [michael.polenberg@safehorizon.org](mailto:michael.polenberg@safehorizon.org) or 212-577-7735 or*

*Jimmy Meagher at [james.meagher@safehorizon.org](mailto:james.meagher@safehorizon.org) or 212-577-4370*



# St.Nicks Alliance

*Where Opportunity Grows*

## **Testimony of St. Nicks Alliance Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2025 Executive Budget Hearing: May 10, 2024**

**Committee on Children and Youth  
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

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Michael F. Rochford  
Executive Director

### **Submitted by Debra Sue Lorenzen, Director of Youth and Education**

My name is Debra Sue Lorenzen. I am the Director of Youth and Education for St. Nicks Alliance in North Brooklyn. St. Nicks Alliance serves more than 10,000 youth and their families through comprehensive youth and education services for ages 2-24 years old.

I want to begin by thanking City Council for its commitment to New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's essential programs such as COMPASS, SONYC, Beacons, Cornerstones and SYEP. They enable community-based organizations to help children, teens and families regain footing after the pandemic in so many ways—from socio-emotional wellness to financial stability to academic recovery.

I am writing to implore City Council to continue to strengthen New York City's investments in DYCD. Funds should not be cut, while the pressing needs of students are growing due to the true, lasting impact of the pandemic.

### **Restore \$6.9 million to save afterschool programming for 3,538 students**

St. Nicks Alliance and its affiliate School Settlement Association are entrusted with 24 NYC Department of Youth and Community Development contracts that serve more than 7,100 North Brooklyn residents. These include 12 K-8 afterschool centers, two Beacons, a Cornerstone and a large Summer Youth Employment Program.

With DYCD funds, St. Nicks Alliance leverages the out-of-schooltime hours to implement our School Success and Career GPS Models. These models are specially designed to provide universal supports and targeted interventions so children and teens have 1) the social, emotional and literacy skills needed to advance through school and graduate high school; and 2) the essential college and career readiness to transition into young adulthood well-positioned to thrive in college or the workforce.

Among St. Nicks Alliance's overenrolled services are four SONYC afterschool programs funded by DYCD. SONYC engages middle school youth in rigorous afterschool activities that are critical to children's school success and pandemic recovery, at a volatile stage of child development. While St. Nicks Alliance escaped cuts to individual contracts, the entire afterschool ecosystem is undermined by the cuts made to organizations across New York City.

Similarly, cuts to COMPASS Explore also reduce the impact of services citywide. This unique K-12 model allows providers to develop specialized programming to engage youth in experiential learning opportunities. Youth need an expansion of this program, so young people from North Brooklyn and other communities who do not have these services can benefit, instead of cuts across the city.

These cuts will result in **3,538 young people losing access to afterschool programming and a loss of \$6.9 million dedicated to afterschool programming** in FY25. In light of growing demand for childcare services and the persistent lack of affordable care options for working families, we know these cuts will be harmful to our youth and families. Afterschool services continue to prove essential to helping youth "catch up" across all domains of child development, from socio-emotional to academics to physical development.

Any reduction decreases the number of youth that can be served and the amount of citywide funding dedicated to afterschool programming. This means that DYCD's forthcoming afterschool procurement will have a smaller overall pot of funding to invest in afterschool programming, perpetuating an overall smaller, and possibly still underfunded, citywide after school system, a shift that does not reflect the need felt by St. Nicks Alliance, our fellow CBOs or the City's reports.

**The City must restore \$6.9 million in afterschool funding by extending the COMPASS Explore contracts, and restoring cuts to SONYC programming.**

### **Restore \$19.6 million to preserve Summer Rising programming for middle school students**

St. Nicks Alliance operates 10 Summer Rising sites serving nearly 1,700 of North Brooklyn's children. When the City restored Summer Rising funding to the NYCPS's budget, they left in place severe cuts to DYCD and the CBOs who operate the afternoon enrichment programming portion of Summer Rising.

If maintained, this \$19.6 million cut will result in a drastic reduction to programming for middle school students this summer - a complete cut to Friday programming and a 2-hour reduction to the remaining program days. **With middle school programming reduced to 4 days a week and ending two hours early the remaining four days a week, this equates to a loss of 18 hours of programming per week.**

These savings are short-sited and harmful to our students, families and community-based organizations. very concerned about the safety of middle school students who will be left without structure or supervision. Reduced days will have a negative impact on Summer Rising attendance, and therefore student outcomes, as Fridays which are packed with field trips, field days and fun

enrichment activities--incentivize children to attend Summer Rising all week long. The City has provided no alternative for families who rely on this programming in order to stay in the workforce while Summer Rising is out. Further, while NYC cuts costs, CBO's must still cover the cost of full-time employees without adequate funding from NYC to do so.

**New York City must restore \$19.6 million in Summer Rising funding to middle school programs.**

**New York City must reissue an RFP that reflects the true cost of providing high quality afterschool programming.**

COMPASS/SONYC programs have not been re-procured in many years, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation or changes in the labor market. DYCD must reissue an RFP that reflects the true cost of providing high quality afterschool programming.

**This includes:**

- **Providing adequate funds to support models such as School Success and Career GPS, that give students the enrichment by youth workers and targeted intervention services by credentialed specialists that promote literacy and social/emotional well-being. Without these skill sets, children cannot thrive in school or life. Afterschool is essential to helping promote these skills and get back on track after the devastating, long-term impacts of the pandemic.**
- Establishing year-round, 12-month youth service contracts moving forward and streamlining the procurement process.
- Paying approved provider indirect rates in full, in accordance with the City's Indirect Cost Rate Initiative.
- Providers must be able to claim those rates at the outset and include them in budgets, not have a placeholder rate that later gets amended.
- Year-over-year funding cost escalators in the contracts, in accordance with inflation.
- Support for staffing ratios appropriate for School Age Child Care (SACC) licensing for all 12 months of the year.

**New York City must reissue an RFP that reflects the true cost of providing high quality afterschool programming.**

Thank you for your consideration of St. Nicks Alliance's written testimony and for your deep commitment to NYC's children and youth.



**May 10, 2024**

Nadia Swanson, LCSW  
Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy  
nswanson@aliforneycenter.org

## **The Ali Forney Center's Testimony: Executive Budget Hearing - Children and Youth**

### **ACS Testimony:**

#### **Summary of the Issue:**

Over the last year The Ali Forney Center (AFC) has experienced an increase in blatant homophobic and transphobic remarks and treatment by the State Central Registry (SCR) and ACS workers. LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented and are the most likely to experience homelessness as a result of not feeling safe at home or within the child welfare system. While internal policies and training state that homophobia/transphobia is abuse, in practice, too many individuals are not taking this form of abuse as seriously as others. There appears to be a failure in general oversight and accountability to address when individuals do not follow policy and the amount of training is inadequate.

Additionally, we need families to better understand the severity of this form of abuse and maltreatment.. Families must be offered specialized Prevention services to stay together and keep children safe in their homes. AFC acknowledges the many steps taken over the years to address this issue and has been part of the process at times; but we must do more to keep LGBTQ+ children safe. Especially at a time when the rights of Trans and Non-Binary children are being taken away across the country, and when parents are being threatened with legal action and family separation for supporting their Trans child; New York must make a stand, taking concrete action to do better and set an example for the country.

LGBTQ+ youth that experience family rejection are significantly more susceptible to the following risk factors<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Caitlin Ryan, David Huebner, Rafael M. Diaz, and Jorge Sanchez, "Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults," *Pediatrics* 123, no. 1 (2009): 346-352, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2007-3524>.

It is imperative that we intervene early and intentionally, providing LGBTQ+ youth and families with affirming support and access to education; and ensuring that the systems meant to protect youth are not exacerbating harm through compounded traumas that could be life threatening.

## **Example Incidents Experienced at Ali Forney Center with ACS / SCR Workers:**

**Reported by AFC Housing Director:** During a routine home visit at a housing site an ACS worker refused to use the youths chosen name, stating that ACS does not allow them to use their chosen name and that their name cannot be used while in court. Additionally, when our clinical staff was working with an ACS contracted agency that supported the same resident, the agency reported a determination that his Trans identity was a symptom of psychosis.

**Reported by an ACS Senior Director :** An official report was filed, with ACS regarding an extreme case of homophobia/transphobia from an ACS worker. The minor reported to AFC their experiences of physical abuse, emotional neglect, lack of supervision, parental drug use, inadequate food/clothing/shelter, serious emotional abuse about their trans identity and abuse if they do not dress as their sex assigned at birth. The worker questioned why we called ACS for those reasons; and refused to use their correct name and pronouns. This incident was handled after filing the report and the youth now works with an ACS worker that is respectful and affirming of the youths identity. We are unclear on how the incident was handled internally and what accountability measures and/or education was provided to the staff by ACS.

### **Reported by multiple staff and directors:**

- An almost consistent failure from ACS workers to use proper names and pronouns;
- Recurring statements from both SCR and ACS workers that youth being forced to present as a gender they are not does not count as child abuse despite ACS policy stating otherwise;
- SCR workers consistently failing to dispatch investigators when SCR reports are made during the Drop In Overnight Program (between 8pm and 8am) as required, or showing up to investigate and deciding they do not need to investigate further because they are at our Drop In Center, failing to connect them to appropriate services or hear from the youth what they would like to do.
- Numerous reports of ACS workers stating, "That's y'all's job" in regards to using correct names and pronouns, saying, "we don't do pronouns."

## **Data:**

In ACS's 2019 Well Being Study on LGBTQ+ Youth Foster Care,<sup>2</sup> it is reported that:

LGBTQAI+ youth are overrepresented in foster care. More than one out of three youths (34.1%), ages 13-20, in New York City foster care is LGBTQIA+. This is substantially higher than the proportion of LGBTQAI+ youth in the general population and double the national statistic of 20% LGBTQIA+ youth in foster care.

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<sup>2</sup> Theo G. M. Sandfort, "Experiences and Well-Being of Sexual and Gender Diverse Youth in Foster Care in New York City: Disproportionality and Disparities," *Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, Department of Psychiatry* (2019)

- **LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care are more frequently youth of color**, with almost three quarters of the sample identifying as African American and almost a third identifying as Latinx
- **The placements of LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care differ from those of non-LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care.** Compared to non-LGBTQAI+ youth, LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to be placed in group homes or residential care and less likely to be placed in family-based care. LGBTQAI+ youth were less satisfied with their current placement. LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to say that they experienced little to no control over their lives in foster care and to have heard staff or other people refer to them as “hard to place.”
- **The family experiences of LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care can be challenging.** While LGBTQAI+ youth were more likely to be in touch with family members, they saw these family members less frequently. Fewer LGBTQAI+ youth reported that there were adults in their lives, other than family members, who they could rely on and by whom they felt supported.
- **LGBTQAI+ young people have more struggles with institutional systems and higher risk factors for depression.** LGBTQAI+ youth had been absent without permission from their foster care placements for significantly more days than non-LGBTQAI+ youth; Furthermore, LGBTQAI+ youth reported more frequently than non-LGBTQAI+ youth to have been criticized for dressing too feminine/too masculine (20.3% versus 4.9%, respectively) and to behave too much like a person of the other sex (22.0% versus 5.0%, respectively). These risk factors were associated with differences in well-being: LGBTQAI+ youth reported to experience more depressive symptoms and fewer feelings of optimism compared to non-LGBTQAI+ youth.

In the reports conclusion, researches state: “Although some observed health disparities were bigger than others, these disparities form a pattern and warrant ongoing policy and programming activities to better accommodate the needs of LGBTQAI+ youth in foster care, and to promote their safety, permanency, and well-being. LGBTQAI+ youth should have access to competent and appropriate support in an environment that validates gender and sexual diversity. This requires that all parties that interact with foster care youth, including social workers, foster parents, and institutional staff, understand gender and sexual diversity and related issues. They should be enabled to appropriately interact with LGBTQAI+ youth and address their needs.”

### **Runaway and Homeless Youth(RHY)**

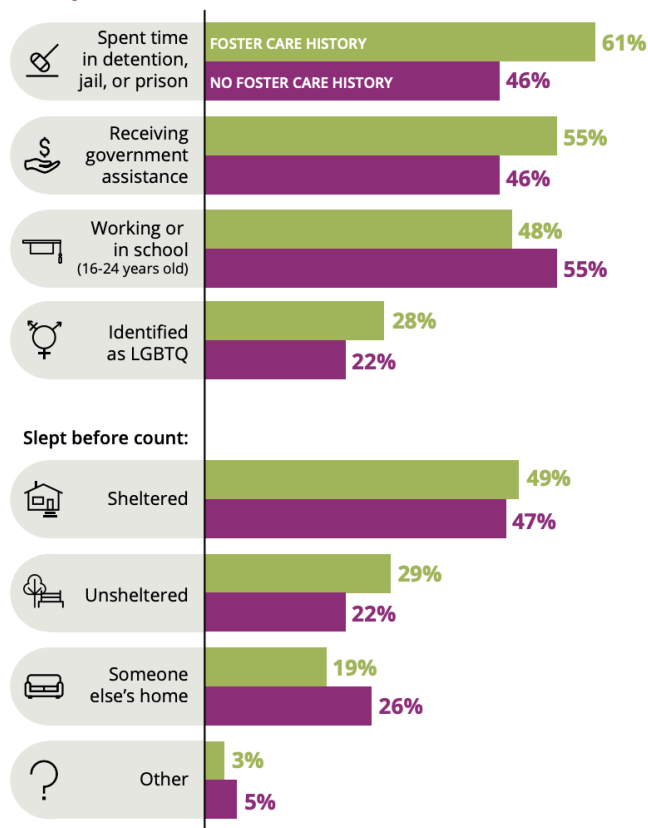
**LGBTQAI + youth were also more likely to have been homeless and to have had negative confrontations with the police.** 23.3% of the LGBTQAI+ youth reported to have been homeless versus 19.5% of the non-LGBTQAI+ youth. 24.1% of the LGBTQAI+ youth reported negative encounters with the police versus 17.5% of the non-LGBTQAI+ youth.

The Ali Forney Center’s 2023 intake data reports that 18% of our youth have had some contact with the child welfare system. The compounded traumas of family rejection, family separation in the foster care system and experiencing homelessness put the youth we serve at a higher disadvantage to success and independence.



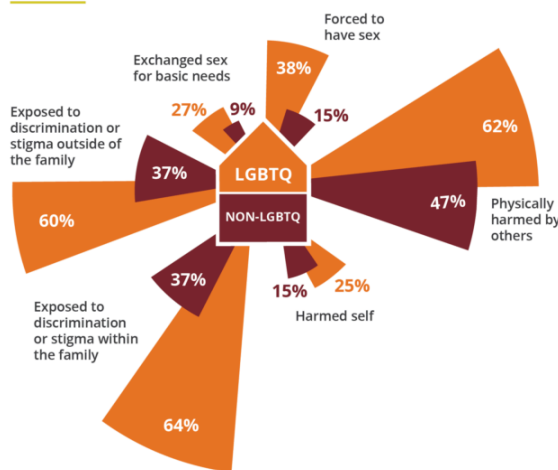
As reported by Chapin Hall Voices of Youth Count,<sup>34</sup> youth who experience homelessness with a foster care history and youth who experience homelessness and are LGBTQ have greater barriers and trauma experiences than their counterparts:

### Differences between youth experiencing homelessness with and without a foster care history



(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Surveys)

LGBTQ youth endured especially high levels of adversity among youth experiencing homelessness



(Source: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago)

## Our Asks:

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

- Provide staff with more clear guidance and examples on how to identify homophobia and transphobia in the home and during SCR calls. Providing different levels and the appropriate intervention. Example: "Red, Yellow and Green Flags".
- Hold workers and foster parents accountable when not followed and provide mandatory training with LIFT or Ackerman as part of their performance improvement plan.

<sup>3</sup>Amy Dworsky, Elissa Gitlow, Beth Horwitz, and Gina Samuels, "Interrupting the Pathway from Foster Care to Homelessness," Chapin Hall, The University of Chicago, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Morton, Amy Dworsky, Sonali Patel, "LGBTQ Young Adults Experience Homelessness at More than Twice the Rate of Peers," Chapin Hall, The University of Chicago, 2018

- Complete revision of the current LGBTQ Policy<sup>5</sup>, last updated in 2012. With input from LGBTQ+ organizations and LGBTQ+ youth in the system. Example : The “How to Communicate Effectively” portion is on page 87 in the 146 pages of the policy and only focuses on health care.
- LGBTQ+ children and youth who are placed in a foster home, must be placed with foster parents that not only affirm but celebrate their identity; and workers must prioritize finding such a placement.

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

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

**Affirming Family Therapy to Build Bridges and Heal Divides** - Family rejection is the violent reality for all too many LGBTQ+ youths— studies<sup>6</sup> show that family acceptance is linked to significantly lower rates of depression and substance abuse, and promotes overall well-being for young people.

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

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

- Staff need expanded trainings with clear examples of how to identify the abuse and guidelines on what actions to take when homophobia and transphobia is occurring in the home— by offering expanded training programs that include :
  - Empathic consciousness raising
  - The importance of accurate name/pronoun use
  - LGBTQ+ history and systemic oppressions
  - The impacts of discrimination
- Update the 2022 Parents Handbook<sup>7</sup> to include LGBTQ+ affirmation in the Parent Responsibilities section and other relevant areas.

### **Legislative:**

Support the passing NYC Council Bill Int 0056 (Osse)<sup>8</sup> : Requiring the administration for children's services to report annually on the number of and placement of LGBTQ+ foster youth. With the change of lowering the age reported in to 5 years old<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The City of New York Administration of Children's Services, "Policy # 2012/01, Promoting a Safe and Respectful Environment for LGBTQ Youth and their Families Involved in the Child Welfare, Detention and Juvenile Justice System," 2012

<sup>6</sup> Katz-Wise SL, Rosario M, Tsappis M. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth and Family Acceptance. *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 2016

<sup>7</sup> The City of New York Administration of Children's Services, "A Guide for Parents of Children in the Foster Care System" 2022

<sup>8</sup>New York City Council Int 0056-2024 "Requiring the administration for children's services to report annually on the number of and placement of LGBTQ+ foster youth", Council Member Osse

<sup>9</sup> Cedars-Sinai, "Most Gender Dysphoria Established by Age 7, Study Finds," June 16, 2020, [<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/newsroom/most-gender-dysphoria-established-by-age-7-study-finds/>](<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/newsroom/most-gender-dysphoria-established-by-age-7-study-finds/>).

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## DYCD Testimony:

As a member of The Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) we urge you to support our collective asks for this year's budget. The City's response to the homeless youth crisis by **including an additional \$16,455,000 in funding for the priorities we have outlined below in this year's New York City FY25 Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) budget**. This funding increase will support critical additions to the pre-existing RHY continuum and aid in making New York City a national leader in the fight to end youth homelessness.

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

These requested investments will address a number of capacity gaps and prevent future costs:

- **Fund Support Services for Youth New Arrivals and Unaccompanied Minors: \$1.63M**

DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers have been going above and beyond to meet the growing needs of newly arrived youth and unaccompanied minors without any additional support. We are asking for a one-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts. This additional funding will support meeting the basic needs of young people and fund more appropriate staffing across the sites.

- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Residential Contracts: \$5.5M**

DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded Crisis and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Program contracts be increased to \$55,500. This will cover the baselining of all residential bed rates across contract years, plus a 10% increase for all current DYCD-funded residential RHY contracts.

- **Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services: \$625,000**

Young people in DYCD programs have been excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and most young people qualify for youth-specific immigration relief (ie SIJS) that the city does not currently fund. Funding should be made immediately available for five positions for full-time experienced lawyers, who will be awarded to DYCD-funded RHY programs through an RFP based on the documented need for such services.

- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.5M** The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through federal Emergency Housing Voucher funding which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 2024). Data already demonstrates their success through the record number of youth that have exited homelessness into their own apartments since their inception. Maintaining these positions will ensure that RHY continue to successfully transition to their own apartments and support the Administration's goal to address the homelessness crisis.

- **Restore funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M** In response to the priorities set forth in *Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness*, funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across

the

DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers. Unfortunately, these critical positions that provide peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults were cut in FY24 and should be restored.

- **Fund 100 additional DYCD RHY beds: \$5.6M**

Over the past year, it has been increasingly difficult to secure a vacant DYCD RHY bed for a young person experiencing homelessness. There simply are not enough beds to meet the need. Funding needs to be made available to add 60 beds for Runaway and Homeless Youth (16-20yo) and 40 beds for Homeless Young Adults (21-24yo), which will expand the current DYCD RHY bed portfolio by 100 beds. In addition, DYCD must prioritize allocating any new beds that are funded to serve populations with the greatest documented need in areas that are easily accessible to young people.

- **Give Runaway and Homeless Youth CityFHEPS vouchers**

The Adams Administration must implement the CityFHEPS laws that took effect on January 9th, 2024, which will finally make youth experiencing homelessness in DYCD-funded Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) programs categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without having first to enter the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system.

- **A 5%-3%-3% COLA increase, echoing the ask of the [#JustPay Campaign](#)**

To adequately meet the needs of any youth who enters a program, providers must ensure that all their staff are being paid livable wages. We echo the #JustPay Campaign in asking for:

- A 5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers in this year's budget, at a cost of approximately \$150 million.
- A public commitment from the Mayor to fund a 3% COLA in each of the next two years, bringing the full investment in human services workers to 16% in 5 years from FY23-FY27.

**Including an additional \$16,455,000 million, in funding in the adopted FY25 DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth budget**, will bring us closer to our shared goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness in New York City.



**To: New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth**  
**From: Ellinor Rutkey, Esq., The Door's Legal Services Center**  
**Re: Budget Hearing: Children and Youth**

**Date: May 10, 2024**

The Door is a comprehensive youth development organization that has been supporting vulnerable youth in New York City since 1972. Each year, we provide services to nearly 9,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 24, many of them immigrants. The services we provide include healthcare, education, supportive housing, food and nutrition, career development, arts and recreation, mental health counseling, and legal assistance — all under one roof. We are also a Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth drop-in center, providing food, clothing, showers, laundry, and case management services to young people who are unhoused or unstably housed. At The Door, we emphasize empowering and engaging the young people we serve, and we are committed to creating a safe, equitable, and inclusive space for young people and staff.

The Legal Services Center at The Door is an office of over 50 individuals, including attorneys, social workers, and support staff. We specialize in serving vulnerable children and young people, including many clients who are unhoused, undocumented, and/or LGBTQIA+. Our attorneys represent youth in removal proceedings before immigration courts, as well as those seeking to regularize their status through the filing of affirmative humanitarian applications. In the fiscal year 2023, we handled 3,282 immigration matters for young people. We also operate several free legal clinics, including a weekly drop-in legal clinic for runaway/homeless youth.

## **I. The Need for More Youth Shelter Beds**

### ***i. Benefits of Youth Shelters***

In New York City, unhoused youth ages 16 through 24 rely on the DYCD youth shelter system for lifesaving services. Within the DYCD shelter system, these young people are offered both a safe place to live and wraparound services to help stabilize their lives. Youth living in a youth shelter have access to necessary supports, including mental health care, career and education support, medical care, and case management services. They also have access to a plethora of daily activities, ranging from art classes to pickup sports games. Further, but no less importantly, young people within the DYCD shelter system live among their peers. This provides a greater sense of safety and belonging than if the young person had to live among adults within the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system.

### ***ii. Insufficient Capacity Within the DYCD Youth Shelter System***

Despite the myriad of benefits offered to young people within the DYCD system, many unhoused youth ages 16 through 24 are not currently residing in youth shelters. Over the last two years, demand for youth shelters has skyrocketed. This increase in demand comes largely from the high number of recent immigrants to New York — many of whom are eligible to live in



a youth shelter. However, there is a significant dearth of shelter beds within the DYCD system.<sup>1</sup> On a daily basis, staff members on our legal services team at The Door speak with youth who have been unable to secure a bed in the youth shelter system. Many of these young people have tried repeatedly to find a bed without any success, constantly visiting and calling shelters in hopes that one will have a vacancy.

If a young person does manage to find a bed in a youth shelter, it is likely due to sheer luck. DYCD providers are so overwhelmed with the demand for shelter that eligible young people are not even being added to a waiting list for a bed – they are simply being turned away. As a result, no amount of patience or time will result in a young person receiving a youth shelter placement.

Given the simultaneous unprecedented demand for youth shelter beds and the extreme shortage of those beds, an alarming number of unhoused young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are being placed in Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers (HERRCs) instead of youth shelters. These young people are eligible for placement in both the DYCD youth shelter system and the HERRC system because of their age. Although youth placed in HERRCs are legal adults, the fact that they are being placed in a HERRC rather than in a youth shelter is cause for serious concern.

### *iii. Young People Placed in HERRCs*

First, young people being placed in HERRCs are in extremely vulnerable positions. Many of them have only just arrived in the United States after a perilous, long, and often traumatic journey from their countries of origin. Even before setting out on that journey, many of these young people have already experienced significant trauma in their lives.

For example, at a recent drop-in legal clinic for runaway/homeless youth, Door staff members spoke with a 20-year-old who was unable to find a bed in a youth shelter. He had come to the United States after traveling by plane, bus, and by foot from his home country in North Africa. The young person had made the difficult decision to leave his home country after rebel forces broke into his family's home, raped his sister, and beat his brother to death before his eyes.

Other young people we meet have experienced significant trauma due to familial abuse, neglect, or abandonment. For example, at the same drop-in clinic for runaway homeless youth, Door staff members also spoke with an 18-year-old who is currently living in a HERRC. He had made a similarly arduous journey to the United States from his home country in West Africa. This young person decided to leave his home country after years of being hit, whipped, and physically abused by his father. He hopes to attend school in New York – something he had been unable to do in his home country, as his father forced him to work on a farm rather than attend school starting at age 10.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Gwynne Hogan, *Youth Shelter System Locks Out Hundreds as Migrants Seek Entry*, The City (Mar. 12, 2024, 5:00 AM), [https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/?oref=nyn\\_firstread\\_nl](https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/12/youth-shelter-system-locks-out-young-migrants/?oref=nyn_firstread_nl).





This history of trauma is not the only reason why the young people being placed in HERRCs are so vulnerable. These young people are also vulnerable because they have essentially no support – in any form – here in New York. For one, many young immigrants do not know any Americans when they arrive in the United States. When Door staff members ask these young people about trusted adults that they can turn to for support in New York, the young people almost always tell us that there is no such person in their lives. These young people are thus forced to navigate a new country and culture by themselves and to be their own advocate in the face of barriers. This – coupled with the fact that many of these young people also do not speak English proficiently, and that many have significant gaps in their formal education – makes it exceedingly difficult for young people to access the supports they need if they are placed in a HERRC. Moreover, these young people have essentially no money, and thus, no way to purchase necessary goods and services. And because the young people placed in HERRCs all recently arrived in the United States, most will not be eligible to obtain employment authorization for at least several months – and likely, much longer.

#### ***iv. HERRCs Are Inappropriate Environments for Young People***

HERRCs are not appropriate environments for these vulnerable young people. While DYCD youth shelters are supportive and welcoming environments for young adults, HERRCs are inhospitable and alienating. With thousands of people staying in makeshift tent cities, HERRCs offer little to no privacy for their occupants. This lack of privacy can be especially difficult for young people who need solitude and isolation to process complex trauma. HERRCs also are open to people of all ages, meaning that young people in HERRCs often find themselves among much older adults rather than fellow teenagers and young adults. As a result, many young people say that they have not formed any sort of relationship with their fellow HERRC residents.

An additional reason why HERRCs are not appropriate environments for vulnerable young people is that HERRCs do not supply sufficient food to their occupants. Young people consistently report to Door staff members that they are given barely any food at their HERRCs. While food is a necessity for all people living in shelter, consistent access to nutritious and plentiful food is particularly important for young people whose essential organs, including their brains, are still developing.

Further, HERRCs deprive young people of the opportunity to find safety and stability in New York. For the last few months, youth living in HERRCs have been subject to the unlawful and inhumane 30- and 60-day shelter rules.<sup>2</sup> As a result of these rules and actions, every 30 to 60

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<sup>2</sup> On March 15, 2024, the Legal Aid Society announced that it had reached a settlement with the City that would impact the length of time that new New Yorkers are able to remain in shelter. Under the settlement agreement, young people under the age of 23 will be forced to leave their shelter after 60 days rather than 30 days. See Mia Hollie & Annie McDonough, *City Hall and Legal Aid Society Settle Right to Shelter Case*, City & State New York (Mar. 15, 2024), <https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2024/03/city-hall-and-legal-aid-society-settle-right-shelter-case/394996/>. While 60-day placements are certainly preferable to 30-day placements, this settlement does not prevent vulnerable young people from being forced to leave their shelter placements. An additional change under the settlement is that HERRC residents may request to remain in their shelter placement at the end of their 30- or 60-day stay, rather than be forced to leave. *Stip.*, ¶ 24, *Callahan v. Carey*, No. 42582/1979 (NY Sup Ct New York





days, the young person must uproot their life and find somewhere new to live – without the support of a trusted adult, without money, and usually, without proficiency in English. Moreover, some young people report being given only a few days’ notice that they will need to leave their HERRC, which has caused these young people great fear and panic.

These constant evictions, and the threat thereof, make it all but impossible for newly arrived young people to develop a sense of stability in New York. Young people living in HERRCs report that it is hard for them to make friends and form support networks. It is also hard for these young people to take advantage of community-based resources, like mutual aid groups that distribute food and clothes. By the time that a young HERRC resident learns about a resource in their community, they will only be able to make use of it for at most a few weeks before they are forced to leave that community. Moreover, the threat of constant evictions under the 30- and 60-day shelter rules makes it very difficult for young people to stay in school, which is particularly worrisome when so many of these young people have already experienced interruptions in their formal education.

Unsurprisingly, this indefensible policy has also resulted in many young people sleeping on the streets or otherwise entering dangerous living situations. At The Door, staff members regularly speak with young people who have been removed from their existing HERRC placement and have not been able to find anywhere else to stay. These young people are often forced to develop their own strategies for keeping themselves safe, such as gathering with other newly arrived immigrants and sleeping in shifts. Other young people succeed in finding a place to stay, but at the cost of their own safety. For example, when one newly arrived youth was unable to find a shelter placement, he moved into an apartment with several adults. These adults have coerced this young person into performing unpaid domestic labor, trapping him in an abusive setting. It goes without saying that the living situations that young people face after being removed from a HERRC are extremely dangerous and completely unacceptable as a matter of policy.

If these young people had instead received a bed in a DYCD youth shelter, they would not be subject to the City’s cruel 30- and 60-day rules. Rather, following their shelter stay, they would be supported in transitioning to a Transitional Independent Living (TIL) program for up to two years. Thus, for a young person, placement in a HERRC means a cycle of constant threats of eviction, whereas placement in a DYCD youth shelter means long-term services and support.

More broadly, the services offered to young people in HERRCs pale in comparison to those offered to young people in DYCD youth shelters. While young people in HERRCs receive meagre meals and a cot on which to sleep, young people in DYCD youth shelters receive

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Cnty 2024), [https://iapps.courts.state.ny.us/nyscef/ViewDocument?docIndex=mMvltZFjq\\_PLUS\\_X/RU7jGZrf4Q==](https://iapps.courts.state.ny.us/nyscef/ViewDocument?docIndex=mMvltZFjq_PLUS_X/RU7jGZrf4Q==). However, these requests will only be granted in the event of “extenuating circumstances,” and the person making the request has an obligation to “take all appropriate affirmative steps to resettle in housing opportunities outside of City Shelters.” *Id.* at ¶¶ 22, 24, App’x A. Particularly for young people who lack a support system and a strong grasp of English, these requirements may prove too burdensome. As a result, vulnerable young people may be disproportionately unlikely to be permitted to remain in shelter at the end of their 30- or 60-day placement. Moreover, many of the details of how exactly these new policies will be implemented are still unclear.



numerous supportive services tailored to their needs. Young people in youth shelters are equipped with the tools that they need to thrive, whereas young people in HERRCs are provided with barely enough to survive.<sup>3</sup> It is absolutely necessary that the City provide more youth shelter beds to house and support newly arrived young people.

## **II. The Need for Immigration Legal Services for Newly Arrived Young People**

### ***i. Legal Services Providers Are at Capacity***

Legal services providers in New York City have never been able to fully meet the demand for free immigration legal help. Though the need for these services is great, there has always been a shortage of free immigration lawyers in the City. Over the last two years, non-profit immigration legal service providers have only become more strained, as the number of individuals seeking these services has skyrocketed and organizations are still dealing with many older cases delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic court closures. Every day at the Door, staff members turn away young immigrants seeking legal support and representation. In the month of April 2024, we received over 50 requests for immigration legal help, and we are on track to receive even more requests in May. Our partners representing youth and adult immigrants in New York face this same challenge – we are nearly all at capacity.

In February 2023, The Door’s Legal Services Center formally closed immigration intake to focus on its heavy case load and a waitlist of roughly 400 young immigrants in need of legal assistance. After spending the summer working with our pro bono partners to reach all the young people on our waitlist, we reopened intake at the end of 2023. In the few short months that our intake has been open, we have already added 90 young people eligible for immigration relief to our waitlist and have turned countless more away. Over 200 are still waiting for an initial legal screening appointment.

Moreover, our weekly drop-in legal clinic for runaway/homeless youth has been busier than ever. Prior to 2023, the clinic saw zero to one person each week. Now, clinic staffers routinely speak with up to 25 people over the course of an hour and a half, nearly all of whom are new immigrants looking for immigration legal services. The need and demand for services grows every week and we do not have enough capacity to keep up.

### ***ii. The Importance of Free Legal Services for Young Immigrants***

Now more than ever, it is vital that young immigrants receive free and competent legal services. Door staff members have noticed that immigration hearings are being scheduled particularly quickly, leaving young people with even less time than usual to find a lawyer. Given these time constraints, and the overall shortage of free immigration lawyers, many young immigrants have been entirely unable to find legal assistance. In a recent survey of new immigrants, only six

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Giulia McDonnell Nieto Del Rio, *NYC Shelter Evictions Keep Migrant Youth From Vital Resources*, Documented (Feb. 16, 2024), [https://documentedny.com/2024/02/16/shelter-evictions-nyc-migrants-minors/?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Early+Arrival%3A+Shelter+evictions+keep+youth+from+resources&utm\\_campaign=Newsletter022124+Definitive+-+DNAInfo](https://documentedny.com/2024/02/16/shelter-evictions-nyc-migrants-minors/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Early+Arrival%3A+Shelter+evictions+keep+youth+from+resources&utm_campaign=Newsletter022124+Definitive+-+DNAInfo).



percent reported having found an immigration lawyer to represent them.<sup>4</sup> This is entirely unacceptable.

Even many of the young people who have managed to meet with a lawyer have been disadvantaged due to the shortage of free legal service providers. For example, Door staff members have spoken with young people who turned 21 years old several months after arriving in the United States. If those young people had found a lawyer immediately upon arriving in the country and before turning 21, some could have successfully petitioned for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) – a pathway to legal status that requires that the applicant be under 21 years old. In this way, long waiting times can result in a young person missing their opportunity to apply for certain forms of relief.

Further, a great proportion of those young people have strong legal cases. Many of the young people that The Door turns away should ultimately be found eligible for legal relief, including SIJS and asylum. Without a lawyer, though, it can be difficult – or even impossible – for a young person to successfully self-petition for relief.

The risks to a young person who is not able to find a lawyer are significant. First, the majority of the young people who have requested legal help at The Door are in removal proceedings, meaning that they risk being removed to the very country that they fled to get here. As discussed, these young people are often fleeing horrific situations, and for many, being returned to their home country could be deadly.

While there are resources available to young immigrants who are unable to find lawyers, these are insufficient. Resources like the Red Cross Asylum Application Help Center do not always provide an adequate level of services to immigrants in need. Several young people have reported to Door staff members that the Asylum Application Help Center made significant errors in their asylum applications. For example, one young person reported that the asylum application he completed at the Help Center indicates in several responses that he lived in a country that he has never even visited. In addition, the Help Center has failed to identify young people who arrived as unaccompanied minors and has filed unaccompanied minors' asylum applications with the immigration court. This is a serious issue because unaccompanied minors have the right to have their asylum application first adjudicated at an asylum office, and the errors made by the Help Center deprive an especially vulnerable subset of youth of this right.

Further, for some young people, accessing asylum application assistance at the Red Cross has arguably undermined their stated goals. On a daily basis, young people tell us that their primary goal is to receive their work permit so that they can support themselves here in New York. Because an immigrant can apply for a work permit 150 days after filing an asylum application, these youth often end up submitting pro se applications at the Help Center while they continue to look for an attorney to represent them. Once the application is filed, the 150-day clock starts. But if that asylum applicant then has an immigration court appearance where they ask for an adjournment – a necessary step for immigrants still searching for lawyers – the 150-day clock

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<sup>4</sup> *Leaving Behind the Newest New Yorkers*, Make the Road New York et. Al., 1, 11 (May 2024), <https://maketheroadny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Asylum-Survey-Report.pdf>.



stops until the applicant's next immigration court appearance. Given how busy the immigration courts have been, that next immigration court appearance could easily be more than six months away. As a result, many pro se asylum applicants will end up waiting even longer to receive their work permit than they would have had they not filed a pro se asylum application so quickly and before they could possibly find representation. Unfortunately for these applicants, neither the Red Cross nor the immigration courts are informing asylum applicants of the clock-stopping effect of adjournments.

Even when resources like the Red Cross Asylum Application Help Center do not actively undermine a young person's goals, these resources are not equipped to provide young people with the level of support they need to navigate their immigration cases. Although these resources can help young people to submit immigration applications, they are not equipped to provide support to young immigrants before or after the application is filed. And particularly for young people involved in immigration court, legal support that falls short of full representation is simply not adequate – especially when these young people are at risk of being removed from the United States. Young immigrants need comprehensive legal services, and it is necessary for the City to provide funding to hire more immigration lawyers.

### **III. The Need for Specialized Legal Services for Young People Living in Shelter**

In addition to the immense need for the City to provide funding to hire more immigration lawyers, there is also a substantial need for funding for specialized legal services for young people living in shelter.

For one, there is a need for specialized immigration legal services for young people living in shelter. As discussed, youth living in shelter are in particularly vulnerable positions and lack crucial supports to help them navigate their new lives in New York. Yet, because there are not enough immigration lawyers to meet the great need for immigration legal services, many of these especially vulnerable young people are left without stable housing *and* without a lawyer. Further, there is reason to believe that young people living in shelters are less likely to find lawyers than their peers who are housed or who are living in youth shelters. Door staff members find that Door members living in HERRCs are disproportionately likely to still be in search of an immigration lawyer compared to all other Door members. Funding specialized immigration legal services for young people living in shelter could help bridge this gap and address some of the vulnerabilities of newly arrived New Yorkers.

Further, there is a need for specialized non-immigration legal services for young people living in shelter. The relevant law and policy around shelter access in New York is complex and ever-changing. Even since the last time this committee held a budgetary hearing (about a month and a half ago), the rules that newly arrived New Yorkers must navigate to find and maintain a shelter placement have changed significantly. The vast majority of service providers who work with people in shelter are not well-versed in these rules and are not able to competently advise shelter residents on their rights and responsibilities.

As a result, shelter residents are forced to navigate an ever-changing and confusing system on their own, without adequate legal support. This leads to the erosion of rights and protections for



shelter residents. For instance, Door members living in HERRCs have been erroneously told that they must leave their shelter and cannot return to the shelter system at all. Had a Door attorney who specializes in shelter access not become aware of this issue, impacted Door members would have left their shelter and, with nowhere else to go, would have begun sleeping on the streets.

When rights violations like these occur, it is essential to have a well-developed legal support system in place. Trained attorneys can both inform shelter residents of their rights and can advocate for shelter residents if their rights are infringed upon. This will be particularly important in the coming months, as the City begins to implement a new extension request system that requires that a shelter resident demonstrate extenuating circumstances in order to remain in their shelter placement. When residents inevitably have their requests improperly denied, they will need competent legal advice and representation to ensure that they are not forced out onto the streets. The City can help prevent this awful outcome by funding specialized non-immigration legal services for shelter residents.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Young people experiencing homelessness need access to the safety, stability, and services offered in youth shelters. If the City does not increase funding for the DYCD shelter system, already-vulnerable youth will be left to navigate a constant cycle of evictions and the difficulties of young adulthood – all without any meaningful source of support. Thus, I urge New York City to fund additional DYCD youth shelter beds.

Young people without legal status also need access to free immigration legal services. If the City does not provide funding to remedy the current shortage of legal services providers, an unacceptable number of young people who are eligible for immigration relief will not receive necessary legal help. The probable result is that many of these young people will be ordered removed to a country where their wellbeing – and sometimes, lives – will be at risk. Therefore, I urge New York City to fund youth-specific, no-cost immigration legal services.

Finally, young people living in shelter need access to free, specialized legal services. If the City does not fund legal services for young people living in shelter, youth who already face great difficulties in vindicating their rights will continue to experience rights deprivations, including deprivations that result in street homelessness. Thus, I urge New York City to fund shelter-specific, no-cost legal services.

Thank you.

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Ellinor Rutkey, Esq.  
Legal Fellow  
The Door's Legal Services Center



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

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary  
Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, The Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for  
Fiscal Years 2024-2028, and The Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor's  
Management Report**

Testimony of  
The Legal Aid Society  
Community Justice Unit

May 10, 2024

Presented by:

Michelle Fields  
Co-Supervising Attorney  
Community Justice Unit  
120-46 Queens Blvd  
Queens, NY 11415



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

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

The Cure Violence/Crisis Management System (CMS),<sup>1</sup> launched by the City Council in 2012, delivers a multiagency approach to reducing gun violence in New York City. Cure Violence is a community-based violence interruption model for reducing shootings that treats gun and gang violence as an infectious disease. It employs credible messengers from the community as violence interrupters and outreach workers to detect and stop conflicts before they escalate, to identify and help high-risk individuals, and to change the community's social norms concerning gun and gang violence. CMS encompasses the Cure Violence program and related programs that offer legal services, youth employment opportunities, school-based conflict resolution and mediation, mental health and wellness services, and other social support services.<sup>2</sup>

CJU was established in 2012 as part of the CMS model by the City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence.<sup>3</sup> CJU adopts the Cure Violence philosophy – that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement – and provides comprehensive legal services to CMS partners, participants, and community members to reduce gun and gang violence in their neighborhoods. We offer direct representation to thousands of New Yorkers experiencing legal emergencies. CJU's comprehensive legal services empower at-risk youth and their families to navigate criminal, housing, immigration, and any other legal issues that require assistance so they can improve their circumstances. *See* Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2023 Report.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Finance Division, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, March 19, 2020, *available at* [098-MOCJ.pdf](https://ocj.nyc.gov/098-MOCJ.pdf) (nyc.gov).

<sup>3</sup> The New York City Council, Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, Task Chairs City Council Member Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera, *available at* <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/>.



members about their legal rights when interacting with police. CJU also leads cure violence workshops at schools and our CMS partner sites throughout the city.

Through these comprehensive legal services, CJU works to defend, educate, and organize community members. CJU's defense services include running a critical 24/7 hotline for legal emergencies, such as arrests and housing evictions, helping individuals obtain their rap sheets and seal their criminal records, and assisting New Yorkers with employment and family law issues. We educate community members on their rights to help them navigate legal systems and access vital services that respond to their legal and social service needs. We organize community members to harness community power and mobilize communities to advocate for resources and social justice. As a result of our work, community members receive legal services that they otherwise might not be able to access, and those services directly contribute to their improved circumstances and safer communities. *See Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2023 Report.*

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

- A program manager from one of our Queens CMS/CV partners contacted us about a community member experiencing a mental health problem who was in their home threatening to use a gun unless they were left alone. The program manager was afraid that the situation would escalate if the NYPD were called, resulting in an imminently deadly threat to that community member. Our team immediately advocated for the vulnerable person by connecting them to Legal Aid's Director of Social Services, who quickly connected with them and provided direct social services that calmed the person and de-escalated the situation.
- We received a hotline call from our CMS/CV partner from Staten Island informing us that a CMS employee had passed away and that the decedent's sister, who was also a CMS employee, was arrested because she was desperately trying to see her brother. A flood of NYPD motorized units from the 120th Precinct unnecessarily descended upon this Black and Brown community of Staten Island despite the deceased person having passed away due to natural causes. Our CJU attorneys were immediately able to call the precinct and invoke the sister's right to counsel so that she would not be questioned without an attorney present. At the same time, since Legal Aid is also the primary provider of public defense services in the city, we connected her with one of Legal Aid's trial attorneys so they could quickly represent her and obtain her release.
- We reached hundreds of community members in a three-month education program that went directly into underserved communities to provide wrap-around legal services. We did this by partnering with a CMS/CV organization using their trauma mobile to educate community members on how they could access their rap sheets and learn whether they are eligible for the sealing of their convictions. During this outreach, we conducted legal intakes to connect people to our legal services including immigration, housing, employment, and family law. We reviewed all the rap sheets we received with the support of our Case Closed project that helps New Yorkers seal their criminal convictions.

Community members received follow-up calls from our staff members informing them of the outcome of their rap sheet review and notifying them of their sealing eligibility. Criminal convictions close vital opportunities for underserved communities, such as housing, employment, and financial aid, so this program was critical for our community members.

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

While Mayor Adams' administration has committed to investing an additional \$8.5 million in CMS, it has also committed to cutting the funding of CJU's supportive legal services by \$1.5 million. This proposed cut to CJU's budget is disinvestment in underserved communities, particularly underserved youth because CJU's services target those vulnerable communities. Because CMS is expanding to 40 sites operating in 31 neighborhoods boroughwide, there is a greater demand for CJU's legal wrap-around services.

Despite the mayor's recent public comment that the crisis management team has done a "great job,"<sup>4</sup> the administration's proposed cuts to CJU's funding will undermine the crisis management work to reduce violence. All the organizations that founded the CMS movement in our city, the same ones that continue to work together to keep our communities safe, agree that funding CJU is critical to ensuring the success of their work to reduce gun violence. *See* Exhibit B, Letters of Support from CMS Organizations. As those organizations explain in the attached letters of support, by providing community members with comprehensive legal services, CJU has helped grow the number of participants in cure violence interruption programs and improved the lives of participants and their families. *Id.* Those organizations all count on CJU's legal services to support their mission to eradicate gun violence and to meet the community's needs. *Id.*

CJU's services are vital to the cure violence work. Members of the Mayor's Action Plan (MAP) and the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS), which is responsible for overseeing the contracts of CMS providers, recently attended one of CJU's legal education workshops. Following the workshop, they all agreed that CJU's legal services make up an essential component of the CMS effort to increase public safety in our communities.

The CMS/CV model has proven remarkably effective at keeping our communities safe. Recent data from the NYC Council Data Team showed that "*precincts that received a Cure [program] experienced an 18.1% reduction in shootings in the first year of the program. Additionally, we find a 16-19% reduction in the years after that, demonstrating the longevity of this change.*"<sup>5</sup> A 19% reduction in shootings means that lives were saved. But this administration's decision to defund CJU's work could damage the CMS/CV network by cutting off comprehensive legal services for New York City's vulnerable communities.

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<sup>4</sup> In-Person Media Availability of Mayor Eric Adams, *available at* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0EH5KVCKbQ> (discussing crisis management at the 40-minute mark).

<sup>5</sup> NYC Council Data Team, Cure Violence Programs in NYC, *available at* <https://council.nyc.gov/data/cure/>.

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

Funding CJU is an investment in communities that are in crisis. And that investment pays dividends because CJU has proven to serve more communities in ways that directly contribute to our city's public safety. In FY23, CJU provided 7,045 legal services, including 5,378 services to Cure Violence partner organizations and 1,667 to non-affiliated community members throughout New York City. *See Exhibit A, Community Justice Unit 2023 Report.* These numbers include over 500 services to Project Hope and Project Reset. During FY23, CJU also organized 140 events, including various community town halls led by the Gun Violence Task Force regarding Mayor Adams's Community Safety Plan, a continuation of the Blueprint to End Gun Violence, which focuses on prevention and intervention strategies using public health and community development models to address the root causes of gun violence. CJU also held rallies for our clients and communities to exercise their civic duty through our "Your Vote Matters Symposium." The event saw many of our partner organizations come together to discuss the significance of voting, the impact of criminal disenfranchisement, and how we can strengthen our neighborhoods.

As successful as FY23 was, CJU has provided 4,074 services for the first 6 months of FY24. *Id.* If that trend continues, CJU is on track for around a 15% increase in legal services. CJU's increase in legal services means more underserved communities – experiencing over-policing, unstable housing, limited employment opportunities, and an overall lack of adequate services – can address their basic needs.

#### **Conclusion**

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

# Exhibit A

# COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT

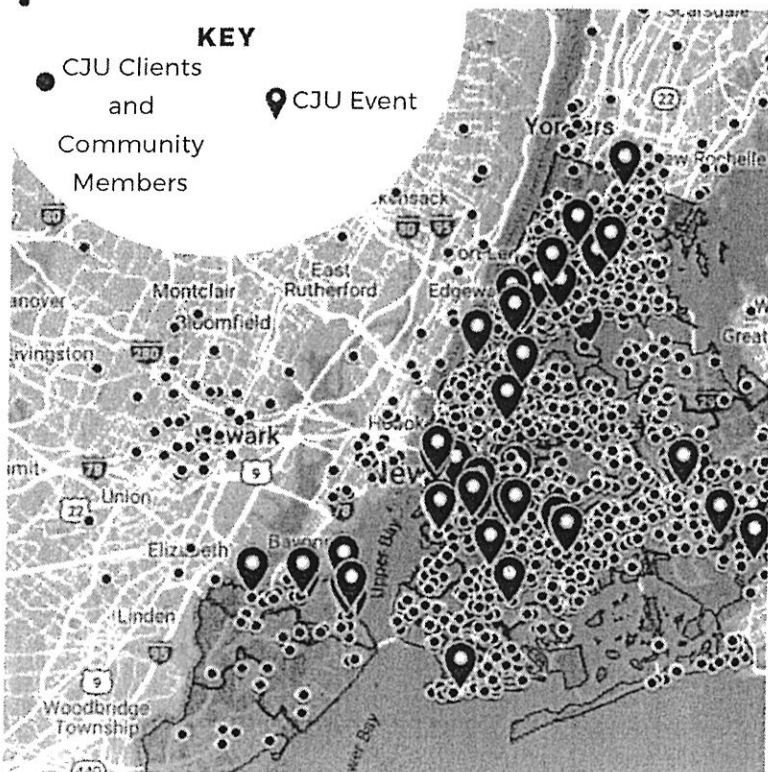
The Community Justice Unit's (CJU) dedicated and client-centered practice model is instrumental in supporting the goal of the New York City's Crisis Management System of eradicating gun-violence with a community-based public health model. The CJU provides essential wrap-around services to play an integral role in the community-led violence interruption model by enabling healthier and safer communities. CJU's services allow at-risk youth and their families to navigate criminal, housing, immigration, and any other legal issues that require assistance, so they can improve their circumstances.

## Creating Healthy and Safe Communities

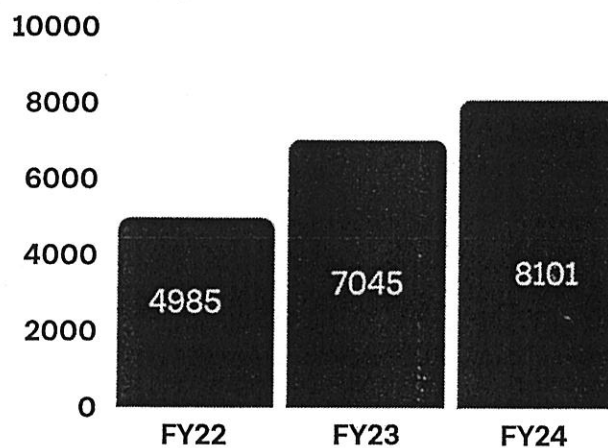
The CJU offers essential legal services to New Yorkers across our city, including helping individuals obtain their rap sheets and seal their criminal records, offering legal advice, assisting New Yorkers with housing issues, and running a 24/7 hotline for legal emergencies. In addition, CJU staff hold community events across all five boroughs, including Know Your Rights (KYR) events, rallies, and educational clinics.

## Our Service Locations

### KEY



## Services Provided by Fiscal Year



Note: FY24 services are estimated based on the projected 15% increase of services in Q1 and Q2

## Our Impact

Between July 1, 2022 and December, 31, 2023, The Legal Aid Society



Served clients residing in every city council district



Held 165 events



Received over 9 million impressions for the "Your Rights, Your Power" campaign



Provided 11,119 services to CJU clients and community members

Note: The map and below graphs and charts include 18 months of services - July 1, 2022 - Dec, 31, 2023

Tina Luongo, Chief Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice

THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY  
CRIMINAL  
DEFENSE

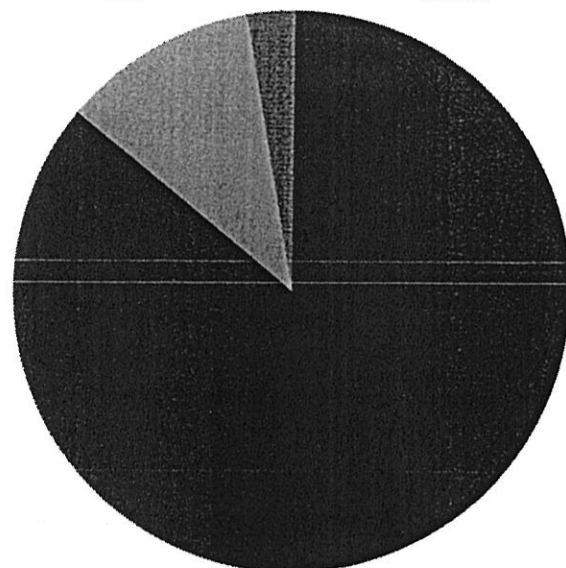


## Reducing Gun Violence and Increasing Community Engagement

The Community Justice Unit (CJU) provides comprehensive legal services to New York City's Crisis Management System (CMS) and Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). We adopt the Cure Violence (CV) philosophy - that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement. Our work empowers communities impacted by gun violence to develop proactive strategies to reduce violence through providing holistic legal representation to the underserved communities of New York City. In addition to legal counsel, the CJU conducts extensive community outreach.

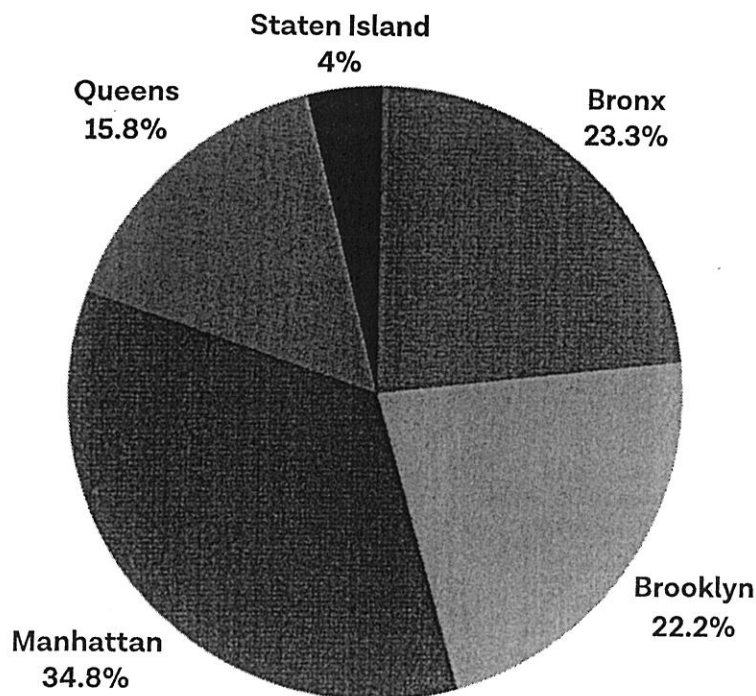
## Services Provided by CV Model Type

Reducing Highest Risk 11.3% Interrupting Transmission 2.8%



## Percentage of Services Provided by Borough

Bronx
  Brooklyn
  Manhattan
  Queens
  Staten Island



## Examples of Our Services

Legal services are provided at CV sites, including Man Up, True 2 Life, and Brownsville In, Violence Out (BIVO).



KYR workshops are provided to support individuals during police encounters.



Ensuring records are sealed if clients are eligible to help prevent illegal discrimination from potential employers.



Community building events promote a culture of positive community norms to reduce gun and gang violence.



Responses to neighborhood violence and shootings provide immediate resources and supports, including "credible messengers" and various other violence interrupters.



# Community Justice Unit

## Services by City Council District

| City Council District | FY23 Services<br>(Full Fiscal Year) | FY24 Services<br>(Q1 & Q2 Only) | Total Services Provided<br>Past 18 months |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1                     | 270                                 | 476                             | 746                                       |
| 2                     | 73                                  | 161                             | 234                                       |
| 3                     | 182                                 | 221                             | 403                                       |
| 4                     | 50                                  | 66                              | 116                                       |
| 5                     | 17                                  | 12                              | 29  |
| 6                     | 231                                 | 39                              | 270                                       |
| 7                     | 70                                  | 66                              | 136                                       |
| 8                     | 670                                 | 325                             | 995                                       |
| 9                     | 147                                 | 113                             | 260                                       |
| 10                    | 57                                  | 76                              | 133                                       |
| 11                    | 33                                  | 79                              | 112                                       |
| 12                    | 61                                  | 32                              | 93  |
| 13                    | 57                                  | 40                              | 97  |
| 14                    | 178                                 | 70                              | 248                                       |
| 15                    | 296                                 | 75                              | 371                                       |
| 16                    | 155                                 | 131                             | 286                                       |
| 17                    | 398                                 | 231                             | 629                                       |
| 18                    | 170                                 | 37                              | 207                                       |
| 19                    | 10                                  | 18                              | 28  |
| 20                    | 11                                  | 12                              | 23  |
| 21                    | 10                                  | 30                              | 40  |
| 22                    | 34                                  | 144                             | 178                                       |
| 23                    | 7                                   | 13                              | 20  |
| 24                    | 148                                 | 21                              | 169                                       |
| 25                    | 47                                  | 24                              | 71  |
| 26                    | 389                                 | 23                              | 412                                       |
| 27                    | 39                                  | 19                              | 58  |
| 28                    | 378                                 | 26                              | 404                                       |
| 29                    | 18                                  | 15                              | 33  |
| 30                    | 19                                  | 10                              | 29  |
| 31                    | 48                                  | 34                              | 82  |
| 32                    | 8                                   | 30                              | 38  |
| 33                    | 58                                  | 60                              | 118                                       |
| 34                    | 31                                  | 38                              | 69  |
| 35                    | 125                                 | 419                             | 544                                       |
| 36                    | 135                                 | 111                             | 246                                       |
| 37                    | 30                                  | 58                              | 88  |
| 38                    | 419                                 | 142                             | 561                                       |
| 39                    | 32                                  | 18                              | 50  |
| 40                    | 29                                  | 16                              | 45  |
| 41                    | 64                                  | 95                              | 159                                       |
| 42                    | 90                                  | 59                              | 149                                       |
| 43                    | 99                                  | 4                               | 103                                       |
| 44                    | 19                                  | 10                              | 29  |
| 45                    | 46                                  | 13                              | 59  |
| 46                    | 25                                  | 3                               | 28  |
| 47                    | 112                                 | 20                              | 132                                       |
| 48                    | 18                                  | 10                              | 28  |
| 49                    | 258                                 | 130                             | 388                                       |
| 50                    | 12                                  | 6                               | 18  |
| 51                    | 7                                   | 3                               | 10  |
| Unknown / Other       | 1155                                | 190                             | 1345                                      |
| <b>Grand Total</b>    | <b>7045</b>                         | <b>4074</b>                     | <b>11119</b>                              |



# Community Justice Unit

## Services by Partner Organization

| Partner Organization  | FY23 Services (Full Fiscal Year) | FY24 Services (Q1 & Q2 Only) | Work Services Provided Over The Past 18 months |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Center for Justice Initiatives: Midtown   | 1102                             | 1283                         | 2385   |
| Project Reset   | 526                              | 466                          | 992  |
| Osborne Association   | 550                              | 0                            | 550  |
| Red Hook Initiative   | 384                              | 136                          | 520  |
| Center for Justice Initiatives: Downtown  | 297                              | 215                          | 512  |
| Save Our Streets  | 285                              | 215                          | 500  |
| True2Life   | 350                              | 136                          | 486  |
| Community Capacity Development  | 164                              | 305                          | 469  |
| 100 suits   | 309                              | 21                           | 330  |
| Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence  | 283                              | 2                            | 285  |
| Center for Community Alternatives   | 219                              | 65                           | 284  |
| Life Camp   | 270                              | 1                            | 271  |
| Project Hope  | 201                              | 57                           | 258  |
| Until Freedom   | 200                              | 0                            | 200  |
| Bronx Defenders   | 64                               | 89                           | 153  |
| Man Up!   | 48                               | 58                           | 106  |
| Release the Grip (Bronx Connect)  | 101                              | 0                            | 101  |
| Street Corner Resources   | 87                               | 0                            | 87   |
| Guns Down Lives Up  | 26                               | 56                           | 82   |
| Brownsville In, Violence Out  | 14                               | 66                           | 80   |
| Stand Up to Violence  | 80                               | 0                            | 80   |
| Jails Voting Initiative   | 0                                | 73                           | 73   |
| GANGS Coalition   | 53                               | 10                           | 63   |
| King of Kings   | 48                               | 14                           | 62   |
| Exodus Transitional Community   | 55                               | 0                            | 55   |
| Operation HOOD  | 54                               | 1                            | 55   |
| Developing Righteous United Movements   | 41                               | 0                            | 41   |
| Dock Street Academy   | 36                               | 0                            | 36   |
| NAACP Legal Defense Fund  | 36                               | 0                            | 36   |
| Gangsta's Making Astronomical Community Changes   | 34                               | 0                            | 34   |
| St. Nick's Alliance   | 0                                | 34                           | 34   |
| Jails Action Coalition  | 0                                | 30                           | 30   |
| Urban Neighborhood  | 26                               | 0                            | 26   |
| The Wick  | 1                                | 24                           | 25   |
| Rock Safe Streets   | 9                                | 15                           | 24   |
| Young New Yorkers   | 24                               | 0                            | 24   |
| Kramer Levin  | 20                               | 0                            | 20   |
| Staten Island Justice Center  | 19                               | 0                            | 19   |
| Safe Space  | 18                               | 0                            | 18   |
| Freedom Agenda  | 14                               | 0                            | 14   |
| Ingersol houses   | 12                               | 0                            | 12   |
| Brooklyn School for Career Development  | 0                                | 11                           | 11   |
| East Harlem Tutorial  | 10                               | 0                            | 10   |
| Immigrant Defense Project   | 0                                | 10                           | 10   |
| United Activities Unlimited   | 10                               | 0                            | 10   |
| Elite Learners  | 5                                | 0                            | 5  |
| East NY Tutorial  | 3                                | 0                            | 3  |
| Central Family Life Center  | 2                                | 0                            | 2  |
| Sheltering Arms   | 2                                | 0                            | 2  |
| Fortune Society   | 1                                | 0                            | 1  |
| N/A   | 206                              | 155                          | 361  |
| Other (includes CJU events such as voter registration, school career days, rallies, and days of action) | 746                              | 526                          | 1272   |
| Grand Total   | 7045                             | 4074                         | 11119  |

**THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY  
CRIMINAL  
DEFENSE**

# **THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT**

**JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023**

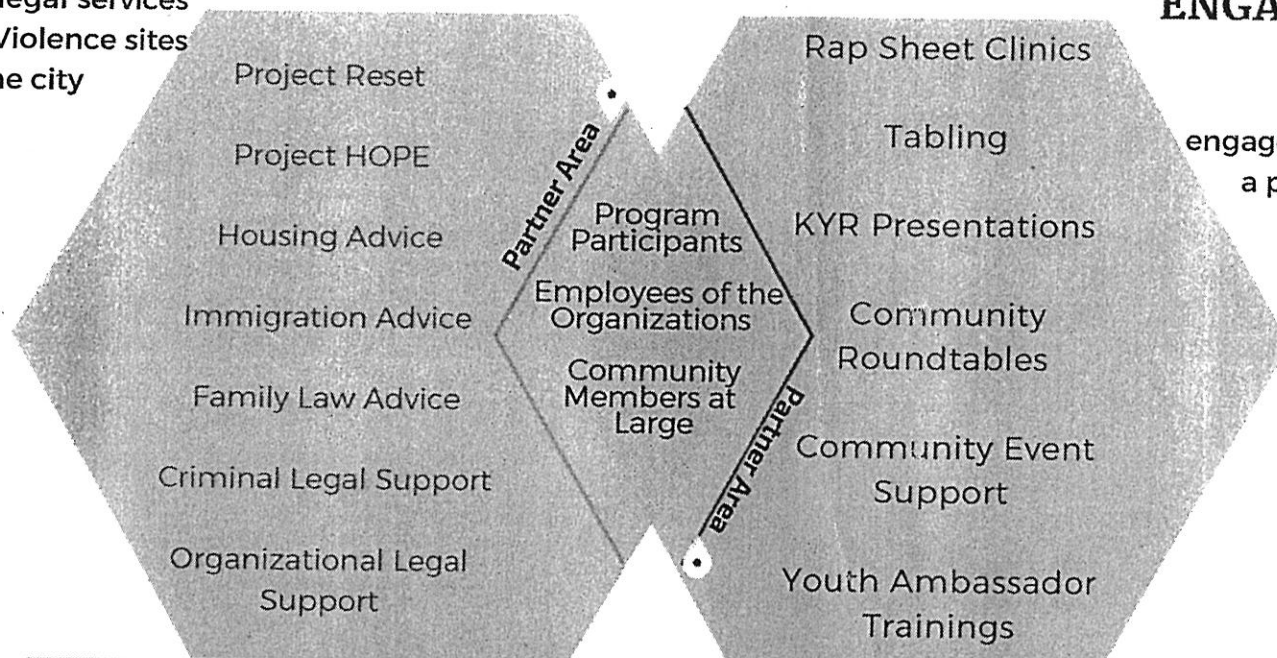
199 Water Street  
New York, NY 10038

<https://legalaidnyc.org>

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

## CURE VIOLENCE

Provide legal services  
to Cure Violence sites  
across the city



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citywide  
community  
engagement under  
a public health  
model

## IMPLEMENTING THE CV MODEL

### Interrupting Transmission

#### MODEL GOALS:

Prevent Retaliations; Mediate Conflicts; Keep Conflicts Cool

#### CJU ROLE:

Provide support to CV partner agencies and participants  
intermediary role between communities and law enforcement

#### SERVICES PROVIDED

Safe Surrenders  
24/7 Hotlines  
Emergency Legal Support

### Reducing Highest Risk

#### MODEL GOALS:

Assess Highest Risk;  
Change Behavior; Provide Treatment

#### CJU ROLE:

Vertical Representation Model;  
Connect CV partner agencies, community members and participants to social/legal services

#### SERVICES PROVIDED

Rap Sheet Clinics  
Job Fairs/Employment Training  
Access to Benefits (Housing, Disability, Education, Healthcare)  
Case Closed - Record Sealing

### Changing Community Norms

#### MODEL GOALS:

Respond to Shootings; Organize Community; Spread Positive Norms

#### CJU ROLE:

Amplify Community Voices;  
Challenge policies negatively impacting communities  
(e.g. MJ reform, gang database)

#### SERVICES PROVIDED

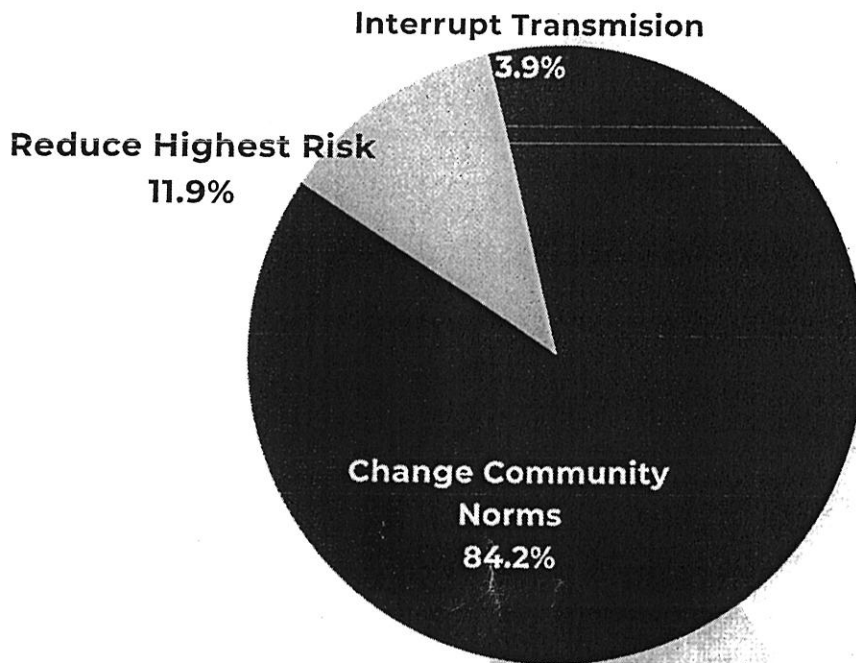
Shooting Responses  
Know Your Rights Events  
Community Events (Tabling)  
Policy Advocacy/Reform  
Awareness Campaigns



# OUR SERVICES

Over the course of FY23, the CJU had a total of **7,045 services** including: **5,378** services to **Cure Violence** partner organizations and **1,667** to non-affiliated **community**

**members** throughout New York City. These numbers include over **500 services to Project Hope and Project Reset** participants.



## HOSTED 140 COMMUNITY EVENTS

Including, but not limited to:

- Gun Awareness Campaigns
- Gang Database workshops
- Other Virtual Events
- Know Your Rights trainings
- Legal Clinics
- Voting Information Events

# OUR SERVICE POPULATION

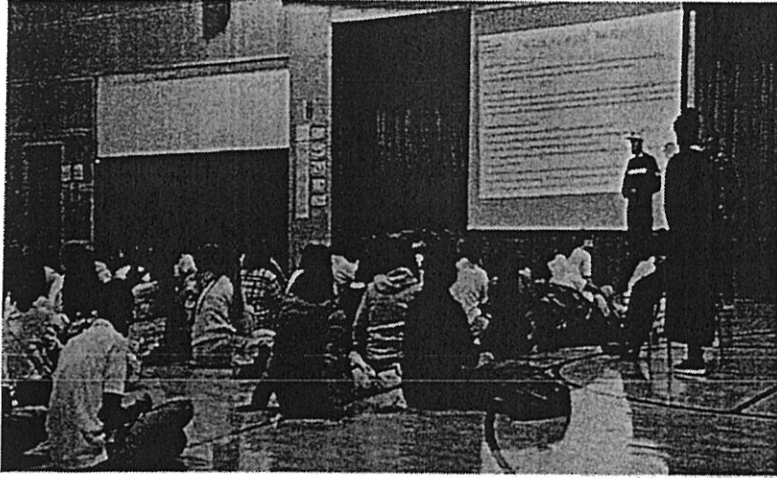
**957**

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

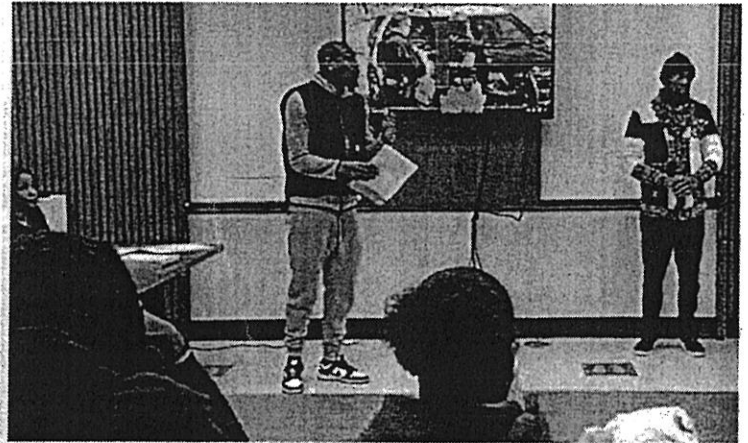
**4024**

**2064  
PARTICIPANTS**

# OUR ADVOCACY



In order to help combat youth's early involvement in the criminal justice system, CJU's Community Organizer's led a number of Know Your Rights trainings and workshops



The two pictured here are from the Dock Street Middle School for STEAM Studies in Brooklyn (top) and Guns Down Life Up in the Bronx (right).



The CJU has been hard at work this fiscal year, rallying our clients and community to exercise their civic duty and cast their vote. Our very own Community Organizer spearheaded the "Your Vote Matters Symposium." The event saw many of our partner organizations

come together for a discussion on the significance of voting, the impact of criminal disenfranchisement, and how we can come together to strengthen our neighborhoods.

Throughout the year, the CJU participated in many of the community town halls led by the Gun Violence Task Force. These conversations were used to help generate Mayor Adams' "Community Safety Plan"; a continuation of Blueprint to End Gun Violence. The plan focuses on prevention and intervention strategies using public health and community development

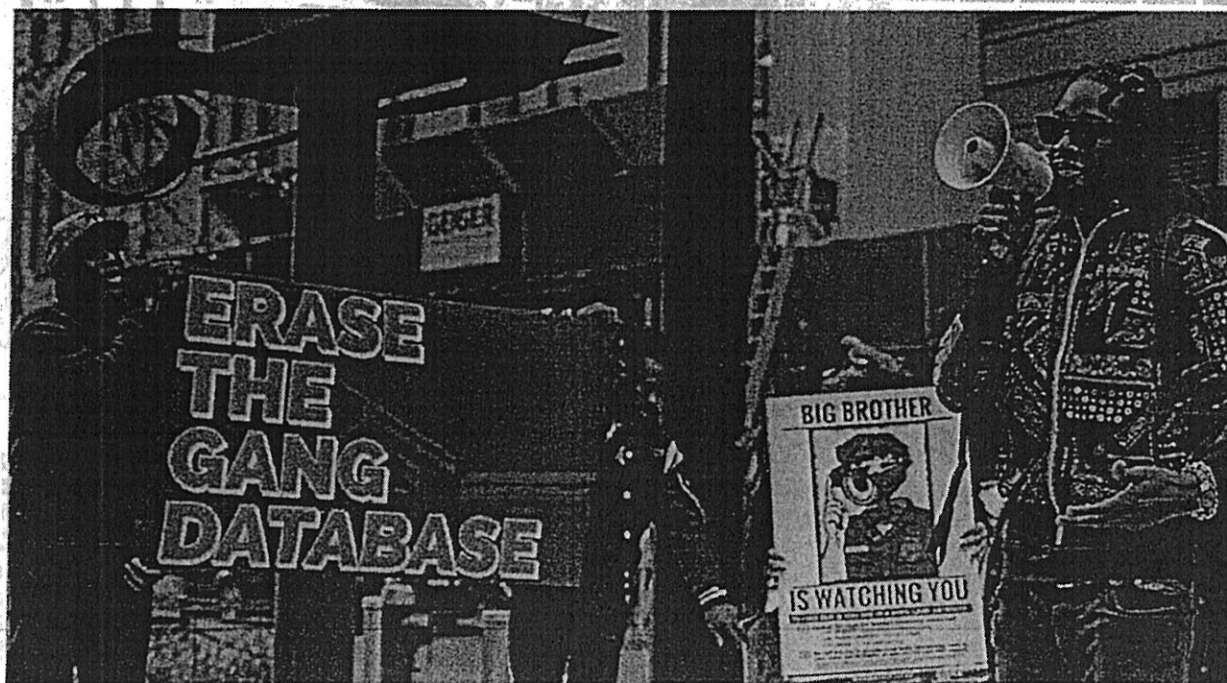


# FY 23 CURE VIOLENCE HIGHLIGHTS



Cardi B announced a new partnership with Cure Violence (CV) site, Community Capacity Development (CCD).

After years of delay and pushing from the CJU and various other CV organizations, the Office of Inspector General finally released its report on the NYPD's use and operation of the criminal group database.





**THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY  
CRIMINAL  
DEFENSE**

# **THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE UNIT**

**JULY 1, 2023 - DECEMBER 31, 2023**

199 Water Street  
New York, NY 10038

<https://legalaidnyc.org>

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

## CURE VIOLENCE

Provide legal services  
to Cure Violence sites  
across the city

Project Reset  
Project HOPE  
Housing Advice  
Immigration Advice  
Family Law Advice  
Criminal Legal Support  
Organizational Legal Support

Partner Area

Program Participants  
Employees of the Organizations  
Community Members at Large

Partner Area

Rap Sheet Clinics  
Tabling  
KYR Presentations  
Community Roundtables  
Community Event Support  
Youth Ambassador Trainings

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citywide  
community  
engagement under  
a public health  
model

## IMPLEMENTING THE CV MODEL

### Interrupting Transmission

#### MODEL GOALS

Prevent Retaliations; Mediate Conflicts; Keep Conflicts Cool

#### CJU ROLE

Provide support to CV partner agencies and participants intermediary role between communities and law enforcement

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24/7 Hotlines  
Emergency Legal Support

### Reducing Highest Risk

#### MODEL GOALS

Assess Highest Risk; Change Behavior; Provide Treatment

#### CJU ROLE

Vertical Representation Model; Connect CV partner agencies, community members and participants to social/legal services

#### SERVICES PROVIDED

Rap Sheet Clinics  
Job Fairs/Employment Training  
Access to Benefits (Housing, Disability, Education, Healthcare)  
Case Closed - Record Sealing

### Changing Community Norms

#### MODEL GOALS

Respond to Shootings; Organize Community; Spread Positive Norms

#### CJU ROLE

Amplify Community Voices; Challenge policies negatively impacting communities (e.g. MJ reform, gang database)

#### SERVICES PROVIDED

Shooting Responses  
Know Your Rights Events  
Community Events (Tabling)  
Policy Advocacy/Reform  
Awareness Campaigns

# OUR SERVICES

The **CJU** provided a total of **4074 services** including: **367** services to members of **Cure Violence** partner organizations and **3840** services to non-affiliated **community members** throughout New York City. These numbers include **523 Project Reset and Project Hope** participants. **CJU events** supported **1940 individuals**.

## SERVICES BY PARTICIPANT TYPE

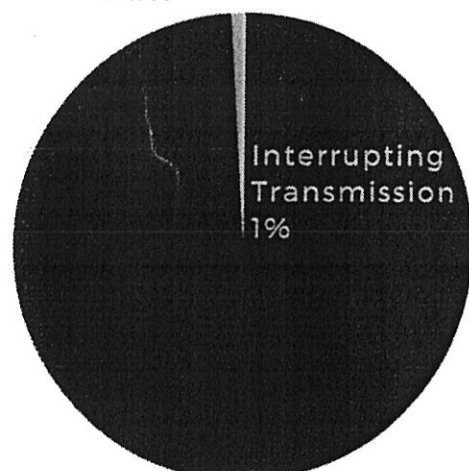
CV Program Participants  
9%



Community Members  
83.8%

## SERVICES BY CATEGORY

Reducing Highest Risk  
10.3%



Changing Community Norms  
88.7%



## Areas Served

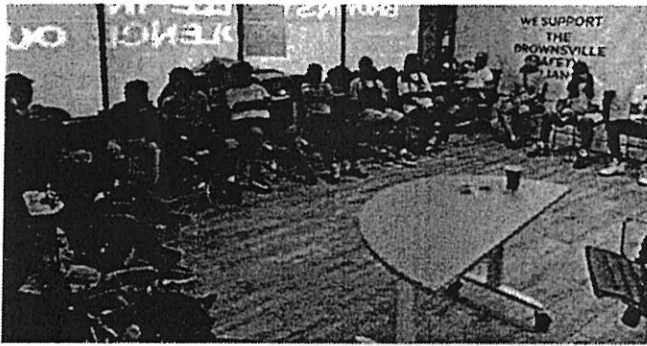
### KEY

- Clients and Community Members
- Project Reset and Project Hope Participants
- Events



# OUR ADVOCACY

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



Multiple cohorts of teens attended our Youth Ambassador Trainings.

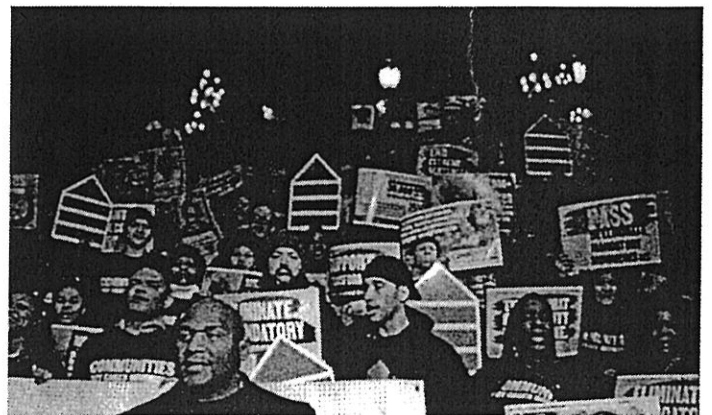


They learned about organizing in their communities and teaching other community members about their legal rights when interacting with police.



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

CJU members attended the Communities Not Cages Advocacy Day in Albany. More than 300 New Yorkers from across the state gathered to advocate for sentencing reform bills aimed at confronting New York's crisis of mass incarceration.



# Exhibit B

# 100SUITS

STAND OUT. STAND UP. STAND TALL.

227 12A Merrick Blvd  
Laurelton NY 11413

646.618.9797  
100SuitsNYC@gmail.com

March 19, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council Speaker

Dear New York City Mayor and Speaker:

On behalf of 100 Suits, we write to thank you for your support of our work in the Crisis Management System/Cure Violence model and ask that you ensure that such support includes expanding funding, not reducing it, for The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU). The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model, and the proposed cuts to CJU's budget will undermine our work to reduce violence in the community.

The CJU was established in 2012 as part of the New York City CMS/CV model by the New York City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence. In its recommendations, the Task Force noted that "legal support will help at-risk youth and their families navigate different issues...Families might also have housing, family and immigration issues that they need assistance with in order to move or otherwise improve their circumstances." The legal support CJU provides has played an integral role in the success of our community violence interruption model. By providing community members with comprehensive legal services, CJU has helped us grow the number of participants in our violence interruption programs and it has improved the lives of participants and their families. To enable healthier and safer communities, participants and their families must continue to have access to these vital legal services in and around our catchment areas.

CJU's legal education clinics have empowered thousands of New Yorkers in high schools, community organizations, and even in jails. CJU supports healthier communities by educating people on their rights in the criminal and civil contexts, demystifying legal systems, and explaining how to access legal services effectively. These clinics make the critical difference between someone being a statistic or being empowered when they find themselves in a police encounter or other legal matter. With more CV site participants, the demand for such clinics has risen. But because of the Department of Youth and Community Development's decision to cut its funding, CJU's capacity to deliver vital services to our communities will be depleted.



# 100SUITS

STAND OUT. STAND UP. STAND TALL.

227 12A Merrick Blvd  
Laurelton NY 11413

646.618.9797  
100SuitsNYC@gmail.com

As part of the CMS/CV model, we are committed to continuing to work with CJU and believe their dedicated and comprehensive client-centered practice is the most effective approach to supporting us in the mission to eradicate gun violence using the community violence intervention model. CJU is integral to our ability to effectively address the needs and demands of those before the courts and in the community. With Mayor Adams' recent announcement of the "partnership" and "pouring money" into CMS, which places the CMS sites at the center of the City's strategy to prevent gun violence, we must be able to count on CJU's legal services to meet the community's needs.

We call on you to restore CJU's funding that has been taken away due to the Department of Youth and Community Development's budget cuts and to increase CJU's budget so its capacity to deliver comprehensive legal services grows as the CMS/CV model also grows.

Sincerely,



Yours in service

**Mr. Kevin Livingston**  
**Founder, President, & CEO**  
**100 Suits for 100 Men**

# 100SUITS

STAND OUT. STAND UP. STAND TALL.

646-618-9797  
100SuitsNYC@gmail.com  
[100SuitsNYC.org](http://100SuitsNYC.org)



LIFE Camp, Inc  
111-12 Sutphin Boulevard  
Jamaica, NY 11435  
(646) 258-0936  
[www.peaceisalifestyle.com](http://www.peaceisalifestyle.com)

**Life Camp, Inc.**  
"Peace is a Lifestyle"

March 19, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor  
Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council Speaker

Dear New York City Mayor and Speaker:

On behalf of Life Camp, we write to thank you for your support of our work in the Crisis Management System/Cure Violence model and ask that you ensure that such support includes expanding funding, not reducing it, for The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU). The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model, and the proposed cuts to CJU's budget will undermine our work to reduce violence in the community.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Erica Ford", written in a cursive style.

Erica Ford  
CEO LIFE Camp, Inc.

March 20, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council

Dear New York City

But because  
its funding, CJU's c

As part of t  
believe their dedic  
approach to supp  
violence intervent  
demands of those  
announcement of



March 20, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council Speaker

Dear New York City Mayor and Speaker:

On behalf of Man Up! Inc. we write to thank you for your support of our work in the Crisis Management System/Cure Violence model and ask that you ensure that such support includes expanding funding, not reducing it, for The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU). The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model, and the proposed cuts to CJU's budget will undermine our work to reduce violence in the community.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York City Council, Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, Task Chairs City Council Member Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera, available at, <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, at 15.





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We call on you to restore CJU's funding that has been taken away due to the Department of Youth and Community Development's budget cuts and to increase CJU's budget so its capacity to deliver comprehensive legal services grows as the CMS/CV model also grows.

Sincerely,

Sharlene Nash-Pryor, MPH

Director of Operations

797/799 Van Siclen Ave.

Brooklyn NY 11207

Phone: (718) 498-2320

Email: [Snash-Pryor@manupinc.org](mailto:Snash-Pryor@manupinc.org)

Website: [www.Manupinc.org](http://www.Manupinc.org)

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<sup>3</sup> NYC Mayor's Office, *Mayor Eric Adams Holds In-Person Media Availability*, YouTube (March 12, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/live/X0EH5KVCKbQ?si=OJ157WTnuWtUF8WS>.



Iesha Sekou · CEO/Founder

151 West 145<sup>th</sup> Street · New York, NY 10039 · (212) 694-8759

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March 19, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council Speaker

Dear New York City Mayor and Speaker:

On behalf of Street Corner Resources, Inc, we write to thank you for your support of our work in the Crisis Management System/Cure Violence model and ask that you ensure that such support includes expanding funding, not reducing it, for The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU). The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model, and the proposed cuts to CJU's budget will undermine our work to reduce violence in the community.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York City Council, Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, Task Chairs City Council Member Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera, available at, <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/>.

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We call on you to restore CJU's funding that has been taken away due to the Department of Youth and Community Development's budget cuts and to increase CJU's budget so its capacity to deliver comprehensive legal services grows as the CMS/CV model also grows.

Sincerely,

Maurice Lacey – LMSW, MS Ed  
Social Work Coordinator  
Credible Clinician

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<sup>3</sup> NYC Mayor's Office, *Mayor Eric Adams Holds In-Person Media Availability*, YouTube (March 12, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/live/X0EH5KVCKbQ?si=OJ157WTnuWtUF8WS>.



We see what can be.

March 20, 2024

New York City Commissioner Keith Howard  
Department of Community and Youth Development  
2 Lafayette Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Commissioner Howard:

On behalf of our Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence program (B.R.A.G.), I am writing to ask that you restore the November Plan Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) to the Office of Neighborhood Safety in the amount of \$5.471 Million in Fiscal Year 2025 and the out years.

I am especially concerned about the cuts to The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU) and how this will impact our ability to support youth. The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model. The legal support CJU provides has played an integral role in the success of our community violence interruption model. By providing community members with comprehensive legal services, CJU has helped us grow the number of participants in our violence interruption programs and it has improved the lives of participants and their families. To enable healthier and safer communities, participants and their families must continue to have access to these vital legal services in and around our catchment areas.

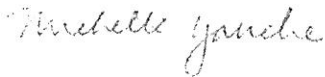
CJU's legal education clinics have empowered thousands of New Yorkers in high schools, community organizations, and even in jails. CJU supports healthier communities by educating people on their rights in the criminal and civil contexts, demystifying legal systems, and explaining how to access legal services effectively. These clinics make the critical difference between someone being a statistic or being empowered when they find themselves in a police encounter or other legal matter. With more CV site participants, the demand for such clinics has risen. But because of the Mayor's decision to cut its funding in the November Plan, CJU's capacity to deliver vital services to our communities will be depleted.

As part of the CMS/CV model, we are committed to continuing to work with CJU and believe their dedicated and comprehensive client-centered practice is the most effective approach to supporting us in the mission to eradicate gun violence using the community violence intervention model. CJU is integral to our ability to effectively address the needs and demands of those before the courts and in the community. With Mayor Adams' recent announcement of the "partnership" and "pouring money" into CMS, which places the CMS sites at the center of the

City's strategy to prevent gun violence, we must be able to count on CJU's legal services to meet the community's needs.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, I call on you to restore CJU's funding and to examine CJU's budget so its capacity to deliver comprehensive legal services grows as the CMS/CV model also grows. Please be in touch if you have any questions at (212) 243-7070.

Sincerely,



Michelle Yanche  
Chief Executive Officer

CC:

Deputy Mayor Ana Almanzar

Honorable Adrienne E. Adams, Speaker, New York City Council

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

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<sup>1</sup> NYC Mayor's Office, *Mayor Eric Adams Holds In-Person Media Availability*, YouTube (March 12, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/live/X0EH5KVCKbQ?si=OJ157WTnuWtUF8WS>.



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89-36 Sutphin Blvd Suite 303  
Jamaica NY 11435

AboutCCD.org  
info@aboutccd.org

March 19, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams  
New York City Mayor

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
New York City Council Speaker

Dear New York City Mayor and Speaker:

On behalf of Community Capacity Development Worldwide, we write to thank you for your support of our work in the Crisis Management System/Cure Violence model and ask that you ensure that such support includes expanding funding, not reducing it, for The Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit (CJU). The Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CMS/CV) work relies on providing community members with comprehensive legal services to our growing network of participants within the CMS/CV model, and the proposed cuts to CJU's budget will undermine our work to reduce violence in the community.

The CJU was established in 2012 as part of the New York City CMS/CV model by the New York City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence.<sup>1</sup> In its recommendations, the Task Force noted that "legal support will help at-risk youth and their families navigate different issues...Families might also have housing, family and immigration issues that they need assistance with in order to move or otherwise improve their circumstances."<sup>2</sup> The legal support CJU provides has played an integral role in the success of our community violence interruption model. By providing community members with comprehensive legal services, CJU has helped us grow the number of participants in our violence interruption programs and it has improved the lives of participants and their families. To enable healthier and safer communities, participants and their families must continue to have access to these vital legal services in and around our catchment areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York City Council, Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, Task Chairs City Council Member Jumaane Williams and Fernando Cabrera, available at, <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2012/12/21/617/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, at 15.

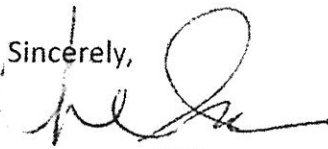


CJU's legal education clinics have empowered thousands of New Yorkers in high schools, community organizations, and even in jails. CJU supports healthier communities by educating people on their rights in the criminal and civil contexts, demystifying legal systems, and explaining how to access legal services effectively. These clinics make the critical difference between someone being a statistic or being empowered when they find themselves in a police encounter or other legal matter. With more CV site participants, the demand for such clinics has risen. But because of the Department of Youth and Community Development's decision to cut its funding, CJU's capacity to deliver vital services to our communities will be depleted.

As part of the CMS/CV model, we are committed to continuing to work with CJU and believe their dedicated and comprehensive client-centered practice is the most effective approach to supporting us in the mission to eradicate gun violence using the community violence intervention model. CJU is integral to our ability to effectively address the needs and demands of those before the courts and in the community. With Mayor Adams' recent announcement of the "partnership" and "pouring money" into CMS, which places the CMS sites at the center of the City's strategy to prevent gun violence, we must be able to count on CJU's legal services to meet the community's needs.<sup>3</sup>

We call on you to restore CJU's funding that has been taken away due to the Department of Youth and Community Development's budget cuts and to increase CJU's budget so its capacity to deliver comprehensive legal services grows as the CMS/CV model also grows.

Sincerely,



Senior Policy Advisor

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<sup>3</sup> NYC Mayor's Office, *Mayor Eric Adams Holds In-Person Media Availability*, YouTube (March 12, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/live/X0EH5KVCKbQ?si=OJ157WTnuWtUF8WS>.



**New York City Council  
Committee on Children and Youth Services  
Executive Budget Hearing  
May 10, 2024**

**Testimony of The Legal Aid Society**

49 Thomas Street  
New York, NY 10013  
(212) 577-3300

Prepared by:  
Anna Blondell

We wish to thank Chair Stevens and the full committee for providing this opportunity for the public to provide commentary on the Executive Budget. We direct our testimony to two critical areas of the budget affecting children and youth; the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) use of federal benefits intended for orphaned and disabled children and the need for increased funding for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Project.

### **The Legal Aid Society**

The Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Courts in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, Juvenile Rights staff represented approximately 34,000 children. The Legal Aid Society represents the majority of children and youth placed in foster care through New York City's Family Courts. The Legal Aid Society has dedicated teams of lawyers, social workers, paralegals and investigators devoted to serving the unique needs of children and youth removed from their homes and placed in the custody of the Administration of Children's Services (ACS). Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and from our interactions with the courts, social service providers, and City and State agencies. In addition to representing our clients in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives.

### **THE CITY MUST PROPERLY FUND FOSTER CARE SO THAT ORPHANS AND DISABLED CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR FOSTER CARE**

For over a decade, ACS diverted and kept federal Social Security Benefits belonging to children in foster care, **most of whom are Black and brown children living in conditions of poverty**, to pay itself for providing care. Former ACS Commissioner David Hansell and current ACS Commissioner Jess Dannhauser have acknowledged that this practice needed to change. Commissioner Hansell committed to a "Child-Centric Social Security Benefits Plan," stating that this regime change was "the right thing to do," and would "provide concrete support to children and youth leaving foster care."<sup>1</sup> Referring to children in care eligible for Social Security Benefits,

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<sup>1</sup> Administration for Children's Services Announces Plan to Ensure Youth in Foster Care who are Eligible for Social Security Income have Benefits in Place & Can Receive Those Funds, December 30, 2021 (available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/PressReleases/2021/SocialSecurityIncome.pdf>)

Commissioner Dannhauser stated boldly that “[t]his is their money, and they deserve to use it as they see fit.”<sup>2</sup>

Through a recent draft policy, ACS has committed to changing its practice for orphans eligible for Survivors Benefits,<sup>3</sup> and for disabled children eligible for Disability Benefits.<sup>4</sup> However, those changes do not go far enough, and ACS’s practice must be further revised to create a truly equitable economic support structure for orphans and disabled children in foster care. If ACS lacks the funding to make a truly child-centric plan a reality, the City must provide additional funding so that orphans and disabled children are no longer used as a revenue stream to subsidize the foster care system. The Executive Budget must allow for all Social Security Benefits to go directly to the children who are entitled to them and who desperately need them. Children entitled to Survivors and Disability Benefits must be permitted to use and conserve these benefits; they can provide critical, possibly life-altering funds to this most vulnerable population.

**The Executive Budget must ear mark \$18.8 million to reimburse orphaned children who were in foster care between 2011-July 2022 and whose Survivors Benefits were diverted by ACS**

Between 2011 and July, 2022, ACS took \$18.8 million dollars of Survivors Benefits away from children in foster care and used that money as a revenue stream to pay its own administrative costs.<sup>5</sup> We are pleased that ACS has now recognized that this practice needed to be changed and as of July 2022 it changed its practice (and incorporated this change into its draft policy) to conserve Survivors Benefits for eligible children.<sup>6</sup> However, as Chair Stevens has recognized, children whose money was taken over an 11-year period must be made economically whole.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *New York City will stop collecting Social Security money from children in foster care*, NPR and WNYC, Joseph Shapiro, March 9, 2022 (available at <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/09/1084620883/new-york-city-will-stop-collecting-social-security-money-from-children-in-foster#:~:text=Child%20welfare%20officials%20in%20New.criticized%20by%20advocates%20for%20children>).

<sup>3</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 404.

<sup>4</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 416.

<sup>5</sup> *Evidence arises that ACS took children's survivor benefits*, NBC4 New York, April 22, 2024 (available at <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/evidence-arises-that-ac-s-took-childrens-survivor-benefits/5344860/>).

<sup>6</sup> It is critical to note that, to date, we do not know of any children/families who have received the money back from ACS after discharge. See *Evidence arises that ACS took children's survivor benefits*, NBC4 New York, April 22, 2024 (available at <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/evidence-arises-that-ac-s-took-childrens-survivor-benefits/5344860/>). We have spoken to many children and families after discharge who have reported that ACS neither returned the money nor advised on how to seek the return of their funds from SSA.

<sup>7</sup> *City Hall Reacts to Claims ACS Took Funds from Children's Survivors Benefits*, NBC4 New York, April 23, 2024 (available at <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/city-hall-reacts-to-claims-ac-s-took-funds-from-childrens-survivor-benefits/5348559/>).

Survivors Benefits are an insurance program. If a parent paid taxes, money for this benefit was automatically deducted from their income. If that parent subsequently dies, their child or children are eligible to receive Survivors Benefits to make up for the significant economic impact of the death of a parent. Historically, ACS took children who had family serving as their representative payee, had itself automatically assigned as representative payee, and then kept the money. ACS also found children who tragically lost their parent/s while in the care of the Commissioner, applied for benefits on their behalf, and kept that money as well. In other words, money that the federal government intended to stabilize a child's future, and insurance that their parents had already paid for automatically through their taxable income, was taken by ACS – and the new draft policy does not create any mechanism for children and families to recoup that money.

ACS must create a system for allowing children whose Survivors Benefits were confiscated by ACS prior to July 2022, to seek funds directly from ACS, or to utilize other creative solutions, such as a grants program, to make them whole.<sup>8</sup> Grants could be made available to meet educational and employment goals, secure housing, get help with medical or mental health concerns, or pay for childcare. This exciting possibility would allow children who were in foster care to be made whole, as the federal Survivors Benefits program was intended to function, while using the money to which they had been entitled to tangibly improve their lives and address their needs. It would be a monumental step towards fairness, and New York City must be the leader in this field.

ACS is an approximately \$2.72 billion dollar a year agency<sup>9</sup> – and \$18.8 million dollars is less than 1% of the annual budget. However, to each individual child who has lost out on the nest egg left by their parent, the money could be the difference between having a home and being on the street, having food and going hungry at the end of the month, or having childcare and risking an ACS case.

*The City must ensure that orphans who were disenfranchised of their own money simply because they were placed in foster care between 2011 and 2022 are made economically whole.*

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<sup>8</sup> Such a proposal was recently introduced in the Oregon state legislature, after vigorous advocacy by an advocate who was formerly in foster care. S.B. 557 (text of the proposed bill available here <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB0557/Introduced>).

<sup>9</sup> Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on General Welfare on the Fiscal 2024 Executive Plan and the Fiscal 2024 Executive Capital Commitment Plan for the Administration for Children's Services, May 8, 2023 (available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/05/ACS.pdf>).

**The Executive Budget must allow ACS to apply for, use, and conserve all Disability Benefits for disabled children in foster care**

While ACS has committed to changing the practice around Survivors Benefits moving forward, the landscape for disabled children in foster care remains almost unchanged. In its draft policy, ACS commits to “maximize allowable savings from Social Security Administration benefits for Children in foster care”<sup>10</sup> and “conserve SSI benefits up to the asset limitation imposed under federal law.”<sup>11</sup> However, the actual policy proposed falls far short of conserving the full benefit for disabled children; instead, ACS would refuse to screen the poorest children for eligibility and continue to use Disability Benefits to “offset the cost of foster care.”<sup>12</sup> Under the draft policy, ACS would conserve \$2,000 for every child, to be transferred to the child when they are discharged from care. This would allow ACS to keep potentially tens of thousands of benefits dollars that rightfully belong to children in foster care. ACS’s plan for disabled children in foster care fails in two significant ways. First, for Title IV-E<sup>13</sup> eligible children, ACS plans to *not* screen for Disability Benefits eligibility – even where ACS knows that a child has a qualifying disability. Second, for Title IV-E ineligible children, ACS plans to continue to keep the bulk of the Disability Benefit to offset the cost of foster care.

**For children eligible for both Disability Benefits and Title IV-E funding, the City must ensure that ACS screens and applies for Disability Benefits as soon as the child enters foster care**

ACS is obligated to conduct regular, comprehensive screenings for disabilities for all children who enter care.<sup>14</sup> Evaluating a child for disability is a critical part of all safety and permanency planning – therefore, once ACS complies with its obligation to create a meaningful service plan for a child in care, it will be on notice when a child has a qualifying disability and may therefore be eligible for Disability Benefits. It cannot then simply ignore a child’s disability to continue receiving Title IV-E benefits. ACS’s draft policy only requires ACS to screen and apply for benefits for children who are *not* eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement, so that ACS can continue receiving Title IV-E reimbursement. However, early screening and application for all children are essential to ensure that children receive all the benefits for which they are eligible.

The law and guidance from the Social Security Administration is clear: **a representative payee must opt to apply for whichever benefit is in the best interests of the child.** Federal

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<sup>10</sup> ACS Draft Policy, summary.

<sup>11</sup> ACS Draft Policy, section III.A.2.c

<sup>12</sup> ACS Draft Policy, section III(A)(2)(c).

<sup>13</sup> 42 U.S.C. §§ 671-679b.

<sup>14</sup> 142 C.F.R. §441.50.



guidance dictates the child's best interests should control the decision about whether to apply for Title IV-E or Disability Benefits. "Information regarding the benefits available under each program should be made available by the title IV-E agency so that an informed choice can be made in the child's best interests."<sup>15</sup> SSA's Guide for Organizational Representative Payees prohibits an organization such as ACS from using "a beneficiary's Social Security or SSI funds for anything other than their use and benefit. But more than that, [the organization] must make reasoned judgments to use the funds in the beneficiary's best interest."<sup>16</sup> ACS cannot be permitted to make a choice that benefits its own revenue stream over the best interests of the child.

ACS contracts with the Public Consulting Group ("PCG"), a third-party provider that has historically screened all children to determine whether they may be eligible to receive Disability or Survivors Benefits "[u]pon the child's initial placement in foster care."<sup>17</sup> ACS must continue this practice and re-screen annually to determine if any child not eligible upon entry has become eligible. There is no doubt that applying for, and conserving, Disability Benefits is in the best interest of virtually all eligible children as compared to having Title IV-E funds flow to the social services district. By proposing to defer applying for Disability Benefits, ACS is ignoring the federal guidance, SSA's guidance, and eluding its fiduciary duty by selecting the benefit that brings itself the most money, rather than the benefit that is in the child's best interest.

Per ACS, the Title IV-E benefit the agency would have to forego to apply for and conserve Disability Benefits for all children in foster care would be about \$10 million per year.<sup>18</sup> Again, as ACS is a \$2.72 billion dollar agency, this would amount to less than 1/2 a percent. However, for an individual disabled child, the money could be life altering and go towards a needed surgery, therapy, or adaptive equipment to help manage their disability, among other stabilizing items.

*ACS must screen all children for Disability Benefits early and repeatedly and must apply for Disability Benefits for all eligible children. The City must ensure that ACS has the funding to comply with the law.*

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Servs., Administration for Children and Families, Child Welfare Policy Manual, 8.4D, TITLE IV-E, General Title IV-E Requirements, Concurrent Receipt of Federal Benefits (available at [http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/laws/cwpm/policy\\_dsp.jsp?citID=76](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp.jsp?citID=76)).

<sup>16</sup> Social Security Administration, Guide for Organizational Representative Payees, available at [https://www.ssa.gov/payee/NewGuide/toc.htm#Role\\_Payee](https://www.ssa.gov/payee/NewGuide/toc.htm#Role_Payee).

<sup>17</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services, Social Security Benefits Unit (SSBU) Policy and Procedural Manual, 10 (2017).

<sup>18</sup> *NYC suspends Social Security payouts to some disabled foster kids to protect federal funding*, Chris Sommerfeldt, New York Daily News, April 8, 2024.

For children ineligible for Title IV-E, the City must ensure that ACS uses and conserves all Disability Benefits on behalf of each individual child

Despite promises to the contrary, the draft policy continues ACS's practice of using many children's Disability Benefits to "offset[] the cost of foster care," mandating only that \$2,000 be conserved on behalf of the child, while any additional benefit remains with ACS.<sup>19</sup> ACS is required to use or conserve funds to benefit the specific child – not the foster care system broadly.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, as the representative payee for kids in care, ACS has a fiduciary obligation under the law to use the money to benefit the child directly.<sup>21</sup>

While Disability Benefits have a federal assets cap (if a person has more than \$2,000 in a regular bank account, the benefits are suspended until the money is spent down), Congress passed a bill in 2014 creating specialized accounts known as Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts. These special savings accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save above the assets cap to help pay for disability-related expenses.<sup>22</sup> ABLE accounts allow a disabled child to save up to \$102,000 for a rainy day, without impacting resource limitations for SSA benefits or a host of other federal benefits.<sup>23</sup> Funds can be withdrawn to meet a child's needs including for education, housing, transportation, and assistive technologies and can also be conserved for future use.<sup>24</sup> While this is not the only account available for disabled people to conserve funds (others include Plan to Achieve Self-Support or "PASS,"<sup>25</sup> and Individual Development Accounts or "IDA"<sup>26</sup>), ABLE accounts allow the greatest savings above the assets cap.

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<sup>19</sup> ACS Draft Policy, section III(A)(2)(c).

<sup>20</sup> 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.2045, 416.645 (Conservation and investment of benefit payments).

<sup>21</sup> *Riddick v. D'Elia*, 626 F.2d 1084, 1088 (2d Cir. 1980) (representative payee has a "legally enforceable fiduciary obligation"); United States Social Security Administration, Program Operations Manual System (POMS) § GS 00502.113 (available at <http://policy.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0200502113!opendocument>) (providing direction for SSA staff that "[i]f the payee tells you that he/she will not carry out his fiduciary responsibilities without compensation, deny the application and seek another payee.").

<sup>22</sup> Specifically, the legislative intent was to "encourage and assist individuals and families in saving private funds for the purpose of supporting individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life." ABLE Act of 2014, H.R. 647, 113th Cong. § 101 (2014).

<sup>23</sup> Additional information regarding ABLE accounts is available at ABLE National Resource Center, <https://www.ablenrc.org>; 26 U.S.C. § 529A; NY MHL Art. 84.

<sup>24</sup> *What are qualified disability expenses?* NY ABLE, [mynyable.org/home/how-ny-able-works/qualified-uses.html](http://mynyable.org/home/how-ny-able-works/qualified-uses.html).

<sup>25</sup> Social Security Benefits information page on PASS accounts (available at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm#:~:text=PASS%20lets%20a%20disabled%20individual,eliminate%20SSI%20or%20SSDI%20benefits>).

<sup>26</sup> Social Security Administration Spotlight on Individual Development Accounts.

<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-individual-development.htm#:~:text=WHAT%20IS%20AN%20INDIVIDUAL%20DEVELOPMENT,bank%20account%20for%20an%20IDA>.

Numerous jurisdictions, including Arizona, Washington D.C., and most recently, Massachusetts, require local districts of social services, such as ACS, to use these accounts to save Disability Benefits for children in foster care without jeopardizing the children's eligibility for the benefit moving forward. It is inaccurate to say that ACS must divert the benefit into its own funding stream to keep a child eligible.

As of 2023, over 150,000 people across the country were benefiting from ABLE.<sup>27</sup> But ACS's policy ignores this option, and other specialized accounts, limiting children with disabilities to \$2,000 in savings. ABLE and other specialized accounts would also preserve a child's eligibility. Even without relying upon these specialized accounts, ACS could allow disabled children to conserve up to \$2,000 while in foster care and then spend that money down to preserve their eligibility.

ACS must not continue diverting or keeping federal benefits intended for disabled children, effectively keeping families mired in poverty to benefit its revenue stream. Recognizing the need for change but continuing to uphold most of the existing status quo fails to ensure the best interests of disabled children in care.

*ACS must work towards economic stability for disabled children in care and must use and conserve Disability Benefits in the best interest of each child. The City must ensure that ACS has funding to comply with the law.*

## **THE CITY MUST INVEST IN THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN CRITICAL SUPPORTS FOR RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH**

We reiterate the request made by the Coalition for Homeless Youth as laid out below: We urge City Council to improve the City's response to the homeless youth crisis by **including an additional \$16,455,000 in funding for the priorities we have outlined below in this year's New York City FY25 Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) budget.** This funding increase will support critical additions to the pre-existing RHY continuum and aid in making New York City a national leader in the fight to end youth homelessness.

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<sup>27</sup> 2Q 2023 529 and ABLE Market Sizing Highlights, ISS Market Intelligence, August 14, 2023 (available at <https://www.529conference.com/2q-2023-529-and-able-market-sizing-highlights/?layout=print>).

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

These requested investments will address a number of capacity gaps and prevent future costs:

- **Fund Support Services for Youth New Arrivals and Unaccompanied Minors: \$1.63M**  
DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers have been going above and beyond to meet the growing needs of newly arrived youth and unaccompanied minors without any additional support. We are asking for a one-time 30% contract increase for DYCD-funded Drop-in Center contracts. This additional funding will support meeting the basic needs of young people and fund more appropriate staffing across the sites.
- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Residential Contracts: \$5.5M**  
DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded Crisis and Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Program contracts be increased to \$55,500. This will cover the baselining of all residential bed rates across contract years, plus a 10% increase for all current DYCD-funded residential RHY contracts.
- **Fund Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services: \$625,000**  
Young people in DYCD programs have been excluded from access to city-funded legal support, and most young people qualify for youth-specific immigration relief (ie SIJS) that the city does not currently fund. Funding should be made immediately available for five positions for full-time experienced lawyers, who will be awarded to DYCD-funded RHY programs through an RFP based on the documented need for such services.
- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.5M**  
The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through federal Emergency Housing Voucher funding which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 2024). Data already demonstrates their success through the record number of youth that have exited homelessness into their own apartments since their inception. Maintaining these positions will ensure that RHY continue to successfully

transition to their own apartments and support the Administration's goal to address the homelessness crisis.

- **Restore funding for the 16 Peer Navigator positions in the DYCD-RHY System: \$1.6M**

In response to the priorities set forth in [\*Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness\*](#), funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across the DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers. Unfortunately, these critical positions that provide peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults were cut in FY24 and should be restored.

- **Fund 100 additional DYCD RHY beds: \$5.6M**

Over the past year, it has been increasingly difficult to secure a vacant DYCD RHY bed for a young person experiencing homelessness. There simply are not enough beds to meet the need. Funding needs to be made available to add 60 beds for Runaway and Homeless Youth (16-20yo) and 40 beds for Homeless Young Adults (21-24yo), which will expand the current DYCD RHY bed portfolio by 100 beds. In addition, DYCD must prioritize allocating any new beds that are funded to serve populations with the greatest documented need in areas that are easily accessible to young people.

- **Give Runaway and Homeless Youth CityFHEPS vouchers**

The Adams Administration must implement the CityFHEPS laws that took effect on January 9th, 2024, which will finally make youth experiencing homelessness in DYCD-funded Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) programs categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without having first to enter the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system.

- **A 5%-3%-3% COLA increase, echoing the ask of the [#JustPay Campaign](#)**

To adequately meet the needs of any youth who enters a program, providers must ensure that all their staff are being paid livable wages. We echo the #JustPay Campaign in asking for:

- A 5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers in this year's budget, at a cost of approximately \$150 million.
- A public commitment from the Mayor to fund a 3% COLA in each of the next two years, bringing the full investment in human services workers to 16% in 5 years from FY23-FY27.

## **CONCLUSION**

ACS and the City must commit to breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty which lead to repeated child welfare involvement for families, particularly for New York City's Black and Latinx families. Economic justice is a critical step, and the City must ensure that ACS uses and conserves all Social Security Benefits on behalf of individual children, as intended, and must provide additional funds to realize that obligation, as necessary. The City must also include an additional \$16,455,000 million, in funding in the adopted FY25 DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth budget, which will bring us closer to our shared goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness in New York City.

Contact:  
Anna Blondell  
ABlondell@legal-aid.org



**TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**

**New York City Council Budget and Joint Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025**

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

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

**May 10, 2024**

Thank you, Chairperson Stevens, Chairperson Brannan and members of the Committee on Children and Youth Services and Finance, 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 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 \$180 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, counter antisemitism and strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

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

UJA and our partners thank the City Council for the \$100 million workforce investment over the last two years and the \$50 million investment next year. We are also grateful to the City Council and Administration for agreeing to invest an additional \$741 million in New York City's human services workforce by committing to fund a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for FY 25 through FY 27.

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

Years of underfunding of the sector have resulted in the human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. These are workers who do some of the most important jobs in our communities; they take care of our aging neighbors, assist families in staying in their homes, provide

workforce training, work with people to overcome substance abuse and addiction, and help people from all walks of life in the event of an emergency. The COLA investment is a step in the right direction of ensuring city-contracted human services workers are paid fairly.

### **Reverse the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) for COMPASS and Summer Rising Programs**

The Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget includes a \$26.54 million PEG for COMPASS and Summer Rising Programs. This PEG includes a \$6.9 million cut to COMPASS after school programs decreasing access to these programs for 3,538 total youth. If this cut remains in place, three nonprofits in UJA's network will lose funding impacting 122 youth. All these programs provide services to communities that have limited access to other affordable after school options. It is unclear what families will do if these after school supports are cut. A \$19.64 million cut is also included for Summer Rising which would result in middle school students attending the program only 4 days a week (Monday through Thursday) until 4pm each day. Families rely on Summer Rising to keep their children engaged and safe while they work. A 4pm dismissal for middle school students will result in families having to scramble to find alternative care for their children. No programming on Fridays will mean middle school students will not be able to have field trips; these excursions expose them to places and experiences not offered in their immediate neighborhoods.

This PEG comes at a time when communities need these services the most. According to the Citizens' Committee for Children, 80% of New York City families cannot afford child care or after school programs.<sup>1</sup> The inability to secure child care resulted in a loss of \$23 billion in economic activity in New York City in 2022. It is clear, families need more support not less to remain in New York City and thrive. **UJA urges the Adams' Administration to reverse the \$26.54 million PEG to COMPASS and Summer Rising programs and to invest in programs that are serving youth and strengthening communities across New York City.** The Summer Rising PEG must be reversed no later than May 31<sup>st</sup>. Summer Rising programs for middle school participants starts July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Nonprofits need as much time as possible to plan additional programming hours before that start date.

### **Strengthening Youth Programs**

Nonprofits in UJA's network oversee COMPASS and/or SONYC after school programs throughout New York City, Beacons in Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx, and Cornerstones in Staten Island and the Bronx. In recent years, low wages for staff led to recruitment and retention challenges at these programs. Delays in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) comprehensive background check process have made it increasingly difficult to onboard staff quickly and efficiently. And lastly, decreased enrollment in programs due to COVID impacted rates of participation in programs. When rates of participation increased, these programs struggled to have enough staff to serve participants due to the combination of low wages and delayed background checks plaguing the youth services workforce.

The following investments must be made in these programs to ensure the fiscal stability of these programs:

- Increase the cost-per-participant rate in COMPASS, SONYC and Beacon contracts to set a wage floor of \$22 per hour for employees, so that providers can offer a more competitive wage to combat recruitment challenges. This rate is in line with wages for similar positions at the Department of Education.
- Increase Cornerstones' budgets to cover the costs associated with operating programs in NYCHA-owned spaces and ensure equal pay for Cornerstone staff doing similar work to Beacon and SONYC and COMPASS staff. Reexamine the current funding formula for Cornerstone, which is insufficient to cover staffing and program costs, forcing many providers to offer programming through "in kind" contributions from other programs.

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<sup>1</sup> [From Birth to Age 12: The \(Un\)Affordability of Child Care and Out-of-School Care in New York City | CCC New York](#)

- Provide greater transparency on how Cornerstone rates are calculated and the average cost-per-participant rate so providers and advocates can work with DYCD to improve the formula to ensure it covers the true costs of running these programs.

COMPASS and SONYC programs have also not been re-procured in many years, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation. Providers are expecting DYCD to reissue an RFP in 2024. It must address the true cost of providing high quality after school programming. Mechanisms to do this include:

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

COMPASS, SONYC, Beacon and Cornerstone programs continued to provide services to children, youth and adults during challenging times for both employees and participants. Investments must be made to strengthen these programs, so they are prepared for future challenges.

### **Comprehensive Background Checks**

Staffing is one of the main components that children and youth programs require to be successful. Specifically, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) need to not only recruit staff to work in their programs, but they also need to hire these individuals in a timely manner. Part of the hiring process for CBOs operating under School-age Child Care (SACC) licenses requires staff to undergo comprehensive background checks.

In September 2019, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) required new comprehensive background checks for staff and volunteers in youth and early childhood education programs. The background checks are required by rules in the Federal Childcare and Community Development Block Grant that was reauthorized and revised in 2014. As the local regulator, the background check process is managed in New York City by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

DOHMH struggled to manage the process effectively causing delays in the hiring process for staff members in early childhood education and after school programs. The length of time between submitting clearance paperwork and the clearances being completed by DOHMH took anywhere between two weeks and six months and was impacted by the time of year clearances were submitted. Communication with DOHMH was also challenging. When providers sent inquiries about the status of pending background checks to the DOHMH they often receive delayed responses with little information or worse no responses at all. In some instances, providers reported receiving notifications of successfully completed background checks up to six months after they were completed by the DOHMH.

The challenges with the comprehensive background check system were acknowledged in the *Blueprint for Child Care and Early Childhood Education in New York City*<sup>2</sup> noting specifically that any delay in the background check process disrupts child care. The Adams' Administration ultimately committed to hiring forty additional employees at DOHMH to support the comprehensive background check process in addition to "automating the processing system". DOHMH launched the online system to submit background checks on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. The ability to upload documents to an online platform instead of emailing them is a welcome change and being able to check the status of applications online has been incredibly helpful to providers. It currently takes approximately 45 days for background checks to be completed-much less time than the months providers used to have to wait. There have been some challenges with the transition to the new system. For example, providers were told originally by DOHMH that clearances submitted prior to May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 would not have to be submitted again after the launch of the automated system on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. DOHMH eventually rescinded this rule and asked providers to re-submit all clearances to the online system. Recently, some staff were notified directly and not their employer when their comprehensive background check was expiring, encouraging them to complete the appropriate paperwork and get fingerprinted in the next 14 days. Notification like this must be received by both the employee and employer.

**UJA believes that for the comprehensive background check process to continue to improve, DOHMH must have enough staff to oversee the online system and to work with providers who experience issues. DOHMH should continue to commit to improving the background check process, decreasing the timeframe to complete checks and to notify providers and staff within 48 hours when background checks have been completed.**

### **Summer Rising Issues**

Nonprofits will oversee the afternoon enrichment sessions during Summer Rising 2024. A few things need to be addressed to ensure a smoother implementation of this program.

CBOs have no control over enrollment in their Summer Rising programs. They rely on NYCPS to receive information on who they will be serving and have little freedom to move enrollment forward when issues arise. Confusion particularly exists when it comes to waitlists for programs. CBOs are not notified when a participant chooses another program and no longer needs to be on their waitlist. This results in CBOs spending time tracking down families, attempting to find out if a child is still interested in attending their program. When a family is offered a waitlist spot, the CBO who will be serving that individual is not contacted automatically. Families are also only allowed three days to accept a spot in a Summer Rising program. **Language and technology barriers make it difficult for families to meet this deadline. Communication between NYCPS and CBOs regarding enrollment needs to be improved. CBOs must be notified immediately when a participant is offered a spot in their program or is removed from their waitlist. Families should also be given five days to accept a Summer Rising placement.** The extra time will help both providers and families.

CBOs also feel inadequately prepared and supported to engage participants with disabilities. CBOs do not have access to IEPs and receive little information on the needs of the participants with disabilities who will attend their programs. DOE paraprofessionals are supposed to be available during the enrichment part of the day, but CBOs are unclear what the protocol is when paraprofessionals are not available to work with participants who need them. **Increased coordination and support between NYCPS, DYCD and CBOs is needed for participants with disabilities to ensure a successful and meaningful summer for these students.**

CBOs are being placed in schools they have no relationship with meaning providers have to become accustomed to a new space when they are designing their programs. Multiple CBOs will also be operating

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/office-of-the-mayor/2022/Childcare-Plan.pdf#:~:text=The%20Blueprint%20for%20Child%20Care%20and%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20cuts,City's%20most%20in%20need%20families.>

programs in the same school building. It is unclear what the process is for assigning multiple providers space in one building. Additional support must be given to CBOs from NYCPS and DYCD who are struggling with the size of the space they will be overseeing programs in.

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 have no previous relationship with. **Both DYCD and NYCPS should provide information to children on why they were not placed with a CBO they already receive services from and include additional information on who will be supporting them this summer.**

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.

### **Adult Literacy: Increase investment in Adult Literacy Programs**

DYCD is currently reviewing proposals under an RFP that will fund community-based adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs for the next three to six years. At a time when the need for services in our communities is expanding, this RFP cuts DYCD funding for adult literacy education by 30% -- from \$16.83 million in FY24 to \$11.85 million in FY25 through FY27. This dramatic cut in funding will mean that only 9,118 students will be served through DYCD-funded classes annually, less than half of 1% of the 2.2 million adult New Yorkers in need. And a decrease between 25% to 45% of the number of students served through DYCD funded programs as compared to previous fiscal years.

Because of this, UJA-Federation of New York, as a member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy are calling for the FY25 Adopted Budget to **baseline \$21.8 million for DYCD 2 RFP-funded Adult Literacy programs, to restore cuts and maintain services for over 16,000 students. This requires adding \$11 million to the \$10.8 million in the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget, which will:**

- Restore the \$6 million that the FY25 Executive Budget has cut from the \$16.8 million in administration-side funding in the FY24 Adopted Budget, and
- Provide an additional \$5 million to sustain community-based adult literacy services for 16,769 students at the new per-student rate that will take effect in FY25.

In addition, we call on the City Council to renew and expand its crucial funding initiatives:

- 1. Maintain the \$4 million in City Council Discretionary Funding for the Adult Literacy Initiative.**
- 2. Double the funding for the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project from \$2.5 million to \$5 million and expand the number of programs that receive this funding.**
- 3. Change the name of the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project to the City Council Adult Literacy Innovation Project to better reflect the purpose of this funding going forward.**

A substantial investment in adult literacy education means that more New Yorkers will have the capacity to access better jobs and organize for better wages and working conditions; more parents will be able to advocate for their children and their families; more New Yorkers will speak up for their rights and participate in the democratic process; and more communities will be healthier and safer. For these reasons, UJA urges the Administration and the Council to consider the proposed recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions, please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org.

**Testimony to Council Committee on Children and Youth****May 10, 2024****Submitted by Edwin Santana, Freedom Agenda**

Thank you Chairs Brannan and Stevens and Committee members. My name is Edwin Santana. I'm a member and Community Organizer at Freedom Agenda. I believe that the city budget should reflect what we value. And I believe that most New Yorkers value our youth. If we value our youth, then we should invest in the programs and services that serve our youth.

But Mayor Adams seems to have different priorities. He's slashing funding for everything that supports our youth, and doubling down on arresting and incarcerating them. It's shameful. It's also not going to do anything to drive down crime. I can tell you from my own experience, as a person who entered juvenile detention at 13 and 15 years old. Instead of giving me the proper services to help me in my youth, I was incarcerated, and all that did was expose me to horrors that come with the Criminal Justice System. The same is happening with the youth today, let us not forget that there are over 1,000 young people 25 and under at Rikers today. Incarceration is not the answer but that is what Eric Adams wants us to believe.

The Mayor's budget proposes cutting millions from the Department of Youth and Community Development. That includes huge cuts to the Office of Neighborhood Safety for things like Cure Violence programs, employment programs as well as legal services, and recreational events. But you know what he's not cutting? The Department of Correction. Even though they have four times more officers per person in custody than the average jail system, and even though they are the only city agency that is actually required to shrink in the next three years under the plan to Close Rikers. Rikers is hell, especially for people behind the walls, but for people who work there too. So, DOC is expected to have over 1,400 vacancies this year and the Mayor isn't planning to cut any of them. He keeps saying he expects the jail population to rise, but that's not inevitable – it's his policies that are designed to create that outcome. I know and the City Council knows that is the wrong path, and I want to thank you for calling on the Mayor to restore funding cuts to DYCD and other services that support our youth. If the Mayor won't agree to those changes in the budget, we urge the City Council to use every power you have, including passing a budget amendment, to ensure a just budget for our city. In the full written testimony I will submit, you'll see a [full budget analysis](#) from the Campaign to Close Rikers that calls on the City Council to cut DOC's bloated budget and redirect those resources to our youth and our communities.

Thank you, Edwin Santana





## FY2025 Budget Analysis & Priorities

**Mayor Adams' proposed budget is a recipe for keeping Rikers open** by maintaining DOC budget bloat while cutting funds for alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) and re-entry services, and failing to adequately fund supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment. The budget also proposes cuts to a wide range of social services and violence prevention initiatives.<sup>1</sup> In order to follow through on the legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, City Council must secure a budget that will improve community safety and reduce our City's overreliance on incarceration.

### **DOC's budget is still bloated:**

- The Mayor has proposed spending [\\$2.6 billion](#)<sup>2</sup> on jail operations in FY2025.
- Most of DOC's costs are driven by overstaffing. Their ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#).
- DOC anticipates cost savings from [1,451 uniformed vacancies in FY2025](#), but plans to budget for [7,060 uniformed officers through FY2028](#)<sup>3</sup>. By that time, New York City is required to close Rikers Island and shift to a borough jails system with [approximately 4,000 beds](#). Uniform headcount reductions are consistent with a lower jail population and closing Rikers - in fact, these reductions should have started years ago when the jail population started to decline.
- DOC's projected overtime costs have ballooned to over \$274M this year,<sup>4</sup> 105% above [their adopted budget](#).

**The administration seems to be planning either to continue overusing incarceration, or to employ almost twice as many correction officers as people in custody.** Either option makes no sense, morally or financially.

### **Commitments in the Close Rikers plan are still inadequately funded:**

- In the [Points of Agreement on Closing Rikers](#), the administration agreed to establish 380 more units of [Justice Involved Supportive Housing](#), a model that has been hugely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generating substantial cost savings. But funding rates proposed in the RFP issued were so low that [qualified providers have not applied](#), and operators of the existing 120 units are struggling to keep them open.
- [The Close Rikers Plan](#) also promised "A new community-based mental health safety net." This administration has clearly fallen short of that goal - the number of people in Rikers diagnosed

<sup>1</sup> Including large cuts to DSS, DYCD, and DOHMH, outlined here: [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf \(vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. "A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget." Vera Institute of Justice. February 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Financial Plan of the City of New York. Fiscal Years 2024 - 2028. Full time and full time equivalent staffing levels.

<sup>4</sup> Per IBO, April 29, 2024.

with a serious mental illness has [increased by more than 40% since January 2022](#) without sufficient investments in community-based interventions and care, and there are long waiting lists for services like Forensic Assertive Community Treatment teams.

### **Alternatives to incarceration and re-entry supports face cuts:**

- The administration is proposing [\\$2.1M in cuts to alternatives to incarceration programs](#).<sup>5</sup> Opportunities to divert people from Rikers should be fully utilized, in collaboration with the Jail Population Review Initiative that the Council established last year through Local Law 75-2023. Expanding alternatives to incarceration was also a key commitment in the [plan to close Rikers](#).
- The administration is proposing [\\$2.6M in cuts to re-entry services](#), while a key commitment in the [plan to Close Rikers](#) was to “Enhance Reentry and Discharge Planning Services Available to Everyone Leaving City Jails,” as [evidence recommends](#).
- The above programs are funded under the Office of Criminal Justice (formerly MOCJ).

### **Jail oversight cuts are proposed:**

- DOC continues to [violate minimum standards](#) established by the Board of Correction, and strong oversight is crucial. BOC needs more staff to fulfill its mandate, but the Mayor proposes [reducing their staff from 35 to 29 positions, and cutting BOC's budget by \\$459,953 \(12%\)](#).

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## **What should happen in this year's budget**

### **I. Reduce DOC uniformed headcount to 5,110**

- a. **Eliminate vacancies for uniformed staff.** The Department of Correction currently employs about [6,041 uniformed staff](#) (1,019 vacancies)<sup>6</sup> and anticipates cost savings based on an average of [1,451 uniformed vacancies in Fiscal Year 2025](#), but they have not made a plan to rightsize this agency in alignment with closing Rikers.
  - b. **Hold staff accountable for chronic absenteeism.** The Nunez Federal Monitor reported in October 2022 that DOC had [identified 1,029 officers as chronically absent](#),<sup>7</sup> and in the March 2023 preliminary budget hearing, DOC could not report if these staff had returned to work or been held accountable.<sup>8</sup> If approximately 50% (500) of these officers are terminated and 50% return to work to avoid termination, we can reduce jail operations spending by \$55.8M.<sup>9</sup>
2. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center.<sup>10</sup>
  3. **Allocate an additional \$19.4M to meet housing and mental health needs**, and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:

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<sup>5</sup> “The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025. Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)”. January 2024. P. 30 - 31.

<sup>6</sup> Per IBO, as of April 29, 2024

<sup>7</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Second Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” October 28, 2022. p53.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” November 8, 2023. p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Based on \$111,660 per officer, as calculated by the Vera Institute, [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf](#)

[\(vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#).

<sup>10</sup> In response to Council Member questions in the March 23, 2023 budget hearing.

- a. Establish a separate line-item for JISH in the DOHMH budget, and [allocate an additional \\$6.4M](#) to increase service funding rates for 380 new and 120 existing units.
  - b. \$2.9M more to enable 5 more state-funded Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
  - c. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
  - d. Ensure adequate funding to fully implement Local Law 119-2023 by establishing at least five new clubhouses (21 citywide), and take steps to prevent closures of existing sites
4. **Fully restore cuts to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs and re-entry programs, and expand funding.** While the Executive Budget includes partially restored cuts to these programs, there is still a vital need to restore \$2.1M for alternatives to incarceration still and \$2.6M for re-entry services. The budget should go further, to add \$1.1M for these programs as requested by the [ATI/Reentry Coalition](#).
5. **Increase Board of Correction headcount** to at least 1% of DOC's headcount. This type of linked budget exists for other oversight agencies [like the CCRB](#). Increasing BOC headcount to 1% of DOC's would add 35 BOC staff positions, but would only add approximately \$4M to the overall expense budget.<sup>11</sup>

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does the Department of Correction have a staff shortage?**

No. In fact, they are overstaffed. The Department of Correction's ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#), and NYC's is the only jail system among the nation's 50 largest cities that has as many officers as people in custody. Reducing their headcount now is an important first step to [rightsizing](#) the department.

### **If they are not understaffed, why is there a shortage of officers to cover posts and provide basic services?**

For three main reasons:

1. **Officers often leave their assigned posts or don't fulfill their duties.** [Investigations](#) found that many officers who *are* at work are *not* at their assigned posts – including some found hanging out in locker rooms. Multiple death reports from the Board of Correction, including their [most recent report](#), indicated that insufficient touring and staff leaving their posts contributed to tragic deaths in custody, including those of William Johnstone, Curtis Davis, and Manish Kunwar. The Nunez federal monitor in their [November 8 report](#), stated “Definitive measures to ensure that staff are available in sufficient numbers and that they stay on post are obviously necessary. It is equally critical that staff *actually do their jobs* [emphasis in original]... Too often, staff are present and yet fail to enact or enforce even the most basic security protocols.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The FY2024 projected budget allocates \$3.8M to BOC, for 35 staff; 68 staff would constitute 1% of a 6,822 person uniformed DOC workforce (1,722 civilian - as projected by the administration and 5,100 uniformed - as we recommend).

<sup>12</sup> Martin, Steve et al. Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor. November 8, 2023. P 25.

2. **There are too many officers assigned to non-jail posts.** There are [hundreds of officers each day](#) who work in non-jail posts either because they are prevented from working directly with incarcerated people due to an ongoing disciplinary case, they are being ‘medically monitored,’ or they have been assigned to a different job like working in the laundry room or as a secretary to a warden - tasks that are performed by civilians in other jail systems. These posts have been widely used in DOC as rewards to officers favored by supervisors, and officers who have these posts have [strongly resisted](#) being transferred to posts in the jails.
3. **Too many officers don’t come to work.** Uniformed DOC staff have unlimited sick leave. As of December 2023, [DOC sick leave rates](#) remained at nearly twice the pre-Covid rates within the department (8.49%), and more than double the rates of NYPD and FDNY - agencies that also offer unlimited sick leave.<sup>13</sup> Another 3.4% of officers are out on [long term sick leave, which is often abused](#).

### **Does DOC need to replace officers who are retiring?**

Reducing the uniform headcount would not prevent DOC from replacing some officers who quit, retire, or are terminated. It would require DOC to more effectively supervise and manage their very large staff.

### **How is the money being spent?**

The FY2025 budget projects that [88.3% of DOC expenses](#) will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

### **How does NYC’s jail spending compare to other cities?**

In 2021, [New York City spent 350% more](#) per incarcerated person ([\\$556,539](#)<sup>14</sup> per year) than Los Angeles or Cook County, Illinois, and yet, people in DOC custody are subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation. The *Nunez* federal monitor also reported in their [October 2023 report](#) “The Department’s staffing complement is highly unusual and is one of the richest staffing ratios among the systems with which the Monitoring Team has had experience.”

### **What will we do about those jobs? Aren’t a lot of correction officers people of color, and women?**

The choice to invest so much of New York City’s budget in incarceration has meant that DOC has become a path to the middle class, including for many women and people of color.<sup>15</sup> New York City could and should make a different choice - to invest in and raise salaries, for example, for [EMS workers](#), [green jobs](#) that can help us meet our goals for a vibrant and climate resilient city, and [human services jobs](#) that address community needs. Black and Brown workers deserve jobs with good wages and benefits that aren’t dependent on the incarceration of their neighbors and families. We must invest in a [just transition](#) to expand and better compensate jobs outside of law enforcement - for example, human services, a sector in which more than 80% of workers are women of color, and which is subject to constant budget cuts that have resulted in lost jobs and depressed wages.

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<sup>13</sup> “Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report.” January 2024.p 411.

<sup>14</sup> For FY2021. “NYC Department of Correction, FYs 2011-21 Operating Expenditures.” *New York City Comptroller’s Office, Budget Bureau*. December 2021

<sup>15</sup> New York City correction officers are paid \$92,000/year after 5.5 years on the job, and receive generous benefits.  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/jointheboldest/officer/salary-benefits.page>





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

**FY 2025 Executive Budget Hearing:  
Committee on Children & Youth Services  
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Submitted by Nora Moran, Director of Policy & Advocacy  
May 10th, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Nora Moran, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses 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.

Youth programming has played a significant role throughout the history of New York City by engaging young people in programming that can expand their minds and opportunities, connecting families to other essential supports beyond after school, and helping youth navigate challenging times. Summer programming, including summer camps and the Summer Youth Employment Program, has long been the cornerstone of the positive youth development movement, offering exciting and supportive programs outside of the September-June school structure. It is crucial that New York City maintain and invest in its summer programs not only to offer youth and their caregivers safe spaces to be in the summer, but also to maintain the positive development, enrichment, and most importantly fun that comes with summer programs.

The Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget proposes **a \$44.9 million program to eliminate the gap (PEG)** for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). Leading up to the FY25 Preliminary and Executive Budget proposals, the Adams Administration cited economic uncertainty to justify a round of PEGs to City agencies. However, analyses from New York State



Comptroller DiNapoli and the Independent Budget Office (IBO) have called into question the need for budget cuts, given an anticipated surplus of more than \$2 billion.<sup>1 2</sup>

The Mayor has reversed some previously established PEGs from November 2023 for agencies such as DOE and NYPD, but has maintained all budget cuts for DYCD, and, in fact, announced new cuts in January's FY25 Preliminary Budget. DYCD's PEG will directly and indirectly impact the broad array of community-based programs supported by the agency. This PEG comes at a time when communities need services the most as our city faces an affordability crisis for families and. The Mayor's Management Report issued in January 2024 notes increased program utilization across many DYCD programs in FY24,<sup>3</sup> calling any proposed cuts—however they are framed—into question. **This \$44.9 million PEG must be restored in the FY25 Adopted Budget.** Instead of cutting this network of supports for our youth and families, we should be strengthening and expanding it, as well as creating further linkages between program models to ensure that the vast array of services are readily available to all New Yorkers. Instituting funding cuts to DYCD at a time when working families are faced with a crisis of unaffordability and the city has seen an influx of new families in need of supportive services is a grievous misstep and calls into question this administration's commitment to both our young people and their families.

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

- Restore \$6.9 million to COMPASS Explore and SONYC afterschool programs;
- Restore \$19.6 million in Summer Rising funding to prevent the reduction of middle school programs;
- Baseline \$21.7 million in Adult Literacy funding and ensure all funding is included in the current RFP;
- Create a \$3 Million Youth Mental Health Council Initiative;
- Baseline the Promise NYC program with a \$25 million annual investment;
- Reduce barriers preventing asylum seeking families from accessing youth-serving programs;
- Invest in the human services workforce and make a long-term investment by creating and funding a prevailing wage schedule.

### **Restore \$6.9 Million to COMPASS Explore and SONYC Afterschool Programs**

COMPASS/SONYC programs provide afterschool and summer programming to school-aged youth across the city. Settlement houses collectively operate 140 school-based after-school programs. COMPASS/SONYC programs have struggled in recent years with low staff wages leading to recruitment and retention challenges, as well as vacancies due to delays in the DOHMH Comprehensive Background Check process. Now that schools are consistently open and youth are engaging with in-person activities again, it's important to protect and invest in afterschool programs to ensure they have the staff and resources they need to support young New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, the PEG from the November 2023 Plan proposed a \$6.9 million cut to afterschool programs. In January 2024, CBOs started receiving notices of cuts (described as "slot

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/print-2024-preliminary-budget-report-february.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/osdc/pdf/report-16-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dycd.pdf>



reductions”) to their FY25 SONYC<sup>4</sup> contracts. Simultaneously, COMPASS Explore<sup>5</sup> providers received notice that their contracts would be permanently ended on June 30, 2024, after their current one-year extension contract expires.

**This will result in the loss of 3,538 afterschool seats and the shrinking of the citywide afterschool system.** In light of growing demand for childcare services and the persistent lack of affordable care options for working families, this cut will be devastating for the families of New York City.

**In the FY25 budget, the City must restore \$6.9 million in afterschool funding by extending the COMPASS Explore contracts, and restoring cuts to SONYC programming.**

Furthermore, COMPASS/SONYC programs have not been re-procured in many years, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation or changes in the labor market. The upcoming RFP must reflect the true cost of providing high quality afterschool programming. In November 2023, UNH released a report that details this issue and includes model budgets for city-funded afterschool programs.<sup>6</sup> Our recommendations include:

- Establishing year-round, 12 month youth service contracts and streamlining the procurement process;
- Paying approved provider indirect rates in full, in accordance with the City’s Indirect Cost Rate Initiative;
  - Providers must be able to claim those rates at the outset and include them in budgets, not have a placeholder rate that later gets amended;
- Funding the true cost of afterschool programming and establishing a \$22 an hour wage floor
  - Contracts should also include year-over-year funding cost escalators, in accordance with inflation;
- Supporting staffing ratios appropriate for School Age Child Care (SACC) licensing for all 12 months of the year; and
- Prioritizing positive youth development principles.

To support the new RFP, the City Council should invest \$3 million in a new Youth Mental Health Council Initiative to provide flexible mental health services for youth programs run by CBOs, allowing them to hire mental health professionals who are trained to engage young people, lead structured group activities, or test other innovative, tailored solutions to youth mental health needs (see below for more information).

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

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<sup>4</sup> The SONYC model serves grades 6-8. Middle school youth are engaged in rigorous afterschool activities, structured as clubs, emphasizing student voice and choice.

<sup>5</sup> The COMPASS Explore model serves grades K-12 students. This unique model allowed providers to develop specialized programming to engage youth in experiential learning opportunities.

<sup>6</sup> UNH, *Assessing the True Cost of Implementing High-Quality Afterschool Programming in New York City*, November 2023

[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/unhny/pages/12/attachments/original/1702991824/True\\_Cost\\_of\\_Afterschool\\_November\\_2023%281%29.pdf?1702991824](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/unhny/pages/12/attachments/original/1702991824/True_Cost_of_Afterschool_November_2023%281%29.pdf?1702991824)



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

### **Restore \$19.6 Million in Summer Rising Funding to Prevent the Reduction of Middle School Programs**

DYCD has confirmed that Summer Rising, the partnership between DYCD and the DOE to provide integrated summer school and summer camp to elementary- and middle-school aged youth, will continue in Summer 2024. Despite several years of feedback where CBOs have raised challenges with this model—including issues with centralized DOE enrollment; a lack of choice for parents and families who wanted a more traditional summer camp experience; and inconsistent support for students with disabilities—there have been few clear changes or improvements made.

Despite these challenges, CBOs have worked hard to implement strong Summer Rising programs. However, the Adams Administration has proposed a \$19.6 million PEG to DYCD's Summer Rising budget. If maintained, this cut will result in a drastic reduction to programming for middle school students this summer - a complete cut to Friday programming and a 2-hour reduction to the remaining program days. This equates to a proposed loss of 18 hours of programming per week.

### **The City must restore \$19.6 million in Summer Rising funding to restore middle school programs.**

In addition, in order to make this model successful for all parties, but especially for children and families who deserve summer opportunities that fulfill their needs, the City must consider the following:

- DYCD and DOE should jointly invest in a comprehensive evaluation to determine the efficacy of the model;
- CBOs must have control over participant registration, which will especially help families who need additional digital and language support to apply for programming,
  - CBOs should be able to maintain their own rosters so that if there are young people who cannot attend the CBO portion of the day, 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;
- The City should allow youth and families to choose whether to attend summer school, camp, or both, and allow CBOs the chance to record how many young people choose which service; and
- In addition, Summer Rising 2024 can only be set up for success if there is increased and coordinated support for students with disabilities and students in temporary housing to make sure CBOs have resources they need to properly serve these young people.



**Baseline \$21.7 million in Adult Literacy funding and ensure all funding is included in the current RFP.**

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

Today in New York City, there are nearly one million adults living in New York City with limited to no proficiency in English (i.e. those who reported that they did not speak English or did not speak English well). Moreover, over the past year, more than 170,000 asylum seekers and refugees have arrived in New York after fleeing life-threatening social, political, and economic conditions in their home countries. For many of these adults, limited skills impact almost every aspect of their lives, making it difficult to support their children in school, access health care, secure and maintain living-wage jobs, advocate for their rights, and fully participate in their new communities.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) currently has an open Request for Proposal (RFP) that will fund community-based organizations to lead adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs for the next three to six years. The Literacy Services RFP application closed on April 5, and DYCD maintains that new contracts will be awarded by July 1, 2024.

UNH is grateful to the City Council for calling on the administration to fully invest in Adult Literacy programs in its response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. Unfortunately, despite our collective efforts and our strong support from the City Council, the Mayor's Executive Budget **cuts \$1 million** from DYCD Adult Literacy programs for FY25 – from \$11,853,400 in the DYCD Literacy RFP to \$10,803,000 in the Executive Budget.

Earlier in the year, the Mayor's FY25 Preliminary Budget included \$21.7 million for DYCD RFP-funded Adult Literacy programs. UNH and our City Council champions called for this additional \$10 million to be baselined in the RFP. However, during the City Council's preliminary budget oversight hearings, we were told by the administration that the \$10 million was a "technical" error. (Please note that none of these figures include the \$2.5 million in Council Discretionary Pilot funding or the \$4 million in Council Discretionary Adult Literacy Initiative funding.)

At the same time, the \$11.85 million budget set forth in the RFP is \$5 million less than the \$16.83 million in administration-side funding for DYCD Adult Literacy contracts in FY24. This means that this RFP will serve just over 9,100 students annually, a significant decrease from the 11,000 – 16,000 that DYCD has reported over the past few years.

If this additional funding could get baselined and included in the Literacy Services RFP, we ask the City Council to call on DYCD to take action through some combination of the following steps:

- Baseline \$21.8 million for DYCD Adult Literacy programs to restore cuts and maintain service levels. This requires adding \$11 million to the \$10.8 million in the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget which will:
  - Restore the \$6 million that the FY25 Executive Budget has cut from the \$16.8 million in administration funding in the FY24 Adopted Budget, and



- Provide an additional \$5 million to maintain community-based adult literacy services for roughly the same number of students at the new per-student rate that will take effect in FY25.
- Maintain the \$4 million in City Council Discretionary Funding for the Adult Literacy Initiative.
- Double the funding for the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project from \$2.5 million to \$5 million and expand the number of programs that receive this funding.
- Change the name of the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project to the City Council Adult Literacy Innovation Project to better reflect the purpose of this funding going forward.

Given that contracts under the new Literacy Services RFP are set to begin July 1, **we urge this Committee to get clarity on the funding and push for a baseline of the full \$21.8 million.**

### **Create a \$3 Million Youth Mental Health Council Initiative**

The COVID-19 pandemic had long-lasting effects on young people, including their mental health. During the first few months of the pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will “require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities.” In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children’s Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis. Furthermore, according to a 2022 survey from the Institute of Education Sciences, 69 percent of public schools reported an increase in students seeking mental health services that year, but 43 percent of schools “moderately agreed” that they could “effectively provide mental health service to all students in need.” Only 13 percent “strongly agreed.”

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

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



comprehensive mental health services that address the many stressors they are facing with substantive and professional care.

### **Baseline the Promise NYC Program with a \$25 Million Annual Investment**

Due to restrictions on certain funding sources, the only public early childhood education programs that undocumented children can directly join are 3-K and Pre-K programs and federal Head Start. This leaves a major gap in child care for undocumented immigrants, including the tens of thousands of recent asylum seekers in New York City. To help address this challenge, UNH urges New York City to invest \$25 million in the FY 2025 Adopted Budget to baseline the new Promise NYC program to provide subsidized child care to low-income undocumented children.

Under Promise NYC, four providers, including three settlement houses, have contracted with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to implement a child care voucher program in each of their respective boroughs (NMIC in the Bronx and Manhattan, Center for Family Life in Brooklyn, Chinese-American Planning Council in Queens, and La Colmena in Staten Island). The 6-month program launched in January 2023, and after a six-week period of administrative preparation, providers were able to begin outreach to families in February. Providers are contracted to serve a total of 600 children citywide for the remainder of the fiscal year through June.

For NMIC (Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation), this venture into child care services was new for the organization, yet they were chosen due to their presence in both Manhattan and the Bronx and the strong relationships they hold with the community they serve. Unsurprisingly, they did not need extensive outreach efforts; the program's popularity was swift and substantial, emphasizing the pressing need for child care services, particularly among undocumented community members. However, the budget allocation still falls short of addressing the demand, with NMIC only being able to serve 110 children in Manhattan and 125 in the Bronx, while having over 400 children waitlisted.

Promise NYC was funded with \$16 million in the City's FY 2024 budget after extensive support and negotiation from the Council. However, this funding was secured before the majority of new asylum seekers arrived in New York City, and it was not baselined, so programs are anticipating that child care will end on June 30th and undocumented families will abruptly be left without a child care arrangement.

**We urge the City to extend funding for Promise NYC to \$20 million in the FY 2025 budget and each year thereafter so that undocumented families can continue to access the affordable, subsidized child care they need.** This investment will allow providers to expand the number of children they serve, including funding for increased staff capacity necessary for invoicing and matching families to available child care providers. With an expanded budget, the goal is to further facilitate families' access to care and serve as a pipeline into the K-12 school system, solidifying its status as a crucial community resource. In sum, Promise NYC has emerged as a lifeline for families facing childcare challenges, illustrating the positive impact that accessible child care can have on individuals, families, and communities.

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



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

Settlement houses have been welcoming immigrant New Yorkers since their founding in the late 19th century, and today's wave of the newest New Yorkers is no exception. Settlement houses are experts at pivoting services to support the most urgent needs in their neighborhoods. According to a September 2023 survey of UNH members, 72% reported an increased presence of asylum seekers in their youth programs.<sup>7</sup>

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

- Lack of transportation - Youth residing in shelters who participate in afterschool programming are not able to take advantage of free bussing that is provided at the end of the school day.
- Need for additional bilingual staff - With an increase of youth whose first language is not English, providers have stated a need for additional bilingual staff who can support youth in their own language. This issue is compounded by the persistent staffing shortage in early childhood and school-aged youth programs due to low wages.
- Inconsistency due to 60-day shelter timeline - Even when families are able to overcome other barriers to enroll their young people in childcare or afterschool programs, they may receive notice and be required to move sites, displacing young people from the program they were enrolled in.

The City's inability to provide consistency for newly arrived youth and provide supports to keep them enrolled in childcare and afterschool programs is a missed opportunity to support our newest New Yorkers. However, we must note that with the current proposed cuts, making these changes to expand access to afterschool services to newly arrived New Yorkers will only create an inundated system that is unable to accommodate the need. **For the City to appropriately tackle this issue, it must simultaneously restore the cuts to afterschool, early childhood education, and summer services, while removing barriers to access.**

### **Invest In The Human Services Workforce and Make a Long-Term Investment By Creating and Funding a Prevailing Wage Schedule**

Human services workers in New York City are grossly underpaid. Across UNH's network of settlement houses in New York City, 76% of their total budget comes from government sources, and 65% of that is from New York City. Unfortunately, contracts from New York City often do not include sufficient funding to pay workers a fair and dignified wage.

Wages have failed to keep up with both inflation and changes to the job market, and as a result the human services sector continues to sit on the cliff of a staffing crisis. On average, more than a third (35%) of UNH settlement house members reported double-digit job vacancy rates of 10% or higher in 2023, up from 31 percent the previous year, and nearly two-thirds (65%) of UNH

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<sup>7</sup> UNH, *Settlement Houses Supporting the Newest New Yorkers: Voices from the Field*, [https://assets.nationbuilder.com/unhny/pages/12/attachments/original/1702991539/UNH\\_Voices\\_from\\_the\\_Field\\_Report\\_1252023%281%29.pdf?1702991539](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/unhny/pages/12/attachments/original/1702991539/UNH_Voices_from_the_Field_Report_1252023%281%29.pdf?1702991539)



settlement house members reported that job positions remained vacant for 3 months or more in the past year, including 14% who said that positions remained vacant for 6 months or longer.

Without increased budgets in government contracts to cover wage increases, nonprofits will be unable to recruit and train the next generation of nonprofit leaders, setting future New Yorkers up for significant barriers to accessing services that grow over time. Further, insufficient staffing has made it increasingly difficult for nonprofits to serve New Yorkers, leading to under-enrollment and program closures which then leads to budget reductions and a vicious cycle that harms New Yorkers seeking services.

We thank the City Council and Mayor Adams for funding a 3-year Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human service workers. This will provide immediate relief, we must do more to undo years of budgets that left behind human service workers.

### ***Create a Prevailing Wage Schedule for Human Services Workers***

UNH supports Int 0734-2024 (sponsored by Council Member Stevens) to establish a prevailing wage for city-contracted human service workers, which would require City agencies to include sufficient funding to cover those wages in contracts, and track implementation of those wages by human service contractors. While prevailing wage schedules are an imperfect tool to address the current conditions faced by human service workers, it is a significant improvement from the status quo. This process to design a true prevailing wage system is arduous and will require careful analysis, but we cannot continue to afford ignoring the need. For years, the government at every level has asked nonprofit partners to do “more with less.” This dynamic has pushed our sector to a real breaking point, and our workforce has suffered the consequences. It’s time for us to look beyond stopgap measures and towards efforts that would have a long-lasting impact on the human service sector.

**UNH urges the City Council to pass CM Stevens’ prevailing wage legislation and fully fund it in the FY25 budget to limit impacts to programs.**

Thank you for your time. For any follow up questions, I can be contacted at [nmoran@unhny.org](mailto:nmoran@unhny.org).



May 10, 2024

Chairs Stevens, Brannan, and members of the City Council,

Good afternoon.

My name is Alex Malescio and I am the Senior Director of Government Relations at Urban Upbound (a.k.a East River Development Alliance, Inc.) Like many of my colleagues in the nonprofit sector, I'm here today to advocate for the inclusion of funding in the City's budget to support programs that address the root causes of poverty and mitigate its social ills which often affect youth the most, including violence and exclusion from economic opportunity.

Specifically, we at Urban Upbound have found that the following programs have the greatest positive impact on youth:

- **Career-focused workforce development:** A high percentage of youth today are seeking meaningful careers that promise a living wage, including coding, engineering, and construction trades. In this context, workforce development involves programs such as high school tutoring and college preparation, soft skills, including resume building, interview prep, career planning, and retention counseling, and hard skills training, including connections to free highly-technical courses.
- **Entrepreneurship services:** Many youth today are particularly attracted to the independence and opportunity associated with starting a business. Technical assistance services provide budding entrepreneurs with the support needed to manage their businesses' finances, operation, marketing, vendor relations, and administrative responsibilities. Urban Upbound specializes in providing business strategy consulting to worker-cooperatives, an innovative business model that facilitates worker equity.
- **Financial inclusion:** is both a prerequisite and a goal of workforce and business development. Regardless of whether they are in crisis-mode or are further into their journey towards financial independence, youth need access to one-on-one counseling and services that address debt, credit, financial planning, taxes, and benefits. Access to safe and affordable banking through community-based institutions such as the Urban Upbound Federal Credit Union is also key.
- Finally, youth should have access to **Mental Wellness services** that address the emotions and challenges that can arise during career and financial growth. Services such as sessions with clinical counselors can only be successful when paired with programming that destigmatizes mental health care.

When integrated comprehensively, access to programs that focus on career-development, entrepreneurship services, financial inclusion, and mental wellness services provide our youth



with the foundation and tools needed to break cycles of poverty. Urban Upbound is proud to advocate for the reflection of these priorities in the City's budget.

Thank you for hearing this testimony today.

Alex Malescio  
Senior Director of Government Relations  
East River Development Alliance, Inc. (DBA Urban Upbound)  
[info@urbanupbound.org](mailto:info@urbanupbound.org)



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

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

**Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearing: Finance Committee and  
Committee on Children and Youth  
May 10, 2024**

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.

The YMCA is also a proud member of the Campaign for Children (C4C), the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs (ECSEP), and the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL). As a member of these networks and coalitions we support their policy and budget agendas.

We stand with the Council, and our non-profit partners, to oppose the harmful budget cuts to the adult literacy, early childhood, and youth service systems which were proposed in the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) November Budget Modification and remain in the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Executive Budget. Budgets reflect our priorities; this budget demonstrates to our youth, families, adult learners, new Americans, new neighbors, and nonprofit providers that this Administration does not value their needs.

**Early Childhood Education**

The YMCA's early childhood programs serve nearly 1,000 children each year. The need for early childhood education continues to increase across the City, with the YMCA having a waitlist at more than half of our program sites. Early childhood education is a vital part of New York City's social and economic ecosystems, as it allows parents and guardians to go to work, supports the development and enrichment of children, and enhances the quality of life for some of our most

vulnerable communities. To sustain these ecosystems, as well as meet the growing need for youth programs and early childhood education, community-based organizations like the YMCA need seamless support from our agency partners. This means fully staffed divisions, clear and timely communication, and designated points of contact. This way we can ensure a smooth process in hiring and onboarding staff, and in turn have the support we need to maximize our enrollment. None of which can occur with direct cuts to Pre-K and 3-K, central support, and an agency-wide hiring freeze which further exasperates bureaucratic hurdles to the delivery of childcare early childhood education.

Even though the FY25 Executive Budget does a one-year restoration of \$92 million to 3-K, the Executive Budget maintains the Fiscal 2024 PEG of \$170 million from early childhood education services, introduced in the November 2023 Financial Plan, citing inefficiencies including unused seats. This could translate into 9,000 to 15,000 seats being cut from the system, leaving many children without Pre-K and halting the timeline of the citywide expansion of 3-K. Additionally, the Executive Budget fails to fund the successful PromiseNYC program, which allows for undocumented children to access early childhood services.

We stand with the Council and Campaign for Children (C4C) call to:

1. **Restore** \$170 million in city tax-levy funding to early care and education. This restoration would protect the path to 3-K expansion and protect Pre-K capacity for 9,000 to 15,000 children.
2. **Restore, invest and baseline** \$25 million for PromiseNYC.

### **Adult Literacy**

The YMCA has worked with newcomers to NYC since 1908, back when we had a YMCA on Ellis Island. Based on the success of our English Language and Employment Services for Adult Immigrant and Refugees program, which was established in 1978, we launched the New Americans Initiative in 2008. Pre-pandemic the initiative was operating out of seven New American Welcome Centers at various YMCA branches. We currently have four sites – Chinatown YMCA, Flatbush YMCA, Flushing YMCA and Harlem YMCA, as well as online classes, serving 390 students with a waiting list of 400 individuals.

As we collectively work towards mitigating the detrimental impact of the pandemic and meet the needs of many asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees, the YMCA's holistic approach to adult education and related services is more crucial now than ever before. Through the New Americans Initiative, we offer instructional, vocational, recreational, and wrap-around services to all of our students. Programming is adapted to meet the individualized needs of our participants, and we are proud to offer a comprehensive case management program to support not only our students but their families and ensure that they have the tools they need to be successful both inside and outside of our classrooms. As we aim to remove any barriers hindering progress, we work to ensure our students have access to food, medical care, childcare, education, immigration services, and other resources they may need. Additionally, in response to the increased rate of mental health distress experienced by our students and their communities, the YMCA of Greater

New York instituted a Crisis Response Team whose goals are to reduce feelings of helplessness, confusion, and heightened anxiety, as well as provide additional resources and referrals where appropriate.

As an active and proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL) - a coalition comprised of adult literacy teachers, program managers, students, and allies from over 40 community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs across the five boroughs – we support the coalition’s calls to invest and baseline \$21.8 million for Department of Youth and Community Development’s (DYCD) Adult Literacy program.

As you are aware, there are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or without a high school diploma. Despite these concerning figures, the combined City and State funding streams for adult education are so low that fewer than 1% of these adults have access to adult basic education, high school equivalency, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes in any given year. Furthermore, these figures do not account for the more than 175,000 asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees who have recently arrived in New York after fleeing life-threatening social, political, environmental, and economic conditions in their home countries.

Yet despite the growing need, DYCD’s recently released Request for Proposal (RFP) reduces the existing system’s ceiling of serving up to 17,722 students to a ceiling of serving up to 9,118 students or 52 percent of the total students served. Additionally, the FY25 Executive Budget reduces the budget from \$16.83 million to \$10.8 million. Although the RFP superficially increases the per participant rate to \$1,300, this merely keeps track with increases to staffing costs and inflation.

The YMCA, like many other adult literacy providers, has had to turn away individuals due to the lack of capacity to serve them. . It is irresponsible for this Administration to not make the necessary investments so that more adult learners and newcomers can be on the path of success, stabilization, and integration into our City.

In response to DYCD’s Adult Literacy RFP, and in alignment with the NYCCAL, the YMCA of Greater New York calls on the Administration to:

1. **Invest and baseline** \$21.8 million for DYCD’s Adult Literacy program.
2. **Increase** the per student funding rate, to remove the burden on organizations to find additional sources of revenue to supplement the DYCD funding. We stand with NYCCAL’s call for a rate no less than \$2,700. This rate is based on the *Investing in Quality* report that DYCD commissioned in 2017, which recommended the building blocks to best support a student that are incorporated in this RFP.

Adult literacy education is a matter of racial, social, and economic justice. Adult literacy education can provide the space for community members to read, write, and speak the truth of their lived



experience. Literacy skills give individuals the power to understand and command information, to communicate in the language of access, to make informed choices, to access critical resources and opportunities, to stand up for themselves in the workplace, to fully participate in civic life and institutions and, ultimately, to transform their lives and the world around them.

By baselining \$21.8 million, a historic and substantial investment, in adult literacy education the Administration will ensure the continuity of services for current students and keep the existing level of participant slots.

### **Youth Services**

The YMCA Afterschool program, which includes six Beacon, eight SONYC, 26 COMPASS, ten Community Schools, and one Cornerstone site, empowers nearly 8,000 children and teens each day. The YMCA helps young people expand on the academic knowledge they acquire during school hours, develop their social and emotional learning, build rapport with their peers, and increase confidence, all of which empower our youth to excel both inside and outside of our program sites. We also are concerned about the reduction of hours for Summer Rising programming for middle school students. Having access to safe, supportive summer programming is crucial for all youth; undermining that will have negative impacts on children and families. In line with our partners, we stand with the Council on opposing these harmful cuts and call on the City to release a new COMPASS RFP that reflects today's reality of the rising need for affordable childcare with an expansion, rather than this proposed constriction. Additionally, we call on the City to establish a year-round, 12-month youth service contracting model and shift to a K-8 summer program model that draws on best practice.

Again, the FY25 Executive Budget maintains the November 2023 Financial Plan's PEG of \$6.9 million from COMPASS afterschool (DYCD), a loss of 3,538 COMPASS slots, and \$19.6 million from the Summer Rising Program New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Thousands of young children and youth stand to lose programs that offer safe and nurturing environments for their learning and development, and that allow parents to work. As youth and families try to rebuild from the pandemic, our city's young people require opportunities to grow and connect with peers in ways that advance their social emotional learning, physical development, academic preparedness, and overall opportunities for success. Programs like COMPASS are vital lifelines for countless children, offering crucial support, mentorship, educational opportunities, and a safe space for personal growth and development. Reductions in these programs would disproportionately impact low-income youth and families who rely on these services for their children's growth and safety and as an indispensable resource for working caregivers who otherwise cannot afford fee-based programs. We urge the City to protect afterschool access and work to strengthen the system in the future.

In line with other youth services providers, we call on the Administration to:

Build a stronger, more inclusive future for our city by investing in the following critical services:

1. **Restore** \$6.9 million to COMPASS after school, protecting services for 3,538 youth.

2. **Restore** \$19.64 million to the DYCD portion of Summer Rising programs for middle school youth, ensuring that youth can have a full 5 days of programming from 8am to 6pm and field trips.

Last, the City should take the following steps to ensure the youth services workforce can support access to services:

- **Release** new RFPs for SONYC and COMPASS that cover the actual cost of care. Increase the cost-per-participant rates for COMPASS and SONYC to set a wage floor of no less than \$22/hour for staff and ensure year-round contracting.

According to a recent Citizen's Committee for Children's report, [80% of families cannot afford](#) childcare or after school programs. Across the city, families can pay up to 63% of their annual income on childcare or after school care. These proposed budget cuts will detrimentally impact youth and families. We are encouraged and thank the Council for pushing back on these cuts.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Rivadeneyra, Vice President of Government Relations, at [mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org](mailto:mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org) or 646-648-1921.



[newyorkedge.org](http://newyorkedge.org)

# NYC Council FY 25 Executive Budget Hearing Public Session:

Finance Committee –

Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair

&

Children & Youth Services Committee –

Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

Education Committee –

Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair

Health Committee –

Hon. Lynn Schulman, Chair

*Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO*

On behalf of the Board and Staff of **New York Edge (NYE)**, I thank you for the Council's longstanding support of our mission of bridging the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. And as our name implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the **EDGE** that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

New York Edge was created 32 years ago at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

**From these beginnings, we have grown into the largest provider of after-school and summer programming in New York City, serving almost 30,000 youth at 133 schools throughout the five boroughs.** Our Education Team, comprised of educators with expertise in curriculum, professional coaching, and program development with a focus on leadership, integrated technologies, literacy and STEAM, take learning beyond the traditional classroom walls. **Core components of New York Edge programming include:**

- **STEM Education**
- **Social Emotional Learning and Leadership**
- **Visual & Performing Arts**
- **Sports, Health & Wellness**
- **Academics and College & Career Readiness**
- **Summer Programs**

New York Edge has been identified by Mosaic by ACT as the largest after-school provider in the nation offering SEL supports. We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access

programs across all educational levels AND have been a leading Community Schools partner for over a decade.

**Our free summer programs will begin in early July, providing over 10,000 young New Yorkers with a summer camp experience on par with the best private pay camps in the city, improving health and wellness, developing social skills, and preventing summer learning loss.**

We are dedicated to improving both physical and nutrition literacy among New York Edge participants through the implementation of a wide variety of sports, wellness and fitness programs. Our programs encourage children to play more, have fun and adopt healthy eating habits.

**With the city's finances in much better shape than expected in January, we ask that the Council continue to support our mission by increasing our funding in the FY 25 Budget.**

We are seeking **1.2M** under the Council's ***After-School Enrichment*** Initiative, an increase of approximately \$200,000 over our FY 24 allocation. **This would be our first enhancement in 16 years.**

New York Edge school-based programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods). Council citywide funding under the ***After School Enrichment Initiative*** enables us to enrich and expand our programming throughout the city and has allowed us to develop and implement unique and engaging programs such as:

- ***FORMATIVE*** – our nationally recognized student led podcast and winner of the prestigious Anthem Community Voice Award in the Education, Art, and Culture - Podcast or Audio category. *Formative* connects middle school students with diverse leaders and role models for conversations on important topics including childhood, personal growth and careers. The podcase empowers students to develop their skills in research, public speaking and interviewing.

- **Book Publishing Program** – New York Edge students across the city, in collaboration with award-winning children’s book author Jesse Byrd and a roster of professional illustrators, write and publish their own stories, gaining joy and insight into the creating writing process and strengthening literacy skills along the way. Their finished works are then sold at *Barnes & Noble* and on *Amazon*. **This year, our student authors participated in a book launch and signing at The Strand in Manhattan.**
- **Heart for Art** – an arts education program powered by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and DHL Express. Designed to inspire children in communities with limited access to cultural education with the art and life story of Vincent Van Gogh, this program engaged 20 teachers across five NYC schools when it was launched in spring 2022. As of September 2022, the program has expanded to 10 NYC school with more on the horizon. Through this innovative arts education program, students have, through the study of Van Gogh’s life and work, received inspiration for their own creative pursuits.
- **Read Across New York Edge** – our new exciting literacy initiative launched this year. During the first week in March, over 50 acclaimed children’s book authors represented by Random House, Hachette, Disney and more visited schools across the city to read and share their love of storytelling with New York Edge students. As part of the Read Across New York Edge curriculum, students will spend time reading and engaging in creating projects centered around the themes of participating authors books.

In addition, we are seeking **\$250,000** under the Council’s ***Social & Emotional Supports for Students*** Initiative. **Not only is SEL is integrated into every element of our programming but we have been recognized by Mosaic by ACT as the largest after-school provider in the nation offering SEL supports.**



Funding under the ***Social & Emotional Supports for Students*** Initiative will enable us to support our current SEL programming providing high quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning assessments, curriculum and resources to all of our partner schools, the students we serve and their families.

All of us at New York Edge is are proud to serve New York City's K-12 students of all ages, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our offerings are culturally relevant programs, tailored to students' needs and interests, and rooted in social-emotional learning. Our model for aiding social emotional learning includes robust academic and personal wellness support, and trauma-informed strategies. We blend the critical elements that support an appreciation of cultural diversity with the core SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, social capital and decision-making into all academic curriculum and extracurricular activities.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past 32 years of support from the New York City Council. Through its partnership and support, the Council is helping young New Yorkers discover their interests, their passions, and their joys, building pathways to careers and trades that will provide financial security throughout their lives – and in the process creating connections to each other, to teachers, mentors, and their communities.

**TOGETHER, we are guiding students so that they grow up healthy, happy and empowered. TOGETHER, we are creating the next generation of active and productive community members and problem solvers. TOGETHER, we are creating New York City's next generation of doctors, mechanics, chefs, writers, engineers, entrepreneurs and SO MUCH MORE.**

**The time has come, however, where increased funding is VITALLY needed.** Unlike contracts with DYCD and other agencies, Council discretionary contracts are not eligible for COLA increases. This is making it increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract and maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the wide array of STEM, SEL, Visual & Performing Arts, Sports, Health & Wellness and College & Career Readiness programs that we are known for.

We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 25 citywide funding requests. **These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the EDGE they need to succeed!**

April 29, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

Hi, my name is Arlene Corona, and I am a youth that directly benefited from The WrapAround Program. The program has helped me so much during my experience with the agency. I participated in the vocational program, which was the EMT course two summers ago fully paid for. That is the main reason I took my test with the FDNY and even passed and got on the list for training this year. It is also why I went to school the following year for the spring semester majoring in medical assistance, where I am graduating this summer!!! I wanted to further continue a career in the medical field with the knowledge and experience I obtained because of the funding this program offered. I am sure I am not the only one that was lucky enough to have this opportunity and not the only one who was able to find some type of passion because of it.

I was also in the Pinkerton internship where I was being paid to do what I love most, be with the youth and plan. I was helping develop some curriculum and using the youth voices to advocate for trips and help make the lounge more accessible and welcoming. That was so fun! It would not have been possible without the funding, help, and outside resources provided by you all. This is extremely important; it allows those facing the direct impact of being in care not only speak up and know what needs to be changed but also allows us to have the ability to have open minded right set of circumstances that will use up our time to stay busy and engaged. That is exactly what my time was made up of and what my mind was set on. Staying busy and meaning something, gaining information, and finding my path. It all started with the finances that were offered. I just wanted to end this with a Thank You and that the sponsoring is going towards a wonderful use, and it is what made me in my career today and hopefully others can experience what I have. It is of great appreciation.

Sincerely,

Arlene Corona

JermiahJones

4/30/2024

Dear council members, my name is Jermiah Jones. As a youth advocate with JCCA I am pleased to be a youth who is receiving wonderful life skills from my opportunity to be a Youth Advocate. This has helped me expand upon my interest in being a role model for other youth. The experience as a Youth Advocate has given me valued experience in my future career in becoming a Cosmetologist. This has allowed me to gain skills in creating advertisement flyers for youth to gain information about events. Apart from my duties I have created a paint and sip for youth involvement creating interactive environments establishing bonds and support. As I can incorporate the skills I'm practicing currently to benefit me in my future careers.

As a youth in care, I haven't been receiving an accurate amount of money to support my needs. This allows me to support the needs and wants I have as a young adult. Furthermore, I get an outlet as well as a safe place to be myself and not get judged. While I continue to learn and obtain knowledge that will help me learn and grow and become a strong adult. At first, I did not want to come to the agency, I've grown to grasp materials from people in various departments around JCCA. Which is helping me navigate through all the trials and tribulations I usually have to face by myself. Without this program, I would not have gained the knowledge I obtained to this very day.

Everyday looks different at JCCA, sometimes I am in charge of brainstorming future events that will take place. I get to tap into my creativity, creating for all the events being held monthly at the agency. This position allows me to interact with other youth and provide connections as well as support with youths in the same position as me. I am really appreciative of the service's you guys provide towards JCCA and the opportunities it has given me to prepare for the workforce.

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

*Honorable Justin Brannan and Honorable Althea Stevens, Chairs*

*May 10, 2024*

*Testimony of Julie Quinton, Make the Road New York*

Good afternoon! My name's Julie Quinton and I direct Make the Road New York's (MRNY's) Adult Literacy Programs. Make the Road New York (MRNY) builds the power of immigrant and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. We have been at it for over 25 years, have over 25,000 members and serve over 800 Adult Literacy students a year. *I am also a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL).* We at NYCCAL and at Make the Road want to work with the Council and Administration to ensure that the city's adult literacy budget addresses the depth of the need in a thoughtful and effective manner.

*Today in New York City, there are over 2.2 million adults with limited English proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma. Last year, DYCD funding provided classes to approximately 16,000 of these adults, less than 1% of those in need.*

*As you know, DYCD is currently reviewing proposals under an RFP that will fund community-based adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs for the next three to six years. Yet at a time when the need for services in our communities is only expanding, this RFP cuts DYCD funding for adult literacy education by 30% -- from \$16.83 million in FY24 to \$11.85 million in FY25 through FY27. This dramatic cut in funding will mean that only 9,118 students will be served through DYCD-funded classes annually, less than ½ of 1% of the 2.2 million adult New Yorkers in need -- and a decrease of somewhere between*



*25%-45% of the number of students served through DYCD-funded programs over the past few fiscal years.*

*Given all of the above, Make the Road and New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy are calling for the FY25 Adopted Budget to baseline \$21.8 million for DYCD RFP-funded Adult Literacy programs, to restore cuts and maintain services for over 16,000 students. This requires adding \$11 million to the \$10.8 million in the Mayor's FY25 Executive Budget, which will:*

- Restore the \$6 million that the FY25 Executive Budget has cut from the \$16.8 million in administration-side funding in the FY24 Adopted Budget, and*
- Provide an additional \$5 million to sustain community-based adult literacy services for 16,769 students at the new per-student rate that will take effect in FY25.*

*In addition, we call on the City Council to renew and expand its crucial funding initiatives:*

- 1. Maintain the \$4 million in City Council Discretionary Funding for the Adult Literacy Initiative.*
- 2. Double the funding for the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project from \$2.5 million to \$5 million and expand the number of programs that receive this funding.*
- 3. Change the name of the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project to the City Council Adult Literacy Innovation Project to better reflect the purpose of this funding going forward.*

*Thank you for your attention.*

*Julie Quinton*

*Director of Adult Literacy*

*Make the Road New York*

*julie.quinton@maketheroadny.org*

The NYPD Strategic Response Group, a heavily armed unit founded originally for counter-terrorism but since exclusively deployed to suppress protests (including peaceful ones), sweep homeless encampments, and undertake street patrols. As the city council continues to debate its funding, I'd like to talk more broadly about the role of policing and respond to the insecurities some Americans have when they hear talk of police dismantlement and help us, as a society, affirm all human dignity rather than being weaponized against one another by myopic and loveless institutions. Nobody wants to be raped, mugged, or held up in public, but the SRG's behavior does nothing to prevent this and amplifies such violations of human dignity for populations (such as the homeless and Black and Brown people) whose personal boundaries cannot be linked to existing law and property.

SRG's approach to public safety is based on an extreme emphasis on property over human dignity originating from "broken windows" criminology. According to this framework, which originated in America around the time of neoliberalism, acts that violate social decorum or show an inability to achieve prosperity increase violence as a result of shattering human inhibitions. This is why the SRG targets peaceful homeless communities—according to them, their very existence in abject powerlessness over their fate inspires others to... take power and violence over others, because both fall outside standard expectations on behavior in public. This approach is based in an understanding of crime exclusively as a violation of legal standards, rather than a violation of other people, and thus amplifies an external appearance of security by suppressing people in much the same way as the violations we citizens fear and refer to as crime. This serves to blame those who are truly powerless for their fates and respond with force to people merely existing, without harming anyone, with no options to access the decorum and prosperity supposedly being defended. The SRG does not protect against the abject powerlessness of terrorism, it hasn't since its founding. It has channeled that fear to exclusively target peaceful demonstrations of deviance in response to trauma (protests) or deviance lacking any choice whatsoever (homelessness), treating even bystanders as enemy combatants.

For our Jewish community members here who've spoken about antisemitism, I am so sorry that you have felt unsafe of late, but violent attacks on protestors do not address this, they are only inflaming a grave disregard for human life and making the actual dialogue that eliminates bias impossible. The same tactics risk being used against you, and anyone, who expresses their needs or opinions in a way that clashes with the norms of quiet in the streets, even nonviolently. We must develop public safety tactics that center human beings, rather than responding with violence against inconvenient peaceful existence. This unit must be disbanded, and its funds placed in the services that studies have shown repeatedly are most effective at reducing crime and poverty in a city—housing, healthcare, and education.

Thank you.

Peter M Tarson

## My Wraparound Experience

Hi my name is Quanjae, I intern for JCCA through the wraparound program. While working for JCCA I've also been part of Pinkerton, Arches, and youth development team offered to me through JCCA career and development department.

I truly appreciate having this opportunity, Due to it not only keeping me occupied and out the streets but also providing funding for my hobbies and my day-to-day needs. I've been able to buy clothes pay my phone bill occasionally go out, and further, my music career as an artist with the money I have been able to earn.

Being that I come from a financially unstable past with no parents or real guidance, a lot of these opportunities were unavailable for me in the past. Not only that but I now have a little financial freedom to be able to participate in more events and activities and broaden my horizon outside of my neighborhood

Me participating in all these programs connected to wrap around has taught and helped me improve skills I can use later on in life such as employment skills. Some of these things include active listening, confidence, emotional intelligence, Speech and communication, as well as excel and PowerPoint.

Some of my personal favorite experiences were college tours, zoom sessions focused on financial literacy, being able to form new connections/bonds. I also learned things that are super important and I never had anyone to teach me about.

Some of the most important lessons in my opinion was Filing taxes, Mental health awareness and career prep and development. Without this program, I would still probably be struggling to learn most of these things up until today.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jess Dannhauser

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ACS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Plotnikoff

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ACS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Winette Saunders

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ACS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sebastien Vante

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Safe Horizon Streetwork

Address: Project ~~Urban~~

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAITLYN PASSARETTI

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR Children of NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nadia Swanson

Address: 307 W. 38<sup>th</sup> St

I represent: The Ali Forney Center

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Annie Minguez (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-24

Name: Tene Howard (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 3705 Foster Ave

I represent: STARS C91

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Scott DALY (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: NYJTL

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Scott Dal

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Roslyn MORRISON, Esq.

Address: 1470-20 Duane Blvd., New York, NY 10015

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: Courthouse Justice Unit

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 10, 2024

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Ellie Rutkey

Address: 121 Avenue of the Americas, Fl. 3

I represent: The DOOR's Legal Services Center New York, NY 10003

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Licbett Rodriguez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Girls Write Now

Address: 247 W 37th Street, Suite 1000

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

29

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 05.10.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edwin Santana

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Freedom Agenda

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

28

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition Child Care - ACS

Date: 5/10/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steven Morales

Address: [REDACTED] Queens

I represent: All Our Kin

Address: 2929 3rd Ave Bx

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

27

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. DYCD Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darryl Rattray

Address: 2 Lafayette Street, NY 10007

I represent: DYCD

Address: 2 Lafayette St. NY 10007

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daphne Moutanet

Address: 2 Lafayette Street

I represent: DYCD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Haskell

Address: DYCD 2 Lafayette St.

I represent: DYCD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Breitman

Address: 2 Lafayette St.

I represent: DYCD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 10, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mike Bobbitt

Address: 123 William St

I represent: DYCD

Address: 123 William St

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rong Zhang

Address: 123 William St

I represent: DYCD

Address: 123 William Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keith Howard

Address: DYCD Commissioner

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alan Cheng Deputy Commissioner

Address: Dy CD

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nequita Bailey

Address: CEO

I represent: Dy CD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle Fields

Address: 120-46 Gorman Blvd

I represent: CSU - Long Aul Scarce

Address: 120-46 Gorman Blvd, Jamaica NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nora Moran

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Raquea Hemingway

Address: Lisbett

I represent: Figure Skating In Harlem

Address: sports Training & Role Models for Success

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisbett Rodriguez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Girls Write Now

Address: sports Training & Role Models for Success

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tene Howard

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Sadie Nash

Address: Sports Training & Role Models for Success

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erica Silberman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Girls Write Now

Address: Sports Training & Role Models for Success

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-10-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonee Billy

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Power Play NYC

Address: Sports Training & Role Models for Success

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shawn Jean-Louis

Address: 11 West 42nd Street, 3rd FL

I represent: Expanded Schools (Policy Director)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

10

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ramon B. Leclerc

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New Alternatives for Homeless  
LGBTQ Youth

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/10/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dante Bravo

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Children's Aid

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

8

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 10, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Annie Minguez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francesca Perrone

Address: [REDACTED] Bk NY 11201

I represent: Hispanic Federation

Address: 55 Exchange Place NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lauren Galloway

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Coalition for homeless youth

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms