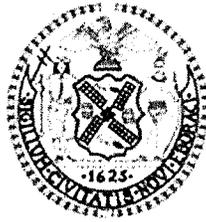


NYC[™]
**Administration for
Children's Services**



**The New York City Council,
Committee on General Welfare
June 16, 2016**

"Foster Care in New York City"

**Testimony by
New York City Administration for Children's Services
Julie Farber, Deputy Commissioner
Division of Family Permanency Services**

Good morning Chair Levin and members of the Committee on General Welfare. I am Julie Farber, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Family Permanency Services at the New York City Administration for Children's Services. With me today is Andrew White, Deputy Commissioner for Policy, Planning and Measurement, and Kathleen Hoskins, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Education Support and Policy Planning. On behalf of Commissioner Carrión, thank you for the opportunity to discuss foster care in New York City.

Before I address the bills that are the subject of today's hearing, I would like to take a few minutes to provide the committee with a brief overview of some of the work that we are doing at ACS.

As many of you have heard, for the first time in many decades, the number of children in foster care is below 10,000. Twenty years ago, when ACS was inaugurated as a stand-alone City agency, almost 42,000 children were in foster care. The decrease in the census is due in large part to a significant expansion of the availability of preventive services for families in their own homes and communities, and changes at the "front door" of ACS in the way investigations are conducted. Some critical facts to understand about the New York City foster care system include the following:

- Of the less than 10,000 youth in foster care, the vast majority are placed in with families. Fewer than nine percent are in congregate care settings. This is one of the lowest rates of congregate care placements in the country.
- The majority of children who enter foster care go home to their parents.
- The majority of children in foster care who do not go home to their parents are placed with relatives or families who are going to adopt or assume guardianship for them.
- More than 3,500 children who came into foster care a decade ago, in 2006, spent 2 years or more in care. By comparison, 2,027 children came into foster care in 2013 and

remained in care in 2015. That's a 42 percent reduction in the number of children spending two years or more in foster care. This number is declining steadily, every year.

- Overall, the total amount of time that all New York City children spend in foster care each year is falling dramatically. From 2010 to 2015, the total number of days New York City children spent in foster care dropped by 29%.
- We have fewer youth aging out of care and we have extended foster care for older youth for whom that is the better option.
- Placement stability is a strength in our system. Most children in foster care experience only one placement throughout their time in care.

All of this adds up to fewer children coming into care than in years past and the vast majority of children who do come into care go home to their families, get adopted or achieve permanency through guardianship. And we are working on many fronts to reduce the time that children spend in foster care. To this end, we have multiple efforts ongoing now that are enhancing case practice and streamlining certain bureaucratic processes that impact time to permanency. The Family Court also plays an important role in the length of time that children remain in foster care as all foster care cases are reviewed in Family Court hearings and final decisions about permanency are made in Family Court.

ACS has created a Foster Care Strategic Blueprint that identifies our key priorities and provides a framework for guiding our work in order to improve outcomes for children in foster care. The blueprint reflects our objectives and identifies five major focus areas: family reunification, kinship placements, foster care placements, adoption, and older youth. Cutting across all five is an agency-wide focus on improving child well-being.

This Administration has taken the critical steps to create the conditions within the child welfare system that are necessary for success, which we define as safer, stronger families. This includes lowered caseloads for foster care caseworkers, professional development opportunities for staff through the new ACS Workforce Institute and implementing evidence-based practices in our work with children and families. All of these are new and truly historic, and they are basic conditions that have not previously existed in the system. Now that these basic conditions are in place, we are well-positioned to move the dial on permanency outcomes for children in care.

As noted, we are working hard to further reduce children's length of stay in foster care. Under ACS' "No Time to Wait" initiative, we have identified and addressed barriers to permanency. For example, we found that the processes of acquiring birth certificates and adoption subsidies were slowing adoptions down. In response, we significantly streamlined both processes. Previously, only four percent of adoption subsidy applications were processed within 30 days. Now, the rate is almost 70 percent. We are continuing to do this kind of "bureaucracy busting" across the foster care system.

I am pleased to announce that ACS is partnering with national expert Casey Family Programs and our foster care agencies to conduct a case review of thousands of children who have been in foster care for two years or more. These reviews will identify barriers to permanency, and also lead to a better understanding of systemic issues that contribute to long stays in care. The reviews will launch next week and will be completed over approximately six months.

Under our federal Title IV-E waiver initiative, we have reduced caseloads and supervisory ratios, implemented a uniform assessment tool for all children in foster care (CANS), and begun implementing two evidence-based models. The models are Attachment &

Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) which promotes responsive, nurturing caregiving of young children, and Partnering for Success (PFS), which improves children's access to appropriate mental health interventions while better integrating child welfare and mental health services.

In the area of family reunification, ACS is revitalizing the ways in which children in foster care spend maintain connections to their families of origin. We are also focused on facilitating safe and timely trial discharges to ensure that families are ready for reunification.

As part of our focus on well-being, we have several efforts underway to help youth in foster care attend college, transition to the world of work and maintain stable housing. We are partnering with CUNY to help hundreds of students in foster care attend college through several initiatives. In January 2016, ACS established a new Office of Employment and Workforce Development Initiatives, including a new specialized internship program launched in May 2016 with the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), a collaboration with the Columbia University Workplace Center and an ACS/DCAS collaboration to connect foster youth to civil service employment. For young people aging out of foster care to independence, we have also made progress with our partner agencies in city government on helping them to secure housing either through the open market, NYCHA, supportive housing or with relatives or roommates.

Later this year, we will launch a major foster parent recruitment initiative, "Home Away from Home," and we look forward to the Council's partnership in that effort. Through Home Away from Home, we will revamp and improve foster parent recruitment and support and make fundamental shifts in the ways that we place and match children to the most appropriate foster homes.

As Commissioner Carrion noted during her recent testimony to the City Council on the Executive Budget, we are very pleased that the budget includes increased funding for preventive services that keep children out of foster care, and that will support families as they reunify after foster care. We are also pleased that it includes funding that will help children and families that touch the foster care system, by providing increased stipends for foster, adoptive, and kinship guardianship parents that will cover children's pressing needs, and by reinstating discharge grants to assist youth and families as they exit the foster care system.

Amending Current Reporting Requirements

ACS is committed to providing the Council with helpful, relevant information that will reflect what is happening in the child welfare system and that can direct all of us toward focusing on areas that need improvement. In 2014, we worked with the Council to pass three different annual reports related to youth in foster care. Local Law 46 requires ACS to report on the foster care system as a whole, including youth who have recently aged out of foster care. Local Law 48 requires ACS to report whether youth in foster care have government-issued identification. Local Law 49 requires ACS to report the high school graduation rates of youth in care. Three of the bills on today's agenda amend those existing reports.

Intro 1197, which amends Local Law 46, would expand certain age disaggregation reporting and require ACS to report on the total population of youth currently in care by age. The bill would also expand the report to include the number of youth who enter a homeless shelter within specific time periods measured from when they aged out of care; the number of youth who receive cash assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits from the Human Resources Administration within 30 days and 60 days of being discharged from foster care; and the number of youth who age out and transition to Medicaid without gaps in coverage.

ACS is willing and able to disaggregate the information by age. However, the new information that this bill requests regarding data around homelessness and public assistance is not currently available to ACS. We are, of course, willing to discuss with our partners at HRA and DHS about the possibility and mechanisms by which this data might be shared.

Intro 1187, which amends Local Law 48, would add the total number of youth aged 17 and older in care, the total number of youth who aged out of care, and the total number of youth in those groups who obtained any type of identification. We support this amendment to the report.

Intro 1205, which amends Local Law 49, would make technical amendments to age disaggregation categories in the local law and would add whether youth in foster care are on track to graduate high school in four years. ACS is currently working with DOE to update the Memorandum of Understanding that covers data sharing between our two agencies and will keep the Council apprised, as the availability of the data requested by this bill depends on those discussions. However, we would recommend changing the number of years for “on track to graduate from high school” from four to five years, as that is the metric that DOE currently uses.

New Reporting Requirements

ACS is committed to maintaining transparency in the work that we do, and we support the City Council’s efforts to learn more about youth in foster care. Together, we would like to work to define the parameters of these new reports so that ACS is better able to provide the information the Council needs in a way that will most effectively suit the purpose of each bill.

Intro 1199 would require ACS to provide to all youth in foster care ages 13 and older who reside with a foster parent an annual survey which would ask questions about the youth’s experience in the foster home. The bill would also require ACS to aggregate data from the

surveys, report it to the City Council, and post it on their website on an annual basis. ACS appreciates and shares the Council's concern for the experience of older youth in foster care, however we would like to work with the Council on the survey methodology and revised survey language in order to elicit the most accurate, representative and useful information about the safety and well-being of young people in foster care.

Intro 1191 would require ACS to submit a report on the 200 children who have spent the greatest length of time in foster care. The reports would include the age, gender, race, and sexual orientation, permanency plan, length of time spent in care, and barriers to placement of each of the 200 children. ACS is committed to addressing the systemic issues that contribute to long stays in foster care, which is why we are working with Casey Family Programs to implement the Rapid Permanency Review initiative described above and collaborating with external stakeholders and the court system to address barriers to permanency. All of these efforts, in addition to ACS' concerted focus on reducing entry into foster care, represent a culture shift in the child welfare system, and ACS suggests a continuing dialogue with the Council about the best ways to share information and address systemic barriers to permanency.

Intro 1196 requires ACS to report on permanency indicators for children in foster care. The annual reports would include the rate of abuse and neglect of children in foster care and the rate of recurring abuse and neglect, the rate of children who achieve permanence in certain designated time frames, the rate of returns to foster care after a previous discharge, the placement stability rate and the rate of children who are absent without leave from care. The majority of this information is already publicly available through the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) and we would like to further discuss with the Council what information may be lacking.

Intro 1190 requires ACS to report on the educational stability of children in foster care.

The reports would include the percentage in children in foster care who remained in their schools of origin upon their initial entry into foster care and who remained in their schools of origin after transferring foster homes, the percentage of children in foster care who did not return to their schools of origin due to a determination that it was not in the child's best interest, disaggregated by the reasons that such a determination was made, and the average school attendance rates of children in foster care. As we mentioned earlier, we are working with DOE on updating our Memorandum of Understanding on data, but we do not currently receive data on school of origin. We do not currently have the capacity to track school of origin and the best interest determination categories on a system-level, as this information is documented in case note narratives.

Foster Care Task Force

Intro 1192 creates an interagency task force with seventeen members that would develop and submit to the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council recommendations for improving services for youth in foster care and outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. Our concern with this legislation is we do not want to duplicate work that other agencies or task forces are currently doing. We would like to discuss this task force with the Council so that we can find the appropriate place for it to be the most effective.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss foster care with all of you this morning. As always, we are happy to work with the Committee in our continuing efforts to improve the foster

care system and to provide services for the City's justice-involved youth. We are happy to take your questions.



ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint

Implementation Status Report

June 2016

Family Reunification

Support safe and timely reunification

In June 2016, ACS is launching "Rapid Permanency Reviews" in partnership with national child welfare expert Casey Family Programs. These reviews are an in-depth look at thousands of cases of children who have been in foster care for more than two years, in order to expedite permanency. This review includes children with goals of reunification, adoption and KinGap as well as children at home on trial discharge.

In 2015 and 2016, ACS implemented new data and reporting tools to help ACS and foster care providers track and monitor progress.

ACS established a Trial Discharge workgroup in March 2016 that is developing a model to implement newly funded aftercare services to support families prior to and following children's discharge from foster care.

Revitalize, resource & improve "Family Time" (a.k.a. visiting) practice

Since March 2016, ACS has delivered training on Family Time policy and best practices to 470 staff at 25 trainings at 14 agencies. Training for all agencies to be completed in Fall 2016.

Since January 2016, ACS has delivered four "Visit Coaching" sessions, training 100 people, including staff from provider agencies and volunteers from the community via ACS's Community Partnership Programs. Visit Coaches assist with visits between children in foster care and their parents.

In Summer 2016, ACS will launch a Family Time Project that will review data and best practices to further improve family time practice throughout the system.

Reinvigorate work around foster parents supporting parents

Enhancing our practice around foster parents working with birth parents will be part of the initiatives implemented through "Home Away from Home" (HAFH) which will revamp the way foster parents are recruited, trained and supported in 2016 and 2017.

Kin

Strengthen Practice Around Engagement of Kin

In January 2016, ACS launched a project to examine both ACS Division of Child Protection and foster care agency practice around engaging kin as placement resources and as supports for families.

ACS in partnership with outside experts has analyzed data and reviewed "family finding" practices in other states. Next step is to gather additional information via interviews about current DCP and foster care agency practices and processes related to searching for and engaging kin.

In 2016 and 2017, based on the above, ACS will identify and implement strategies to increase the identification of and engagement of kin to support families in the child welfare system.

KinGap

Fully leverage KinGap

KinGap refers to the permanency option of subsidized guardianship, in which relatives can receive financial support to care for children who cannot go home to their parents without having to go through termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings. The KinGAP program was established by the State in 2011. There is significant opportunity to expand the use of this permanency option for the benefit of children and families, and ACS is implementing multiple strategies to move this forward.

In Fall 2015, ACS provided onsite KinGap trainings and intensive technical assistance to all foster care agencies.

Every foster care agency has established "KinGap champions" who are specifically designated to help build the agency's practice around KinGap.

In 2015 and 2016, ACS implemented new tools to help ACS and foster care providers track and monitor progress against established permanency targets.

In June 2016, ACS is launching Rapid Permanency Reviews in partnership with national child welfare expert Casey Family Programs. These reviews are an in depth look at thousands of cases of children who have been in foster care for more than two years, in order to expedite permanency. This review includes children with goals of reunification, including a specific look at children who are home on trial discharge, as well as goals of adoption and KinGap.

Support legal advocacy on expanding KinGap eligibility

ACS is supporting legislative advocacy to amend the KinGap law in order to:

- 1) allow children placed with fictive kin (e.g., family friends who are not blood relatives) to achieve permanency through KinGap; and
- 2) eliminate the age restrictions so that kin who have legal guardianship of children age 15 and younger through KinGAP may receive KinGAP financial assistance until the child turns age 21. Currently, children 15 and younger can receive KinGap only up to age 18.

Placement

Implement strategic recruitment, retention, and support strategies for foster and adoptive parents to shift approach from “beds” to “homes”

ACS is working with experts on our “Home Away from Home” (HAFH) initiative, which will revamp the way foster parents are recruited, trained and supported with the goal of enhancing child well-being. We have recently completed the information gathering phase of HAFH and are now developing a plan that ACS and the foster care agencies will implement in 2016 and 2017.

ACS has created a uniform application for those interested in becoming foster parents (replacing the individual forms currently used at each of the agencies). This standardized application will be implemented in 2016 across all foster care agencies.

Making child care “easy” for foster parents is an important part of foster parent recruitment and retention. ACS is currently exploring a more efficient and timely mechanism to provide child care for foster parents. As a first step, we are implementing a new protocol that will allow foster parents who may not otherwise meet the standard eligibility criteria for child care to receive subsidized care.

Placement (continued)

Enhance programming and physical plant
at ACS' Children's Center

ACS is redesigning the entrance and intake space at the Children's Center to create a more welcoming environment for children coming into care. Working with the New York City Department of Design and Construction, renovation will be completed Fall 2017.

In 2015 and 2016, ACS has taken significant steps to enhance the quality of services at the Children's Center including:

- transitioning from temporary to permanent child care workers;
- strengthening management infrastructure
- adding clinical and recreational specialist positions
- implementing new trainings for staff to build the therapeutic milieu including Think Trauma training, Safe Crisis Management, Ramapo Special Needs Training, Motivational Interviewing and a four week standard core curriculum training for all new child care staff
- expanding partnership with Bellevue Mental Health Team (MHT)

Adoption

Improve the time to complete an adoption

ACS streamlined the adoption process in 2015/2016 by centralizing birth certificate process and simplifying and shortening the adoption subsidy process.

ACS is working with outside experts to review Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) practice. This analysis will lead to specific practice improvements to be implemented in 2017.

Beginning in June 2016, ACS is launching "Rapid Permanency Reviews" of thousands of "longstayer" cases in partnership with national child welfare expert Casey Family Programs. The goal is to expedite permanency for children with goals of adoption, reunification and KinGap.

Promote open adoption practice

Open adoption refers to adoptions in which connections are maintained between the child, the adoptive family and the biological family. The main focus of this work is helping professionals to think critically about how maintaining these relationships can serve the well-being of children by creating permanency that respects and honors a child's connection to their history.

ACS held an "Open Adoption" Forum on May 10, 2016 attended by 250 stakeholders from the foster care agencies, legal organizations, Family Court and others.

ACS is providing open adoption trainings to all foster care agencies and discussion sessions with legal providers and Family Court beginning June 2016.

Expand specialized post-permanency services

ACS is currently examining how best to leverage and support existing preventive programs to meet the needs of adoptive families.

APPLA/
Older
Youth

Reduce use of APPLA & increase reunification, adoption, KinGap & relational permanency.

APPLA stands for Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement and refers to youth who are not returning home or being adopted.. Relational permanency refers to informal connections that youth have with adults, outside of legal permanency through adoption or KinGap or reunification.

In 2016, ACS is launching a project with experts that will research the different pathways youth take when aging out of care to independence, and identify policies and incentives to improve practice with older youth. This work will result in the development and implementation of key actions in 2017 to improve outcomes for older youth in care.

Expand placement/ housing options for older youth in and exiting care

ACS is expanding specialized initial placement centers for older youth (called Youth Reception Centers). Heartshare/St. Vincents and Good Shepherd Services have contracts to create an additional 18 beds for teens over the age of 14, in addition to the existing Mercy First Reception Center. These new Reception Centers will be up and running by September 2016.

Host Homes are specialized foster homes for older youth. Contracts for Host Homes are being developed with Youth Advocate Program, Inc. (YAP) and Children's Aid Society. The first Host Homes are expected to be available in the fall of 2016.

ACS held a Housing Forum in May 2016 to provide information about all available housing options to foster care agencies, legal advocates and other stakeholders.

ACS is currently exploring possible models for re-establishing Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs). SILPs refer to apartment settings that have services and support for older youth in foster care who are able to live independently.

Develop wraparound services and improve interagency collaboration for youth with complex needs

ACS launched the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) in the Bronx in April 2014, and Brooklyn in April 2015. Scaled to remaining boroughs in January 2016. CYPM seeks to help youth in the child welfare system avoid further penetration into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

ACS established an interagency and provider work group in January 2016 to develop policy, practice and resource recommendations, which will be produced in summer 2016.

ACS Foster Care Strategic Blueprint – Implementation Status Report – June 2016

APPLA/
Older
Youth
(Continued)

Expand education and workforce development services

Established new Office of Employment and Workforce Development Initiatives in January 2016 in order to expand services and improve employment outcomes for youth in foster care.

Launched new Young Adult Internship Program Plus with DYCD in April 2016, which is a specialized internship program for youth in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

Worked with New Yorkers for Children to issue grant to Henry Street Settlement in May 2016 to provide education, career and supportive services for youth in foster care.

Established partnership with Columbia University to provide technical assistance to 5 foster care agencies with the goal of improving employment services and outcomes for foster youth.

ACS is currently developing a database of employment programs that will be accessible to all foster care agencies and youth in care.

Planning workforce forum and roundtables to launch in Fall 2016.

Working on new program development opportunities including driver's license project, new SBS Workforce 1 Center and grant proposal with Mayor's Fund Center for Youth Employment.

In partnership with CUNY and with funding from the Hilton Foundation, ACS launched in Spring 2016 the Transition Age Youth (TAY) program that will serve 150 students in foster care through a "pipeline" program from CUNY Start (remedial) through CUNY ASAP (Associate Degree) to CUNY four year schools over the next three years.

Receiving state funding for Youth Matters Program (this year, funding is doubling from \$1.5 million to \$3 million). These Higher Education Opportunity Programs provide support services for foster youth at CUNY and SUNY.

Launching program with Queens College in July 2016 that will provide year-round housing for 40 foster youth who are in college. This is the first large CUNY housing initiative for youth in foster care.

Systemic Priorities

Improve Case Practice

Through the Title IV-E waiver demonstration project, ACS is implementing:

-Caseload and supervisory ratio reductions at foster care agencies

-Child and Adolescents Needs and Strengths (CANS), a uniform screening tool to assess trauma and other issues for children in regular family foster care.

-Partnering for Success, evidence-based model focused on ensuring that children receive needed mental health services and effective coordination of child welfare and mental health services.

-Attachment Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up (ABC), evidence-based model focused on positive attachment for young children with their caregivers (foster parents and parents).

ACS' Workforce Institute has launched a significant range of training for all foster care agency staff

In March , ACS hosted the Girls Matter Forum, an all-day convening with national and local experts on the issue of gender responsive programming. National thought leaders and practitioners shared innovative practices in other jurisdictions.

ACS is implementing a Girls Health Screen in our juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

ACS Collaborative Quality Improvement (Co-QI) process is working with agencies to identify practice improvement priorities and implement improvement plans.

Systemic Priorities (Continued)

Improve Case Practice (Continued)

In March 2016, ACS established new pilot to provide more robust consultation to the foster care agencies on individual cases. ACS "Senior Practice Consultants" have been outstationed at 3 foster care agencies. We will add two more agencies to the pilot this summer.

Established new Office of Strategic Program Support to provide program level technical assistance to the foster care agencies. Office began providing intensive technical assistance (TA) on KinGap and adoption in Fall 2015. Office is providing extensive TA on a range of issues to help improve foster care agency case practice, business process and performance management.

Collaborate within ACS and with external partners to integrate services to improve outcomes for children & families

Workgroup established in February 2016 to improve "handoff" of cases from the ACS Division of Child Protection to the foster care agencies.

Family team conferencing (FTC) has been integrated under ACS Child Welfare Programs. FTC capacity being increased.

ACS is increasing its capacity to provide specialized clinical consultation to Division of Child Protection and the foster care and preventive service agencies. RFP has been issued.

ACS has multiple collaborations with DYCD, HRA and DHS. Expanding collaboration with NYCHA, SBS.

ACS Family Court Legal Services (FCLS) is providing ongoing training to foster care agencies on the Family Court process.

ACS is implementing "Project 14," which is a conference between ACS attorneys and foster care agency case planners and their supervisors in advance of the second permanency hearing to assess the goal for the children and family and to try to avoid lengthy stays in foster care.

Explore new financial models that reflect system values & performance goals

ACS is working with national experts to explore new fiscal models that reflect our values of prevention and permanency over foster care.



**BROOKLYN
DEFENDER
SERVICES**

TESTIMONY OF:

Lauren Shapiro – Director of Family Defense Practice

BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

**Presented before
The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
on
Introductions and Resolutions
related to Foster Care Youth**

June 16, 2016

My name is Lauren Shapiro. I am the Director of the family defense practice at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). BDS provides innovative, multi-disciplinary, and client-centered criminal, family, and immigration defense, as well as civil legal services, social work support and advocacy, for over 40,000 clients in Brooklyn every year. I thank the City Council Committee on General Welfare and, in particular Chair Stephen Levin, for the opportunity to testify today about the proposed legislation and families with Administration of Children's Services (ACS) involvement.

BDS's family defense practice has been representing parents in abuse and neglect proceedings since 2007. Over the past nine years, we have represented over 7,700 clients and have helped over 8,000 children leave foster care and safely reunite with their families. Ninety percent of our cases involve charges of neglect (not abuse) and most of these cases are poverty-related involving mental illness, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse, lack of childcare or services, homelessness, and domestic violence. Our family defense clients live primarily in the low-income neighborhoods of East New York, Brownsville and Bedford Stuyvesant. We represent the vast majority of parents in abuse and neglect cases in family court in Kings County, putting us in a unique position to advocate for improvements to the family court and child welfare systems.

BDS supports the legislation before the Committee today. Our recommendations stem from our experience as attorneys for the parents in child welfare proceedings. We strongly support the City Council requesting more information and data from the Administration for Children's Services. The creation and distribution of this data should lead to an important public dialogue about priorities and resources in the child welfare system. However, we strongly caution the City Council to be circumspect in interpreting and relying on this data. Many children who have been in foster care for a long time are actually maintaining stable relationships with relatives and their biological families and may ultimately return home.

Children are usually better off when their biological parents remain actively involved in their lives, whether living in the same home or apart.¹ It is our role as attorneys for the parents to assist parents to determine their own parenting goals and to help them to achieve their goals by connecting them with services and support.

The story of R.J., a former BDS client, illustrates the importance and ultimate success of efforts to reunify biological parents and their ACS-involved children even after extended stays in foster care:

R.J. was 20 years old in March 2012 when her landlord called ACS to report that R.J. was living with her 3-year-old daughter K.G. in an apartment with no heat, electricity, or gas. He also told ACS that R.J. smoked marijuana. When ACS came, they found no food in the home and a broken crib. ACS removed K.G. from the home and placed her in foster care.

After K.G.'s removal, R.J. became homeless. She fell into a depression and stopped coming to court or engaging with ACS, the foster care agency, or her own legal team. She visited her daughter but struggled to keep to a regular schedule.

In August 2014, over two years after K.G.'s removal, R.J., now age 22, recommitted herself to getting her daughter back. She enrolled in services, proved herself to be drug-free, and visited regularly. By November 2014, she was allowed unsupervised visitation with her daughter. Unsupervised overnight and weekend visits began in 2015.

ACS helped R.J. apply for the NYCHA reunification priority, and as soon as the apartment came through in July of 2015, K.G. was trial discharged to her mother in their new apartment. The Family Court approved the final discharge in February 2016, just shy of 4 years after ACS had initially removed K.G. from R.J.'s care.

¹ See, e.g., Alexis T. Williams, *Rethinking Social Severance: Post-Termination Contact Between Birth Parents And Children*, 41 CONNECTICUT L. REV. 2, 609 (2008).

K.G. now gets to spend the rest of her life with a loving mother who overcame obstacles including poverty, homelessness, and drug use to get her back.

R.J. and K.G.'s story is like one of the thousands of clients that BDS attorneys and social workers have assisted over the years. While reunification can be long, hard work for multiple parties, it is more than worth the effort for the children and their families in the long run. We hope that the City Council will remain committed to working with defenders, ACS, and other players to support reunification wherever possible.

It is also vital that ACS and other city agencies prioritize kinship care, or placement with family members, which can facilitate reunification and minimize harm to families with ACS involvement. A definitive study from 2009 reported that children in kinship care experience more stability than those placed in traditional foster care, whether measured by a child's likelihood of initial placement disruption or experiencing three or more placements within a year of entry into care.² We have hundreds of cases where children are placed with family members and able to maintain positive relationships with their parents who may be struggling with a mental illness or physical disability. In many cases, these relationships enable children to reunify with their parents ultimately.

Our client, N.N. was diagnosed with a mental illness while living in a shelter and her daughter was placed with N.N.'s sister in kinship care. ACS told N.N. that she could not have custody of her daughter until she obtained supportive housing, but no housing was available. N.N. began participating in counseling and taking medication. She was very compliant but was hospitalized several times during the case. After years of mental health treatment and navigating the shelter and supportive housing systems, N.N. was placed on the NYCHA priority list and obtained stable housing. She eventually stabilized on a new medication. Because of N.N.'s hard work to overcome her mental illness, and with the support of her sister and her BDS defense team, N.N.'s daughter was final discharged to her approximately 5 and a half years after her initial removal. The strong relationships – not only between N.N. and her daughter but between N.N. and her sister – enabled this family to endure the stresses of mental illness, poverty, and separation and emerge as a loving unit with intact bonds between all members of the family.

We know that relationships with biological parents and family members play a critical role in the success of all ACS-involved children, even for those who go on to be adopted. The Children's Law Center of New York found that in 75 percent of cases involving a "broken adoption," or an adoption that ended unsuccessfully, "the

² Eun Koh, *Permanency outcomes of children in kinship and non-kinship foster care: Testing the external validity of kinship effects*, 32 CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES REV. 389-398 (2010).

immediate biological family (parent, sibling, aunt/uncle, or grandparent) remained involved in the child's life either consistently or intermittently.”³

As the Children's Law Center notes, “Biological parent involvement in an adopted child's life is a reality that cannot continue to be ignored...Families and children should be provided support, counseling, and services to navigate these challenging relationships.”

The City can play an important role in promoting healthy relationships with biological families and kinship care. **To that end, we offer a few recommendations for the language in the legislative proposals that would help to accomplish those goals.**

Our comments are as follows:

Int. No. 1191 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to certain children who have spent the greatest length of time in foster care.

BDS strongly believes in the importance of collecting data to understand trends and promote better outcomes. However, we fear that Int. 1191, in its current form, would result in some form of penalization for ACS in cases where older youth remain in APPLA, or long-term foster care, for significant time periods.⁴

BDS does not believe that every APPLA or long term foster care situation is necessarily problematic; instead, these situations should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. APPLA is sometimes the best placement option for older youth. This is particularly true if they are living with a relative or other caring individual while getting services from ACS and other community providers along with consistent and healthy connections to their biological parents.

To address these concerns, Int. 1191 should be amended to encourage reporting on the quality of support that ACS is providing to foster biological parental relationships and kinship relationships for these children.

- We would like to see additional paragraphs requiring reporting on the barriers to reunification with parents and barriers to placement with kin. Even when a permanency goal other than reunification has been

³ Dawn J. Post, *What are the Factors Leading to Broken Adoptions?* 72 NATL. COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION 6 (2014).

⁴ APPLA stands for “another planned permanent living arrangement.” APPLA is a term created by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 to replace the term “long-term foster care.” With APPLA, ACS maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. APPLA is a permanency option only when other options such as reunification, relative placement, adoption, or legal guardianship have been ruled out.

endorsed by the Court, concurrent planning with parents or other family members as an alternative should always be considered.

- We would also like the administrative code to require reporting on each child's current visitation status with parent(s), siblings, and other family members, with information including duration, frequency, and level of supervision of these visits.
- In addition, the legislation calls for barriers to "placement" although the children are in foster care. It is unclear if the legislation meant to say permanency.

Int. No. 1192 A Local Law in relation to a foster care task force.

BDS strongly supports this law, which would create an interagency task force to issue recommendations for improving services for youth in foster care and outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. However, we want to ensure that parents have a place at the table when policymakers are meeting to discuss foster care youth who can advocate that City policies emphasize reunification with parent(s) and/or kin whenever possible.

As the bill is currently written, only two members of the task force will come from local advocacy organizations, and neither advocate is required to represent the interests of parents. We ask that you consider amending the bill to require the inclusion of at least one representative that represents the parents.

Furthermore, we urge you to consider adding language in section 1(d) to require reporting and investigation of the relationships between foster care youth and their biological parent(s) and/or kin, because of the significant benefits to foster youth indicated on page two of our testimony.

Int. No. 1196 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to a report on permanency indicators.

This bill would require ACS to submit to the Speaker of the Council and post on its website annual reports on permanency indicators for children in foster care.⁵ BDS supports the disclosure of permanency indicators for children in foster care at the City level. However, we believe that the City Council should act to ensure that data is collected and reported that captures information about the large number of children

⁵ Federally mandated permanency indicators assess whether children in out-of-home care have permanency and stability in their living situations. The outcomes related to well-being include education, physical health, and mental health of children while they are in care and upon emancipation from the system. The federal government has mandated six permanency goals for all states. States that do not make sufficient progress toward these timelines can be financially penalized. See "Understanding and Measuring Child Welfare Outcomes," Evidence for Practice (University of California at Berkeley, School of Social Welfare: July 2005); "Understanding Permanency and the Child Welfare System, Insights (California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership: 2009).

who maintain strong ties to their biological families, regardless of their legal status and should be mindful of the fact that many of these children are in stable living arrangements.

- Regarding paragraph 4: We propose that ACS disaggregate reported information to distinguish the several different forms of permanency that children may achieve – reunification with parent, kinGAP, adoption, etc.
- Regarding paragraph 8: We propose that reported information about youth who have been AWOL from foster care include additional information about where the child resided while AWOL, if known.

INT 1197-2016 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to information collected and reported about youth and foster care.

The bill would make amendments to Local Law 46 of 2014 which requires ACS to report on youth in foster care and youth that have recently aged out of foster care. The bill would also expand certain age disaggregation reporting and require ACS to report on the total population of youth currently in care by age.

As with the other bills, we recommend that the Council incorporate language that would require reporting on parental relationships or efforts by ACS to support parental relationship.

INT 1199-2016 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to surveys for youth in foster care regarding experiences with foster parents.

BDS supports a formalized system for collecting information from foster children directly about their experiences in care. Because part of a foster parent's role should be to facilitate the relationship between foster children and their biological parents, we propose questions that will measure the degree of support foster parents provide to foster children's biological relationships. Proposed questions include:

- If the youth's relationship with bio-parents is supported by the foster parent through positive talk about them in the home, phone calls, visits (if foster parent has any role in scheduling or power to supervise), other.
- If the youth's relationship with other kin is supported by the foster parent through positive talk about them, phone calls, visits (if foster parent can have role in that), other.

Resolution 1073 – A Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign A.7756-A (to increase housing subsidy from \$300 to \$600 per month).

We strongly support the City Council's efforts to call upon the state to increase the housing subsidy. There is a strong correlation between child welfare involvement and

unstable housing. Over 40 percent of our family defense clients are homeless, living in unsafe housing conditions, family shelters, doubled up, and/or are moving from place to place. Even though the law provides that children should not be in foster care due to poverty alone,⁶ lack of adequate housing frequently leads to children being placed in foster care and greatly delays family reunification when housing becomes the primary barrier to family reunification.

In our experience, the \$300 per month preventive housing subsidy rarely, if ever, succeeds in preventing the need for foster care or in reunifying families when housing is a barrier to family stability.⁷ The housing subsidy has become a meaningless entitlement due primarily to the exceedingly low monthly \$300 monthly rate. The housing subsidy amount has not been increased since the subsidy was first enacted into law in 1988 ---- almost 30 years ago. Today, rental amounts in New York City are an average of over \$1,200 per month⁸ yet most of our clients' household income is well below this amount. In addition, during the period 2000 – 2012, median apartment rent amounts in New York City rose by 75 percent⁹ while the subsidy amount stayed the same. In short, the housing subsidy must be increased substantially if it is to actually reduce the amount of time children spend in foster care as a result of the lack of adequate housing. BDS attorneys are assigned to represent families each week where ACS is seeking a removal based on housing conditions. Far too often, the only solution ACS proposes when families have back rent issues or repair issues is for the family to enter shelter, thereby giving up their housing. A reformed housing subsidy would help these families stay together without exposing them to the trauma of homelessness.

A substantially higher and more easily accessible preventive housing subsidy would make an enormous difference in preventing children from entering foster care and reducing children's length of stay in foster care. We strongly urge the City Council to call upon the State legislature to increase the housing subsidy amount and thereby carry out its legal commitment to ensure that families not be separated by poverty alone.

BDS supports the following bills without specific comment:

⁶ "As far as possible families shall be kept together, they shall not be separated for reasons of poverty alone, and they shall be provided services to maintain and strengthen family life." Social Services Law § 131 (3).

⁷ Social Services Law section 409-a (5)(c) provides for the provision of a housing subsidy in the amount of \$300 per month for up to three years when "a lack of adequate housing is the primary factor preventing the discharge of children from foster care." Section 409-a(7) further provides for the same subsidy in cases in which "a lack of adequate housing is a factor that may cause the entry of a child or children into foster care and the family has at least one service need other than lack of adequate housing."

⁸ NYU Furman Center, State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2013, pg. 32.

⁹ Office of the NYC Comptroller, Scott M. Stringer, The Growing Gap: New York City's Housing Affordability Challenge (April 2014).

Int. No. 1187 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a report on obtaining government-issued identification for youth.

Int. No. 1190 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to a report on the educational continuity of children in foster care.

T2016-4569 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to high school graduation rates of youth in foster care.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. We are grateful to the Council for your attention to this important. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Lauren Shapiro at lshapiro@bds.org or (347)592-2510 or Emma Alpert at 347-592-2572 or ealpert@bds.org with any questions about these or other issues.



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TESTIMONY

June 16, 2016
New York, New York

Presented before

The New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare

The Legal Aid Society
Juvenile Rights Practice (JRP)
199 Water Street, 6th Floor
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We submit this testimony on behalf of The Legal Aid Society, and thank Chair Levin and all of the committee members for inviting our input on the proposed package of nine bills related to youth in foster care. We applaud the Committee for continuing to tackle this important subject, and look forward to the valuable contributions that we are sure the Council will make in identifying and serving some of our City's most vulnerable children.

About The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of over 1,100 attorneys. These Legal Aid Society lawyers work with some 900 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for

more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform representation for clients benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

Legal Aid's Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and State and City agencies. In addition to representing many thousands of children and youth each year in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients. One example is D.B., et. al v. Richter, a now-settled class action lawsuit addressing the failure of the City to ensure that youth in foster care do not age out to homelessness.

Int. 1190-2016: A report on the educational continuity of children in foster care

The Legal Aid Society supports the passage of Int. 1190, which would require the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to submit regular reports regarding educational continuity for children in foster care. The Juvenile Rights Practice (JRP) applauds the work that ACS has done recently to move towards better compliance with federal school stability laws.

ACS has engaged multiple stakeholders, including JRP, in a work group that is focused on improving educational outcomes for youth in foster care. One of the group's main goals is to create and promote appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that foster youth are able to remain in their schools of origin when it is in their best interests to do so.

Before addressing the specific language of Int. 1190, we wish to emphasize that the most significant barrier to preserving school stability for children in foster care in New York City is the lack of yellow bus service. Currently, a very small number of children in foster care are eligible for Department of Education bussing through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The vast remainder are not. For these children, ACS and its contract agencies have been forced to cobble together expensive, inefficient, ineffective, and unsustainable transportation plans, such as having a foster care case worker accompany a child to and from school via private car service every day. This is not sustainable.

The only sustainable solution will require significant cooperation from the Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation. Indeed, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed by Congress in December 2015, requires local school districts to collaborate with child welfare agencies to develop written procedures describing how transportation will be provided to children in foster care when it is in their best interests to remain in their schools of origin. The deadline for compliance is December 10, 2016 -- a mere six months away. We call on the City Council to hold the Department of Education accountable for meeting its obligations under ESSA, and we ask the Department of Education to recognize that preserving school stability for children in foster care is a shared obligation.

Turning to the bill itself, we would suggest a few changes. First, the bill must specify the point in time at which school stability should be measured. Specifically, JRP recommends that

school stability be measured as of 90 days after the child's initial placement into foster care or change in foster homes. The Legal Aid Society often finds that foster care agencies are willing and able to arrange short-term transportation that allows children to remain in their schools of origin during the days and weeks immediately following a new foster home placement. But as the weeks and months wear on, foster parents and foster care case workers find it increasingly difficult to sustain the ad hoc transportation plans they have improvised. Thus, we find that some of our clients are being forced to change schools several weeks or months after the foster home placement occurs. If the bill merely required reporting as of the day or week immediately following the foster care placement, the data would not capture the full universe of school changes that actually take place.

Second, decisions regarding school stability are quite complex, and typically involve multiple variables. The complexity of these decisions would make it quite difficult, if not impossible, to disaggregate the data according to categories that describe why a particular decision was made. As part of the work group mentioned above, ACS is working with advocates and other stakeholders, including JRP, to develop a school stability decision-making form that would require consideration of multiple factors, as well as a narrative section describing the reasons for the decision. We strongly encourage this type of thoughtful, robust decision-making. We have concerns about asking ACS to assign each case to a narrow category that may not adequately reflect the complexities involved in making the school stability determination.

Int. 1191-2016: Reports on certain children who have spent the greatest length of time in foster care.

The Legal Aid Society JRP supports the premise of Int. 1191-2016, requiring that information regarding the barriers to permanency be made publicly available. We are concerned

that the specific mechanism proposed for reporting this information would not yield the most useful information. With approximately 10,000 children in foster care,¹ this report on 200 children would provide a glimpse of the 2% with the longest stays. We believe this group of children is not representative of the difficulties that the vast majority of children in foster care face in terms of barriers to permanency. Instead, this group reflects those with extreme sets of needs. We would advocate for a report reflecting either a larger group or a random sample of children in the longest quartile.

It is often the case that children who have remained in foster care for the longest periods of time have nuanced, complicated family histories and challenges that cannot be summarized by a single label or two, such as the ones listed in this bill, including “parental homelessness, parental relapse, parental childcare needs,” or “education issues.” It would be more typical, for example, for some combination of these factors, and others, to have been at work for many years. In addition, there are likely to have been multiple challenges on the foster care side, including frequent placement changes, difficulty locating pre-adoptive foster families, lengthy stays in residential placements, or challenges in securing sufficient support and services in order for a foster family to make the decision to adopt. Finally, children themselves have a critical voice in this process and may have expressed a desire to remain in foster care, for example, rather than having their parents’ rights terminated. This is especially true of older children who have consistently visited with their parents during their time in foster care. **While measuring the duration of a child’s stay in foster care is important, we would strongly suggest the Council does not over-emphasize time to permanency as a measure of success.**

¹ <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/data-policy.page>

Quarterly reporting is also too frequent a measure of this group of young people, as it's unlikely that the list would look meaningfully different each quarter; an annual or biannual reporting would be more likely to yield meaningful data. The reality of the lives of the 200 children who have remained in foster care for the greatest length of time are nuanced and complex; a report which lists the "barriers to permanency" for this group, particularly on a quarterly basis, is unlikely to yield useful data about barriers to permanency in general. A larger sample size or random sample with less frequent reporting would be more likely to produce accurate data on lengthy stays in foster care and what causes them.

Int. 1192-2016: Foster Care Task Force

The Legal Aid Society supports this proposal to create an interagency task force to develop and submit recommendations to improve services for youth in foster care and outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. In particular, we support including current and former youth in foster care and their advocates in such a task force. We recognize that a task force could provide a strong platform to bring greater attention to these issues and work towards viable solutions. We would note that the NYC Children's Cabinet is an effort to address these same goals, as is the Interagency Coordinating Council, run by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), although neither youth nor advocates are included in these efforts. The Council might consider integrating youth and JRP into the Children's Cabinet or the Interagency Coordinating Council, to ensure that these efforts are not duplicative or developing contradictory recommendations. We would further note that it would be useful to include the Human Resources Administration (HRA) in the proposed task force, since facilitating the provision of benefits and services through HRA is important for many at risk families and youth in care.

Int. 1197-2016: Information collected and reported about youth and foster care.

The Legal Aid Society supports the proposed amendments to Local Law 46 of 2014, which require ACS to report on additional factors for youth in care and youth who have aged out of foster care. Reporting on the number of youth who have entered DHS within 30 days, 90 days, 180 days and 3 years after aging out of care will yield invaluable information about the discharge outcomes for youth leaving care – both in the short and long term. We suggest that ACS also specify whether the youth who had contact with DHS were parenting. Furthermore, we suggest that ACS also compile data from DYCD about youth in care or recently discharged from care who have entered DYCD youth shelters within 30 days, 90 days, 180 days and 3 years after aging out of care. Although statutory protections prohibit the disclosure of identifying information by DYCD, ACS should report the number of current and former foster youth who have contact with the DYCD shelter system. We support reporting on the number of youth who receive cash assistance and SNAP benefits from HRA within 30 and 60 days of being discharged from foster care. Finally, the bill proposes reporting on the number of youth who age out and transition to Medicaid without a gap in coverage, which we also support.

Int. 1199-2016: Surveys for youth in foster care regarding experiences with foster parents

The Legal Aid Society supports, with important caveats, Int. 1199-2016 which would require ACS to administer annual foster parent experience surveys to all youth age 13 and older who reside with a foster parent. Access to information about the day-to-day experiences of youth in their foster homes is critically important. We believe the survey as outlined touches on many important measures of a young person's experiences. We would ask that City Council address the following issues in the proposed bill:

- ACS should be required to explain the purpose of the survey, confidentiality and any limits on confidentiality of the information shared prior to the survey's administration.
- ACS should be required to ensure that any information shared in the survey is not attributed to the youth without his or her permission.
- Over the course of a year, a young person may have been placed in several different foster homes. Youth should have the opportunity to review each home.
- With respect to older youth, ACS should be required to inquire if the youth is provided with funds to cover the cost of transportation beyond what he or she needs to travel to and from school and whether the youth is denied access to the foster home when the foster parent is not home.

Res. 1073-2016: Increase the housing subsidy and extend the age of eligibility from 21 to 24

We support Resolution 1073-2016, which calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A.7756-A, which increases the amount of the housing subsidy from \$300 to \$600 per month, and extends the age of eligibility from 21 to 24 for youth who have aged out of foster care. Finding and maintaining affordable housing is a major obstacle for older youth in the child welfare system. The housing subsidy program, authorized by Social Service Law §409-a(5)(c), is intended to prevent homelessness for young people ages 18-21 who are aging out of foster care by authorizing a rental subsidy in the amount of \$300 per month to youth who rent an apartment on the private market.

Incredibly, while the median apartment rent in New York City rose 75% from 2000-2012², the size of this subsidy has not changed since its initiation in 1988. The law authorizes the provision of a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month for up to 3 years or until the eligible youth or family reaches the limit of \$10,800. Eligible youth or families can also receive a payment of up to \$1,800 (up to two times during the 3 year period) to help pay for rent arrears or other moving costs. (These “one-shots” count towards the \$10,800 limit.) While these subsidies do provide some assistance, they fall far short of the needs of these youth and families. As counsel in D.B., et. al v. Richter, a now-settled class action lawsuit regarding the failure of the City to ensure that youth in foster care do not age out to homelessness, as well as through our daily practice with adolescents, we are familiar with the seemingly insurmountable challenge faced by these clients of finding an affordable place to live, even with the housing subsidy.

To improve the ability of the housing subsidy program to achieve its goal of stabilizing housing for families and youth aging out of foster care, we call on the State to increase the monthly limit from \$300 to \$600 (an amount with the same buying power as \$300 had in 1988).

In addition, the State should change the upper age limit of eligibility for the subsidy from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care between the ages of 18 and 21 are able to take advantage of the subsidy for up to 3 years. Finally, the State should permit youth receiving the housing subsidy to live with unrelated roommates, even when the youth receiving the subsidy is not the lease-holder. The reality, particularly in NYC, is that a roommate is essential for a youth to afford an apartment, and such arrangements should not be discouraged.

We thank the Committee for their attention to the needs of youth in foster care and for giving The Legal Aid Society the opportunity to speak about this important topic.

² See Office of the New York City Comptroller, The Growing Gap: New York City’s Housing Affordability Challenge (April 2014), available at http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Growing_Gap.pdf

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Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE
BILLS RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE
JUNE 16, 2016

By the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

My name is James Purcell, and I am CEO of the Council of Family Child Caring Agencies (also known as COFCCA). COFCCA represents over fifty New York City child welfare agencies, organizations that provide foster care and child maltreatment prevention services to many thousands of families. Our members range from very large multiservice agencies to small community-based foster care prevention programs in community districts around the city.

It is gratifying to our members and the larger community of human service providers that the General Welfare Committee and the larger Council are taking time to examine issues facing NYC families and children. The number and tenor of the bills being discussed today tells us the Committee has serious intentions to assist this population. In general, we feel most of these bills *will* help, or at least not hurt, our members' efforts to rebuild families while keeping children safe.

Some bills which require the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to obtain data from other city agencies, and we hope the Committee and the Council will assist in encouraging data exchange among these agencies. It seems the Committee recognizes that city agencies exist in and keep data within their own siloes, and the bill establishing a foster care task force (Int 1192-2016) might be in response



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to that. However, we would point out that this is similar to other multiagency efforts (e.g., the Children's Cabinet) and that this task force might be duplicative of other efforts. For this to be a true success, we would encourage the Committee to require the task force meet concrete outcomes and/or produce usable deliverables. Additionally, the list of task force members does not include any representation from the Family Court; the Court is a key player in foster care cases and the Court's actions have direct effect on youth services and outcomes.

Other bills in the package mandate ACS gather and post information about system performance. We have concerns about how this would be done. For example, the bill requesting a report on permanency indicators has very particular methodology for ACS to use in generating the report. On the one hand, it appears to match Federal child welfare permanency outcome methodology, which would mean members of the general public seeking this information would not be confused when finding similar information in other entities' data. However, we have identified several problems with how the Federal measures are designed, particularly when the measures do not take into account how child welfare philosophies vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. New York City has a proud tradition (and rightly so) of protecting parents' and children's rights. In consequence, children in NYC stay in care longer than in counties or states that move to quickly terminate parental rights without giving parents opportunity to rebuild their lives and families.

The bill relating to children who have spent the most time in foster care (Int. 1191-2016) is particularly concerning to us. First, we *think* we understand what the Committee wants to see and why they want to see it, but we aren't certain, and the bill as written now a) might not realize the outcomes the



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Committee wishes and b) may cause harm to the children who have been in care the longest. It seems the Committee is hoping that posting demographic information about the 200 children in care the longest will somehow result in these cases closing more quickly. It is our belief that many, if not most, of these children and youth are still in care for valid reasons and that expediting their discharge will not be helpful for them. Some of the youth in the group of 200 may include

- Young women with babies and other older teens who will be leaving care to live on their own, and who need all the support we can give them before they age out or find a permanent adult resource
- Youth in college who need the system's support to complete their education
- Youth who will not live independently but are awaiting eventual admission to adult facilities operated by the NYS Office of Mental Health or Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

We fear that emphasizing these 200 children may push case planners to make decisions based not on the child's best interests but in the interest of pushing the child "off the list." We also fear that posting this data on line will result in youth identifying themselves in the data and reinforcing the message that they are not candidates for permanent families. It may benefit all involved if this bill were changed to instead ask ACS to examine the cases of the longest-staying children and report a) what systemic barriers ACS found in these cases and b) what suggestions they have for addressing those problems. It is worth noting that ACS has gone to great lengths this past year in examining permanency issues, including regular reviews of lists of cases with contract agency staff and emphasizing the need for timely discharges, as allowed by Family Court.



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We support the idea of surveying youth in foster care regarding their experiences with foster parents (Int. 1199-2016); in fact, many of the contract agencies already survey youth in foster care as a part of their internal quality assurance process and/or as part of recertifying each foster home. We are hopeful that the areas listed in the bill are the areas that must be covered and not the specific questions that must be asked, using that wording, as it seems the survey is designed to elicit negative responses. Nothing in the questions as listed asks foster youth if they like their foster homes and foster parents; if they feel part of the family; if they feel accepted and loved. This, too, is information that should be sought. Our agencies know from conversations from foster care alumni that many positive things can happen in foster care, and we would look forward to seeing that information come to light as well. And one item on a practical note: section C specifies privacy of reporting the data, but if the agencies providing care do not receive response data for the youth in their care, they will not be able to determine whether any of their foster parents require additional training or de-certification.

Finally, we whole-heartedly support the Committee's resolution calling upon New York State to increase the housing subsidy to \$600 and to extend the age of eligibility for youth leaving care. We see the increase and the extension as necessary to youth well-being and are happy to see you agree.

We at COFCCA would be happy to answer any questions the Council members may have, or to arrange for members to see their local child welfare agencies in action. We thank you for allowing us to submit our testimony.

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Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

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Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell  
Associate Executive Director,  
Policy and Advocacy

Before the  
New York City Council  
General Welfare Committee

*Oversight: Foster Care in NYC*  
*Foster care bills:*

June 16, 2016

Good morning. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 72-year-old, independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank Chair Levin, as well as the members of the City Council General Welfare Committee for holding today's oversight hearing on foster care in New York City and for introducing several bills and a resolution aimed at increasing transparency and improving outcomes for children and youth and families involved in the foster care system. I would also like to thank all of the City Council Members and the Public Advocate who have sponsored the legislation being addressed at today's hearing, including Council Members Levin, Ferreras-Copeland, Grodenchik, Richards, Eugene, Palma, Dromm, and Salamanca, Jr.

In addition, I want to thank the City Council and the Public Advocate for the attention you have been paying to the child welfare system, and the foster care system in particular. As you know, children and youth in foster care are some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers—and they are literally in the custody of the City. It is therefore, our collective responsibility to ensure they receive the highest quality care and services in their foster homes and by the foster care agencies charged with their care.

This includes ensuring children and youth are placed in safe, caring and supportive foster homes; expediting permanency so children are discharged from foster care to a family as soon as possible; providing for educational stability whenever possible and educational supports whenever needed; providing high quality and timely services that meet identified needs for parents and children; providing preventive services to keep as many children as possible safely at home and outside the foster care system; ensuring there are services available for children and their families when they leave foster care through reunification, KinGAP or adoption; and providing any services or support for all foster youth to help them transition successfully to adulthood, particularly for those youth who age out of foster care without a family.

The City Council has been a tremendous ally to date and we look forward to continue to partner together. I would like to add a special thank you to Council Member Levin who has met with CCC and other child welfare advocates countless times so he can better understand the intricacies of this system and how the City Council and his Committee can be helpful for the children, youth and parents touched by child welfare.

Furthermore, the City Council's Foster Youth Shadow Day was a tremendous success and has helped Council Members better understand the needs of foster youth. We were also so pleased that the City Council's response to the City's Preliminary Budget included requests for funding to bring back discharge grants and for agencies to have the funds to comply with federal and state laws related to normalcy, which encourages and supports foster children and youth to participate in developmentally appropriate activities, such as sleepovers, music, and athletics, as their peers outside the system do.

Notably, ACS has been continuously working to improve child welfare outcomes and strengthen their foster care system. In fact, the Executive Budget includes funding for both the discharge grants and normalcy (via increasing funding for special payments), as well as proposals to add funding for preventive services, foster parent/adoptive parent stipends, and college supports for foster youth. In addition, ACS has recently brought in CCC's friend and colleague, Julie Farber, as the Deputy Commissioner for Permanency (foster care) and they have been implementing a number of reforms and initiatives aimed at addressing permanency, the quality of foster homes, educational stability for foster children, and the training of caseworkers. ACS has also included CCC on its Steering Committee for some of the reform work underway with other child welfare advocates, and we appreciate having a seat at that table.

The child welfare system and the foster care system are extremely complex, and the needs of the children and families are varied, numerous and complex as well. We know that Commissioner Carrion, the de Blasio administration and the foster care providers are committed to doing everything they can to produce the best outcomes possible for the children and families touched by this system. We want to thank all of the hard-working caseworkers and staff throughout the child welfare system who dedicate their lives to improving the lives of children and their families.

**CCC supports (with some recommendations discussed below) all of the City Council legislation being introduced today.** We believe that this package of bills will help the child welfare community better understand the strengths, needs and barriers in the system (and other city systems) over time, which will in turn help us better focus our advocacy efforts at the federal, state and local level regarding budgets, legislation, and policies. We look forward to working with both the City Council and the Administration to strengthen and pass this legislation—but ultimately to lend our voices in a helpful and collaborative way that will strengthen and support New York City's child welfare system.

### Foster Care

Foster care is intended to be a temporary arrangement for children and youth when it is not safe for them to remain in their homes. Children in foster care have been removed from their homes by a child protective agency (like ACS) upon approval by a Family Court, which must determine amongst other things that reasonable efforts were made to prevent the removal and that it is in the child's best interest to be removed and placed in foster care.

Pursuant to the Nicholson decision, the Court must weigh the risk of harm in the home against the psychological harm that could be created by the removal itself. The state's intrusion into a family, whereby a child is removed from a parent, is a tremendous step by a government and clearly causes trauma to all of those involved. This is why it is so critical to ensure that foster care is reserved for the children who truly need to be in care and why it is so incumbent upon the City to provide the highest quality care to the children in its custody.

The goal of foster care is to place the child in a safe home while parents receive the services they need to enable the child to return home safely. Thus, the child welfare agency and its providers must have access to the services both the children and their parents need.

It is also typically in child's best interests to achieve what is referred to as permanency, as soon as possible. **While "permanency" is child welfare-speak, to a child it means the safety, stability and security of having a family and knowing that it is permanent.** Living in foster care and not having permanency has a profound impact on a child.

Federal and state law require all foster children to have a permanency plan and for this plan to be reviewed by a court periodically (every 12 months under federal law and every 6 months under state law). These permanency plans are: reunification; adoption; legal guardianship; permanent placement with a fit and willing relative; and another planned permanent living arrangement (commonly referred to as APPLA).

New York Law defines the permanency plan of APPLA to be, "placement in another planned permanent living arrangement that includes a significant connection to an adult willing to be a permanency resource for the child."<sup>1</sup> Only youth 16 and older can have a permanency plan of APPLA and the social services agency (ACS/its providers) must document to the court a compelling reason why it would not be in the child's best interest to return home, be referred for termination of parental rights and placed for adoption, be placed with a fit and willing relative or referred for legal guardianship.<sup>2</sup> The statute tries to put as many barriers as possible to prevent youth from aging out of the system without a permanent family connection.

As mentioned above, the goal for children in foster care is to discharge them as soon as possible to a permanent resource. Most children are discharged via reunification with their parents. Other discharges include adoption, KinGAP (which is through a legal guardianship and a KinGAP subsidy agreement), AWOL, and APPLA (aging out.)

### **Foster Care in New York City**

Foster care in New York City has undergone a tremendous transformation since the creation of ACS in 1996- 20 years ago. In 1996, there were 41,669 children in foster care. Today there are **fewer than 10,000 children in foster care** (9,563 as of March 2016).<sup>3</sup> This is a tremendous accomplishment.

In addition, the number of children and youth in congregate care settings has been dramatically reduced. In 1996, there were 4,340 youth who were living in group care settings and not families. Today, there are 818 youth in residential care, 8.6% of the foster children.

There are a number of reasons why foster care has declined so dramatically, including an increased focus on permanency over time and a tremendous increase in the continuum of preventive services available to keep children safely at home and out of foster care. In addition, many children were entering foster care in the 80s and 90s due to the crack epidemic and the advent of HIV/AIDS, which in the 80s left many children orphaned. With regard to congregate care placements, starting with Commissioner Mattingly, ACS made deliberative efforts to reduce the number of children living in these group settings. We have come a long way for sure.

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<sup>1</sup> Family Court Action Section 1089(c).

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> [www.nyc.gov/acs](http://www.nyc.gov/acs). Visited 6/3/16.

Data is critical to understanding where the child welfare system has been, where it is going and what CCC and others should be advocating for in terms of budgets, legislation and policies. The child welfare data currently available has helped in this and we hope the passage of the bills being discussed today will provide us with even more guidance.

Here is a closer look at the current foster care system:

#### Age:

Children in foster care run the age gamut. Notably, a substantial number of children enter foster care very young or as teenagers. It is therefore critical that the foster care system is able to address the needs of children and youth of all ages.

- Since CY 2013 and up through March 2016, the percentages of children entering foster care at various age ranges has been consistent: about half of children entering foster care are newborn-5 years old; about 20% are 6-11 years old and about 30% are 12 years of age and over at the time of entry.<sup>4</sup>
- Point in time data about the ages of children currently in foster care is not publicly available. The most recent data CCC has is from 2013. At that time, about one third (35.8%) were under 5 years old; another third (30.1%) were 6-13; about one fifth (20.4%) were 14-17 years old; and 13.7% were 18 years or older.<sup>5</sup>

#### Race/ethnicity:

While CCC does not have the most recent race/ethnicity data, the race/ethnicity of the City's child welfare system has consistently been disproportionately children of color. In 2014, Black children made up more than half of the foster care population (they make up 23.5% of the general child population). Latino children made up 31.6% of the foster children (they are 35.5% of the general NYC population). Asian and White children were 6% of the total foster care population.

We must be mindful of this disproportionate minority contact with the child welfare system when we put into place reform efforts.

#### Placements:

Being removed from a parent or parents is traumatic to a child. This trauma can be lessened if the child is placed in the home of someone familiar, such as a relative or close family friend.

In March 2016, about one-third (32.5%) of the 9,563 children in foster care were living in kinship foster homes (3,112 children). About half of the children (47.6%) were living in regular foster boarding homes (4,555 children). Another 864 children were living in treatment family foster care, 818 children were in residential care and 214 children were in special medical foster care.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services. Monthly Flash: May 2016, at 15. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2016/FlashIndicators.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Citizens' Committee for Children. *Keeping Track of New York City's Children (2015)*, at 80.

<sup>6</sup> New York City Administration for Children's Services. Monthly Flash: May 2016, at 16. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2016/FlashIndicators.pdf>

## Permanency

Despite all of the reforms and initiatives that have been put into place throughout the past 20 years, children in New York (and NYC) still have longer foster care stays on average than children in the rest of the country. While we would not necessarily want New York/New York City to have the shortest stays as that could mean we were not providing important services, for many of the children who have been in NYC's foster care could have probably benefited from achieving permanency more expeditiously.

**According to the Mayor's Management Report, in FY15, 31% of foster children achieved permanency in 12 months or less.<sup>7</sup> The median length of stay before adoption continues to remain over 50 months.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 600-800 youth age of New York City's foster care system each year.**

The federal government's oversight of child welfare includes the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). This review includes a data component, where states are compared to one another, and an on-site review. In the most recent data review, New York has continued to lag behind other states:

- Maltreatment in care (rate): 46 out of 48 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Recurrence of maltreatment (%): 48 out of 48 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Permanency in 12 months (%): 35 out of 49 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Permanency in 12 months for children in care 12-23 months (%): 50 out of 51 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Permanency in 12 months for children in care 24 months or more (%): 48 out of 51 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Re-entry to foster care in 12 months (%): 40 out of 48 ranked states (did not meet national standards)
- Placement stability (rate): 3 out of 46 ranked states (met national standards)

## Initiatives, Reforms and Outcomes

The child welfare system has three main objectives with regard to the children and families it serves: Safety, Permanency and Well-being. It is important to note that keeping a child safe and discharging him/her from foster care quickly does not necessarily ensure the well-being of the child.

Over time, ACS has implemented a number of reforms and initiatives aimed at improving safety, permanency and well-being. From Commissioner Scoppetta, to Commissioner Bell, to Commissioner Mattingly, to Commissioner Richter, and now with Commissioner Carrion, we have seen many initiatives that have helped countless children and youth and their families. With regard to foster care these have included family team conferencing, parent to parent, congregate care reduction, one year home, improved outcomes for children, realignment, foster parent recruitment campaigns, no time to wait, and the list goes on.

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<sup>7</sup> Mayor's Management Report, Fiscal Year 2015.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2016/acs.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Id.

CCC is inspired by all of the work underway at ACS to not only decrease foster care length of stay, but also to ensure staff are better trained, fewer children age out of care, foster youth receive the education and support they need to go to college and foster parents receive the subsidies they need to better provide for children and youth. CCC is also pleased to see that ACS is conducting a significant amount of internal data analysis to both see where there are structural reforms that can be implemented and to begin to use predictive analytics. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with ACS to strengthen the child welfare system.

### **The City Council Bills**

CCC is generally supportive of all of the bills being addressed at today's hearing: Intros: 1187-2016; 1191-2016; 1192-2016; 1196-2016; 1197-2016; 1199-2016 and Resolution 1073-2016.

With regard to all of the legislation, the data we at CCC analyze from ACS is invaluable. **We respectfully request that when ACS adds new data reports that they keep the prior year's report online as well; otherwise, we are unable to compare from one year to the next. This would apply to the new bills being discussed today, as well as previous data reports ACS produces.**

Below are some recommendations with regard to each piece of legislation:

#### ***1) Local Law 1192-2016: In relation to a foster care task force***

CCC supports the creation of an interagency task force to develop and submit recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council with regard to improving services and outcomes for youth in foster care. We believe that this Task Force, which as drafted would include youth, providers, advocates, the City Council and relevant city agencies (ACS, DHS, DOE, DYCD, DOHMH and NYCHA) would be an invaluable way to address cross-systems issues for youth in foster care, and those age out of foster care. CCC appreciates the City Council recognizing that the Task Force should not last forever and that after the Task Force issues its recommendations there will be two years of annual reports regarding implementation of the recommendations.

CCC respectfully makes the following recommendations with regard to Local Law 1192-2016/the inter-agency task force:

- While CCC appreciates the City Council's attempt to keep the size of the Task Force manageable by limiting it to 17 members, we ask the Council to consider adding the following members:
  - Parent(s) with experience in the child welfare system. We suggest that both the Mayor and the City Council appoint a parent with prior child welfare experience.
  - Foster parent(s). We suggest that there be at least 1 foster parent added to the task force.
  - An additional advocacy organization appointed by the City Council. While, the proposed legislation includes 2 advocacy organizations appointed by the Mayor, we believe there could be value in the City Council also selecting an advocate.

- The Council may want to add a clause that would allow the Task Force to be extended if the Task Force believes that they need more time for implementation and the Mayor, the Speaker and the Chair of the General Welfare Committee all consent to the extension.
- With regard to the areas that the recommendations will address in Section d, we suggest adding post-permanency services (regardless of type of discharge) and access to youth employment opportunities.
- We believe that the Task Force reports could be a substantial amount of work and suggest that the legislation charge an entity to be responsible for coordinating this process, be it ACS, the City Council, an advocacy organization or a consultant brought on for this purpose.

**2) Local Law 1196-2016: *In relation to a report on permanency indicators***

CCC supports Local Law 1196, which would require ACS to report publicly on a number of indicators related to permanency including the rate of maltreatment for children in foster care; repeat maltreatment; the percentage of children achieving permanency within 12 months, 12-23 months, and 24 months or more; the percentage of children discharged to reunification or KinGAP who re-enter care within 12 months (i.e. re-entry); the rate of moves for children in foster care; and the percentage of children who are AWOL.

We believe that ACS collects most, if not all of this data already, and reports a small portion of it in the Mayor's Management Report. CCC supports ACS reporting on all of these indicators and respectfully makes the following recommendations for Local Law 1196-2016:

- CCC urges the City Council and the Administration to work together to make the burden on ACS of reporting pursuant to this local law as minimal as possible by enabling ACS to report in the manner ACS is already collecting this data wherever possible. CCC knows that ACS already collects much of this data and reports some of it in the Mayor's Management Report.
- CCC respectfully requests that the definition of KinGAP be amended to more accurately reflect that the Council is referring to those children who have been discharged from foster care with a KinGAP finalization. The language in the proposed legislation focuses on children who could be eligible. CCC suggests defining KinGAP to be "the permanency and discharge outcome for children for whom a relative has become the legal guardian via court order and whereby the relative and ACS have entered into a finalized KinGAP agreement for a subsidy, pursuant to the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program."
- CCC respectfully requests the following amendments and additions to the indicators:
  - Sections 3, 4 and 5 are aimed at providing data with regard to children's lengths of stay in foster care. As drafted it would require the percent of children discharged in less than 12 months; 12-23 months; and over 24 months. We ask for more specificity here:

- a) We would like to see both the number of children discharged and the percentage.
  - b) We would like to see the number and percentage discharged over the various periods of time in total but also by permanency outcome: reunification, adoption, KinGAP, guardianship or custody without subsidy, APPLA, other.
  - c) We would like for the periods of time to go further out than 24 months. The median length of stay before an adoption is 50 months, so ending with over 24 months is too short of a time to learn as much as possible from the data. We suggest reporting: Less than 12 months; 12-23 months; 24-35 months; 36-47 months; 48-60 months; over 60 months.
- Section 6 is requesting re-entry data for reunification and KinGAP. We respectfully request that the data for each discharge be reported out separately (meaning separate reunification re-entry data from KinGAP re-entry data.) We would also ask if ACS could report on re-entry for children who are adopted, if they are able to do this.

**3) *Local Law 1191-2016: In relation to certain children who have spent the greatest length of time in foster care.***

This law would require ACS to report quarterly demographic data and barriers to permanency for the 200 children and youth who have been in foster care the longest amount of time. CCC supports this legislation in principle and believes that when ACS, the City Council, advocates and others have more information about the children spending the longest amount of time in foster care and their barriers to permanency, it will help us to direct resources, change laws, create new initiatives, etc. to address the barriers.

Our one concern with this bill is ensuring the confidentiality of the 200 children and that there be no way for the public or the child to deduce who the children are when they look at the report.

CCC respectfully makes the following recommendations with regard to Local Law 1191-2016:

- We have heard some concerns that if this report was published online, the children described in it would be able to figure out when they were discussed in the report. One option to address this would be to not require ACS to publish the report online, but rather to require ACS provide the report to the City Council. We would also suggest that there be a way for advocates to have access to the report.
- In Section b(4), instead of asking for the “barriers to placement” we suggest labeling this, “barriers to **permanency**.”
- With regard to the barriers list, we suggest working with ACS to create a fairly detailed list of barriers. Some additional items to consider include: Grounds for TPR took time to achieve; family court delays; no permanency resource yet found; juvenile incarceration; etc.
- CCC respectfully requests that the definition of KinGAP be amended to more accurately reflect that the Council is referring to those children who have been discharged from foster care with a KinGAP finalization. The language in the

proposed legislation focuses on children who could be eligible. CCC suggests defining KinGAP to be “the permanency and discharge outcome for children for whom a relative has become the legal guardian via court order and whereby the relative and ACS have entered into a finalized KinGAP agreement for a subsidy, pursuant to the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program.”

**4) *Local Law 1199-2016: In Relation to surveys for youth in foster care regarding experiences with foster parents***

CCC greatly appreciates the thoughtfulness of this piece of legislation and the desire to capture the experiences youth are having in their foster homes. We also understand that this legislation is responsive to suggestions from youth who have been in foster care and we thank the City Council from listening and responding to these youth voices.

We support this legislation but respectfully submit the following recommendations:

- In general, we suggest that ACS and the City Council work with someone who is an expert in surveys to develop the survey instrument. For example, while some of the questions should be yes/no, we believe some of them should be restructured with a scale (e.g. always, almost always, sometimes, never) and some of them should be Yes/No with follow-up (if yes- please answer). For example, question number 6 with regard to whether the young feels they are treated as a member of the family might be better asked as a scale rather than yes/no.
- We suggest that ACS and the City Council think about how best to engage youth 13 and older in filling out this survey. We appreciate the legislation requiring that the young person complete the survey outside the foster home. We ask ACS and the Council to consider ways that the survey could be conducted electronically and/or as an App on a mobile device.
- We suggest that there also be a survey for youth ages 13 and older who are residing in residential care. The first question on the survey could ask whether they are living in a foster home or in residential care and then direct the youth to appropriate questions based on that response.
- We suggest that the survey have additional questions with regard to implementing normalcy/the reasonable and prudent parent standard. We believe the barriers to implementation (besides training) have been addressed now that ACS has included additional funding in the budget (via special payments) and the state has passed a statute protecting foster parents/residential programs from liability if a child is hurt when the standard is applied (e.g. when a child breaks their leg playing soccer.) Specifically we suggest adding questions like:
  - Have you been asked what activities (e.g. academic, music, sports, theater, etc.) you would like to participate in? If yes, have you been able to participate in activities?
  - Have you been able to participate in activities with your friends from school (such as sleepovers or school trips)?

- The Council may want to consider requiring that the results of the survey be provided to the Foster Care Task Force and that the Task Force amend its recommendations based on the survey findings, where appropriate.

**5) Local Law 1190-2016: In relation to a report on educational continuity of children in foster care.**

Educational stability is critical for foster children. Research has shown the detrimental impact moving schools has on educational outcomes for foster children and youth. In addition, for children who are removed from their families, being able to attend the same school with their teachers and friends provides them with an important point of continuity at a time in their lives when there is much trauma and upheaval. Furthermore, educational stability for foster children is federal law.

CCC supports this local law and looks forward to seeing the data with regard to educational stability both for children entering foster care and children moving placements while in care. We understand that there are times when it is appropriate to change schools such as to allow a child to be placed with a relative, or because a child is not safe in the school of origin, or because the child is not connected to the school. We appreciate that the legislation allows ACS to provide data regarding the reasons why educational stability is not always in the child's best interests.

We respectfully make the following suggestions with regard to Local Law 1190-2016:

- We believe it would be helpful if the data was disaggregated either by grade level (e.g. K, 1, 2, 3, etc.) or by type of school (elementary, middle, high). We think that there are important differences that would be captured by reporting the data disaggregated by grade level.
- It might also be helpful for ACS to report out on how often ACS/DOE are required to make transportation arrangements to accommodate educational stability.

**6) Local Laws 1197-2016 and 1187-2016: Amendments to previously passed City Council data reporting laws related to foster youth and obtaining government-issued identification for youth. In addition the Local Law to amend Local Law 49 with regard to high school graduation rates.**

CCC is grateful for all of the efforts the Public Advocate Tish James and Council Members Levin, Dromm and Cumbo put forth to pass these bills two years ago. CCC also appreciates all of the work that ACS has clearly put into reporting out the data required by these three Local Laws of 2014 (Local Law 46, 48 and 49 of 2014).

While the past two years of data have been interesting to review, the way the data is reported does not enable one to know if outcomes have improved, remained the same, or gotten worse in a number of the areas. This is because most of the data required asks merely for the number of foster children (with regard to housing, permanency, SIJS, birth certificates, etc.) The reports do not provide the base so one does not know how many children there are of a certain age.

The amendments attempt to resolve this issue by asking ACS to report out the number of children in the different age categories.

In the current bill about foster youth leaving with government identification, ACS is required to report out how many children and youth receive various IDs (driver's license, social security card, birth certificate, etc.) While this is helpful, there is no way to know how many individual children left care with one form of ID versus one child leaving with multiple forms.

The other addition is to Local Law 1197 (amending Local Law 46 of 2014), which adds reporting on the number of former foster children who are homeless or receiving public assistance or SNAP. These items were in the original proposed law, but were removed from the final legislation due to a request by ACS.

CCC supports the proposed legislation.

We respectfully we make the following recommendation:

- We suggest that ACS, the Public Advocate's Office, the City Council and other advocates using the reports (like CCC) meet together to understand from ACS how the reporting could be less onerous but more meaningful. This could include combining some items and/or reporting out percentages in addition to whole numbers.

***7) Reso 1073-2016: Calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign A. 7756-A, in increase the housing subsidy amount from \$300 to \$600 per month and to extend the age of eligibility from 21 to 24.***

At the State level, CCC has been spearheading efforts to amend the child welfare housing subsidy, Social Service Law Section 409-a. This work has included working with Assembly member Hevesi, who introduced A7756-A this past winter. This bill includes three components: increasing the amount of the monthly subsidy from \$300-\$600; increasing the age for youth from 21 to 24; and allowing those who use the subsidy to have roommates.

Unfortunately, as we were advocating for this legislation throughout the winter and spring, CCC and other advocates encountered a stumbling block, which was the City only supporting the portion that would increase the amount, which was consistent with a bill introduced by Senator Avella. As we tried to resolve this issue through a variety of advocacy efforts CCC organized in Albany, we also worked with the de Blasio administration. By late Spring, ACS and HRA had met with Assembly member Hevesi and were developing new language with regard to the age increase that the City would be more comfortable with. Unfortunately, neither the state Assembly or the Senate have amended their bills and it does not seem like this bill will pass this session.

CCC has not given up and will be pushing hard for this bill to move next year- using the City's language. We are so grateful for the City Council's support for this bill, in your budget response and now through this legislation.

**We urge you to amend the language in the resolution to support the amendments related to housing subsidy, not only for youth aging out of foster care but for families receiving the subsidy, as well.**

Housing stability and child welfare are inextricably linked. Research has shown a higher rate of homelessness among those involved with the child welfare system than other low-income families and that housing can be a barrier to reunification.<sup>9</sup> “Homeless families are more likely than their non-homeless counterparts to be the focus of a child protective services (CPS) investigation, to have an open child welfare case or to have a child placed in out of home care.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, as documented in a recent U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) report, youth who age out of foster care are at a heightened risk of homelessness.<sup>11</sup>

In 1988, New York created the child welfare housing subsidy to help address homelessness and housing instability for families with open child welfare cases and youth aging out of foster care. Specifically, since 1988, the law has authorized local social service districts to provide eligible families and youth with a housing subsidy of up to \$300 per month for up to 3 years or until reaching the limit of \$10,800. The housing subsidy program is a preventive service, pursuant to State Social Service law and corresponding regulations.<sup>12</sup>

**The goal of the child welfare housing subsidy program to stabilize housing situations and prevent homelessness so as to help prevent foster care placements, expedite reunification, and help youth aging out of foster care. Thus, families with open CPS investigations, families receiving preventive services, families where children are reunifying from foster care, and youth ages 18-21 have been eligible for the housing subsidy.**

Given that the \$300 monthly limit has not increased since 1988, has not been adjusted for inflation, and does not reflect the Fair Market Rent in New York City (or almost all counties in New York), the \$300 housing subsidy is no longer a significant enough rental assistance mechanism to secure and stabilize housing for families or youth aging out of foster care in almost any county in New York State. If the \$300 subsidy is adjusted for inflation using the United States Department of Labor Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflations calculator, \$300 in 1988 has the same buying power as \$602.11 in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to New York’s youth, the child welfare laws enable youth to remain in foster care up to age 21. For those youth who choose to do this, they are not ever able to receive the housing subsidy, as it has been interpreted to end at age 21. These youth never get the opportunity to have avail themselves of the child welfare housing subsidy, which would otherwise be an important support for these young adults as they first learn to live on their own, pay rent, and support themselves.

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<sup>9</sup> Dworsky, Amy. Families at the Nexus of Housing and Child Welfare. Chapin Hall. Nov. 2014. <http://childwelfaresparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Families-at-the-Nexus-of-Housing-and-Child-Welfare.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Id.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Housing for Youth Aging out of Foster Care. May 2014. [http://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/youth\\_hsg\\_main\\_report.pdf](http://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/youth_hsg_main_report.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Social Service Law Section 409-a(5)(c); 18 NYCRR 423.3(b)(ii); 18NYCRR 423.4(l).

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *CPI Inflation Calculator*. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). Visited 11/26/14.

The federal government has recognized the value of enabling youth to remain in foster care through age 21 (rather than 18) and in 2008 passed the Fostering Connections to Success Act, which extended federal reimbursement for foster care up to age 21. Other states are now beginning to follow New York's lead in this area. Extending the child welfare housing subsidy through age 24 would be in line with this practice and best support young people through age 21 and beyond.

Finally, for families and even more so for youth, the high cost of housing and the benefit of living with others, often leads most New Yorkers to have roommates. This bill makes it clear that those receiving the child welfare housing subsidy can also have unrelated roommates.

In summary, to ensure the housing subsidy program is better able to prevent homelessness and address housing instability for families and youth aging out of foster care, this statute includes three components:

- Increases the monthly limit to \$600 (from \$300)
- Increases the upper age limit of subsidy eligibility from 21 to 24 so that youth who age out of foster care from ages 18-21 can avail themselves of the subsidy for up to 3 years.
- Allows those receiving the housing subsidy to live with unrelated roommates/not be required to be the leaseholder.

These steps would go a long way towards helping to address the homeless crisis, and will strengthen and support families involved with the child welfare system and youth aging out of foster care. We urge the City Council to amend this resolution to support all three components and all those who would benefit from the subsidy, including families who avail themselves of subsidy to prevent foster care, to assist with reunification, as well as youth who have been in foster care.

### **The Future**

We look forward to working with the City Council and ACS to not only implement this legislation and use the data that comes out of it, but to advance, advocate and secure resources for the child welfare system and the foster care system in particular. We think that this package of legislation is an enormous step forward with regard to foster children, particularly foster youth.

As we continue to work to strengthen the child welfare system, we hope that the City Council, ACS and the advocates can also discuss additional measures that might better support younger foster children.

In addition, the best way to prevent youth from aging out of care and to prevent the trauma of foster care for all children, youth and parents, is to prevent children from coming into foster care in the first place. ACS has one of the most extensive continuums of preventive services in the country. New York State and New York City have invested significant resources in prevention.

When I speak with my colleagues from other states and counties, they are all extremely impressed (and jealous) by the preventive services we have here in NYC. Notably, ACS's budget includes additional funding for both slots for families and a new primary prevention model, similar to what New Jersey has implemented.

We are eager to learn more about the impact of these budget enhancements and the City's preventive system in general. We would encourage the City Council to hold a hearing on preventive services so that we can learn more about the work underway at ACS with regard to prevention. CCC would also be interested in seeing more preventive services data publicly available.

Finally, at the federal level, the Family First Preventions Services Act was recently introduced in the House. CCC co-chairs the New York Coalition for Child Welfare Finance Reform. Federal funding for child welfare focuses on funding for children in foster care, meaning that they pay more for more care days and nothing for prevention. This new law opens up federal funding for preventive services, and also attempts to reduce the use of congregate care and extends Chafee independent living funds to youth up through age 23 (it now ends at 21). CCC is supporting these federal efforts and encourages the City Council to weigh in supportively with your federal counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

CCC wants to give a tremendous thank you to Council Member Levin, Council Member Levin's staff, and the General Welfare Committee staff who have worked so hard on this bill package. We thank you for your efforts and your eagerness to collaborate with CCC and other advocates and providers. We look forward to the passage of these bills and our work together, with the Administration, to strengthen the child welfare system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of Valerie Anna Lynch

General Welfare Committee

June 16, 2016

Chairman Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am testifying today in hope that older youth get to have opportunities that I never got the chance to explore and experience when I was in foster care. I personally feel that there is a strong urgency to improve this process. I passionately believe that youth in care deserve so much more. I currently spend my time willingly advocating for youth in care because I know what it's like to move from home to home; what it feels like to be the child and the parent at the same time. I believe that these bills can contribute to a more positive outcome for those who are aging out of the foster care system.

I entered into care at the age of 13 for the second time. I had been adopted from care as a baby and never knew the difference between being disciplined and being abused until one day my adopted mom's friend called ACS on her, and they came one night to take me away. I remained in care from the age 13 until I became 21, moving through 13 different foster homes in many different parts inside the boroughs of New York.

The only goal that I thought would benefit me at that time was the independent living goal (APPLA) because returning to family wasn't an option for me. Through my transition through care, no worker- *not a single one* had ever explained the possibility of having a forever home, or to just have an actual loving family. I was merely offered independent living training. I was a 15-16 years old girl believing that I didn't need anyone to help me. I didn't want any help after going through what I had gone through. All I wanted to do was get out and nobody in the system ever put up an argument about it. I was happy and content that nobody did and that was the problem. I shouldn't have been. At that time I didn't understand that someone- some family out there could take me in, care, and give me what I needed, which was much more than just the 40 dollars I received for allowance. I didn't know that I could have had a family that would get to know me instead of making me feel like I was staying at another temporary "hotel", that wouldn't keep reminding me every day that I was a part of the system, that would support me, include me and show me affection as if I was their own.

Instead, I wound up aging out of Foster care on my birthday, in October of 2013. I was couch surfing from friend's house to another friend's house, struggling to find a job on my own, making sure I wouldn't go hungry or wind up wandering the streets at night with nowhere to stay. All the while, I was waiting for NYCHA housing to call me to tell me that I would finally get to move into my own apartment. Not until the end of January of 2015, a year and a half after I aged out, did I finally get notified that a NYCHA apartment was available for me. I can't help but think of all of the youth who are in care now, or who have aged out in the past years, going through the same thing. What if I didn't have those friends that were able to be there for me when I aged out? Anything could have happened to me--incarceration, drug use, stealing to survive, sleeping outside on the street or even worse but, these things are currently happening right now to the youth who are aging out as we speak.

I urge you to pass these bills to protect youth currently in care and to contribute to a more positive outcome for those who are aging out of the foster care system.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hear from youth and for accepting my testimony today. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me through my Email: [Anna@yougottabelieve.org](mailto:Anna@yougottabelieve.org) or Call 646-841-6245.

Testimony of Richard Lefebvre  
Committee on Finance

**Hearing on New York City Council Strengthening of Foster Care Bills**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

June 16, 2016

Dear Chairman Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Hello, My name is Richard Lefebvre. I came into care at the age of 11 in 2002 and ultimately ended up signing myself out at 20. My experience in care wasn't the best, just like other story's you have heard. I have moved mutable times 10+ to be exact. Most of the times these moves were caused by normal every day adolescent behavior, others, looking back now, I'm sure it was because I am gay. These moves included foster homes, both regular and therapeutic, RTC's and RTF's. To put in in prospective, I have been to 5 different middle schools and 4 different high schools. These moves caused trauma, even though at the time I didn't know they did. All these moves caused a disconnect between me and relationships with people. Trusting people to me became impossible. I felt no need to build a relationship with anyone because I knew that eventually all the effort would be for nothing. So, because of this I, in the back of my mind taught myself I must be self-sufficient. If I need it I must get it myself because nobody else is going to bat for me. That was until I met my mother Danielle. She had adopted my sister who was 16, I was just turning 17 by this time. Even though my forever family had found me because of my past experiences I was reluctant to open up for fear of everything crumbling down again. Im not going to lie. I flip flopped with the idea of being adopted daily. I still had a connection with my biological family and just had bad feeling from past experiences. When I started to get connected to this family I became scared. 3 days after my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I went to school and told them I was afraid to go home and I was removed. I made it seem like I was afraid for my health and safety but that wasn't what I was afraid of. I was afraid of attachment. Could this family really be MY family? What are these peoples intentions. What's going to happen when the check stops coming? These thoughts raced though my mind. I was afraid. I didn't understand that I was worthy of that love. That I was worthy of a family. My fears drove me out the door, I was out and on my own. I was 18. I didn't need anyone. The funny thing is this was the time that I needed it the most. I had no idea what I was going to do. For 3 years I bounced from couch to couch. Between that time I signed myself out of care. I remember telling the judge " no I don't have a place to stay, no I don't have a job, no I don't have a support system" He still let me sign myself out, His last words to me were " good luck". Good luck? As time went on I reestablished contact with my "mom". Even though I didn't live in her house she still helped me out. Gave me some money here and there. Let me do my laundry. Advice and guidance. You know things a parent would do for their child. It still didn't click yet. It didn't

officially click until I turned 25. After all I did to this woman. She was still here. She was still in my life. After the check stopped she was still supporting me. She was still guiding me. She was still caring for me. Is this my mom? Im not going to say that at that moment it all became easy. But it did allow me to realize that I did have a family even though I didn't know it before. I am worthy of that unconditional support and connection. And I wish that someone explained this to me sooner. Now at the age of 27 Im being adopted! It is possible and I wish that the idea of family was expressed to me the moment the court realized that my biological family wasn't an option. Maybe it could have spared me all the heartache and trauma. This is why im here today. Laws have to change. We have to change the way the system works. No child should have to go through what I went through. No child should age out to homelessness. Every youth is deserving of that Unconditional support and connection. **EVEY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY.**

**New York City Council**  
Committee on General Welfare  
6/16/2016 10:00am  
250 Broadway – 16<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10007

Good morning everyone, my name is Darlene Jackson; currently an Advocate Counselor at a New York City Transfer H.S. in District 13, a parent of a thirteen year old son in a New York City public school and a former youth that aged out of the foster care system. I'm speaking on behalf of two foster care high school students, Sheldon Edwards, whom could not be here today due to a scheduled college placement exam and Frances DePaolo, whom is taking her regent exams this morning.

**Envisioning a Stronger Foster Care System for Our Youth** would entail a change in the framework of how contracted foster care agencies operate. First and foremost, the top priority is to refocus the mission statement for all foster care agencies with the goal of "Restoring Families" by identifying and seeking solutions to problems impacting the safety, permanency, emotional well-being, and education of foster youth within their own community. To decrease the time from entry into the foster care system, we must exhaust all possible placement with immediate family members to ensure a stable, permanent, supportive and loving family through reunification, kin-guardianship, adoption, or other unconditional adult connection as a permanency discharge planning goal.

We believe that no one should age out of the foster care system, and that foster care should only act as a temporary placement that provides preventive and crisis intervention services; while addressing societal and community issues collectively with their constituency. Child welfare reform can only truly take force while tackling the underlying issues that would cause a child to be removed from home. Investing in communities, with equal access to resources, such as a quality education, affordable housing, health care for all, a living wage, financial literacy, and mental health services will ensure that people are not left to be wards of the state.

Contracted foster care agencies should primarily service children and families within the same district, to provide stability in education, health, and wrap around community services towards permanency with a supportive loving family. The foster care task force that includes, ACS, DHS, DOE, DYCD, DOMHM, the City Council, foster care providers, advocacy organizations, and youth currently and or formerly in foster care, should work together strategically by district to develop and advance evidence-based, results-driven practices, policies, and programs. The task force should establish and improve performance management, to track and share progress toward priority goals, strengthen accountability and transparency that is focused on ensuring that all foster care youth exit the child welfare system to a caring and permanent family.

The child welfare system should change its contracting practices. It must focus on the way it structures and manages its contracts to deliver better results, and demand greater accountability as to how public funds are spent.

The foster care system must utilize open data and evidence to improve outcomes for young people, their families, and communities by shifting public resources toward evidence-based, results-driven solutions made available to the public.

Foster care has become another pipeline into the criminal justice system for many of our Black and Latino youth, especially those struggling with mental illness, homelessness, unemployment and lack of education. This vicious cycle of institutionalized racism targeting those living below the poverty line, as well as the working poor has sustained a racial and economic caste system. This must be addressed through policy reform and accountability on a local, state, and federal level.

I am here today with many of my fellow advocates that have been directly impacted by the foster care system. We are here in solidarity in a call to action for real child welfare reform and to challenge the status quo of Band-Aid reforms.

***Darlene Jackson - Advocate***  
***Sheldon Edwards - Youth Advocate***  
***Frances DePaolo - Youth Advocate***

Testimony of Ivan Mendez

Committee on Finance

**Hearing on New York City Council Strengthening of Foster Care Bills**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

June 16, 2016

Dear Chairman Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am speaking to you today to support the bills that have been introduced – to increase accountability for the older youth in care that I work with and to help youth currently in care move one step forward in their search for stability. I am here in the hopes that youth will be afforded opportunities that I never had.

I remember the day that my mother tried to take my life. I remember the words that she exclaimed after: "I don't want you, I'm done." These are the words that launched me face first into the foster care system at the age of fourteen. It was also during this time that I made a huge decision for myself, I decided to take things into my own hands. I advocated to be placed with my sister however it was deemed that she was too young to take care of me. I knew that she could provide the stability I desired and I felt it was wrong to not be placed into her care because she could provide for me. So I ran away, I ran away from the system. What that consisted of was me moving from home to home. Anywhere that was offered to me I stayed and it didn't matter where it was or who it was with. So if I had to sleep on the floor, a couch or even outside I would do it because all I knew was that I deserved to be placed in the care of someone who could provide stability for me. After a year of fighting with the system I was granted a court date and was told that I will be placed into kinship care with my sister however I had to comply with all of the demands made by the agency or else I would be removed immediately. Although it was difficult we persevered and because she stepped into my life I was able to complete high school, move onto college and now secure a job as a youth advocate.

Currently as a youth advocate in my work with the hundreds of youth I've encountered I can say with the utmost confidence that most do not even know that family is an option, they do not know that family is a right. I credit my success thus far in life to the support I received but it is virtually impossible to focus on getting a job and ascertaining some form of education if you are stuck on survival mode where you have no idea what you're going to eat today and where you're going to sleep for the night. This is one of the many unfortunate realities that youth face today. When I look at these bills I see the potential to afford stability to our youth, to help our youth make steps toward their futures and to allow youth to voice their concerns. So with that being said it is with the greatest urge that I ask you all to pass these bills to help ensure the wellbeing of our youth.

Thank you.

Submitted by: Ivan Mendez

Address: 659 Ocean Ave, Apt C3

Phone: 347 451 7718

Email: mendez.ivan.m@gmail.com

Testimony of Sharif Griggs

Committee on Finance

**Hearing on New York City Council Strengthening of Foster Care Bills**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

June 16, 2016

Dear Chairman Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am testifying today in hope that older youth in foster care will continue to be given a shot at finding forever families. Youth whose lives are just like mine, who are in danger due to the lack of support from a major resource that helps us find permanent homes; You Gotta Believe (YGB).

I entered Foster care at the age of 13 years old because my adoptive mom voluntarily placed me in care. I then remained in care until I was 19, moving through a few group homes and a RTC.

The only goal that I saw for myself was independent living because returning to another RTC as the only option they offered and it didn't feel safe or comfortable enough for me to stay there. For as long as I was in care, no worker had ever explained the possibility of having a forever home, actual loving parents, a safe environment to put my head down and for the rest of my life. In fact, I was considered "unadoptable." This is untrue of course and the truth is I deserved to be around those I knew truly cared and loved me for me. Not for who they wanted their ideal child to be.

As a result of the lack of work being done I was just given independent living training. I believed I didn't need anyone to help nor did I want any help after being abandoned by my parent. I thought that I could do it all by myself and that I would. Fortunately though learning and self-advocacy I was able to connect to a forever family and have avoided many of the severe outcomes my peers face. In my work I have youth reminding me every day that I was a part of the system, but I am a minority who actually received actual permanency and a feeling of belonging.

Now I spend my time willingly advocating for other youth because I personally feel that they deserve to understand what I am lucky to understand myself. The moment any youth is removed from their home, priority one should be family, whatever shape or form because they deserve it. With all the hundreds of kids are aging out of Foster care every year in New York City with nowhere to go and no one in their corner it seems like a logical choice to continue to support the work You Gotta Believe aspires to do.

Please ask them to extend the YGB contract. Our lives are at risk and we deserve better. We should not be hurt and abandoned again by the system that should be helping us.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read what I have sent to you today. If any questions please feel free to contact me through my cell or by email at: Sharif.Griggs@Gmail.com - (646)-895-0757

Testimony of Katherine Rando

Committee on Finance

**Hearing on New York City Council Strengthening of Foster Care Bills**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

June 16, 2016

Dear Chairman Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Katherine Rando and I am a former foster youth. I work at You Gotta Believe which is an older teen adoption agency. Our primary focus is to find youth families or reconnect them with their biological family.

I entered Foster care at the age of 10 due to the neglect of my mother. I remained in care from the age of 10 until I was 21, moving through multiple homes and eventually landed in an RTC until I was 16. When I was 16, it was obvious that I wasn't returning home and asked for a family. After meeting several parents, I decided to move in with a woman from Manhattan. It was a rough few years (awoling, getting pregnant and having a child at 18.) She ultimately adopted me when I was 23. Though our relationship is not easy, she gave me the stability I needed to prosper.

My experiences in care have turned me into the advocate I am today. Out of the 13+ homes I've been in, my last one was the only one where I was treated like a person. Like I mattered and wasn't stupid. She built up my self esteem and gave me a voice to advocate for others like me. She helped me obtain my GED and eventually I graduated with my Associates at 24. Without having her as a permanent connection I would've never been able to keep my son let alone graduate college. I cannot say the same for so many youth that age out every year to homelessness. Many of them couch surf and do anything and everything to survive. This is not a way of life and it's unfair to deal them this hand.

These days, I help youth in foster care with their goals and understand the importance of having an adult in their life. Most of the youth I meet have no idea what they are entitled to a family. Since April 1, 2015, no agency is providing adoption recruitment for older youth and young adults. These young people are aging out to no one but themselves and having the goal of independent living is setting them up for failure. They need guidance and stability in order to become productive adults. My goal is that no youth age out of care and that they always have a reliable adult to support them through the every day stresses and successes of adulthood.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my testimony. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me through my cell or by email at: [347-208-9258](tel:347-208-9258)/[krando@yougottabelieve.org](mailto:krando@yougottabelieve.org).

Sincerely,

Katherine Rando



**FOR THE RECORD**

Testimony of

Jess Dannhauser  
President and CEO  
Graham Windham

Before the  
New York City Council  
General Welfare Committee

June 16, 2016

Good morning, my name is Jess Dannhauser. I am the President and CEO of Graham Windham, a family support and youth development organization serving children and their families in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Westchester. Thank you, Chair Levin and Members of the General Welfare Committee, for the opportunity to testify regarding NYC's foster care system. It is essential that we come together to discuss how we collectively help the children, young people and their families who come into contact with our system have successful lives.

The single most important tool in the success of our kids and families is an honest, caring, non-judgmental and enduring relationship. (This is one reason why the City's investment in Preventive Services which works to preserve family is so important). As a nation, we have developed a foster care system that makes enduring relationships really hard. Federal funding for family support and for young people after they leave care dries up immediately. With all we know about trauma, neuroscience, and youth development today, how is it possible that we still have a national and local system that is set up to cut ties with the very kids and families who need stable relationships more than anyone else? Informed by our routine youth, parent and foster parent round tables and Commissioner Carrion's focus on well-being, I have come to see that any policy that only does better by kids while they're in care is by definition incomplete. As you know, in NYC, there are less than 10,000 kids in care today but we have several times that number of young people under 25 who have been in foster care. These remain our kids. I submit that our policy and practice must include efforts to help these young people succeed, both for the sake of today's kids in care and our alumni. Foster care must be temporary but true well-being takes a life time. Simply, we cannot solve our challenges unless we create ways to stick with our kids beyond foster care.

A child's reunification with her parents, permanent custody with family or adoption is not the end but the first essential step in building a foundation of success for her. ACS has made great strides in helping organizations like Graham Windham do a better job ensuring our children receive the permanency they need and deserve. Over the past two years, following Commissioner Carrion's move to extend the Title IV-E waiver program to all agencies operating foster care programs which allowed us to reduce caseloads to 12 -- a deep investment in the direct practice staff who put it all on the line to do right by kids and families -- we have been able to increase our permanency rate by 11% percent. The use of kinship guardianship and refined adoption practices, highlighted in ACS' data-driven No Time to Wait initiative, are an important part of these improved outcomes. More recently, we have also improved our rate of reunification with parents by 39% percent. In addition to evidence-informed practices, Parent Peer Supporters who have themselves been successful in reunifying with their children, funded by both City and private funding have made an enormous difference in engaging birth parents and continuing to support them post-reunification. As mentioned earlier, our Parents need a stable, transformative relationship that remains in their lives after their children come home. As part of Strong Families NYC, ACS is wisely investing in parent support that can help the transition home in the form of Attachment and Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up (ABC) which we've recently started implementing in Brooklyn.

When reunification doesn't work -- foster parents, kin and non kin, are the primary source of permanent family. They make lifelong commitments through kinship guardianship or adoption that are the bedrock of our kids' wellness. These volunteer heroes need our collective

support. Indeed, being a foster parent is a privilege and we must ensure that no one looking to harm kids can find their way into our system, but let us not confuse the need for excellent assessment with a necessity to be skeptical towards all foster parents. Foster parents are too often taken for granted in our practice and legal processes. Being an effective foster parent -- caring for children who may have experienced trauma, managing the myriad logistics of appointments and assessments, providing unwavering support while holding firm to the high expectations our kids deserve -- is no easy task. Doing it, while feeling like you can always be second-guessed is even harder. (This second-guessing is not about poor intentions. Just imagine your in-laws had the authority to govern your home, and you'll get what our foster parents experience. The "in-laws" in this example are the representatives of the foster care system who are tasked with ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in foster homes. I'm not suggesting changing that, but want to acknowledge the challenges of fostering children.) Foster parents need tangible supports, including help navigating schools to ensure school stability, in addition to relational support. I applaud ACS' Home Away from Home initiative and the data-informed approach they are taking to supporting foster parents and strengthening our foster parent network. In addition, as part of an effort to provide greater stability to our kids in care, an area we are not strong enough in, we at Graham Windham have launched our Hub Home initiative which connects foster parents to one another to provide peer support. We are using the same approach to provide post-permanency supports to birth, kin and adoptive families and it is working. Our re-entry rate has been consistently lower than the system norm since launching these supports with funding from the Redlich Horwitz Foundation. There is a long way to go to be where we need to be on permanency as a system but we are making real strides.

As noted earlier, permanency is the first essential step but it is not the end of the story. Commissioner Carrion has rightly focused us on the well-being of our kids. The City's plan to enhance funding for kids to pursue positive activities, support kids in college, and reinstate discharge grants to help make ends meet at a time of significant transition will make a big impact. Our kids and families have experienced enormous stress and often trauma but they remain incredibly capable. We hear a lot about the importance of grit these days. Well, our kids are as gritty and courageous as they come. They don't want or need our pity but they and their families do need us to be there as a community to keep them safe. There is no doubt that our kids thrive when we invest in them. Our 47 kids in college are a testament to that. Two years ago, with support from the Hilton, Tiger and Price Foundations, we launched Graham SLAM, a coaching model, that sticks with our kids until they are 25 and in a living wage career. Since launching that program, our high school graduation rate for seniors is up to 86 percent, and our college enrollment and persistence rates have nearly doubled. College persistence is not easy; it has usually included lots of stumbles at first. One of our incredibly bright young women, I'll call Monique, failed almost all of her classes first semester. She wanted to drop out but we convinced her to stick with it and helped her develop better study habits. She is now a sophomore with a 3.3 average. We provide Graham SLAM to our kids over 16 regardless of how they exit foster care. While it certainly serves kids who have aged out, it also serves kids who have gone home or been adopted. This is very intentional. Again, healthy relationships are the foundation of success. Our kids have had enough instability. We cannot break ties with them, especially when they need us there to make sure their normal stumbles don't become catastrophes.

Out of great intentions, too often we've set up programs to try to solve the problems youth aging out experience. In doing that, we reserve the supports all kids in care will eventually need until after we've failed them and they've aged out. I implore all policy makers to consider this unintended consequence when developing housing, education and career supports intended to help youth in foster care. All of our kids no matter how they leave care deserve both a strong family and support, including the enriched housing subsidy proposed, to succeed in school and life. (While not the subject of today's hearing, we are confident that our Graham SLAM coaching model has applicability beyond foster care and we thank the Administration for investing in it to serve young people on Probation.)

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I applaud the Council's interest in deepening its understanding of the child welfare system through both data and personal interactions, and in helping improve the lives of our kids and families. As the Council seeks more data to improve its understanding of how the system is functioning, learning from past experience, I encourage a process to ensure that any new data collection efforts required don't distract from good work ACS is doing to better mine and deploy the data they currently utilize, including the efforts of the No Time to Wait and Home Away from Home Initiatives.

Finally, I encourage you to include alumni, both youth and parents, in the Foster Care Taskforce. Their perspective will help to ensure we collectively take on the challenge and opportunity of supporting the success of our kids and families over the long haul. We welcome you Chair Levin and all Members of the Committee to visit our programs and speak freely with our kids and families. It is important that you see our work – warts and all. We would be honored to host you at any time. I know that our LGBT Pride Youth Group would particularly appreciate the time to visit with you in the wake of the senseless tragedy we are all still trying to come to grips with. Thank you again for your time.

Julio Cesar Olmedo Meneses

Testimony

June 16, 2015

Good afternoon my name is Julio Olmedo and I am here on behalf of my foster youth community. I feel part of the foster youth community because I lived four years of my life in the foster care community. Without the foster care support I would not have graduated from High School and be now on my third year in John Jay College willing to earn a major in Criminal Justice and a minor in Security Management. I would like to thank “The City Council members for giving the opportunity to testify today about issues that young people like me face during and after aging out of Foster Care.

My foster youth community knows me as always being working part-time in restaurants to support myself and family back in Mexico; hat although English is my second language I do my best to keep up my grades in John Jay College. But if I was not going to have my green card I don’t know what I would be doing now. The foster care system supported me to get my green card right before I aged out. This allowed me to apply for financial aid to pay for my college education otherwise I would not be able to pay for it out of my pocket. Also with my green card I am able to work legally and to visit my family back in Mexico without having to cross the border again. Working part=time and attending college full-time is a very difficult situation that an aged out foster youth can face in life. Particularly because if I try to work few more hours per week, my income would rise a little bit but my rent would increase a lot and my financial aid would decrease a lot. When this happens I have to go back to the foster care system to ask for support to pay for my books and other school supplies.

I support bills No. 1192 (Task Force) and No. 1199 (Foster parent experience survey). Because I believe that they would provide oversight to the Foster care system.

Some of my recommendations would be 1. To include special focus on undocumented youth by considering a timeline for processing immigration and housing applications before they aged out. 2. Consider developing a special unit to gather and disseminate information for youth in care that are undocumented. 3. Provide special financial aid resources for foster youth that attend college. Thanks again for the opportunity.



Extraordinary reach.  
Unconditional care.  
Life-changing results.

**Testimony of**

SCO Family of Services

Before the  
New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare – Foster Care Bills

Thursday, June 16, 2016

SCO Family of Services serves vulnerable New Yorkers in the boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. We get young children off to a good start, launch youth into adulthood, stabilize and strengthen families, and unlock potential for children and adults with special needs. SCO's foster care portfolio serves 1,200 children and youth in family foster care, therapeutic family foster care and residential foster care programming.

In our Family Foster Care programs, which include Therapeutic Family Foster Care for children with severe emotional and behavioral challenges, we work with foster parents to meet each child's needs – medical, therapeutic, educational and social – until he or she can be reunified with their families, placed in loving adoptive homes or confidently set on the path to adulthood.

SCO's Residential Foster Care programs provide supportive home-like environments for youth in foster care who have multiple challenges. We provide crisis intervention services, as well as an array of other supports, with a goal of reunification with family, placement in a family setting, or independent living. For youth in foster care with severe emotional and behavioral problems as well as a developmental disability, we offer a structured, therapeutic environment. SCO's group residences also provide a specialized residential program for teen mothers who are in foster care. The program helps young mothers learn to be effective parents while pursuing education opportunities, enrichment and recreational activities, in addition to receiving treatment services.

SCO would like to take this opportunity to thank Council Member Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee for advancing critically needed policy and practice reforms that aim to improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care. An interagency task force comprised of government, non-profit providers, youth whose lives have been touched by the foster care system and advocates who propose reforms that positively impact the lives of these youth – is an important collaborative and one in which SCO would like to serve.

For consideration by the General Welfare Committee, SCO recommends the exploration of the YVLifeSet program (developed by Youth Villages), which provides intensive in-home support and guidance to foster care youth ages 17 to 22 years old who are transitioning from child welfare services to adulthood. New York based organizations could deliver YVLifeSet in New York with training from Youth Villages. The program provides youth with the necessary skills needed to transition to successful adulthood. A successful transition includes maintaining safe and stable housing, participating in educational/vocational programs, developing life skills necessary to become a productive citizen and remaining free from legal involvement. YVLifeSet specialists use evidence-based practices and research-driven interventions, such as trauma-informed care and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, to help participants overcome challenges and meet their goals. A randomized controlled study of YVLifeSet – the largest study of this population to date – showed that the program is one of the only services that benefits young people in many areas of their lives and provides the youth with a better chance to become successful, productive independent adults. SCO would be happy to connect members of the General Welfare Committee to leadership at Youth Villages and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, which supports this successful initiative.

SCO thanks you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the General Welfare Committee to improve the outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

# THE CENTER

Testimony on Int. 1191 and Int. 1192

Provided by Sarah Mikhail

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Int. 1191 and Int. 1121. My name is Sarah Mikhail, and I serve as Director of Health Services at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center (“The Center”).

Founded in 1983, The Center emerged out of the epicenter of the HIV and AIDS crisis in NYC. Thirty years later, The Center continues to meet the needs of an ever-changing community and help LGBTQ individuals live healthy and successful lives. Each week, 6,000 unique individuals from across all five boroughs visit The Center and over 400 different educational, cultural, professional and recreational groups, including dozens of addiction recovery groups, meet at The Center each year.

I am a licensed social worker in New York City who graduated from New York University’s Silver School of Social Work with my MSW in 2008. Since my undergraduate years, I have been pursuing a career in Social Work that connects me to young people. I’ve dedicated my career to children and adolescents in foster care and have worked in many facets of this system. My most recent years have been spent working at The Center coordinating the LGBT Foster Care Project (FCP). In this role, I have facilitated over 100 trainings for child welfare agencies to more than 2,000 staff and foster parents, with the sole purpose of creating a more inclusive child welfare system for LGBTQ young people.

LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented among the nearly 11,000 children in NYC’s foster care system according to researchers, child advocates, city officials and anecdotal evidence. Estimates suggest that 1 in 5 youth in foster care in NYC identify as LGBTQ. Often families of origin reject LGBTQ young people solely because of who they are. Some young people are told they can return when they are “no longer gay”; others that God will punish them as the door closes behind them. This problem of rejection by their foster parents has led to what we see as a disproportionate rate of

# THE CENTER

LGBTQ youth “aging out” of the foster system, exiting without the sort of stable and supportive structure necessary to flourish at this point of transition in their lives.

## Int. 1191

The more information we are able to access about kids in foster care, the better we are able to serve them. We know those in foster care are disproportionately LGBTQ, although interestingly, the “1 in 5” statistic comes from a study done in Los Angeles, because we actually do not have our own data in New York City. From a social work perspective, it is imperative to have a greater sense of the whole individual, which allows for a more thoughtful provision of care. I suspect that a major barrier to finding forever homes for many of the 200 children who have spent the longest amount of time in foster care is the lack of identified LGBTQ-affirming homes. With more demographic data on these individuals, foster care professionals like myself would be better able to identify, and ultimately help to overcome, the specific barriers keeping these youth in the system.

There are a variety of reasons youth could be in foster care for extended amounts of time, and the data this bill aims to collect would help us address these problems on an individual basis, as well as equip us to tackle the institutional barriers that exist for many children. Thinking about these 200 kids in the abstract brings many questions to mind. Specifically, what is the permanency goal for each child? Are we working toward “APPLA,” or letting them age out of foster care to themselves because they view living alone as more desirable than seeking out a new family as a teenager? Does the child have any close networks of family and have they been contacted? What was their experience in the court system like – did they have a judge who viewed family reunification as the best outcome, even if no family member presented a stable home life? Each child who makes their way through foster care has a unique story molded by many subjective factors that need to be addressed and considered. But they are also part of a larger system, and experience many of the same obstacles that other children in foster care experience. The data this bill will collect would

# THE CENTER

equip professionals like myself to better advocate on their behalf individually, as well as help to address systemic problems that exist.

Specifically, the reports posted on these 200 individuals should include how they self-report on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. These factors could have a large impact on the trajectory of their permanency.

## Int. 1192

A task force created to address the problems faced by children “aging out” of foster care would be an excellent next step. Through my work, I have seen that there are so many important perspectives that need to be factored in when creating permanency plans. Unfortunately, with the amount of work each individual agency and organization has to do, there is not enough time or space for open dialogue and shared ideas. This task force would help establish better means of cross-functional communication.

At The Center, we have created the “LGBT Foster Care Project” (FCP) to better equip foster care agencies, child welfare professionals, and current and prospective foster parents to handle the unique challenges that come with serving as a foster parent to LGBTQ youth. The Center has been providing LGBTQ-specific trainings to child welfare agencies across all five boroughs since 2010, and using an ACS-certified curriculum since 2013. We are the only LGBT organization providing these trainings. There is so much work to be done, and being able to better educate and incorporate other agencies, organizations, and families would support the creation of LGBTQ-affirming homes, which would mean fewer LGBTQ kids leaving the system without support.

To address a need that we saw through doing these trainings, The Center has also created the “Youth Speaker’s Bureau,” which empowers LGBTQ youth who went through the foster care system to share their experience. We find that there is virtually nothing more effective when it comes to creating homes that are explicitly

# THE CENTER

LGBTQ-affirming than providing a platform for LGBTQ kids to tell their stories. Many of the issues that they have experienced might be overlooked as inconsequential by those not well-versed in LGBTQ issues.. Young people have heard parents say to them, “You can be gay, just not in this house.” These kids know that language is aimed directly at their identity, at the core of who they are. I have had youth tell me that they did not want to come out to their foster parents for fear of being rejected and having to move to yet another home. Faced with a terrible conundrum, these young people have expressed their willingness to hide their identity to avoid displacement. Those of us who dedicate our lives to this type of work need to be aware of this problem, and need to view it as unacceptable.

Youth Speaker’s Bureau is also beneficial for the kids themselves, who are finally able to find a voice after feeling they have been silenced for so long. If this task force is to be effective, it is crucial that the LGBTQ youth voice is present. I would strongly encourage you to recruit LGBTQ kids who have been in the foster system, and ensure that they are also provided the support necessary to testify to what may have been a deeply hurtful and negative foster care experience.

Thank you so much for providing me the opportunity to share my expertise and experience working with the LGBTQ youth in foster care. To better serve them, as we must do, we must work harder to identify them, and to listen to them.

**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: Jeff Monerfield

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: Darlene JACKSON

Address: 1878 7th Ave #47 NY, NY 10024

I represent: Foster care youth

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Youth Advocate*

**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: Julio Cesar Olmedo Meneses

Address: 930 E. 4th Walk Apt. 14H NY, NY 10009

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL** overflow  
**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: June 16th, 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anna Sanchez

Address: 207 Kingsborough 2nd Walk

I represent: Myself

Address: 207 Kingsborough 2nd Walk

you gotta Believe **THE COUNCIL** overflow  
**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 6/16/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Breanna Hayes

Address: 3114 Mermaid Ave

I represent: you gotta Believe (Myself)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL** overflow  
**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: June 16<sup>th</sup> 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anni Keane

Address: 55 Alder Street

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor (of bills)     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ivan Mendez

Address: 659 Ocean Ave

I represent: Myself

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: Jess Danbraker

Address: 1 Pierrepont Plaza

I represent: Graham Windham

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: Stephane Gendell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

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: June 16 2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lauren Shapiro

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Brooklyn Defender Services

Address: 177 Livingston 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: Kathleen Hoskins

Address: 150 William St

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 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: 6/16/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Purcell

Address: 254 W 31st St 5th Floor 10001

I represent: Council of Family & Child Care

Address: Same Agencies

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: 6/16/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrew White

Address: 150 William St

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 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: 6/16/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julie Farber

Address: 150 William St

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 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: 6/16/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lena McMahon

Address: 199 Water St., 16th Floor, NY NY 10038

I represent: The Legal Aid Society Juvenile Rights Practice

Address: 199 Water St., 16th Flr., NY NY 10038

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