

TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020

Submitted by:
MJ Okma
Policy and Campaign Strategist
Human Services Council of New York

Introduction:

Good morning Chairperson Dromm and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. My name is MJ Okma and I am the Policy and Campaign Strategist at the Human Services Council (HSC), a membership organization representing over 170 human services providers in New York City. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and an intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our City's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges.

Human services nonprofits across the City are directly working with New Yorkers who are the most impacted by COVID-19—ensuring that seniors have food and support, providing childcare for the families of first responders, running drop-in centers and shelters for homeless New Yorkers and more. They are already on the frontlines and will continue to play an essential role in our City's pandemic response and economic recovery, but they need the City Council's support and partnership.

While we deeply understand the nature of the FY21 budget looks a lot different than when the Preliminary Budget was first announced, the need to invest in the human services sector remains constant. Each and every year leading up to this public health emergency, you have heard from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of government human services contracts. Last year's investment to cover the true indirect cost of city contracted providers was an historic step forward but, even before the added costs of combating and helping the City recover from COVID-19, it was not enough to address the full scope of decades on underfunding. Because both City and State contracts drastically underfund the cost of implementing mandated services it has been very difficult to be nimble and respond to New Yorker's immediate and long-term needs during our continued pandemic response and recovery. The human services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust to make sure that individuals get the lifesaving services they need now, as well as long-term support. But none of that will be possible unless the City commits to support the financial stability of the sector.

This compounding funding crisis created tight financial strains which made it nearly impossible to ensure our workers receive the pay increases they deserve and has resulted in the entire human

services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. **Human services workers are on the frontlines of New York City's pandemic response and they need your support more than ever. The City Council must commit to providing human services workers with a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million.** The previous COLA for human services workers from the City is set to expire at the end of FY20 and we must not allow this benefit to be stripped away. Further, the City Council needs to work with the human services sector to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all human frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely.

New York preexisting human services funding crisis has also led 68% of New York City providers to anticipate not being able to meet their pre-COVID-19 demands for services. That need is on the rise as we are also grappling with new costs and potential legislation that will add more financial burdens. We're calling on the City Council to stand with the sector and help ensure the community-rooted human services providers that New York City relies on are financially stable now, and in the coming months. **Please ensure that no bills pass the City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts. It is also imperative that the City Council commits to holding New York City's historic investment to cover the true indirect costs on human services contracts steady.**

Additionally, it must be ensured that budget deficits are not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services. Sweeping across-the-board cuts resulted in reduced contract payments of \$114 million in FY12 and \$60 million in FY13 that wreaked havoc on human services providers and resulted in a direct loss of services. **Following that same pattern today will only exacerbate existing inequality by resulting in scaled back services for those experiencing poverty and people of color who are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.**

State of the Human Services Workforce:

New York City's nonprofit sector is one of the largest in the nation and it continues to grow to meet the needs of our City's diverse communities. **However, those who work in the nonprofit sector make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience.** Our City's response to COVID-19 solidified the reality that these workers are essential to the wellbeing of our City and should be valued as such in City contracts. While the human services sector can leverage private and philanthropic dollars and funding from the City, State, and federal government, to create dynamic programs at a bargain, the pay for these services needs to be sustainable. **When government refuse to listen to providers and drastically undervalue the services they provide, it is the human services workforce - which is 82% women and 80% people of color - who are disproportionately impacted.**

The City is not getting a deal by chronically underfunding homeless shelters, foster care agencies, food pantries, and senior centers to the point that 18% of New York City human services providers are insolvent; it is directly harming the low wage workers who keep these programs running. Eighty percent of the largest human services organizations have budgets that are 90 percent or

more dependent on government funding. **When contracts drastically underfund programs, set low rates per services unit and require high mandated targets, the City is relying on low-wage workers to fill in these gaps.** The average human services worker makes only \$32,700 in New York City, far below what the 2019 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard found to be required to meet the basic needs and expenses of living in the City. Pay is so low that over 60% of the human services workforce qualified for some form of public assistance themselves.

In the wake of COVID-19 the members of the City Council have made bold and powerful statements about the need to support our City's essential workers who are making unconscionable low wages and stand up for equity. Ensuring the COLA is renewed for city-contracted human services workers past FY20 and fighting to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all human frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely will help make sure those values are solidified in the City's FY21 budget.

Overall Health of the Sector:

Last year's investment to cover the true indirect cost of city contracted providers was an important step forward in addressing New York's human services funding crisis. But while this vital investment eased some major burdens, it was not enough to fully address the gravity of the funding issues experienced by providers, especially considering the additional strain of COVID-19 response and recovery. The sector still faces core funding gaps that must be addressed:

1. Contracts are generally underfunded for the program, asking for an outright match from providers, or with a low rate per service unit, where providers must make up the difference.
2. Contracts neither provide for cost escalations on the OTPS (other-than-personal services) side, nor cost-of-living increases on the PS (personnel services) side. Contracts with government are often for five to seven-year terms, and even longer when RFPs are delayed, but providers are unable to account for unforeseen rising costs, such as a spike in electricity and water prices or an exceptionally cold winter, nor is there a mechanism to accommodate rising rent, health insurance, or other costs when contracts need to be extended.

Providers across all subsectors report that underfunded contracts are the main driver of their financial struggles. Fifty-two percent of New York nonprofits report that local contracts do not cover the full cost of the services they are required to provide. Additionally, fifty percent of New York City human services nonprofits have less than two months of cash on hand and operating reserves.

Under these fiscal binds, providers are unable to maintain salary budgets against market pressures or increase the pay of their workforce without significantly scaling back services.

Organizations are forced to cope with government deficits by cutting staff benefits, not being able to give appropriate wages or give cost-of-living adjustments or scaling back on programs. The sector is also not able to make the necessary repairs and maintenance to buildings that the people coming through our doors deserve for quality programs. Providers are closing programs or not competing

for programs, which does a disservice to communities. And finally, nonprofits are cutting administrative processes and staff, leaving them unable to adequately measure outcomes to understand if they are having an impact, undermining their ability to plan for the long-term, and preventing them from investing in career ladders for emerging talent.

Unfunded Mandates:

The human services sector strongly support increased pay and benefits for essential workers but ask that no bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts. Nonprofits are greatly impacted by employment and labor law changes, and historically, government has not enacted these changes with corresponding increases to contracts it has with nonprofit human services providers. This leaves unfunded mandates for providers to tackle and an ever-increasing gap between what it costs to provide quality services and what government pays for those services. In response to COVID-19, human services providers have been rightly classified as essential, but they have not received the funding or priority that other essential services receive.

Two examples of unfunded mandates currently under consideration by the City Council are Int. 1918 to provide pay premiums for hourly workers and Int. 1926 to expand the Safe and Sick Time Act to cover contracted workers.

The sector has already incurred substantial costs in the last months in response to COVID-19, exposing the ramifications of existing budget shortfalls. Already, without necessary systemic change, recovery from this pandemic will take much longer. It is imperative that both Int. 1918 and int. 1926, if passed, are backed with quick and immediate funding to ensure that the increased pay and benefits are covered under City contracts.

The Economic Impact of the Human Services Sector:

Investing in the human services sector now will also play a key role in the long-term economic recovery of New York City as we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic. **Programs like supportive housing, job training, and childcare help the communities most impacted by this pandemic regain their footing. In addition, human services promote positive education outcomes by offering supportive services that allow families and children to focus more time and energy on education such as access to food, shelter, and afterschool programs.**

Further, human services sector saves taxpayers money. One example of this is supportive housing, which was found to save New York City taxpayers a net average of \$10,100 per person per year, according to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Alternatives to incarceration, another human service provided by nonprofit organizations, similarly yield high returns on investment. New York City's Department of Correction pays \$168,123 per incarcerated person annually, well beyond the costs of investing in alternative-to-detention programs.

The human services sector also brings millions of charitable and federal government dollars into the City and engages in extensive fundraising. Instead of this money being funneled into individual profit, it is invested right back into programs that support community development. There are an estimated 125,000 human services workers in New York City employed by the nonprofit sector and these workers buy in to the local economy. There is also approximately \$6 billion in contracted human services programs funded by the City alone, and those dollars go into many local businesses for food service, supplies, construction, IT, transportation, and a myriad of other services that will need to recover from the impacts of this public health crisis. The economic power of the sector should be utilized as a core pillar of New York's COVID-19 recovery.

The flip side of this equation would be a massive disinvestment in human services in response to the City's budget deficit via sweeping across the board cuts to human services. This course of action would strip services away from communities of color, people with disabilities, and low-income communities who have already been hardest hit by this pandemic.

Conclusion:

Human services will continue to play an essential role in New York City's COVID-19 response and recovery, but in order to be effective the sector and City need to be close partners. Understandably the FY21 budget looks very different than it did a couple months ago but it is vital to our City's wellbeing that the health of the human services sector is taken in to full account.

In order to ensure that providers who were already on the brink of insolvency before COVID-19 can support New Yorkers during this time of increased needs we are asking that the following core FY21 budget priorities:

- A 3% COLA on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million and a commitment to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely.
- Assurance that no bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector, including Int. 1918 and Int. 1926, unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts.
- Commitment to ensure the City's budget deficit is not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services.
- The full continuation and implementation of New York City's historic investment to cover the true indirect costs on human services contracts.

Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to testify about the state of the human services sector in the wake of COVID-19. We greatly value our partnership with the City Council and know you stand with us in our call to address the funding crisis facing our City's human services sector.

MJ Okma, Policy and Campaign Strategist
okmam@humanservicescouncil.org

New York City Council Public Hearing Testimony
New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP)
May 21, 2020

Testimony of Davon Russell, President
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation
May 19, 2020

I am Davon Russell, President of the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco). **I am writing in support of the continuation and increase to \$700,000 of funding for the New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP), which provides culturally and linguistically competent assistance to New Yorkers about how to enroll in and use health care and coverage.** WHEDco is part of a network of 12 community-based organizations (CBOs) coordinated by Community Service Society (CSS) to work directly with the most vulnerable populations who struggle to interact with the health care system, including enrolling in and understanding health insurance, and accessing low-cost health care.

WHEDco's MCCAP History:

MCCAP first started in 1998 as a model consumer assistance program funded by the City of New York. Between 1998 and 2010, MCCAP served more than 140,000 residents in all five boroughs through a network of 26 CBOs, including WHEDco and led by CSS. The program had to be dismantled in 2010 when the City Council funding was eliminated for Fiscal Year 2011. In 2019, the New York City Council restored \$500,000 in funding for MCCAP to address the growing need among underserved residents needing help with navigating the healthcare system and accessing affordable care. The program was officially launched in February 2020.

MCCAP's Services:

MCCAP uses a "hub-and-spokes" model to provide services. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline, while advocates at the CBOs serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in every borough. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people:

- Navigate and make the most out of their health insurance coverage
- Resolve health insurance problems
- Get prior authorizations
- Access specialists, out-of-network services, and affordable healthcare
- Apply for hospital financial assistance programs

MCCAP services are advertised in multi-lingual fliers to ensure that immigrants and linguistic minorities are informed of these services. In addition, information about NYC MCCAP's Helpline at CSS is also available through insurance notices, NYC's 311, websites, and through social media.

Why MCCAP & COVID-19 Response:

Many people, particularly low-income communities of color, struggle to access healthcare because of affordability barriers. And now, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this healthcare affordability crisis with many New Yorkers losing their job-based coverage or cannot afford care. These New Yorkers need help understanding their insurance options and troubleshooting potential problems accessing

coverage and care because of financial barriers. MCCAP can help address these needs by providing health advocacy and health insurance navigation.

MCCAP's Helpline is providing much-needed advocacy assistance to clients whose medical needs are unmet by our overwhelmed healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges of working remotely, our helpline staff has maintained a 95 percent live-answer rate. CBO partners have also transitioned successfully to providing services remotely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the city's healthcare affordability crisis. **MCCAP can be a valuable resource for New Yorkers who lose their job-based coverage or cannot afford care and need help understanding their insurance options and trouble-shooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed flaws in our healthcare system, which fails to provide equal access to coverage and care to low-income communities of color who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. **MCCAP can help address these health disparities by providing culturally and linguistically competent health advocacy services in the hardest-hit areas of the city.** More than 80 percent of MCCAP clients are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home.

MCCAP has enabled WHEDco to enhance its Family Support Services (FSS) program, which provides benefits access such as free and low-cost health insurance, SNAP, housing/homelessness prevention services, mental health counseling, food pantry, and domestic violence services to over 3,000 low-income individuals each year. MCCAP funding has enabled us to partially support an additional full-time Case Manager to deepen our work around health benefits access. As a result, complex cases that were previously referred to organizations that focus on resolving difficult health benefits access issues, are now being addressed in-house, thereby preventing cases from falling through the cracks. In a recent case, a middle-aged, monolingual, Spanish-speaking woman had medical bills she could not pay. While she required additional medical attention, with no health insurance or employment, she feared to return to her doctor for care because she could not pay the bills. WHEDco's MCCAP Case Manager assisted the client in applying for and securing Medicaid and the bills were covered once she was approved.

Request to the City Council:

We urge the New York City Council to enhance MCCAP funding from \$500,000 to \$700,000 to increase the capacity of existing CBOs in underserved communities. The enhancement will allow MCCAP to serve an additional 3,000 clients in FY21. **With this additional funding, WHEDco will be able to retain the full-time Case Manager who will continue to focus on helping low-income people of color in the Bronx access healthcare and navigate complex health systems and other benefits and address other determinants of health.**

I would like to thank the New York City Council for allowing me to share this testimony and hope that MCCAP remains a priority and receives a much-needed increase in Fiscal Year 2021.

Davon Russell
President
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation
May 19, 2020

Testimony

of

Bridget G. Brennan
Special Narcotics Prosecutor

Before

The New York City Council Committees on Finance
and the Justice System

Fiscal Year 2021

Executive Budget Hearing

May 20, 2020

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL NARCOTICS PROSECUTOR

Fiscal Year 2021

I would like to thank the City Council, and the Committees on the Justice System and Finance in particular, for all of the assistance you have provided during a tumultuous year. As we are in the midst of a life threatening pandemic, it is easy to forget that one year ago our concerns were very different. We needed significant resources to comply with requirements of the Criminal Justice Reforms (CJR), which became effective Jan. 1, 2020.

Chair Rory Lancman, you asked the right questions, and along with Chair Daniel Drumm, understood our needs and came to our aid, advocating on our behalf. Working with the Mayor, we were provided adequate resources in the November 2019 Plan to meet our new obligations for the current fiscal year. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also been extremely flexible and helpful.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the exemplary work of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), which assisted prosecutors, the courts and defenders, first on Criminal Justice Reforms, and now during the COVID-19 crisis. Director Liz Glazer has been thoughtful, responsible and an effective moderator during discussions about Criminal Justice Reforms, and has provided guidance and leadership during our current crisis. Deputy Director of Crime Strategies Deanna Logan has been our point person in MOCJ during this pandemic, and she has been knowledgeable, tireless and responsive. MOCJ has proven itself a tremendous resource to the Criminal Justice community. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) FY2021 budget requests.

As its top priority, SNP works to protect public safety and prevent overdose deaths by removing bulk quantities of dangerous drugs from the highest levels of the supply chain. Our work involves targeting major narcotics traffickers, identifying the sellers of drugs causing overdose deaths, and investigating medical professionals who prescribe addictive drugs to make money,

not for medical treatment. Also of great importance is our prevention work, where we have managed to fund safe recreational opportunities for at risk youth, and substance use prevention programs. Federal forfeiture guidelines have changed in recent years, making it difficult for agencies to spend federal forfeiture funds on community based programs. Therefore, most of our programs were funded with City funds provided in fiscal 2012 as part of our Safe Neighborhood Initiative with City Council support and subsequent baselined funding of \$40,000.

New York City serves as a regional hub for the distribution of narcotics produced by international trafficking organizations. Shipments flow through the city to drug networks in surrounding states. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, large loads of narcotics are being brought to our city and distributed locally and throughout the Northeast.

Since mid-March, when most of our office staff began to work remotely, we have been involved in the confiscation of more than 125 pounds of heroin and fentanyl in the metropolitan area, more than a half million dollars in cash, and the disruption of a Bronx-based fentanyl distribution ring caught with a million dollars' worth of heroin/fentanyl packages, some stamped with a coronavirus logo.

Our office has seen that deadly drugs are continuing to flood our city, even during this pandemic. We are concerned that those who currently need substance treatment services are unable to access them. In addition, during this highly stressful time, people are isolated and facing job losses, and substance use may increase as a result. Many law enforcement resources typically devoted to addressing narcotics trafficking have been diverted. Drug dealing within residential buildings in the city is always a source of concern for neighbors, and now residents also fear the spread of disease as a result of drug-related foot traffic where they live. We have already begun to initiate more long term investigations.

We understand the city's difficult financial situation in the current fiscal year, and are committed to making necessary budgetary adjustments in the face of a financial crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the City Council played a crucial role in securing funding to facilitate my office's compliance with sweeping Criminal Justice Reforms, which took effect on January 1, 2020. Without your support and assistance, we would not have received our CJR funding as quickly.

The City allocated \$1,587,000 in CJR funding to hire the additional personnel and procure up-to-date Information Technology (IT) resources required to comply with the new reform discovery law. This includes approximately \$783,000 for OTPS (other than personal service) and a baselined \$804,000 for PS (personal service) computed based on a seven-month period for fiscal year 2020. We are grateful to the City for recognizing our significant needs in meeting our new obligations.

This funding commitment preceded the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the dire financial situation now confronting the City. We have been working the Office of Management and Budget since March in an effort to generate savings in various areas in our operations, so we can help the city close its budget gap for fiscal year 2020. These discussions resulted in a mid-year cash reduction of just over \$1.34 million from our fiscal year 2020 budget. A portion of this reduction came from this year's CJR funding, which remained in reserve due to the short timeframe we had from receiving funding to the January 1 start date of the reforms to the COVID-19 outbreak. Currently, we have suspended efforts to recruit and hire staff to assist with our CJR obligations. The remainder of the cut was covered by attrition and retirements not replaced due to increased competition and COVID-19 hiring restrictions.

At the prompting of OMB, we have submitted actual and projected costs of \$292,000 for COVID-19 needs. Although we remain committed to reduced

onsite staff as much as possible in accordance with guidance from the Mayor and Governor, we have begun planning for an eventual reopening. This gradual process will involve careful implementation of procedures and protocols to provide our staff with a safe, clean and secure work place. This reopening process will be a costly one.

Our projected COVID-19 funding request to OMB is of \$292,000, covering the time period from March of 2020 to December 2020, split between FY2020 at an estimated \$215,000 and FY2021 at an estimated \$77,000, and for the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), Information Technology (IT) needs such as laptops and remote access for staff members working offsite, and modifications to our physical workspace, such as cubicles, partitions and minor construction costs. Our understanding is that this funding would come from the federal CARES Act. However, we have not received confirmation from OMB that we will indeed receive this funding. We have so far incurred COVID-19 expenses at \$97,000 in fiscal year 2020, with the rest of the costs projected to be split between fiscal years 2020 and 2021. We hope OMB will either increase funding in our budget to cover these costs or reimburse us for the costs.

As Chair Lancman knows, I testified at length yesterday with regard to our efforts to reduce population in the City jails in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, so I will not go over that again. As you know our jurisdiction and caseload are unique; other questions in your letter pertain to the types of cases prosecuted by the District Attorneys' Offices.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chairs for their past assistance, and for the commitment, passion and wisdom they will bring to the challenges that lie ahead.

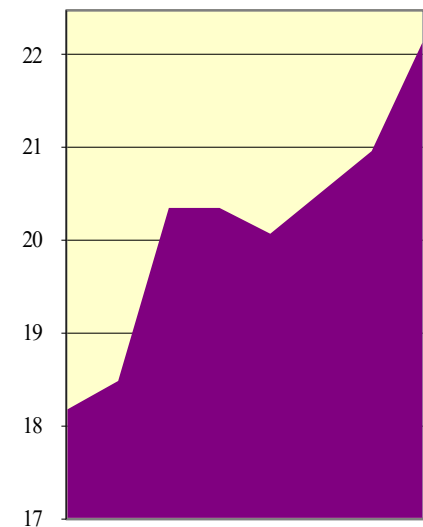
Bridget G. Brennan
Special Narcotics Prosecutor
for the City of New York

Funding

Overall Funding Outlook

For current fiscal year 2020, our grant funds have increased slightly and returned to fiscal year 2017 levels. City funds allocated to our office have also shown a minor increase of 1% or \$243,195, according to the proposed executive plan for fiscal year 2021. In total, we have seen a 2% overall funding increase

Total Funds



In millions, 2014-2021 (projected) CB funds excluded.

or \$447,218 from all funding sources, including City, State and Federal, in fiscal year 2020 compared with the total funding we received in last fiscal year 2019.

In its executive plan for fiscal year 2021 and out years, the City proposed a mid-year PEG (program to eliminate gap) or a cash reduction to our fiscal year 2020

budget at \$1,347,779. The nation is confronted by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic with our city at the epicenter, placing us in a dire financial situation. We have been working the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over the past few months in an effort to generate savings in various areas in our operations, so we can help the City close its budget gap for fiscal year 2020.

For fiscal year 2021, no change was proposed to our City funding according to the City's executive plan. However, we are facing baseline shortfalls in Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) funding. And as we continue our efforts to combat COVID-19 under a statewide "pause" order, we have begun preparations for re-opening. It will be a gradual process as we must use caution and implement procedures and protocols to provide our staff with the necessary protective sup-

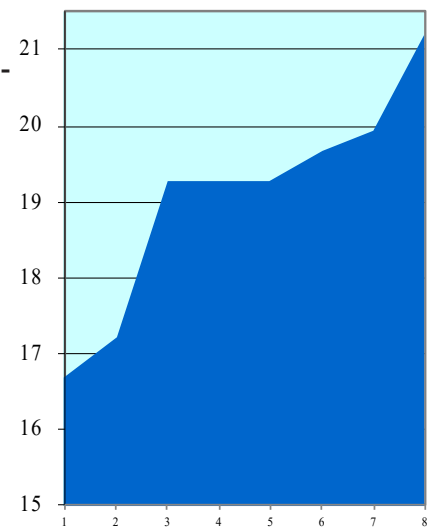
plies, and a safe, clean and secure work place when the city is ready to reopen. This reopening process will be a costly one.

City Funding Needs

We are grateful for all of the support we have received from the City Council over the years. This year, however, we are especially thankful for the efforts you have made in helping our agency and the District Attorneys' offices secure CJR funding from the City. The City Council played a crucial role in this initiative and without your support and assistance, we would not have received our CJR funding as quickly.

As a result of your efforts, we received \$1,587,000 in CJR funds in fiscal year 2020 and we were able to hire the additional personnel and procure up-to-date IT resources required in order to comply with the new reform discovery law. While the COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on our recruitment and procurement efforts, it also allowed us to generate the cost savings we need to meet our PEG target and help the City close its gap this year.

City Funds



In millions, 2014-2021 (projected) CB funds excluded.

In fiscal year 2021, however, we will be faced with shortfalls in City funding. This shortfall is caused by the fact that we only received partial CJR funding for fiscal year 2021 and out years. CJR funding provided for personnel services (PS) are used to pay for salaries of new hires. Our funding was computed for a seven-month period for fiscal year 2020. The same amount was baselined for fiscal year 2021 and out years, instead of the full 12-month year. OMB agreed

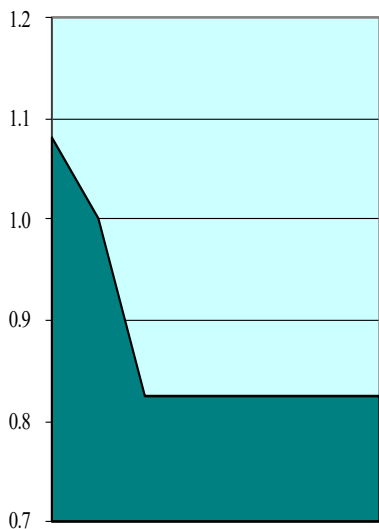
in late 2019 that they will revisit and possibly annualize CJR funding to cover full-year salaries for our reform-related hires.

In addition to our CJR funding shortfall, we also need COVID-19 funding to cover our projected costs associated with this pandemic. We have reported our actual cost to date, as well as projected COVID-19 cost totaling \$292,000, to OMB as requested. We are asking that the City either provide COVID-19 funding to us or reimburse us for actual costs.

State Funding Reductions

In fiscal year 2016, two of our three State grant programs were ended by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The total loss in State funding that year alone was \$257,100 or 24%. We currently

State Funds



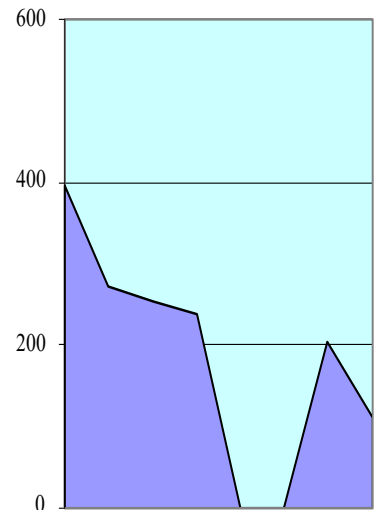
In millions, 2014-2021 (projected).

loss in this State grant alone amounted to a stunning \$600,000 or 42%.

Loss in Federal Funds

Over the past decade, our Federal funding declined drastically from \$843,059 in fiscal year 2013 to \$236,728 in fiscal year 2017. In the last two fiscal years, 2018 and 2019, we received \$0 in Federal funding due to sanctuary city status. In fiscal year 2020, after the removal of sanctuary city status, we received \$204,023 for our two JAG programs. This brought our Federal funding back to near fiscal year 2017 levels. At the present time, we have not received any information regarding our Federal funding for fiscal year 2021

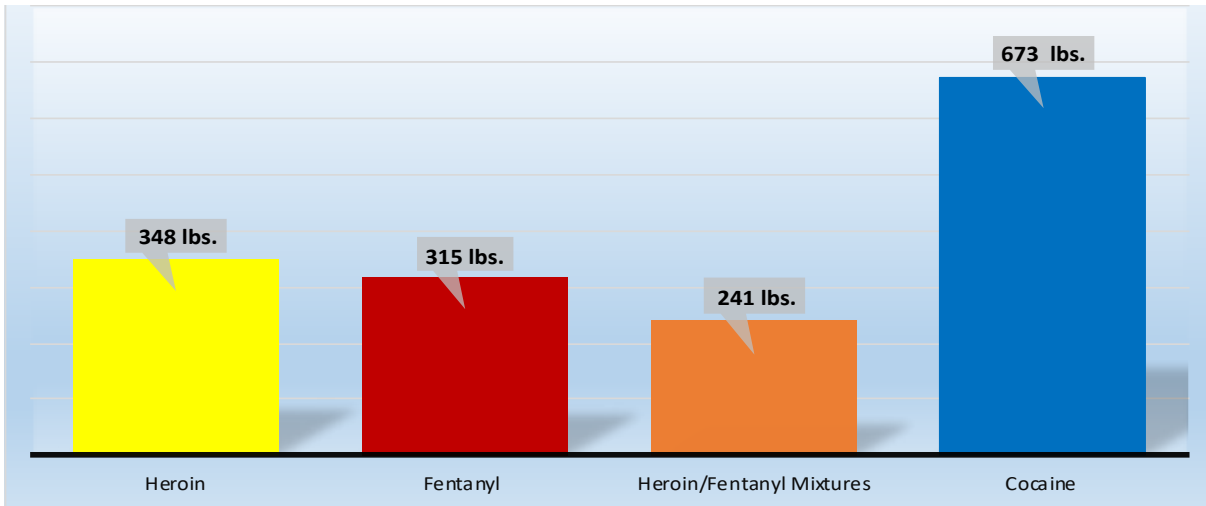
Federal Funds



In thousands, 2014-2021 (projected).

Saving Lives Through Supply Reduction

SNP Narcotics Seizures in Pounds: 2019 (Preliminary)



The central mission of Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor (SNP) is to protect public safety and prevent overdose deaths by removing dangerous drugs from the highest levels of the supply chain. New York City serves as a regional hub for the distribution of narcotics produced by international trafficking organizations. Shipments flow through the city to drug networks in surrounding states. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, large loads of narcotics are being brought to our city and distributed locally and throughout the Northeast.

Working in partnership with the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the New York State Police and other law enforcement teams, SNP tracked and intercepted potent heroin, cocaine, the synthetic opioid

fentanyl and methamphetamine in 2019. Mexican cartels continue to use sophisticated concealment methods to smuggle shipments on established routes across the Southwest border in cars and trucks. Narcotics also travel by plane, boat and parcel delivery services.

Much of the heroin and fentanyl that enters New York City arrives in the Bronx, where numerous transportation thoroughfares converge and provide access to large metropolitan areas across the region. Dozens of large-scale packaging “mill” operations across the city each pump out many thousands of individual dose glassine envelopes of heroin and fentanyl. These mixtures are increasingly lethal as evidenced by historically high rates of fatal overdoses. Cocaine trafficking surged in 2019 and the stimulant is increasingly involved in overdose deaths.



Typical of large scale heroin and fentanyl packaging operations, two interrelated “mill” locations in the Bronx catered to customers throughout the Northeast. Agents seized approximately 870,000 filled glassine envelopes stamped with a variety of brands, including “Coronavirus” and “Fire,” with a street value of close to \$9 million.

Fentanyl Analog Legislation

An influx of fentanyl analogs is the latest wave in the opioid epidemic. An analog is a slight variation of fentanyl which may have the same or greater effect on the body, but may not be regulated because its chemical composition is not exactly the same. In July of 2019, SNP released a New York State Grand Jury Report detailing the deadly toll of these highly potent variations of fentanyl. The Grand Jury heard evidence regarding lack of regulation of these substances and the overdoses and deaths associated with them.

In 2019, fentanyl analogs were present in approximately 40% of all New York City overdoses resulting from a non-prescription opioid. Yet regulation has been piecemeal and only select fentanyl analogs are regulated in New York State. The Report recommended that the New York State Legislature prohibit all forms of fentanyl analogs and allocate additional funding for police labs, offices of medical examiners, and for treatment to assist substance users whose risk of death may increase with analog exposure.

After SNP and the city's five District Attorneys spotlighted the Grand Jury report, 13 additional fentanyl-related substances were added to New York State's list of controlled substances. While legislators stopped short of banning all fentanyl analogs, progress was made and Gov. Andrew Cuomo continues to show great leadership in this area. Ms. Brennan urged Congress to permanently ban all fentanyl analogs, emphasizing that

states are reliant upon the federal government to effectively control dangerous substances originating from foreign sources.

Fentanyl analogs are produced from precursor chemicals originating largely in China. Foreign laboratories need only tweak the chemical composition to create new analogs and evade enforcement. Currently, the federal government has a temporary ban on fentanyl analogs.

More than a dozen different analogs have been identified in New York City. Readily available through the Dark Web, these substances are typically shipped in small packages via international parcel delivery services and the U.S. Mail, passing through John F. Kennedy International Airport and other busy transshipment points. Fentanyl analogs are occasionally seized alongside bulk quantities of fentanyl and heroin in shipments from Mexico.

Low level narcotics organizations sell analogs mixed with fentanyl, heroin and other substances. Analogs can be highly pure and therefore lethal in low concentrations. It is difficult for local law enforcement agencies to intercept and identify unregulated compounds. Prosecutors are unable to obtain search warrants or make arrests in cases, even when deaths have resulted, unless controlled substances are also involved.



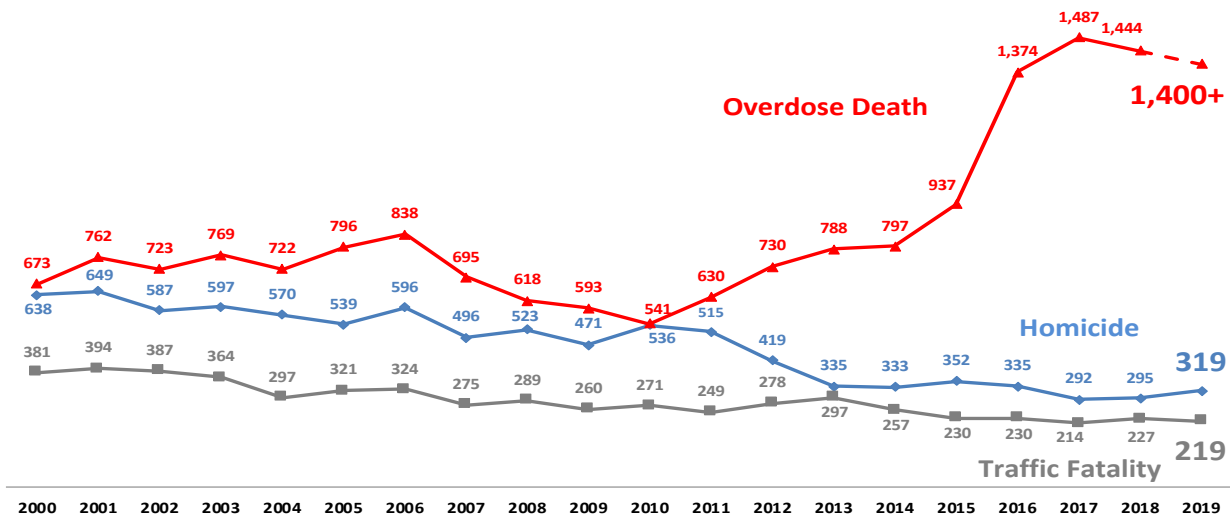
Bridget Brennan testified at a Congressional hearing examining the homeland security implications of the opioid epidemic.



Bridget Brennan announced a Grand Jury Report on fentanyl analogs with the NYPD at One Police Plaza.

Overdose Death Investigations

Overdose Deaths in New York City Remain at Epidemic Levels



SNP and partner agencies investigate overdose deaths to identify organizations that supply lethal drugs and prevent further fatalities. An investigation into three overdose deaths and two non-fatal overdoses in the Bronx and Westchester led law enforcement agents to dismantle a multimillion dollar drug operation in October of 2019. Over 30 pounds of heroin and fentanyl with a street value of over \$4 million, as well as five handguns, an assault rifle and \$170,000 cash were seized in court authorized searches in Morris Park in the Bronx and Elmsford, N.Y. Furniture was outfitted with hidden compartments to conceal narcotics. Nine individuals were arrested, including two charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker. The investigation revealed direct communications between one manager and suppliers in Mexico. Members of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Border Enforcement Security/Task-

force (BEST) recovered ledgers detailing the operation's finances, indicating more than \$2 million came in between January and September of 2019 alone.

Earlier in 2019, an investigation sparked by the fatal overdose of a 28-year-old man in the Upper East Side led to the indictment of 14 defendants in the Bronx and Manhattan. An alleged supplier, Jose "Cataño" Jorge, is accused of knowingly selling lethal drugs. In chilling conversations with an undercover officer, Cataño allegedly described mixing fentanyl with heroin and declared overdoses "good for business" because then everyone wants what he is selling. Also charged is retired NYPD officer Edward Wagner, who allegedly sold the undercover officer cocaine, heroin, boxes of bullets, a ballistic vest and a shotgun. Wagner's son was also a target of the investigation, but died of unknown causes prior to the arrests.



An investigation into overdose deaths tracked back to members of a multi-million dollar narcotics organization who coordinated drug shipments with suppliers in Mexico.

Drugs and Violence



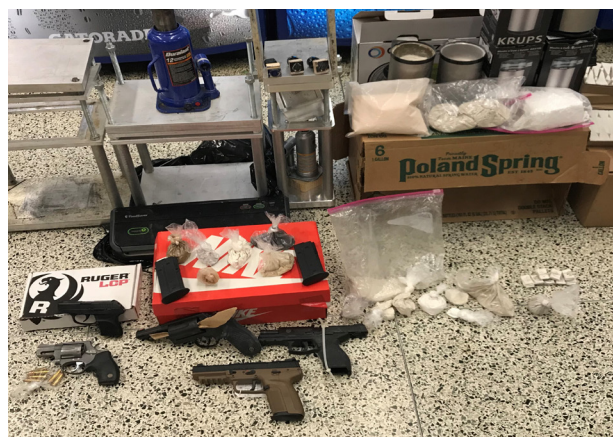
Defendant Michael Watson allegedly fired shots on a residential street in Brooklyn as a rival attempted to escape in a silver sedan.

SNP strives to protect New York City neighborhoods from the destabilizing effects of drug-related violence by investigating a wide variety of organizations, from street gang affiliates to entrenched narcotics distribution groups. In partnership with the NYPD and the DEA, we identify and prosecute members of violent drug distribution networks that endanger our communities.

In a recent case, two overdoses, one of which was fatal, led to the arrest of 10 members of a Brooklyn criminal organization engaged in gun violence. An investigation by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North involved sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to an undercover officer. Among the defendants charged were multiple members from the same family: brothers Michael Watson and Marvin Watson and their nephews Jerry Watson and Earl Watson.

Video from a security camera captured the Watson brothers engaged in a violent shootout in broad daylight. They used a vehicle to block the flow of traffic on a narrow residential street in an attempt to corner a rival. A total of 20 shots were fired as pedestrians sought cover.

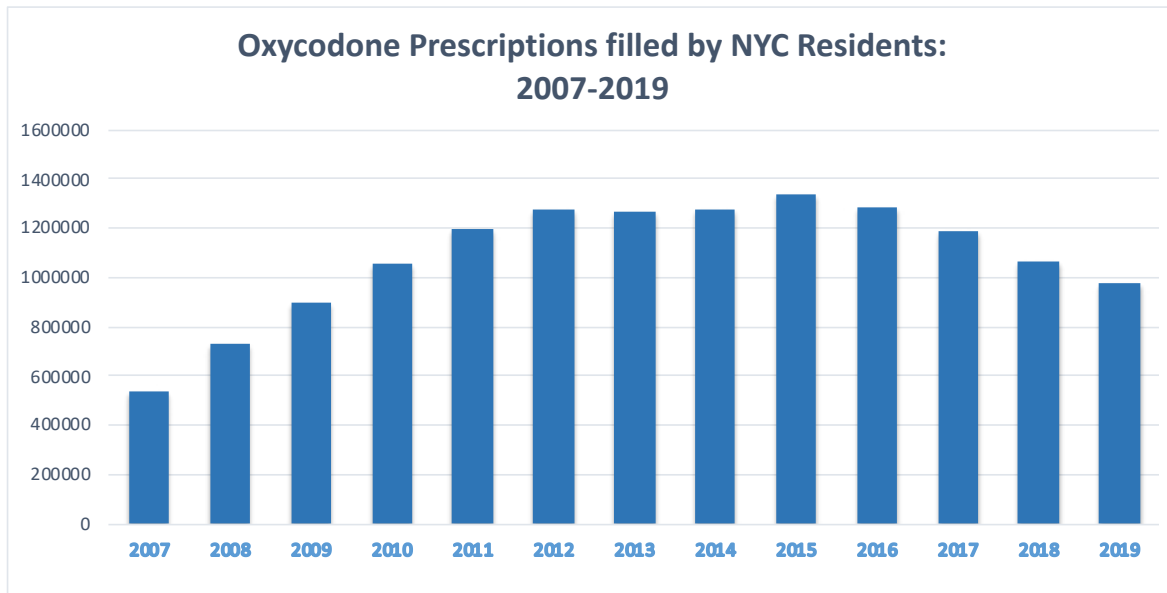
Two days after this incident, police received another report of shots being fired. Michael Watson was observed driving away from the scene. Police later found him at a stash location and acquired a search warrant. They recovered four guns, cocaine, and various drug paraphernalia at the location. A total of 12 guns were seized during the investigation.



Narcotics and 12 guns were seized from a trafficking group implicated in broad daylight shootouts.

Prescription Drug Investigations

Oxycodone Rx's Filled by NYC Residents: 2007-2019



Since its creation in 2011, SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit (PDIU) has targeted large scale pill mills, pharmaceutical drug trafficking rings and corrupt medical practitioners who sell prescriptions for highly addictive pills in exchange for cash. As a result of these efforts, combined with improved education for doctors, increased public awareness and more effective regulatory systems, the black market supply of diverted prescription drugs in New York City has been reduced.

Significantly, the office has obtained the convictions of two doctors on manslaughter charges in connection with separate investigations involving patients' deaths. In November of 2019, the New York Court of Appeals broke new legal ground as it affirmed the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan Xuhui Li, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison following a jury trial in 2014. The court ruled that doctors can face homicide charges, in certain instances, if the drugs they prescribe are involved in the fatal overdose of a patient. It was the first New York high court decision to rely on the legal theory in a homicide case.

Also in 2019, Dr. Lawrence Choy, a physician for over 35 years, was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to charges of manslaughter, reckless endangerment and illegal prescription sales related to three patients' deaths.

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NY High Court Rules Doctors Can Face Homicide Charges Over Drug Overdose Deaths

The decision, which was nearly unanimous, means the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan XuHui Li of Queens over the deaths of two of his patients will be allowed to stand.

By Dan M. Clark

The New York Court of Appeals has ruled that doctors can face homicide charges, in certain instances, if the drugs they prescribe are used by one of their patients during a fatal overdose on the medication. It is the first New York high court decision to rely on the legal theory in a homicide case.

The decision, which was nearly unanimous, means the manslaughter conviction of Dr. Stan XuHui Li of Queens over the deaths of two of his patients will be allowed to stand.

Associate Justice Eugene Fahey wrote for the majority that, given the facts of the case, a jury was correct in finding Li guilty on the charges of manslaughter in 2014 after two of his patients, Joseph Haeg and Nicholas Rappold, died of opioid overdoses.

"We conclude that a rational jury could have found that defendant was aware of and consciously disregarded a substantial and unjustifiable risk that his prescription practices would result in the deaths of Haeg and Rappold," Fahey wrote.

Li was accused by prosecutors from the New York City Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor of running what's known as a "pill mill," an office where the physician drives



business by prescribing a disproportionate amount of addictive drugs.

Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget Brennan said the decision Tuesday was nine years in the making, from their investigation into Li to his trial and the resulting appeals.

"Today's Court of Appeals decision makes clear that those who recklessly cause a death can be held criminally responsible, even if their conduct is disguised as a medical practice," Brennan said. "We hope this brings a sense of justice and closure to the patients and families who suffered as a result of Dr. Stan XuHui Li's conduct."

In the decision Tuesday, the Court of Appeals laid out the facts of the case brought by prosecutors, who portrayed Li's practice as one influenced by profit, rather than treatment.

His office, in Flushing, was only open one day a week, on the weekend, and didn't require appointments to be seen. Prosecutors said he saw as many as 90 patients in a single day and charged a base fee of \$100 per visit. Payments were only allowed in cash.

When patients showed up seeking a prescription for a controlled

New York Law Journal- November 26, 2019

Photo: Video, Creative/Shutterstock.com

Prevention and Education

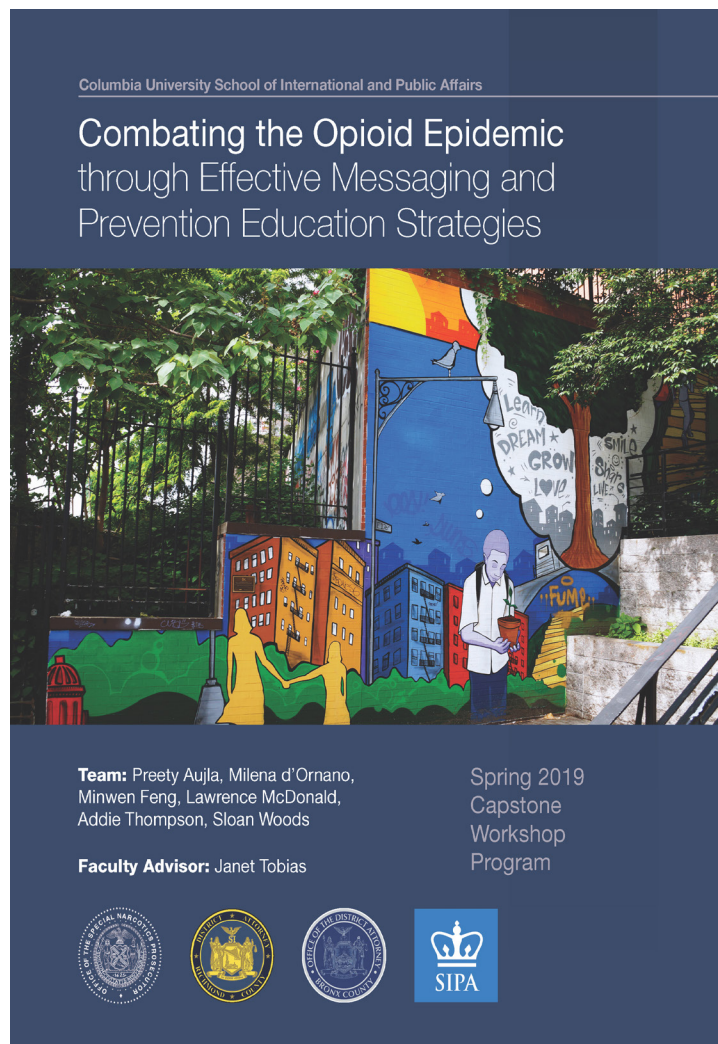
The Office of Special Narcotics seeks not only to diminish the supply and distribution of narcotics through prosecution of high-level traffickers, but to save the lives of New York City residents by educating the public about the dangers of street level narcotics.

Over the past four years, the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Staten Island District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark have served as clients and worked closely with teams of graduate student researchers from Columbia University examining the opioid epidemic in New York City. These capstone teams have produced independent reports and recommendations for improved access to treatment services, substance abuse education and prevention initiatives.

In the Spring of 2019, students from Columbia's School of International Public Affairs (SIPA) created a report entitled "Combating the Opioid Epidemic through Effective Messaging and Prevention Strategies." The capstone team focused on the enhancement of opioid education for students in grades 6-12 and prevention strategies that could be incorporated into the city's educational system. They examined mental health education in tandem with opioid awareness.

This messaging and prevention education work is being carried forward on two tracks. In the Spring of 2020, a new SIPA team is involved in creating a small advertising campaign targeting teens to promote healthy lifestyle choices with an emphasis on substance abuse education and prevention. This campaign will effectively use social media and partnerships to reach young teens. The group will also provide guidelines to grow the campaign into a widescale popular platform in order to spread awareness.

Currently, a graduate student from Teachers College is pursuing an independent study involving the use of effective drug education resources as a basis for an Opioid Crisis Prevention Education rubric for teachers. This rubric is designed to aid teachers in assessing the



Student researchers at Columbia University produced an independent report with recommendations on how to combat opioid crisis through messaging and prevention education.

effectiveness of education materials on the topic of the opioid epidemic with the goal of supporting students in making informed decisions.

Over the summer a team of city educators collaborated with SNP to create a bank of over 60 lessons for multiple courses and grade levels to educate youth about the opioid epidemic and growing issue of substance abuse. Enabling students to make informed decisions based on credible information is one of the best ways to combat this crisis.

Community Initiatives



In partnership with the city's five District Attorneys, SNP seeks to leave a positive imprint on communities touched by our major drug enforcement operations by investing in safe recreational opportunities for neighborhood youth. SNP partners with the city's District Attorneys, the Police Athletic League (PAL) and the New York City Police Department (NYPD) each year.

During the summer of 2019, SNP partnered with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the NYPD and PAL to sponsor a West 123rd Street PAL Playstreet to provide safe and enjoyable activities for local youth. This endeavor followed a long-term investigation into persistent drug trafficking in the area. The investigation was sparked by numerous community complaints.

Drug sellers congregated in groups, impeding the ability of passersby, including school children, to safely use the block. Police arrested 11 individuals for over 50 sales of crack cocaine and heroin to undercover officers.

SNP is committed to educating communities across New York City about the opioid epidemic in an effort to prevent substance abuse and overdose. Bridget G. Brennan served as a panelist at "The Opioid Crisis in Northern Manhattan: A Community Forum" organized by Senator Robert Jackson in partnership with the Fort Washington Collegiate Church, the Washington Heights CORNER Project and VOCAL-NY in October of 2019. The event featured a discussion of efforts to address the opioid epidemic, which has had devastating effect on families and neighborhoods.



SNP Community Affairs Director Calvin Solomon (left) and James Secreto, then the NYPD's Housing Bureau Chief, attend the PAL Summer Playstreet Opening Ceremony in Harlem.



Bridget G. Brennan served as a panelist at a community forum on the opioid crisis in Northern Manhattan.

Case Highlights

Fentanyl and Heroin in Bulk

“Fire” Heroin/Fentanyl Worth \$7 Million Seized

A long term investigation into heroin and fentanyl trafficking led to six arrests at a high volume drug packaging mill in the Bronx. After conducting intensive surveillance on a Sedgwick Avenue apartment, agents and officers with the DEA’s Drug Enforcement Task Force obtained a search warrant and entered to find six individuals. A surprising discovery even for veteran narcotics agents, the defendants had allegedly filled over 750,000 glassine envelopes with a street value of approximately \$7 million. The narcotics were believed to be destined for distribution in New York and Massachusetts. Hundreds of thousands of glassine envelopes covered two table tops and overflowed from plastic bins and cardboard boxes on the floor and a bed. Equipment and paraphernalia typical of a heroin/fentanyl mill were present in the room, including a glass table, desk lamps, a scale, grinders, empty glassine envelopes, small spoons, an ink bottle, ink pads and stamps.



Over 750,000 “fire” stamped glassines with heroin/fentanyl mixtures were found in the Bronx packaging mill.

\$5 Million Worth of Heroin and Fentanyl Seized: “El Chapo” Brand



3 kilograms of heroin packages and 250,000 glassines were branded with various stamps such as “EL Chapo” and “Exit 4”.

Approximately \$5 million in heroin and fentanyl was intercepted in the Bronx, including 250,000 ready for use glassine envelopes and an additional three kilograms in bulk, which were destined for distribution New York City and the Northeast. Members of a drug trafficking organization used a variety of different stamps to brand the narcotics, including “El Chapo” and “Exit 4”. The El Chapo stamp was a nod to the convicted leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel, while the Exit 4 stamp referenced an exit off the Massachusetts Turnpike near Springfield, Mass., where one of the defendants resided. Some of the heroin and fentanyl was recovered from a vehicle, while the majority was found during a court authorized search of an apartment on Wallace Avenue. Glassine envelopes of heroin were piled on tables, in bags and on the floor. Most had been bundled into rectangular packages according to brand name, ready for delivery on the street. The three kilograms were in brick form and wrapped in cellophane. Three defendants were charged following the investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force.

Major Trafficker Extradited from Dominican Republic

A high-level alleged narcotics trafficker accused of setting up and supplying a series of heroin and fentanyl packaging operations in the Bronx was extradited from the Dominican Republic to face trial in New York City. A long-term wiretap investigation by the New York Strike Force revealed that Anyerson Delacruz-Rosario directed at least two heroin packaging operations in New York City from his base in the Dominican Republic. Delacruz-Rosario faces the top narcotics charge Operating as a Major Trafficker. The investigation began in October of 2014 following a young man's death from a fatal overdose in Sullivan County, N.Y. Eleven defendants were previously arrested as a result of the investigation. All pled guilty. Ten were sentenced, while one fled prior to being sentenced, prompting a Manhattan Supreme Court justice to issue a bench warrant. Agents and officers conducted court authorized searches at 11 locations, including an apartment housing a drug packaging mill and multiple stash locations. Officers recovered thousands of individual dose glassine envelopes, approximately five kilograms of fentanyl, more than 1.5 kilograms of heroin and a loaded .357 Magnum. The narcotics carried an estimated value of \$2 million once packaged for street-level sales.

\$5 Million in Fentanyl Hidden in Trap Compartment

A large load of 18 kilograms of fentanyl (approximately 40 lbs.) was seized from a hidden trap in the rear of a Kia Sorrento in the Bronx. Members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force stopped the car near the Bronx River Parkway after conducting round-the-clock surveillance in the vicinity of 1690 East 174th Street. On the previous day, agents and officers observed the driver shining a light around the inside of the rear passenger area of the Kia Sorrento, which was parked. The car remained in the parking spot near 1690 East 174th Street overnight while agents maintained surveillance. Early the next morning, the driver placed a heavy looking gym bag in the backseat of the car and climbed inside the rear passenger area. He could be seen moving around and wiping the seat with a rag. He drove off and was stopped minutes later. The empty gym bag was inside the car when officers found the 18 kilograms of fentanyl.



A defendant is seen carrying a heavy duffel bag on security footage. He entered a car that was later found to contain 18 kilograms of fentanyl.

Fentanyl Assault on Officer Inside Drug Packaging Mill

A defendant was charged with assault for throwing toxic fentanyl at law enforcement officers who were in the process of conducting a court authorized search of a drug packaging location in the Bronx. Multiple officers required medical treatment for nausea and shortness of breath after defendant Christian Rojas allegedly threw the potent illicit opioid at an officer's head, causing powder to become airborne. Seven defendants were found inside the drug packaging mill on Willis Avenue in Mott Haven, where approximately 20,000 individual glassines had been filled with heroin and fentanyl. Additional quantities of narcotics were present in loose powder form. All seven of the defendants face top narcotics possession charges.



20,000 glassines were being packaged in the apartment. Additional fentanyl powder was recklessly strewn around the location.

Pallets of Drugs Shipped from Mexico to U.S. Cities



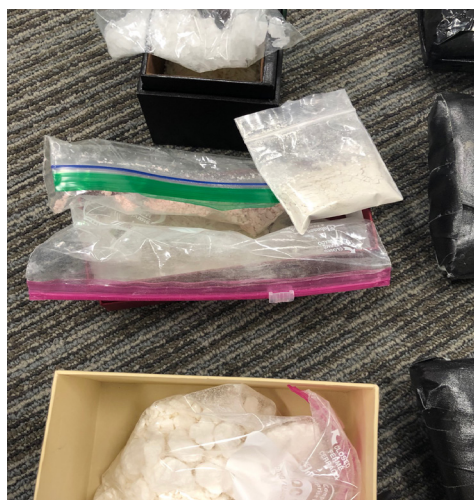
Bulk amounts of drugs were shipped from Mexico to the U.S. in hidden shipping pallets.

An investigation disrupted a sophisticated scheme to smuggle bulk amounts of drugs hidden in shipping pallets from Mexico to cities across the U.S. Two pallets intercepted in Brooklyn and in Memphis, Tenn. and contained a total of 12 kilograms (over 25 lbs.) of heroin and cocaine. Agents with the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force linked these shipments to a defendant based in Brownsville, Tex., who was arrested and extradited to New York City to face trial. At the time of his arrest, the defendant was in possession of a phone and other evidence associated with 10 shipments of narcotics. Besides the narcotics, the pallets contained hundreds of pounds of discarded household goods.

The investigation identified approximately 100 pallets that followed a similar pattern, including the use of a shipping account under a fake name associated with the defendant. Additional pallets were subsequently intercepted in Baton Rouge, La. and Fort Wayne, Ind. and contained 217 lbs. of marijuana and 10 lbs. of methamphetamine.

Multi-Drug Packaging Mill Dismantled Near Bronx School

A three-bedroom apartment housed a multi-drug packaging mill on the same block as a private elementary school and a day care center. Over six kilograms of narcotics (13 lbs.), including three kilograms of fentanyl, three kilograms of heroin and quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine, were recovered by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. A defendant was observed leaving the mill location on Andrews Avenue in the Bronx carrying a black backpack, which contained three brick-shaped packages of heroin and fentanyl. Upon conducting a court authorized search of the apartment, agents and officers found an additional three brick-shaped packages of heroin, as well as several plastic bags containing methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin. Also recovered were narcotics paraphernalia, including empty glassine envelopes, a scale, grinders and a kilogram press. The DEA estimated the wholesale value of the drugs recovered at over \$300,000 and the street value at approximately \$1 million. The defendant was sentenced to four years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.



A Bronx daycare center and elementary school were located on the same block as a drug packaging mill that contained heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine.

Fentanyl Analog Investigations

Fentanyl Analogs Cause Rash of Overdoses in Brooklyn: 14 Charged

A rash of overdoses linked to fentanyl analogs in South Brooklyn sparked a wiretap investigation that resulted in the arrest and indictment of 14 individuals. The defendants are charged in connection with two drug distribution organizations that sold cocaine, heroin, fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. Fentanyl analogs are potent variants of fentanyl that are produced illicitly, but are largely unregulated in New York State. The two drug rings obtained narcotics from a common source of supply, Brandice Williams, who faces the top narcotics charge of Operating as a Major Trafficker. Williams was living in Virginia

at the time of her arrest and allegedly travelled to Brooklyn to deliver narcotics. Defendant Waldemar Valentin, aka “Wiz,” the alleged head of one of the two drug rings supplied by Williams, is also charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker. More than 175 instances of drug sales or possession were linked to his ring, which operated out of two South Brooklyn motels. Valentin also faces charges of assault and witness intimidation in connection with a baseball bat beating of an individual suspected of stealing from the drug ring. The beating occurred inside a car in a Staples store parking lot.

The Marlboro Houses, a New York City Housing Authority residential complex, was the hub of lucrative drug activity for the second organization. Drugs, guns and ammunition were stashed inside various apartments at the complex. Defendant James Sease resided in New Jersey and regularly commuted in his Mercedes to Brooklyn for drug sales. During the investigation, Sease allegedly spent some criminal profits on shopping sprees at high end stores. At Chanel, Sease purchased a \$5,000 bag with a stack of \$20 bills, which he photographed on his phone. He also shopped at Bergdorf Goodman. Following his arrest, Sease was indicted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York in a sweeping racketeering case involving the Brims gang. He is currently in federal custody.

Citywide Cocaine Supply

Multi-Million Dollar Cocaine Shipment Seized in Hunts Point

A \$3 million cocaine shipment was seized in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx during an investigation into narcotics activity at a commercial warehouse. Members of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force conducting surveillance observed a series of cars and trucks entering through a metal security gate at the warehouse. Agents stopped a Hyundai Santa Fe previously seen with different license plates. Inside were two large black suitcases containing 70 kilograms (over 154 lbs.) of cocaine. In a subsequent court authorized search of the warehouse, Port Authority K-9 “Balu” alerted to the presence of narcotics in a truck trailer that entered the location earlier that day. Agents discovered a hidden compartment at the top of the trailer. The main area contained bags of rotted papayas, and pallets of cartons of oregano and coconuts.



A narcotics investigation in Hunts Point led to the seizure of over 150 pounds of cocaine that had been offloaded in a warehouse.

Major Cocaine Trafficker Indicted: Ordered Shipments Direct from Mexico



Police discovered 29 kilograms of cocaine in the heavy luggage that co-defendants were transporting to a vacant apartment.

The accused leader of a multi-million-dollar cocaine trafficking organization and three others were arrested following a long term wiretap investigation by the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Miguel Rodriguez is charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker for allegedly overseeing the shipment and sale of 30 kilograms of cocaine (approximately 66 lbs.) worth over a million dollars in February 2020. Rodriguez directly contacted a source of supply in Mexico to coordinate international shipments of narcotics. The wiretap investigation revealed the organization trafficked in a comparable amount on a monthly basis. Acutely aware of law enforcement, the defendants stashed escape vehicles in different neighborhoods around the city. On the day that agents and officers seized the 30 kilograms of cocaine, Rodriguez initially directed his co-defendant to transfer the nar-

cotics at a hotel, but changed plans due to too much activity in the lobby. Rodriguez instead directed his codefendants to bring the cocaine to a vacant apartment on West 130th Street in Manhattan. Agents and officers observed one of Rodriguez's codefendants enter the apartment carrying two heavy pieces of luggage, which proved to contain 29 kilograms of cocaine. An additional kilogram was recovered from a vehicle. Rodriguez was stopped leaving the apartment. Charged with Operating as a Major Trafficker, the only narcotics charge that qualifies for bail or remand under the new criminal justice reforms, Rodriguez was ordered remanded at the time of his arraignment.

Large Load of “Pablo Escobar” Branded Narcotics Seized

Approximately 30 kilograms of narcotics, including cocaine, heroin and synthetic painkillers, and \$200,000 cash were seized in Harlem as a result of an investigation by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force. Kilogram-sized packages were wrapped in brown, black and clear tape, with various labels affixed on top. Among the labels was a photo of the notorious drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, as well of pieces of paper marked with his name. Other labels bore recipient code names and images of airplanes. Agents seized the narcotics during a short term investigation in which they observed two men meet in the vicinity of 630 Lenox Avenue. One man then entered an apartment at that address and later reemerged with a gray backpack containing three kilograms. A court authorized search of



Kilogram-sized packages were wrapped and labeled with various images, including the notorious drug trafficker Pablo Escobar.

the apartment uncovered the other 27 kilograms of narcotics. The total street value of the 30 kilograms (66 lbs.) of narcotics seized was an estimated \$3 million. Hernandez was sentenced to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.

NYC Distribution Networks

“Operation Frostbite” Nets Fourteen

Fourteen defendants in the Bronx and Manhattan were indicted in sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine following an investigation sparked by a fatal overdose in the Upper East Side. The victim, a 28-year-old man, died in a diner in January 2018. Jose “Cataño” Jorge, based in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx, faces narcotics and conspiracy charges, as well as reckless endangerment for knowingly selling potentially lethal drugs. In chilling conversations with an undercover officer, Cataño allegedly described how he mixed fentanyl into the heroin he sold. Laughing off an accusation of causing a death, he explained that overdoses are actually “good for business” because then everyone wants what he is selling. Cataño was held in jail at the time of his arrest, but later released as a result of bail reform that took effect on January 1, 2020.

Also charged is former police officer Edward Wagner, who retired from the NYPD in 1994 and who allegedly drove his son Christopher Wagner from Manhattan to the Bronx in order to purchase cocaine, heroin and fentanyl from Cataño. Drugs were then sold to an undercover officer. Christopher Wagner, who was a friend and neighbor to the 28-year-old overdose victim, also died during the investigation. Subsequently, Edward Wagner sold the undercover officer cocaine, heroin, boxes of bullets, a ballistic vest, a shotgun and shotgun shells.

Five Sentenced to Prison; Drug Sales Linked to Overdoses

Five members of a Sunset Park, Brooklyn-based narcotics trafficking organization received prison sentences of up to six years for selling a variety of narcotics, including potent fentanyl, heroin and cocaine. During the investigation, two individuals overdosed on narcotics allegedly linked to the drug ring. A Staten Island woman fatally overdosed in early 2019. An autopsy in the Staten Island fatality determined the cause of death was the combined effects of fentanyl, a fentanyl analog called fluoroisobutyl fentanyl, cocaine and morphine. Subsequently, a Brooklyn man related to two of the defendants suffered an overdose and survived. At the outset of the investigation, the defendants sold blue-tinted fentanyl to an undercover officer with the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough Brooklyn South, leading officers to dub the investigation “Operation Blue Dope.” The defendants later expanded the types of narcotics sold to heroin and cocaine.



New York Post- March 7, 2019

California to New York Supply Chain Disrupted

An investigation that began with drug overdoses led police to uncover a Queens distribution network and a California to New York City supply chain. In a sophisticated scheme, Nassau County-based brothers Jamel and Randolph Brown allegedly teamed up with a New York City school custodian, Troy Williams, to transport large quantities of cocaine and fentanyl across the U.S. Jamel Brown made multiple trips to California to meet with members of a supply organization. Williams is charged with orchestrating these meetings. Packages containing narcotics were sent back to New York through mail delivery services. Also inside the packages were GPS devices that the trio used for tracking. Court authorized searches of properties associated with the Brown brothers yielded three guns, over \$60,000 cash and more than a pound of cocaine. Williams was arrested as he entered his vehicle outside the school where he worked. Police recovered a kilogram of fentanyl from inside the car. Members of a Queens-based distribution network were among those supplied by the trio. Undercover officers purchased cocaine and heroin from this group on approximately two-dozen occasions between November of 2018 and December of 2019.



New York Daily News- March 22, 2020

Drug Dealer Targeted Busy Union Square Businesses in Sales

A defendant who sold heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to an undercover NYPD officer set up the majority of his sales in the vicinity of Union Square. The defendant directed the undercover to meet him inside busy fast food restaurants, including Chipotle, McDonald's and Au Bon Pain, with most sales occurring between the hours of 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. The defendant handed narcotics to the undercover inside a bag or box, while families with young children and babies in strollers were nearby. In the largest sale, the undercover met the defendant at a Dunkin' Donuts on St. Nicholas Avenue in Harlem and paid \$3,700 for cocaine and purported heroin. Laboratory analysis determined the narcotics sold were cocaine and heroin. The defendant was sentenced to eight years in prison after pleading guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree.

Drugs and Violence

Notorious Bronx Street Market for Drugs Dismantled

An indictment charged 14 members of a large narcotics trafficking organization with conspiracy to sell heroin and cocaine in the vicinity of a Bronx bakery following a long-term wiretap investigation. The alleged leader of the organization, Jack Acevedo, faces the top narcotics charge of Operating as a Major Trafficker. The New York Strike Force investigation was initiated in response to community complaints about the open and notorious sale and consumption of narcotics along a busy commercial stretch of 3rd Avenue in Mott Haven, as well as violent incidents. Acevedo's alleged organization took over the bakery, a legitimate business, and used it as a hub for drug trafficking. Sales were conducted on the sidewalk and inside. Members of the organization observed a strict hierarchy. A court authorized search of Acevedo's residence, which served as an alleged stash location, yielded

approximately \$50,000 cash and hundreds of glassine envelopes of suspected heroin as well as ziplock bags containing suspected heroin and cocaine. Acevedo received his narcotics from multiple suppliers, including Antonio Paigne. In a court authorized search of Paigne's residence, agents and officers recovered two loaded guns and nearly a kilogram of suspected heroin and cocaine.

Speedster Drug Suspect Nearly Ran Down Woman and Dog

A suspected drug dealer known for high-speed getaways was arrested two months after fleeing from DEA agents and nearly running down a young woman walking her dog in the Upper East Side. The close call came in August 2019 after members of a DEA surveillance team attempted to approach Arfhy "Coyote" Santos in the vicinity of Park Avenue and 97th Street as he was allegedly conducting the sale of two kilograms of purported cocaine. Santos twice smashed his car into a police vehicle as he fled the scene. Security video allegedly shows Santos drive up onto a sidewalk and come within inches of hitting a woman and her dog. Laboratory testing determined that the two kilograms Santos was selling were fake. Santos was arrested in October 2019 outside a Bronx nightclub. He had three pounds of marijuana inside his vehicle. Santos faces charges of Reckless Driving, Aggravated Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, Leaving the Scene of an Incident without Reporting, Reckless Endangerment, Criminal Possession of Marijuana and Attempted Grand Larceny. In a prior incident prosecuted by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in 2018, Santos struck and dragged a police officer who had approached his car in Times Square.



New York Daily News- November 19, 2019

Ten Face Assault, Weapon and Drug Charges: 12 Guns Seized

Ten members of an alleged Brooklyn based criminal organization were charged with trafficking in narcotics, attempted assault and weapons possession. The investigation began following two overdoses, one of which was fatal.



10 defendants were charged after police seized 12 guns, narcotics and drug paraphenilia from a stash house.

The indictment contains charges related two incidents of shots fired in Brooklyn, including a wild shootout on August 27, 2018 in which over 20 bullets were fired in broad daylight. The indictment charges multiple members of the same family: brothers Michael Watson and Marvin Watson and their nephews Jerry Watson and Earl Watson. During the August 27, 2018 shootout, which was captured on security video, Michael and Marvin Watson emerged from a black SUV carrying weapons and exchanged fire with a rival driving a silver Lexus. Pedestrians dove for cover as Michael Watson brandished a large gun and ran after the rival's car, which sped backwards and rammed multiple vehicles. Two days later, police received another report of shots fired and observed Michael Watson speeding away from the scene. Police tracked

five of the defendants were present. A court authorized search yielded four guns, cocaine and drug paraphernalia. During the investigation by the NYPD's Narcotics Borough Brooklyn North, the ten charged defendants allegedly coordinated with one another to make sales of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine to customers, including 10 sales to an undercover officer. A total of 12 guns were seized.

Drug Stash Worth \$4 Million and Six Guns Seized Following Overdoses

An investigation into three overdose deaths and two non-fatal overdoses in the Bronx and Westchester led law enforcement agents to seize over 30 pounds of heroin and fentanyl with a street value of over \$4 million, as well as five handguns, an assault rifle and \$170,000 cash. Nine defendants were charged, including members of a drug distribution network and two top suppliers for the organization, Ismael Lugo and Ricardo Gonzalez. The two suppliers were present inside a drug stash location on Holland Avenue in Morris Park when members of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Border Enforcement Security Taskforce (BEST) conducted a court authorized search and seized approximately 10 kilograms of heroin and fentanyl, six guns and over \$100,000 cash. Furniture inside the stash apartment was outfitted with hidden compartments. Mechanical kilo presses used for compressing narcotics into brick form and four pounds of marijuana were also recovered. A subsequent search of Lugo's residence in Elmsford, N.Y. yielded an additional four kilograms of narcotics packaged in the same manner as those at the stash location. Members of the drug distribution network conducted more than a dozen sales to undercover officers during the investigation, including sales of heroin laced with potentially lethal fentanyl.



Furniture outfitted with hidden traps contained narcotics and other contraband.

Prescription Drugs

Queens Doctor Sentenced to 7 Years in Patients' Deaths

Dr. Lawrence Choy was sentenced to a nearly seven-year prison term on two counts of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, 27 counts of Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance and five counts of Reckless Endangerment. Three of the doctor's patients died of overdoses, including two patients whose deaths are the subject of the manslaughter charges. In pleading guilty to 34 felony counts stemming from illegal sales of prescriptions for controlled substances, Choy admitted to causing the deaths of patients Eliot Castillo, 35, and Michael Ries, 30, both of whom fatally overdosed within three days of receiving prescriptions from Choy. The five counts of Reckless Endangerment relate to five additional patients, one of whom died of an overdose. A licensed physician since 1981, Choy specialized in internal medicine and nephrology and operated a full-time medical office in Flushing. Beginning in 2012, he began issuing prescriptions for dangerous levels of narcotic drugs in high-risk combinations with other controlled substances. Choy drew patients from a wide geographic area. The investigation was conducted by SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit and Investigators Unit, the DEA's New York Strike Force and the New York City Human Resources Administration, with assistance from the Nassau County and Suffolk County Police Departments.

Doctor sentenced to 7 years in connection to 3 patients' fatal ODs

By Rebecca Rosenberg

September 10, 2019 | 4:52p



New York Post- September 10, 2019

Pharmacist Sentenced for Oxycodone Sales and Forged Rx's

A supervising pharmacist was sentenced to four years in prison for diverting millions of dollars in oxycodone pills from a Queens pharmacy. Victor LaPerla and a pharmacy technician allegedly conspired to fill forged prescriptions in exchange for cash at their workplace, Dale Pharmacy & Surgical Inc. in Richmond Hill, Queens. Each forged prescription was written for 180 pills of 30 mg oxycodone painkillers for a total of 2,700 pills. An unindicted coconspirator and others also made cash payments for oxycodone pills in unlabeled bottles for which no official prescription had been presented. This was done for the purpose of reselling the pills on the black market. Through search warrants at the pharmacy and LaPerla's home and phone, investigators found proof of unaccounted for prescriptions and corresponding documentation of the amount of pills that were resold. The investigation, conducted by SNP's Prescription Drug Investigation Unit and the DEA, revealed that between March 2013 and May 2018 LaPerla filled over 855 oxycodone 30 mg prescriptions. As a result, an estimated 158,000 pills carrying a street value of up to \$4 million were diverted to the black market. In 2017 alone, LaPerla allegedly received approximately \$303,900 as a result of the scheme. LaPerla pled guilty to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree and Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree. The pharmacy technician is awaiting trial.

Doctor Sentenced in Multi-Million Dollar Fraud

Dr. Lazar Feygin received a sentence of five years in prison in connection with schemes to illegally sell prescriptions for millions of oxycodone pills, to defraud Medicaid/Medicare of millions of dollars and to commit money laundering. Feygin pled guilty to 16 felonies, including multiple counts of Conspiracy, Criminal Sale of a Prescription for a Controlled Substance and Health Care Fraud. As operator of two medical clinics in Brooklyn, Feygin directed medical professionals and office staff to subject patients to unnecessary tests that were then fraudulently billed to Medicaid/Medicare. To induce patients to submit to these tests, Feygin and his staff illegally provided patients with prescriptions for oxycodone, an addictive opioid painkiller, for no legitimate medical purpose. In pleading guilty, Feygin admitted to directing his employees to provide oxycodone prescriptions to individuals known to be reselling pills on the street and to those using illicit drugs, such as heroin. Feygin and his staff were responsible for prescribing over 3.7 million oxycodone pills between early 2012 and early 2017 and received over \$16 million in reimbursements from Medicaid/Medicare.

Crooked doctor who admitted to running 'pill mills' takes plea deal

By Olivia Bensimon

March 11, 2019 | 8:19pm | Updated



New York Post- March 11, 2019



Written Testimony of Teresa Baik
Director of Education at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)
Before the
New York City Council Committees on Finance and Youth Services
Regarding
Executive Budget Hearings – Youth Services
May 20th, 2020

Good afternoon Chairs Dromm and Rose and members of the Committee on Finance and Youth Services. My name is Teresa Baik and I am the Director of Education for Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). I am grateful for this opportunity to testify on the executive budget hearings, particularly on youth services.

Founded in 1973 and incorporated in 1974 as the first Korean community-based social service agency in the Northeast, KCS focused on delivering social services to address the various needs of the Korean community, but has since expanded to serve the wider Asian American community. KCS serves over 1,300 individuals daily from six different locations, with culturally competent programs focusing on aging, immigration, senior employment, education, mental health, and public health and research.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the Mayor's early decisions was to cut all of the funds allocated for SYEP and summer camps. This news came as a shock for many organizations, including ours, since we understand the direct impact that these programs have on the youth we serve. There are many youths that rely on the stipends that come out of SYEP, and without them, they are unable to help their families or even have a little spending money for themselves. The two month break in the summer is usually an opportunity for them to find out where their passions and interests lie through various internship opportunities. Cutting these vital programs without an alternative is a disservice to our youth. During the summer, they need time to explore outside of the classroom, especially when they have been confined to their homes as a result of the pandemic. The city needs to create an environment where young people can still gain experience while being in a safe and healthy environment.

If SYEP and the summer camps cannot operate, alternative summer programming should be considered. The city should converse with various non-profit organizations that work with young people on an individual basis to create a viable solution on how to best help during these unprecedented times. This would also be a huge relief for parents who rely on these services to help keep their children busy and safe.

We at KCS hope that the members of the Committee will understand that an alternative summer program needs to be set in place for the sake of our youth and for parents seeking childcare options.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

KCS Main Office
Adult Daycare |
Immigration | ESOL
203-05 32nd Avenue
Bayside, NY 11361

**Corona Senior
Center**
37-06 111th Street
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: (718) 651-9220

**Flushing Senior
Center**
42-15 166th Street
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 886-8203

**Public Health and
Research Center |
Workforce Development**
325 W 38th Street, Ste. 1210
New York, NY 10018

Brooklyn Project
8710 5th Ave. 1FL
Bay Ridge, NY 11209
Tel: (718) 630-0001
Fax: (718) 630-0002

Mental Health Clinic
42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 534-4149



Testimony of Women In Need Opposing Budget Cuts to Summer Programs for Children and Youth

Women In Need (Win) urges the City Council to protect summer programming for children and youth from funding cuts. New York City's families rely on DYCD programs for invaluable academic enrichment and developmental support, ensuring children and youth are on track for bright futures. This is especially true for homeless children and youth, who lag academically in disproportionate numbers and benefit profoundly from the socio-emotional supports and developmental opportunities that summer programs provide. Summer programs also provide child care and supervision for working parents, giving parents the resources and peace of mind they need to go to work, especially important now to fuel New York City's economic recovery.

At Win, New York City's largest provider of shelter and supportive housing for homeless families with children, we see the positive impact that the SYEP, COMPASS, and other summer programs have on the learning and well-being of the children and youth we work with. SYEP and summer programs provide opportunities for academic engagement and hands-on experiences with topics and perspectives that homeless children otherwise lack access to. Equally important, they provide children and youth opportunities to build relationships that reduce the sense of isolation and disesteem that often accompanies homelessness.

Never has this need been more acute than during the COVID-19 crisis, when homeless students have already lost so much. Given the traumatic disruptions and losses that homeless children have experienced, and the tremendous trauma of abruptly losing the relationships, consistent routine, and expansive environment that school provided, it is cruel to also deprive homeless children of summer programs. And stay-at-home directives further isolate and limit homeless students, who spend their days in a humble shelter unit with their family. Further, delays in access to remote learning resources mean that homeless students have fallen even further behind in their learning and academics. Summer opportunities for engagement and supporting learning and healthy development are especially critical.

Lastly, homeless parents need the quality, reliable child care and supervision that DYCD programs provide. Without it, many moms face impossible choices between the employment they need to leave homelessness and the need to care for their children. Summer programs give parents the peace of mind and tangible resource they need to work consistently to forge a path out of shelter, and they give New York City the labor force it needs for an economic recovery after the COVID-19 health crisis.

Funding for SYEP and DYCD programs must be reinstated. These cuts exact the cost of balancing the budget on those who can least afford it: homeless families with children. I believe the City Council can find a more equitable solution to our budget challenges.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

DHS Budget Hearing
Submitted May 20, 2020

My name is Josh Dean and I am the Executive Director of [Human.nyc](https://www.human.nyc/), an organization that works alongside street homeless New Yorkers to advocate for human-centered policy reforms.

We want to highlight our concerns about the continued mistreatment and over-policing of homeless New Yorkers who sleep on the streets and/or subways. Particularly during the current public health crisis, the use of both continuing and newly-implemented policies which target homeless New Yorkers are destroying their trust with the system at large. Further, the city's refusal to move people from the streets or subways into congregate settings rather than into safe, individual spaces has perpetuated well-established concerns that the City cares more about its bottom line than the lives of homeless people.

As an organization who works directly with impacted individuals, we have heard over and over again of the impact that these misguided policies have had on people who are living on the streets and subways. We have listened to people who have been kicked off of the subway in the middle of the night, in freezing temperatures, and were provided no safe options for somewhere to go. For those that took a chance and accepted the option of transport to a shelter, we've seen how instead of a safe place to rest, folks have been forced to sleep in hallways and on stairs. While the Mayor has touted this as "extraordinary work", we know that these experiences are more likely to destroy any trust or belief they had in the system to help them.

Further, we have watched, repeatedly, the use of NYPD in situations which call for trained outreach workers. The continued partnership between homeless outreach teams and law enforcement does nothing to increase trust or rapport with those experiencing homelessness; rather, it suggests that there is something illegal about being homeless. Homeless New Yorkers have even begun to call outreach teams the "outreach police."

On May 20, a group of anonymous outreach workers authored an op-ed in Gothamist where they warned of the challenges ahead. They wrote that, "Deploying NYPD officers to sweep our clients into crowded shelters in the middle of the night with the assistance of outreach workers damages the trust we hope to build."

As the outreach workers noted, policies enacted by the City and its contracted outreach teams continue to erode trust among the individuals they are meant to serve. Outreach workers who are only able to offer crowded, congregate settings until someone has 'proven' their homelessness, or programs which believe providing hand sanitizer and other hygiene supplies will be the only reason someone does not accept other services, create unnecessary barriers to building the rapport and trust with people. We know that people who choose not to accept these services have rational reasons for disengaging with these systems. The City must ensure that programs meant to provide services to those experiencing homelessness actually does that - by

respecting the autonomy and self-determination of individuals and by recognizing that there are valid reasons for not accepting services that will not meet specific needs.

These programs and policies, if left in place, will exacerbate individuals' rational and understandable distrust in a system that says it wants to help them.

In order to gain back the trust of our street homeless neighbors, the City must do the following

1. Immediately cease all initiatives utilizing police as mechanisms to "engage" homeless individuals, including street sweeps and the Subway Diversion Program. Any budget invested in those programs should instead be invested in providing housing through a Housing First harm reduction model for people who live on the streets and subways.
2. Invest in programs that people experiencing street homelessness actually want and need. First and foremost, this means housing - both independent, affordable units and permanent supportive housing units. This also includes low-barrer transitional housing, such as safe havens, that can be accessed without proving need or worthiness. Dismantling counterproductive policing policies to fund the creation and development of housing will focus on the solutions we know are effective in ending homelessness: housing.
3. Utilize outreach teams in a way that rebuilds trust with people experiencing street and subway homeless teams. Rather than continuing to perpetuate the ill-informed narrative that providing basic needs items will keep people on the streets, outreach teams should be equipped to employ harm-reduction tools and strategies and meet people where they are at. This includes, but is not limited to, providing basic needs items like socks, tampons and pads, winter clothing, blankets, and petty cash.

We want to thank the Council for its continued work on homelessness and urge all involved in budgetary decisions to rethink the current policies in place when it comes to providing services to our unsheltered homeless neighbors.



**New York City Council
Final Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

**Testimony of the Article 10 family defense organizations:
The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Service, Center for Family Representation, and
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**

This testimony is submitted jointly by the Bronx Defenders (BxD), Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS), Center for Family Representation (CFR) and the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS). Our offices are the primary providers of mandated legal representation to indigent parents in Article 10 cases filed in family court in each of our boroughs (collectively the “family defense providers”). Together, we have pioneered a model of interdisciplinary representation for parents charged with abuse or neglect and at risk of losing their children to the foster care system. Our model links attorneys, social workers and parent advocates to provide low-income parents with comprehensive representation and advocacy both in and out of court.

The COVID-19 crisis and the resulting pause have brought the family court to a screeching halt, and thrown the child protection system into disarray. The harrowing cascade of physical and mental health consequences, economic devastation, and social disruption have fallen disproportionately on the families we serve: low-income communities and Black and Brown people. These conditions have exacerbated the harm of family separation for parents and children, created conditions ripe for child welfare involvement, and slowed the progress on existing cases. The family defense providers have met this challenge and continued to provide effective representation to parents during this crisis in and out of court. What is abundantly clear is that our clients and their families need us now more than ever before.

The primary goal of our representation is to ameliorate the underlying issues that drive families into the child protection system, and to reduce the harm of the consequences of system involvement, including criminal charges, housing and income loss, education issues and immigration status. Collectively we represent over 12,000 respondent parents in Article 10 cases each year. Since New York City first contracted with institutional providers to represent parents, we have represented about 40,000 parents in Family Court touching the lives of more than 80,000 children, the vast majority of whom are Black and Brown and live in the most marginalized low-income communities in New York City. With our model of representation in place, the foster care census has been reduced by almost 50% in New York City from over 17,000 children in 2007 to just under 8,000.

Our testimony addresses the importance of our role as the primary providers of mandated legal representation for parents charged with abuse or neglect in New York City Family Court by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Specifically,

- **We are asking the City to maintain our FY21 funding at the FY20 level. The current FY21 contracts include an \$8.7million decrease across the providers (more than 30% of our budgets) and this revenue must be restored; and**
- **We are asking the City to continue funding the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative which provides representation to parents in child welfare investigations, avoids unnecessary family separation and case filings and provides representation in SCR hearings.**

I. Adequately funding mandated institutional representation for parents reduces the time children spend in foster care and improves court efficiency.

In New York, parents charged with abuse or neglect in family court are legally entitled to an attorney if they cannot afford one, both by statute and under the New York State Constitution.¹ In 2007, New York City dramatically changed the parent representation system by offering contracts to legal organizations which are multi-disciplinary and employ lawyers, social workers, parent advocates, and investigators and have expertise in a wide range of legal matters including housing, public benefits, mental health, criminal justice, educational law, and immigration defense. Since 2007, our offices have represented the vast majority of parents in Article 10 proceedings and all related matters, including interim appeals, custody, visitation, family offense, paternity and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings.

Over the last 13 years, our offices have developed family defense practices that serve as a state and national model and have been recognized as the most effective model of representation for parents in child welfare cases.² In February 2019, following extensive hearings from stakeholders around the state, the Commission on Parental Representation established by Chief Judge DiFiore to examine the state of representation for indigent parents in New York State

¹ New York has long recognized a parent's right to counsel in child protection proceedings. In a pioneering 1972 decision, *Matter of Ella B.*, 30 N.Y.2d 352, the New York Court of Appeals recognized the equal protection and due process right to indigent parents to assigned counsel in child neglect and abuse cases. Three years later, sections 261, 262, and 1120 of the Family Court Act codified a broad parental right to counsel. Additionally, numerous provisions throughout Article 10 of the Family Court Act address implementation of the parental right to counsel in child welfare proceedings.

² See Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore (February 2019), pps. 27-28. See also Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, *A New National Movement in Parent Representation*, 47 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 44, 45 (2013), available at <http://www.cfrny.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/A-New-National-Movement-in-Parent-Representation-Clearinghouse-Review.pdf>.

issued an interim report recommending that New York City’s model of parent representation in child welfare cases be adopted state-wide. The Commission concluded that:

“the best chance of successful implementation of its recommendations is through statewide expansion of institutional providers and attorneys specializing in child welfare law. The use of attorneys dedicated to, and proficient in, such representation would improve the quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of parental representation statewide.”³

The benefit of New York City’s contract with family defense providers to fulfill the mandate of parent representation cannot be overstated: the number of children removed from their parents as a result of a child welfare investigation and the time children spend in the foster system has been drastically reduced.⁴ Our offices actively litigate, when appropriate, early on in the life of the case, through emergency hearings under Family Court Act §§ 1027 and 1028, to ensure that children never enter foster care unless absolutely necessary and, if they do, that the amount of time they spend in the foster system is as short as possible. After the start of the Article 10 case, our interdisciplinary teams fight at every stage to achieve family reunification as quickly as possible and maintain it, through advocacy at case conferences, active motion practice, and the litigation of fact finding, disposition, and visitation and permanency hearings. Zealous representation with additional support and resources is the only way to secure the rights of parents and children while ensuring the fairness and effectiveness of the entire child welfare system. Adequately resourced interdisciplinary family defense representation is also essential to providing the court with the information it needs to properly follow the law in maintaining family relationships.

Our effectiveness in reducing the length of foster care is well documented. The largest study of parental representation in family court ever conducted found that holistic, interdisciplinary institutional representation in New York City significantly reduces the time children spend in foster care.⁵ This study compared length of foster care stays for the children of BxD, BDS, and CFR’s clients with the children of parents who were assigned solo attorneys pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law, Indigent Defense Legal Panel Plan. The study found that representation by multidisciplinary providers reduced children’s time in foster care by nearly 4 months during the 48 months following filing of the petition, through earlier reunification outcomes translating to up to nearly \$40 million in annual savings in foster care expenditures for New York City.

³ *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore*, pg. 26.

⁴ Center for New York City Affairs, The New School, *Watching the Numbers: A Six-Year Statistical Survey Monitoring New York City’s Child Welfare System* (November 2016), available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5849a22f725e254385d753eb/1481220657883/FINAL_Watching+the+Numbers_2016.pdf.

⁵ See study at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X>; see also *Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children’s Time in Foster Care*, by Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, June 4, 2019.

According to the study, these outcomes were achieved without any difference in safety to children between the two groups.

A. Most Article 10 cases involve allegations of neglect, and clients need the support services the family defense providers offer.

The vast majority of our clients are facing allegations of neglect. Most of these cases are poverty-related and the allegations often include poor or unstable housing conditions, food instability, allegations that children are not attending school, domestic violence in the home, excessive corporal punishment or inadequate childcare. Many of our clients struggle with untreated underlying mental health and/or substance use disorders or are facing other challenges, such as cognitive disabilities. Many of our clients are or were in foster care themselves. While our clients may face challenges that impact their ability to keep their families together, in our experience the vast majority of these families suffer more trauma from being separated than from staying together with support systems in place. Family separation is often traumatic for children, and the state's highest court has recognized separation as a harm to children.⁶ When children are separated from their parents for a long period of time, studies have shown that they remain on high alert, and their bodies endure prolonged and severe toxic stress as a result. If continuously exposed to toxic stress over time, damage done to the child's brain cannot be mitigated.⁷ We work hard to keep children home with their families, and when they are separated, to bring children home as soon as possible once services are in place and the court can be assured that the children will be safe. Many of our clients' children stay in the home during the pendency of the case while the parent and family receive needed services.

Fewer than 10 percent of our cases involve allegations of abuse. These cases involve more serious allegations, and these children often are removed immediately. These are some of our most complex cases and often require extensive litigation and expert testimony as well as full investigations to uncover claims of innocence or mitigating factors. Our offices are staffed with highly qualified and zealous attorneys that are ready to litigate claims and assert the due process rights of our clients.

B. The family defense model provides consistent high-quality representation through the following key elements:

Interdisciplinary practice: Our interdisciplinary practice, which treats social workers and parent advocates as equal partners in our client-centered representation, is the key to our success.

⁶ See, e.g., *Matter of Jamie J.*, 30 N.Y.3d 275, 280 n.1 (2017).

⁷ See Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Brain Development, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw&feature=youtu.be>.

Parent Advocates are most often parents with lived experience of child welfare involvement, “credible messengers” that offer peer-to-peer support. Social work and parent advocate support is vital to addressing the complex needs of our clients and ensuring that we support them both inside and outside of the courtroom. Social workers and parent advocates support clients through every step of their Family Court case, often meeting them on their first day in court and connecting them immediately with services, such as domestic violence shelter placement, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or other vital resources needed to avoid family separation. Social workers, peer advocates, attorneys and clients work closely as a team to develop a service plan and legal strategy based on the client’s goals. Social workers perform comprehensive and on-going family assessments that help identify the family’s needs to ensure that appropriate services and interventions are put into place. Social workers advocate for clients at ACS and foster-care agency conferences and collaborate with attorneys to ensure continuity between in-court advocacy, agency practice and the evolving circumstances of our clients’ lives.

One of the most important roles of our social work and parent advocate teams is to build trusting relationships with clients and ensure their voices are heard outside of court. Social workers and parent advocates travel across the five boroughs to attend child safety conferences and family team conferences at ACS and foster care agencies and advocate for appropriate service plans that meet the needs of the individual family. They negotiate with child protection and agency workers regarding visitation, placement, and reunification issues. Our staff has been successful in avoiding removals and failed trial discharges and in maintaining the permanency goal of Return to Parent by attending out-of-court conferences and using their knowledge of the client’s individual situation as well as the social service landscape in New York. They often connect parents with the material resources they need to care for their children, and help parents navigate the shelter and benefits systems. Social workers also help mediate and problem-solve issues that can arise between clients and child welfare professionals, foster parents and/or service providers.

Many of our clients are immigrants and do not speak English as their first language. Our offices develop close relationships with community-based programs serving New York’s immigrant communities in order to connect clients to culturally competent service providers and access to services in their native language. For clients who do not qualify for medical insurance, our social workers identify programs that will accept clients on a no-fee basis.

Supervisory structure: Our supervisory structure provides accountability and ensures that our staff is operating efficiently and effectively to achieve client goals. Supervisors ensure quality control through in-court and out-of-court supervision, review of papers and trial preparation, and performance evaluations. Supervisors become familiar with clients’ cases and can respond in emergencies; step in to cover hearings, conferences, or motions; and provide continuity when attorneys or advocates leave the practice. The supervisory structure also provides a mechanism for clients or other stakeholders to provide feedback on staff performance.

Training of staff: Our extensive training of new staff imparts the information and skill-building they need to provide high quality representation in a complex area of law from the very start. Our offices provide extensive training programs for new attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates covering every aspect of Article 10 proceedings, including both substantive law and practical litigation skills for attorneys. Our offices also present regular workshops to enhance staff's professional development and build on their substantive knowledge and skills.

Language access: Our offices recruit staff from different backgrounds who speak many languages because clients greatly benefit from working with staff who speak their primary language. Bilingual staff also develop contacts with community-based agencies and are familiar with a client's cultural or religious background, a factor which is often relevant in an Article 10 case. Attorneys who can communicate with clients in their primary language enhance the attorney-client relationship and vastly improve the quality of representation.⁸

Specialized expertise in substantive areas: Over time our offices have identified attorneys and social work staff who specialize in particular areas of law or practice, thereby developing skills and institutional knowledge and improving the quality of representation and making our practice more efficient, including expertise in appeals, custody, medically complex (*res ipsa*), Termination of Parental Rights supplemental cases (TPR), education, and immigration matters.

Motion practice: Our offices leverage our institutional knowledge to great advantage with our robust motion practice. We improve efficiency by maintaining databases on model briefs and motions. Attorneys use these models as starting points to engage in zealous motion practice in settled and emerging areas of the law. For clients seeking to reunify with their children, our motion practice keeps the process moving forward. Attorneys regularly file motions to compel ACS to provide our clients with necessary services and to increase visitation. For our clients whose children are home and who face meritless neglect allegations or where the aid of the court is no longer necessary, we file motions seeking dismissal. In some cases, we file motions to seek the end of supervision of cases that no longer need to be in court. Our highly skilled motion practice helps resolve cases more quickly and helps speed up reunification.

Technology/data that provides accountability: Our offices have online case management systems, developed and improved over many years, enabling our offices to produce data on client demographics and court procedures and outcomes for the City, ensuring accountability. These systems also allow staff members to access up-to-date information on cases, enhancing our ability to respond to frequent emergencies, and enable our attorneys and out-of-court advocates to share information about cases. Our relationship with the court has allowed us to

⁸ See, e.g., Jayesh M. Rathod, *The Transformative Potential of Attorney Bilingualism*, 46 U. Michigan J. Law Reform 863-920 (2013).

access court data as well, which enhances our ability to advise clients and ensure our records are updated.

Collaborations with the court and child welfare stakeholders: Our offices are involved in numerous collaborations with other stakeholders in the courts and the child welfare system with the goal of improving efficiency in the court system and enhancing outcomes for children and families. We meet regularly with court personnel to discuss issues of shared concern regarding the effective operation of Family Court. We are involved in ongoing, fruitful collaborations with ACS and attorneys for the children to decrease the number of children unnecessarily removed from their homes without court order, expand visitation between parents and children, improve access to housing assistance for ACS-involved families, design and implement fair and effective guidelines for working with parents affected by mental illness, enhance access to preventive services tailored to parents with intellectual disabilities, and increase families' access to services in their primary language.

Leveraging pro bono and law school and social work resources: Our offices expand our limited resources through collaborations with the major New York City law firms which co-counsel with us on some of our most complex cases. Clinics from the New York City area law and social work schools also greatly enhance the efficiency of our practices with added resources to support the work of our attorneys and social workers.

C. Family defense providers' clients have multiple and complex cases resulting in work with clients lasting on average over two years and high pending client loads.

In evaluating the resources needed to effectively fund family defense work, the City Council should consider the unique aspects of the work. Our clients often have multiple supplemental proceedings and child welfare cases last an average of two years, resulting in our organizations carrying pending client loads from prior years in addition to the regular intake of new cases as they enter each new fiscal year. *Our Article 10 contracts are based on the numbers of clients we represent (not cases or matters), and our obligation is to represent every client until every matter they may have is resolved.* As discussed below, many Article 10 clients end up needing representation on supplemental proceedings, also filed in family court and directly related to the original Article 10 case that brought the client to family court. Even with our best efforts to expedite our clients' cases, there are many factors that prolong the outcome of cases, including ongoing custody battles, large sibling groups, appeals, termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings, alleged violations of orders, the birth of additional children, loss of housing or other forms of instability and an ever-increasing backlog in the courts: a backlog that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting pause on court operations.

Supplemental proceedings: Each client has an original Article 10 case, which could involve several petitions or children, often with their own unique needs. Throughout the course of representation in the proceedings, additional cases may be filed involving children born after filing of the original petition but while it is still pending; petitions to violate orders of protection or ACD or dispositional orders; custody cases; family offense cases; paternity cases; and/or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases. In addition, as part of our representation on the Article 10 case, attorneys are responsible for litigating interim appeals, which are litigated on an expedited time frame, and are often filed by ACS when our offices prevail at emergency hearings. Our offices are responsible for handling all of these related cases for each client.

Average length of time we represent clients on Article 10 and related cases: Despite our efforts to expedite our clients' cases, consistent with our clients' goals of reducing the amount of time that they are involved in the family court system, the average length of time we work with clients (to see all their cases to resolution) is over two years and many cases last substantially longer. Representation typically requires an increasing amount of work as the case progresses. On average, *33 percent of our pending caseloads have cases that are over two years old*. All of the provider agencies have clients with cases that are over five years old.

Our clients' older cases require just as much ongoing attention and advocacy as newer cases do, and often require more work than newer cases because of their complexity. At a minimum, we are appearing in permanency hearings every six months on the original Article 10 petition and on any Article 10 petitions filed on children born during the pendency of the first petition. These hearings can be extensive, such as when we are seeking family reunification or unsupervised visits over the agency's objections, or where there are a number of children with different statuses, placements, and permanency goals. Although Family Court Act § 1089(a)(3) requires that permanency hearings be completed within 30 days, permanency hearings often are adjourned for many months at a time and require multiple half-hour appearances to complete. Federal law requires, with only some limited exceptions, that if a child has been in foster care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months, a Termination of Parental Rights ("TPR") petition be filed to free a child for adoption; often a TPR has been filed while we are litigating permanency hearings, and that proceeding will involve extensive discovery and litigation and can take more than a year to complete. TPR proceedings themselves can also result in even further litigation, such as when a parent is accused of having violated the terms of a suspended judgment entered at the conclusion of the TPR trial. Because of the complex needs of families whose children spend a long time in foster care, these cases require extensive social work advocacy outside of court.

Article 10 cases and related supplemental proceedings take a long time to resolve because families' lives are constantly evolving. For child-welfare-involved families, changes in life circumstances such as a death or illness in the family, loss of a job or housing, or the birth of a child, often result in new litigation. In addition to permanency hearings and TPR cases, litigation at this late stage of a case can involve ACS violation petitions, motions to restrict visits, motions

to fail a trial discharge or remove children, and/or motions to change placement of the children when there is a change in the foster family situation. Our attorneys file motions for payment for needed services, motions for unsupervised visits, and motions for trial or final discharge of children to their parents' care. The information our social workers and parent advocates gather through out-of court-advocacy often informs the motions filed by our attorneys. Funding must take into account the long length of Article 10 and related cases and ensure that parents have attorneys and advocates with the time and resources necessary to provide them with high-quality representation at every stage of their case, no matter how long their case lasts.

II. Family defense provider FY 21 revenue must be maintained at at least FY 20 levels.

Despite a decade of excellent representation that is saving the City substantial monies in foster care costs, the Mayor's budget has a dramatic DECREASE in funding in FY20. This is not related to COVID-19 and the most recent budget concerns that are affecting the City, but actually reflects a pattern that has occurred for the past four years. A decision was made to baseline our contracts at \$8.7 million less than we were allocated in FY 16 and in each year since then we have had to work hard and wait a long time to have our budget restored. It is imperative that the City Council require that the Mayor restore our funding to FY 20 levels in the budget that is passed on June 30.

A. History of the Article 10 contracts and funding

The current contract term for the four family defense providers is FY14-FY20, but MOCJ has extended the contracts for a seventh year. The base revenue in the contracts for FY 21 is, however, currently set at FY 16 levels. MOCJ has acknowledged that FY16 base revenue is wholly inadequate to meet our costs, as evidenced by the fact that it provided each of the Article 10 providers increased revenue for FY 17, FY 18, FY19, and FY 20, through the contract amendment process, and assured us that they would similarly raise our annual budget for FY 21.

As well, and pertinent to the Council's review of the MOCJ budget, FY 20 revenue was insufficient to meet the total cost of the practice in that year and in FY19. The revenue added as a result of dramatically increased filings in the two years before did not keep pace with increased costs in salary, rent and health insurance. As well, over time, the backlog created in the courts made it more likely that every Article 10 client would face supplemental proceedings—when it takes longer to resolve a case, there is a greater likelihood that additional matters will be filed against a client—and as these contracts are currently structured, our revenue corresponds to pending *client* load, rather than pending case load. The result has been an extreme shortfall in our budgets because the City has not increased our funding sufficiently to meet the growing epidemic of case filings, the increase in our pending client loads after 2016, the growing complexity of our cases, and the expanded need for critical casework outside of court by our social workers and parent advocates.

And certainly, even if fully restored, FY20 amounts do not take into account costs related to addressing the costs of COVID-19, which could involve additional renovation, technology investments to accommodate continued remote work, and costs related to periodic cleaning, testing, and protective supplies.

We would be on solid ground if we argued that we needed an increase in our budgets due to the enormous needs our clients face right now. They are the poorest people in the City who face the most obstacles during the best of times. During the pandemic, which is affecting our client communities at a much higher rate than other neighborhoods in the City, we are often the only resource they have to help meet their basic necessities like food and a safe place to sleep. Our workload has increased over the past few months, even though the number of new cases is temporarily down. We have accrued increased rent, salaries and other expenses since 2016 as well. Even so, what we are asking is that we are treated fairly and receive our full FY 20 budget as we enter into FY21 so we can make reopening plans and maintain our staffing at current levels.

B. MOCJ needs to at least restore our FY21 revenue to FY20 levels because active, pending client load (not annual intake) drives our costs.

For reasons explained below, the providers expect that the pending client load will remain at FY20 levels in FY21. Family defense providers do not get additional revenue for additional matters filed against a client, like a termination of parental rights or custody case—yet every supplemental matter adds time and workload to the representation. While intake may fluctuate, *it is the pending client load that determines how many attorneys, social work staff and other supports we need to run our practices and serve clients well.* Cases are never resolved quickly. Quite the opposite, we work with clients for a long time—on average, more than two years. It is therefore common for us to be litigating two or more matters that involve different discovery, legal standards, and court proceedings for a client simultaneously, sometimes before different jurists. There are no statutory requirements for cases to go to trial within a set time frame, yet when children are in foster care for 15 out of 22 months, federal law requires, with few exceptions, that a petition to terminate parental rights be filed. A petition to terminate parental rights, if successful, has been called the ‘civil death penalty,’ because it wholesale dissolves the legal relationship—and usually any connection at all—between a parent and child. In cases involving domestic violence, substance use, incarceration, mental illness, children with complex needs, or difficulty obtaining safe and permanent housing, 22 months is a very short time to address the myriad barriers to family reunification, and that is why our interdisciplinary teams are so critical to the representation of parents in child protection proceedings. The longer a case is pending, the more likely it is that a supplemental case will be filed. Supplemental matters, like custody and termination cases, often involve new parties, new motion practice, and new needs for investigation and retaining forensic experts. That is why the current measure of our

contracts, new annual intake, is a poor measure of our workload. Our work is defined by our current pending caseload and should be measured by that standard.

To cite just a few data points: between October 2016 and May 2017, ACS filed more than 10,500 cases accusing families of child abuse or neglect in Family Court—an increase of 64 percent over the number of cases filed by the agency during the same months of the previous year; the number of New York City abuse or neglect cases that were pending without having reached a determination, called a “fact-finding,” increased by 38.9% from the end of calendar year 2016 to the end of 2017⁹ and by June of 2018, each of us had a pending active client load that was 30% higher than it had been in June 2017. At the same time, the Court did not gain a corresponding increase in resources, meaning that cases were taking longer to resolve and many clients had supplemental petitions filed. While intake always fluctuates, and in some boroughs has decreased somewhat since then, intake is still higher than FY16 levels and our contract has not been increased since then. Our pending client loads, while flattening somewhat, are much higher than they were in FY 16.

Higher pending client numbers means we need more attorneys and administrative staff to handle these cases, as well as more social workers and parent advocates to help parents negotiate service plans, attend meetings and conferences with caseworkers, and fulfill the requirements of the service plans required by ACS. To provide quality representation, move cases toward permanency, and ensure children do not languish needlessly in foster care, our staffing must ensure that each attorney is handling a manageable pending client load. We believe that the target for pending clients should be set at 50, and that has been recognized by the Commission on Legal Representation as the appropriate standard.¹⁰ In order to meet that pending client target, we would not only need to have the \$8.7 million restored, but we would need to add additional funds.

⁹ Data are from the New York State Unified Court System, comparing 1,140 at the end of 2016 (see the second row, penultimate column of the chart available here:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Family-Court-statistics2016.pdf>) with 1,584 at the end of 2017 (see the second row, penultimate column of the chart available here:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/publications/pdfs/Family-Court-statistics2017.pdf>).

¹⁰ Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore, February 2019.

See also written testimony of American Bar Association, Government Affairs Office, *e.g.* ABA, Indicators of Success for Parental Representation, at ii-iii (describing results of evaluation of a Texas pilot project setting a cap of 50 clients and finding that after six months, “the model had already improved the quality of representation for parents,” and resulted in reduced continuances and delays). *See also* ILS Model Upstate Parental Representation Office Request for Proposals (“Given the unique complexities involved in state intervention cases, caseload limits are essential to permit attorneys to comply with their ethical responsibilities. This RFP therefore contemplates an office average of no more than 50 clients per attorney at any given time.”), available at <https://www.ils.ny.gov/files/Parent%20Representation/RFP-Upstate%20Model%20Parental%20Representation%20Office%20Grant%20032017.pdf>.

C. Active, pending client loads remain high and are not likely to decrease in FY 21, making immediate restoration of our revenue critical so that we can maintain sufficient staff to handle our current clients and new clients as well as address the needs of the families we work with during the pandemic.

Initial filings in the early stages of COVID-19 were somewhat lower, as ACS and court actors all adjusted to the physical shut down of the court and offices, but intake is creeping back up. In addition, hundreds of cases are being adjourned several months in the future despite our efforts to see progress on our cases. With our ability to seek hearings to return children from foster care severely restricted, we have less ability to reunify families and keep cases moving. These limitations and delays only make it more likely that supplemental proceedings like TPRs will be filed, and that the Court will have significant backlogs when it reopens. As well, the overwhelming majority of our cases are directly related to poverty. Lost wages, the inability to access services, and food and housing insecurity will certainly result from the COVID-19 pandemic—as will a corresponding increase in SCR reports and ACS filings. When the courts finally do re-open, the work required to reduce the backlog is likely to be confusing, complicated and staggering. It is essential that we are fully staffed and prepared for that eventuality.

D. Keeping revenue for family defense providers at FY 16 levels will increase the cost of mandated representation in Article 10 proceedings for New York City.

Not only would keeping the institutional providers at FY 16 levels—effectively reducing their revenue by more than a third—deprive parents and families of proven high quality representation, this decision would be economically unwise. Representation of parents in child protection matters is mandated by statute and the NYS Constitution. If revenue for family defense providers is not stabilized at FY 20 levels, many cases would end up with a different type of counsel, assigned counsel pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law. Reverting to reliance on the 18-b panel of attorneys—most of whom are solo practitioners who do not have on-site social workers or parent advocates—would lead to the unnecessary prolonged separations of families, increasing the overall number of children in foster care in a manner typical of the family court system before New York City revamped its parent representation system in 2007. This would also create a different type of crisis, because there are insufficient numbers of 18b attorneys to fill this need.

E. COVID-19 and its harrowing impact on low-income NY families makes it likely that we will ‘return’ to significant work.

The social and economic instability caused by COVID-19 is precisely the type of circumstance that gives rise to the vast majority of ACS investigations, case filings, and forced family separations through the foster system. Much of our work to come will be a continuation of our efforts to ensure that families are supported and children are not unnecessarily and traumatically

separated from their parents due to poverty or instability. It will, however, be significant and require more resources than ever before in the wake of COVID-19.

III. Funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative must be maintained.

Thanks to the support of Speaker Corey Johnson and Councilperson Stephen Levin, the City Council allocated 1.5 million for the four family defense providers (\$325,000 for each organization) to provide representation to low-income parents during child protection investigations, as well as in SCR hearings in fiscal year 2020. The *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative* was a new initiative that provided desperately needed due process, legal representation, and advocacy services to individuals and families involved in the child welfare system. Our contracts with the city do not fund us to provide this critical representation before a court case is filed and without the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative parents would not have access to counsel before an Article 10 petition is filed.

A. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel during ACS investigations, resulting in unnecessary traumatic and harmful family separations and case filings.

Currently, parents with child welfare involvement are not assigned attorneys until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in Family Court. Before a case is filed in court, however, critical decisions are made that have grave consequences for how cases proceed, including whether the family will be diverted to prevention programs and services; whether the case will be filed in court; and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents. Without access to counsel during this critically important investigative stage of an Article 10 case, parents are forced to meet with ACS, make critical decisions, and navigate the state's intervention in their family on their own. The result is that too many cases are filed and too many children are unnecessarily separated from their parents. This is why the Commission on Parental Legal Representation established in 2018 by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore recommended that parents be granted access to counsel during a child protective investigation.¹¹ In addition, the standards of practice for parents' attorneys adopted by the American Bar Association in 2006 recommend that attorneys actively represent parents during an investigation.¹²

B. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel in SCR hearings and are unjustifiably categorically denied employment opportunities.

¹¹ Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore, February 2019.

¹² See American Bar Association, Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases 10 (2006), available at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf

Parents are also not given access to counsel in Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) hearings that are necessary to amend an indicated case from the state central registry for child maltreatment (the “SCR”). New York parents who are listed on the SCR are routinely denied employment based on unproven allegations of child abuse and neglect. SCR records remain accessible to employers and others for years and restrict parents’ ability to work and support their families. The majority of indicated cases are never brought to court and reviewed by a judge to determine whether the allegations are supported by evidence and warrant drastically limiting a person’s employability. In these cases, parents are never assigned an attorney to inform them of their right to challenge their listing on the SCR. This year the law was changed and an entirely new legal standard and process is in place for SCR hearings that goes into effect in January of 2022. It is critical that the City provide low-income parents with access to attorneys to represent them in these hearings and remove barriers to employment. This is even more urgent as the unemployment rate skyrockets. People who challenge their inclusion in the SCR and have their names cleared can get jobs that serve society, particularly in health care, once they are cleared.

C. The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative avoids unnecessary removals and removes barriers to employment for hundreds of low-income NYC parents.

Through the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, low-income parents in New York City have access to attorneys through hotlines, emails, and walk in hours when they are faced with an ACS investigation or have been denied employment due to having an indicated case on the SCR. Teams of attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents about their rights, their choices, and the consequences of decisions during an ACS investigation. As a result, parents are more meaningfully engaged in the process and ACS is better informed about a family’s situation. We are able to assist parents in providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance, and addressing the issues that brought their children to the attention of ACS in the first instance. Our advocates attend conferences at ACS, schools, and medical providers with our clients. This support often results in resolving cases without ACS having to go to court.

With the funding provided by the City Council in fiscal year 2020, the family defense providers collectively represented over 550¹³ parents during child welfare investigations and SCR hearings between July 2019 and April 2020. Through early advocacy and identification of appropriate services and resources, we avoided unnecessary and traumatic family separations and, often, kept family court cases from ever being filed against the families we assisted. Our representation in SCR hearings has enabled parents to access employment and support their families. Our work

¹³ Total clients represented includes all clients for whom Early Defense & SCR advocacy began between July 1, 2019 - April 30, 2019 and is now concluded. It does not include cases that began during this time period, but which are still pending.

pursuant to the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative has resulted in tremendous fiscal savings for the City by avoiding removals and reducing court filings. It also preserves valuable court resources and time for cases that actually require court intervention

E. We are asking that the City Council preserve the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative.

Last February, just before COVID-19 swept through the City and New York went on pause, the Article 10 providers jointly applied to renew the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative for fiscal year 2021. In order to meet the demand of low-income parents in need of representation during child protection investigations and in SCR hearings, we requested increased funding of \$3 million (\$750,000 per organization). We do not receive any other funding dedicated to our pre petition or SCR advocacy. We recognize that in this time of fiscal crisis, additional funding might not be possible in which case we are asking that our funding not be cut and remain at FY20 levels.

IV. The Family Defense Providers are needed more than ever in the aftermath of COVID-19

New York City's institutional family defense providers have met the challenge of an extremely limited Family Court through continued effective representation of parents during this crisis. We have represented parents in new cases filed in the virtual court, including emergency hearings regarding removals, worked to conference and resolve as many pending cases as possible, and advocated in agency conferences with ACS and foster care agencies and with Family Court Legal Services regarding visitation, access to services and reunification of families. Despite these efforts, our clients' access to the court has been drastically curtailed and many cases have been adjourned to a date in the far future. The result is that when the court is back up and running, the number of active cases that we carry will be greater than before.

A. Our clients are a vulnerable population disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

The novel coronavirus is disproportionately impacting Black and Brown low-income New Yorkers. In 2019, the vast majority of the families prosecuted by ACS were from this same demographic and from low-income communities. Many are unemployed or have recently become unemployed as a result of coronavirus-related layoffs. Our clients who are employed are likely to either be considered "essential employees" or have jobs that cannot be done from home, leaving them more vulnerable to contracting COVID-19. When they do get sick with COVID-19, they are likely to face bias in the medical care they receive, making them more likely to die

from the virus; preliminary research shows that Black people who go to hospitals with symptoms are less likely than their white counterparts to be tested or treated for COVID-19, and that Black and Latinx people infected with the virus were twice as likely to die as white people.¹⁴

Large percentages of our clients live in cramped family shelters or are home insecure, making it virtually impossible to truly quarantine at home if a family member develops COVID-19 symptoms. For our clients, social distancing guidelines can be a luxury; families on public assistance cannot “stock up” on groceries and other essentials to reduce the need to leave home, do not have any option for travel other than public transportation, and, unlike more fortunate NYC residents, they, cannot flee the city for less densely populated areas.

Many of our clients lack access to the technology necessary to comply with distance learning, despite their concerted efforts to obtain technology from the Department of Education, and many parents who have the required technology do not have the support needed to use it effectively. As a result of these challenges, schools have begun reporting parents to the State Central Registry (“SCR”) for suspected educational neglect.¹⁵ An indicated case in the SCR can thwart access to the socially-necessary and reliable healthcare jobs that many of our clients currently have or ultimately seek. The need for such healthcare workers will only continue to grow as the continued impact of COVID-19 unfolds. As low-income families face new struggles under the evolving conditions of the pandemic, family defense providers’ ability to advise families during an ACS investigation and to challenge indicated SCR reports through the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is proving essential.

B. Due process protections are severely compromised and family defense work has increased rather than decreased during the public health crisis.

In March 2020, the New York Family Court essentially closed its doors to families who remained separated, but whose children can return home safely. Despite initial assurances from court administration that emergency hearings to return children would be heard, even if in limited form, pending hearings were adjourned as far out as June and, in at least one case, to October. In one case, the Court even refused to hear a parent’s application to deny the government’s initial request to remove a newborn baby, granted the government’s removal request, and adjourned the “continued hearing” to July. The result of the court closing its doors to parents’ requests for emergency and other hearings to reunite their families is that children

¹⁴ Villarosa, Linda (April 29, 2020) “A Terrible Price: The Deadly Racial Disparities of Covid-19 in America”; New York Times; Mays, Jeffrey C. Andy Newman. (2020 April 8). “Virus is Twice as Deadly for Black and Latino People Than Whites in N.Y.C” New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-race-deaths.html>

¹⁵ Grench, Eileen. (2020 April 28). “Parents Expecting Ipads Deliveries Got Knock on Door from Child Welfare Workers” . The City. https://thecity.nyc/2020/04/some-parents-awaiting-ipads-got-visit-from-child-welfare.html?utm_campaign=mailchimp&utm_source=daily&utm_medium=newsletter

will remain in foster care unnecessarily even in situations where a parent's circumstances have improved and the harm to the child of remaining in foster care has only intensified as a result of the pandemic and the limitations on parent-child visitation resulting from it, tipping the balance of harm in favor of the child returning home.

C. The pandemic has meant that families separated by foster care have very little ability to visit one another in-person.

ACS and foster care agencies have unilaterally and summarily restricted families' ability to visit in-person, despite court orders from before the pandemic and despite ACS's own guidelines to evaluate each case individually to assess whether in-person visitation can continue safely. Families are left to maintain their bond virtually over telephone and video chat, tenuous and dependent as this is on access to requisite technology and WiFi. Our attorneys and social workers have had to renegotiate the terms of almost every case where children are separated from their families because of foster care agencies' and foster parents' refusal to continue in-person visits and their insistence on limiting the amount of contact parents have with their children for a variety of reasons. In the face of this massive and systemic distancing of families that have already been separated, the court's capacity to hear applications by parents to enforce their rights to spend time in-person with their children or to reunite families with children in foster care has been greatly reduced. As a result, our staff have shifted focus to helping our clients navigate these newly-erected obstacles to remaining connected with their children by negotiating creative solutions with ACS and foster care agencies.

D. The family defense providers have continued to advocate for clients at ACS and FCA conferences by phone or video-conference.

As a result of the Courts' drastic limitation on holding hearings and hearing cases, our staff has spent countless hours negotiating with ACS to safely return children home; to continue in-person visitation; to establish video visitation where in-person visitation is not safe; to modify visitation frequency and length to respond to young children's ability to engage in video visitation; and to assist our clients with technology to enable any visitation at all. In many cases, we have been able to preserve contact between separated parents and children where otherwise ACS and foster agencies' inaction would have resulted in indefinite, total separation.

During the pandemic, our social workers and parent advocates have continued to represent our clients every day in grueling hours-long phone conferences with ACS—sometimes multiple conferences in a day—to fight removals of children, reduction in visitation, and complaints that parents who are enforcing social distancing guidelines with workers are “noncompliant with supervision.” At the same time, our staff continues to help our clients obtain access to needed support services as they attempt to comply with their court and ACS mandates.

E. The family defense providers have engaged in desperately needed systemic advocacy during the COVID-19 crisis.

Our offices represent the vast majority of parents involved in the City's child welfare system which places us in a unique position to advocate for needed systemic change. That need has never been clearer than during this pandemic when so many of our clients and their families are suffering both from the Coronavirus but also because of unnecessary family separation. We have collectively sought to expand access to courts by advocating with individual Supervising Judges in each borough, with Administrative Judge of New York City Family Courts Jeannette Ruiz and with Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks. In collaboration with attorneys for children, we have advocated with ACS to systematically review each foster care case to assess whether reunification or expansion of visitation can occur. Families are relying on our ability to work together with ACS and the courts more than ever during this unprecedented health crisis. We have sought to raise awareness about our clients' plight and to fight fear-based narratives about the increase of child abuse through media advocacy.

There is no quantitative or qualitative metric that can capture the cascading impact this pandemic is going to have on New York City's families with ACS involvement. All of these changes have amplified the intensity of separation between parents and children in foster care and, by default, increased the length of stay for every single child in foster care. We fear that once we return to some level of normalcy, there will be an absolute flood of Termination of Parental Rights ("TPR") proceedings as well, meaning that many of our clients will face permanent and irrevocable termination of their families because of the obstacles created by the pandemic. Our continued ability to work around these obstacles and implement creative solutions is more critical than ever.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have and you can reach us at the contact information provided below. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to provide you with information on the critical importance of maintaining our funding to ensure that parents faced with the loss of their children are provided high quality mandated legal representation and on the importance of continuing the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative.

Bronx Defenders, Emma Ketteringham
emmak@bronxdefenders.org

Brooklyn Defender Services, Lauren Shapiro
lshapiro@bds.org

Center for Family Representation, Michele Cortese
mcortese@cfrny.org

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, Zainab Akbar
zakbar@nds.org



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NYC Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Testimony
Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
April 24th, 2020

Thank you for allowing our submission of testimony on the New York City budget for FY 2021. In this unprecedented time, we are all adjusting and working diligently to show up in support of our communities. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) continues to work with its communities and partners to strengthen the support systems and continuum of learning for disenfranchised families, children and youth across the city; an ever urgent need which has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis. With the changes that each day has brought, we have continued to modify our programs to ensure that our staff are able to deliver the necessary information, support, and materials to those that we serve. The many coalition spaces we are engaged with have also adjusted their equity-focused work to reflect this new reality while still keeping an eye on the ongoing equity concerns that have tainted our systems. It is with consideration of both the pressing and pragmatic needs during this crisis and an understanding that inequity has existed in our systems before now and is expected to be significantly worsened once we transition out, that we put forward this testimony on the NYC budget for fiscal year 2021.

We appreciate the critical state that our state and city finances are in with the unforeseen devastating impact of COVID-19. While the past years have brought opportunities to invest in and build programs to better meet the needs of our communities, we now face a significant reduction to state and city revenue. We further understand the effects of the federal government's delay in specifically allocating emergency funds to states and localities to ensure that key services can be sustained during this crisis. Difficult decisions will have to be made in negotiating this budget and perhaps for budgets to come; we must not lose sight of existing critical issues of inequity that persist through this pandemic as we address new issues that have arisen under the ensuing state of emergency. It is clear that we will be feeling the effects of this for quite some time—we have to be intentional, pragmatic, and proactive in the budgetary decisions being made at present so as not to unduly intensify the damaging impact of this time.

Early Care

The CHCF Early Care and Education Institute rapidly adjusted its service delivery model to reflect social distancing and stay-at-home. Our team continues to send supplies to Family Child Care (FCC) providers who have faced tremendous difficulty in accessing personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, thermometers, and food for their programs. Just this week, we were able to safely distribute kits to 42 providers with open programs across the city containing PPE and cleaning supplies, which allows



them to safely remain open to serve essential workers and emergency responders. Our early care coaches continue to deliver technical assistance virtually, as well as professional development training that reflects the providers' current reality. This includes support on maintaining healthy, safe spaces and protocols to protect themselves, the essential worker parents, and children who continue to attend their programs; as well as business supports for financial sustainability during this time, i.e. navigating SBA loan access, unemployment access, and other financial relief that might exist.

As a partner of the City's First Readers initiative, we continue to distribute book kits and resources to providers and families. So far this fiscal year, we have distributed 28 provider early literacy kits, 14 of which have gone out during COVID-19, containing books, puppets, art supplies, and dramatic play materials. An additional 21 early literacy kits have gone out to families during the crisis. Moreover, we have been able to get literacy information out to over 400 families so far this year. The response we have received from parents and children has emphasized the importance of ongoing developmental and educational support for families with small children, especially during these difficult times. We know the significance of these early years on a child's development under typical circumstances; with the heightened risk against mental and physical health during this period, we must safeguard programs that actively work to provide families with the materials, resources, and supports necessary to ensure their collective well-being is sustained and protected. Early childhood literacy continues to be an essential initiative for the healthy development of New York's children.

One of the greatest achievements of the De Blasio administration has been the expansion of universal Pre-K. CHCF continues to work closely with the DOE around the development and roll-out of its FCC Network system as part of 3K for All, set to begin July 1st. We understand that the current crisis has required a significant cut to DOE programs and that the expansion of 3K for the upcoming school year is being put on hold. At the same time, as 3K has already opened in 12 DOE districts, it remains our responsibility to continue investing in the quality of the city-wide model to ensure that it truly meets the needs of children and families.

More than ever, CBO network partners require funding security to continue delivery of high-quality services and supports for providers, families, and children. For too long, under-payment of city contracts that do not reflect the true cost of sustaining quality programs have left many CBOs financially vulnerable. With the new round of network contracts that were awarded earlier this year, FCC Network contracts are only to be paid out based on enrollment. Although Networks and their providers will continue to do tremendous work recruiting for their 3K programs, a lack of oversight of the centralized enrollment system and the current crisis and family concerns about child health and safety will create barriers in reaching full enrollment, which in turn compromises the CBOs ability to receive full funding of the contract. We all know that the overhead costs and staffing structures that are required to deliver consistent, high-quality supports and services in networks and in child care programs persist, even if enrollment fluctuates. In order to sustain the DOE 3K and early child care structure with CBO partners and the already vulnerable FCC sector, it is crucial that the DOE guarantee a percentage of contract funding based on enrollment, in line with the Birth-to-Five contracts (i.e. less than 68% enrollment = 75% of the contract; 93% or more enrollment = 100% of the contract).



Further, it is important to recognize the critical state that the FCC sector has continuously been held in for years as a result of willful underinvestment. With COVID-19, while schools closed, the need for child care of essential workers has remained and many home-based programs across the city remained open to meet the needs of the families they serve. Child care providers have made difficult decisions about risking their health and the health of their families or jeopardizing any last semblance of financial stability. Many providers who have closed their programs in light of COVID-19, either over health concerns or due to underattendance/enrollment, have reported concerns about their ability to open back up once our economy picks up again. This is a reflection of the already devastated state that New York State and New York City has held this sector in. While we have already been asking that New York City DOE increase the rates they are offering providers for Birth-to-Three care, the clear need for respectful rates that better reflect the true cost of high-quality programs has never been underscored as it is now. For too long, the State and City have consciously relied on this sector's willingness to deliver high quality services at low rates that often hold these predominantly women-of-color at or below poverty. Taking advantage of provider dedication cannot be the practice going forward. Time and time again, even now in a health crisis, providers show up to keep safe child care available to all who need it; the rates need to honor and reflect the essential services they continually provide for our workforce and city.

While we know that rapid, large investments to address each of these issues is not realistic at present, we still believe that the DOE should be laying out an intentional budget plan to continue gradually moving in the right direction in addressing these issues.

Of additional concern are the holes in linguistically responsive communications and supports that are being provided for the child care sector across city agencies. The DOE, ACS, HRA, DOHMH, and additionally the UFT, all touch this sector. We continue to see a lack of consistent communications, updates and supports to providers, especially for those whose home language is a language other than English, at a time when it is *crucial* that they be receiving direct, rapid updates and supports. While we recognize that OCFS and DOH oversee much of the released communications and directives for providers during this time, each local agency should be doing its part to support translation of important information into the top languages and to ensure that providers are consistently receiving direct, linguistically accessible, quality support from frontline staff of those agencies. Providers who speak a language other than English have always faced tremendous barriers in accessing information from state and city agencies; while never appropriate, under the current circumstances it is potentially endangering the health and safety of providers, their household members, their staff, and the families they serve by not ensuring they are receiving necessary information in their language *at the same time* that it is released in English. Each agency should do an internal review of their budget needs to ensure that they are able to better meet the language needs of this sector.

Youth Development

In light of the school closure as of March 16th, CHCF's Youth Development team immediately began outreach to the families we work with to support them in accessing devices, meals, and any other supports



they might need during this time. We have reflectively modified our work plans for SONYC and Empire State After School, together with our DYCD program managers, to ensure continued support for our students. We continue to provide virtual academic support, 1:1 tutoring, social emotional supports, and assistance for families in accessing virtual learning spaces.

Our program staff at the community school we are partnered with have maintained a case-load model that allows them to stay in touch with students on a daily basis. We continue to holistically assist families in accessing necessary resources during this time. In addition to supporting student engagement in virtual learning so that their academic growth is not stagnated while they are physically out of school, we are reaching out to Seniors to support their path to graduation during this devastating time. It is clear that the issues of equity and access that our communities, families, and students face persist, and have been further magnified as a result of the pandemic. The need for ongoing community-based organizational support for families and students to supplement what DOE schools are able to provide is more apparent now than ever. Through this crisis and the ensuing switch to virtual outreach and learning we have even seen previously hard to reach students re-engage in their education like never before. This moment is allowing us to recognize the varied, effective ways that we can responsively connect with our families and students both during crisis and going forward.

CHCF continues to be part of a number of coalitions, collaborations, and initiatives that speak directly to issues of inequity in birth through post-secondary educational spaces. Equity advocates all recognize that the barriers to access and opportunity for students of color, low-income students, immigrant students, students in temporary housing, multilingual learners (MLLs), and students with disabilities that have always existed have only been exacerbated under these circumstances. With the closure of schools and transition to virtual learning, the need to address the gap in access to devices and reliable internet immediately moved up on the list of priorities. The gap in supports and services to meet the need of students with specific needs has become all the more dire as we desperately race to minimize the negative impact of losing consistent access to direct school supports. The already limited linguistically responsive supports and communication between schools and families has become all the more devastating as parents are suddenly expected to navigate home-schooling and the use of technology that they may not feel comfortable or confident using.

While we understand that some hard decisions must be made in the DOE budget for the coming fiscal year, it is important to consider the needs of our students within this current reality, as well as how their needs must be met on the other side of this. A recent poll conducted by Education Trust-New York found that 89% of New York parents were concerned about their child falling behind academically. 79% of parents were further concerned about their child feeling safe and emotionally at ease during this time.¹ The long-term impact on academic progress and mental health of our students as a result of the COVID-19 crisis is being sewn as we speak. The city must intentionally respond and proactively act to safeguard and further invest in supports that would mitigate the full weight of this time on our students. The city must actively work to preserve and grow access to extended learning time programs to combat any

¹ Education Equity & Coronavirus: Listening to Parents (2020). Education Trust-New York.
<https://newyork.edtrust.org/covid-19/#learn>



educational stagnation; we must protect existing and invest additional funding on social/emotional supports and services to increase the student-to-social worker/guidance counselor ratio. We will be feeling the true impact of this crisis on our students' academic growth and mental health for months to come. We must not respond to this crisis by eliminating the essential supports and services that are best equipped to help students through this time and beyond.

Additional Issues

COVID-19 has further disrupted the important work around the Census count, which will have a significant impact on the future of our communities, our city, state, and country. Census 2020 remains as significant today as it was before the pandemic hit. Knowing the impact that the count has on long term structures of power and funding that will impact our communities for the decade to come, it remains crucial that every household get counted. We know that this is not the priority of families at this time, as they adjust to home-learning, financial instability, threats to their immediate safety, health issues, and loss. This year, CHCF partnered with the city for Census 2020 and, as with our other program areas, has modified its service delivery to reflect social distancing and stay-at-home, while still delivering this important work. Knowing the importance of the count and responding to the crisis that families have been thrust into, the Census count deadline has been extended to August 14th, 2020. The importance of continuing the city-wide effort through the extended deadline to ensure everyone is counted remains.

No one can fully predict what is to come with this pandemic. We are all vulnerable to the volatility of this pandemic from day to day. However, we can safely assume that this will not have a clean end date; the ramifications of this pandemic will linger. We know that for communities, families, and children who were already marginalized and vulnerable within our systems, the impact will be intensified. It is incumbent upon us to reflect on the reported impact of this crisis on families, anticipate the needs of our students and families on the other side of this, and act pragmatically and proactively to sustain programs that can lessen the harmful impact of this period on family security and well-being, as well as student academic progress and social-emotional development. The city must further ensure that its community-based partners are able to continue delivering much needed supports and services to our community members. It is through our city partnerships and the direct discretionary funding support from our City Council members that we are able to unfailingly show up for our communities, especially in trying times such as these. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families remains ready to work together with our communities and city partners to ensure that we pull through this time together.

For any questions about this testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse, Policy Analyst for CHCF at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY FINANCE COMMITTEE – MAY 2020

By Mathew Joseph, CSA-G

Good evening members of the committee. I am Mathew Joseph, a New York City Assessor, New York State Certified General Appraiser, and a member of the Columbia Society of Appraisers and Vice president of the Assessors' Union, Local 1757, DC 37. I am testifying on my own and do not represent the Finance Department of the City of New York.

Instead of looking at the short term, my proposals affect the long term economic health of the City of New York.

Some of the suggestions will need changes to the Real Property Tax Law and NYC rules and regulations.

FULL MARKET VALUE ASSESSMENT.

All properties should be assessed at full market value and determine the tax rate based on full market value. New York City employs fractional assessments of market values that are beholden to a ratio based upon tax classes. Eliminate different assessment ratios and transitional assessment. There will not be any need for special ratios for equalization and/or physical changes.

[To do this we will have to hire qualified Appraisers/Assessors.](#)

Income producing properties should be valued based on market income.

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Create a new Tax Class for owner occupied one family houses only. Income producing two and three family houses should not be valued along with owner occupied one family houses.

Residential owner occupied condo units should be included in the new Tax Class.

Tax rates should not be increased more than half a percent without voter approval.

Eliminate all exemptions except personal exemptions.

In New York City about 60% of properties enjoy some form of tax exemptions. Exemptions in reality are subsidies and most of them are welfare checks for the rich and powerful.

A separate department of assessment from the department of Finance should be created with a Chief Assessor reporting directly to the Mayor. The Chief Assessor should be made an eight year term position. This would give that office stability, strength and independence from outside influence. Only experienced Assessors or Appraisers should be appointed as Chief Assessor. The management and supervision of assessing personnel should be assigned to employees who have a high degree of assessing/appraisal experience. Assessors should be compensated according to industry standards. The unrealistic workload of Assessors must be reduced to manageable levels so that quality assessments are arrived.

Eliminate the request for review and Request for Administrative Review (Clerical Error Remission):

All reviews after the tentative assessment publication should be done by the Tax Commission only. Tax Commission should be expanded with qualified and experienced Assessors/Appraisers only.

So if anyone is seriously interested in additional information, you may contact me at reviewassessor@yahoo.com. Or tele: 929 393 5773.

Thanks.

Dear Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel and Speaker Johnson,

As your constituent, I am urging you to keep funding summer and after school programming for my kids. I work at New York Edge and I know what our afternoon programs mean to the 40,000 kids we serve in addition to after school programs in academics, the arts and health & wellness, we can provide fun and engaging summer programming online or in person. If it becomes possible to gather in small groups. Please fight to continue New York Edge \$1M citywide funding under the Council's After School Enrichment initiative and work to restore DYCD's cuts to summer programs. Our kids need to stay focused, connected and motivated and our organization needs to stay vibrant and strong so we can serve them. Please don't cancel summer or after school for our kids.

Cynthia Francis

225 Bainbridge Street

Brooklyn NY 11233

Dear Council Member Constantinides and Speaker Johnson,

As your constituent, I am urging you to keep funding summer AND afterschool programming for my kids. I work at New York Edge and I know what our afterschool programs mean to the 40,000 kids we serve. In addition to afterschool programs in academics, the arts and health & wellness, we can provide fun and engaging summer programming online or in person, if it becomes possible to gather in small groups. Please fight to continue New York Edge's \$1M citywide funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative AND work to restore DYCD's cuts to summer programs. Our kids need to stay focused, connected and motivated. And our organization needs to stay vibrant and strong so we can serve them. Please don't cancel summer OR afterschool for our kids. These activities and programs that are provided for these children are essential to child development, in both social and education departments. To get rid of this part of their life is exposing them to less help than they need in order to become the best children that they can be, not to mention the fact that After-School programs for years have provided a safe place for children when their parents were not able to watch them because of working obligations. For underprivileged communities, NYE has become a way for kids to escape their environment and become exposed to a new line of thinking, one that includes a world outside of where they are from. Whether it is a new activity like theatre, or a new game like chess or a new sport like tennis, we have given children all across NYC a chance to be more than a color, a race, an ethnicity, a sexual orientation, a gender, we have given children a chance to create their own unique identity and for that we MUST keep these programs open. Please, let's work together to ensure programs like NYE stay for the sake of the children involved

Fritz Jacques
523 E108th Street

keep Funding Summer AND After School Programming

Dear Council Donovan J. Richards and Speaker Johnson,

As your constituent, I am urging you to keep funding summer AND afterschool programming for the kids. I fully support New York Edge and I know what our afterschool programs mean to the 40,000 kids we serve. In addition to afterschool programs in academics, the arts and health & wellness, they provide fun and engaging summer programming online or in person, if it becomes possible to gather in small groups. Please fight to continue New York Edge's \$1M citywide funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative AND work to restore DYCD's cuts to summer programs. These kids need to stay focused, connected and motivated. And this organization needs to stay vibrant and strong so they can serve them. Please don't cancel summer OR afterschool for our kids.

Esther Holguin
488 Beach 66th Street

Impact for Proposed Cuts on East New York Community and Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

Description	Dollar Amount Lost	Number of Residents Impacted	Impacts
Elimination of Summer Youth Employment Program through NYC Department of Youth & Community Development	\$662,850.00		Loss of SYEP participants helping small businesses, human service organizations, and government agencies and undertake critical community service projects. Fewer young people shopping in local area. SYEP participants who contribute to their household's budgets will be unable to do so if the cuts happen. Elimination of school-based SYEP with Multicultural High School, Brooklyn Lab High School and Cypress Hills Collegiate Prep HS on Lane campus and the FDNY and 932 WATCH high schools on Thomas Jefferson High School campus
Elimination of DYCD - funded Summer Camps through Compass and SONYC Programs run by NYC Department of Youth & Community Development	\$590,872.00		Increased unemployment in the community as we lay-off 200 staff. Elimination of free high quality child care in the community at PS7, PS65, PS89, PS 677, IS171/Highland Park Middle School, Liberty 712 Avenue Middle School. Parents unable to return to work because they
Elimination of Summer Programs at Beacons at PS 214 and JHS 218 through NYC Department of Youth & Community Development	\$220,000.00		Increased unemployment in the community. Elimination of free high quality child care and enrichment programming in the community at 600 PS214 and JHS 218
Dismantling of the Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program by NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development	\$2,000,000.00		Inability to move forward with Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program - eliminates the ability of low/moderate income homeowners in an immigrant communities to legalize their basements into apartments and stabilize their finances and improve the living conditions of renters.
Community Land Trust discretionary program through NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development	\$60,000.00	entire community	Will sidetrack the community's efforts to control publicly-owned land to create deeply affordable housing, help distressed homeowners, and protect manufacturing and preserve other community desired uses

Communities for Healthy Food Discretionary Program supported by NYC Council	\$145,000.00	We will be unable to help 400+ residents apply for and recertify for SNAP benefits, educate families about healthy eating and run a Youth Market - providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to improve physical health of community residents in a community with high rates of 850 obesity, diabetes, heart disease and asthma
Reduced Funding for College Access for All through NYC Department of Education	\$250,000.00	Unable to educate high school students about the college choice process and provide individualized guidance in the college and financial aid application process 2350
NYC Department of Education - Fair Student Funding Cuts	\$315,000.00	2200 Increased unemployment in the community
Elimination of Afterschool Expansion slots for afterschool - Council restoration to DYCD	\$335,376.00	Increased unemployment in the community. Elimination of free high 212 quality child care in the community.
Totals	\$4,579,098.00	7896

Testimony of Shaina Ramos for New York City Council

Budget Hearing

May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Shaina Ramos and I live in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I'd like to share with you how shortages in preschool special education classes have affected my three-year-old son, Oliver.

Oliver was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and at his IEP meeting last August, the DOE determined that he needed a small preschool special education class to meet his needs. However, the DOE didn't have a seat available for my son anywhere in Brooklyn. I called every preschool the DOE recommended, but they all told me they had no seats available. Since the DOE failed to find a seat, I started calling programs in other boroughs. The closest seat I could find was in Woodhaven, Queens. With no other option, I enrolled Oliver.

The class has helped Oliver. However, before schools closed, the long trip to Queens took a toll. It took two hours for the school bus to bring Oliver to school. That meant that every day, my three-year-old preschooler with Autism had to sit on a bus for four hours. Oliver had to wake up extra early to catch the bus, was too tired to play with his classmates, and had terrible nightmares during naptime because his sleep pattern was disrupted.

I am speaking to you not only as a mother, but also as a special education teacher. For four years I worked as a teaching assistant in a preschool special education program at a community-based organization. I saw what a difference these programs made for young children. However, my co-workers and I were severely underpaid, which led to a high turnover rate. Even though I loved this job, I decided to leave to work for a DOE school that offered a higher salary. This year, the Mayor announced well-deserved salary increases for preschool general education teachers at community-based organizations, but not for preschool special education teachers. Leaving out preschool special education teachers is unfair to teachers and to children. It will cause even more teachers to leave preschool special education programs, resulting in even more children waiting for seats.

I understand that hundreds of preschoolers with disabilities are waiting for the classes mandated by their IEPs, and others, like Oliver, have had to travel hours each day to get to their programs. As a mother and teacher, I am asking the city to address the shortage of preschool special education classes. I know there are budget challenges, but these are legally required services and we can't afford to have our preschoolers go another year without the services they need. Thank you.

SLTs United
School Leadership Teams of NYC

May 11, 2020

Sent via email to:

Mayor Bill deBlasio bdeblasio@cityhall.nyc.gov
Comptroller Scott Stringer action@comptroller.nyc.gov
Council Speaker Corey Johnson SpeakerJohnson@council.nyc.gov
Councilperson Daniel Dromm dromm@council.nyc.gov
Councilperson Mark Treyger MTreyger@council.nyc.gov
Chancellor Richard Carranza nycchancellor@schools.nyc.gov

Dear Mayor deBlasio, Comptroller Stringer, Speaker Johnson, Councilperson Dromm, Councilperson Treyger, and Chancellor Carranza:

We, the School Leadership Teams of the undersigned schools, write as communities that are profoundly distressed by what the proposed budget cuts to education spending will mean for our children's futures. We are distraught that our teachers will be the next first responders set up for failure, the next essential workers required to carry unbearably heavy burdens. We reject the proposal that our children, already traumatized by the pandemic experience, will return to schools with fewer resources at a time when they need more.

We know what it takes to lead successful and enriching schools. We know the struggles schools faced—before Covid-19—with insufficient funding and inadequate support for basics such as arts instruction, counseling, and other supportive services. We are intimately familiar with the inequities of how our public schools are funded, a system which leaves students behind and makes achieving excellence a challenge.

Throughout the lockdown, parents have come to understand more fully than ever before what key roles our teachers play in our children's lives. We have watched as our children have struggled, both academically and emotionally, without the guidance and structure their teachers and their school communities provide. We know our kids will be returning to school traumatized. We know that many of our most vulnerable children will have lost family and friends to this virus. New York City's public-school students will need more—not less—care, attention, and resources when they return to their school buildings, whenever that may be.

And yet, despite all of this, we now understand that the City is proposing the most draconian cuts to education spending in recent memory—and that those cuts will fall most heavily on the schools themselves, on their staffs and support structures, including cuts to counseling services, professional development funds, and day-to-day school operating budgets. To this we say: ENOUGH.

We know with absolute certainty that our city's children will return to school in September struggling to make sense of the past eight months. These children, the sons and daughters of the workers we hope will restart our economy, will need MORE support not less. They will need more art classes, more social workers, and more guidance counselors. They will need their teachers and administrators. All of them. To provide the level of academic instruction as well as social and emotional support required to restore our children's education—and their parents' ability to focus on restoring the city's economy through their work—we believe we must increase school funding for the coming year.

We demand a reset. The current budget proposal must be rejected. Before a single dollar is taken from our schools' budgets, every contract with an outside agency must be scrutinized, and, where necessary, cut or terminated. Before we lose a single social worker or administrator from our school buildings, we demand that central office functions be evaluated and eliminated until only the most essential jobs are retained. While layers of superintendents, coaches, and evaluators might play a role in a fully funded system, that is not the case now. Funding must be concentrated in the places where the students are—in the schools themselves.

We demand that our school communities be left whole, and that support for them be enhanced rather than withdrawn. Our children and their families deserve no less.

Sincerely,

SLTs United

Bronx

The Bronx High School of Science - Elected Parent
Representatives of the PA and SLT
International Community High School - SLT
Judith K Weiss School PS 19 - PTA
Lucero Elementary School PS 311 - SLT & PTA
Pablo Casals School IS 181- SLT & PTA
MS 228 -- PTA
PS 59 - SLT
PS 112 - PTA
PS 175 - PTA

Brooklyn

Arts and Letters - SLT
Brighter Choice Community School Brooklyn - SLT & PTA
Brooklyn Arbor (PS K414) - PTA
Brooklyn International High School- SLT & PTA
Brooklyn New School - SLT & PTA
Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies - SLT
The Carroll School PS58 - SLT

Edward R. Murrow High School - SLT
Henry Bristow PS 39 - SLT
John D Wells Middle School - SLT
Kingsborough Early College Secondary School - SLT & PTA
The Legacy School of the Arts - SLT & PTA
The Math and Science Exploratory School - SLT & PTA
Sarah Smith Garnett - PS9 - PTA
Sunset Park High School - SLT & PTA
William Alexander M.S. 51 - SLT & PTA
IS 187 - SLT
IS 318 - PTA
PS 10 - SLT & PTA
PS 11 - SLT
PS 75 - SLT & PTA
PS 130 - PTA
PS 132 - SLT & PTA
PS 154 - Windsor Terrace School
PS 221 - SLT & PTA
PS 261 - SLT & PTA
PS 267 - SLT
PS 282 - SLT
PS 315- PTA
PS 516 - parent members of the SLT
PS 770 - PTA & SLT

Manhattan

Baruch College Campus High School - Parent Members of SLT & PTA
Beacon - SLT & PTA
Battery Park City School PS-IS 276 - SLT & PTA
Central Park East One - SLT & PTA
Central Park East Two - SLT & PTA
East Side Community School - SLT
Gregorio Luperon H.S for Science and Mathematics M552 - PTA & SLT
Hudson High School of Learning Technologies - SLT & PTA
Institute for Collaborative Education - SLT & PTA
Manhattan International - PTA
The Neighborhood School - SLT
NYC Lab High School for Collaborative Studies - SLT & PTA
School of the Future - PA
Special Music School PS 859 - PTA
The Urban Academy Laboratory High School - SLT & PTA
Urban Assembly School of Business for Young Women - SLT
PS 3 -PTA

Queens

August Martin High School - SLT & PTA
Information Technology High School - SLT
Queens Metropolitan High School - PTA
PS 212 - PTA

Staten Island

Richard Hungerford P721 - SLT & PTA

Cc: All Members of the New York City Council (or their representative)

mguerra@council.nyc.gov;
District2@council.nyc.gov
SpeakerJohnson@council.nyc.gov
KPowers@council.nyc.gov
BKallos@BenKallos.com
Helen@HelenRosenthal.com
District7@council.nyc.gov
DAyala@council.nyc.gov
D09perkins@council.nyc.gov
yrodriguez@council.nyc.gov
District11@council.nyc.gov
Andy.King@council.nyc.gov
MGjonaj@council.nyc.gov
fcabrera@council.nyc.gov
Rtorres@council.nyc.gov
District16Bronx@council.nyc.gov
salamanca@council.nyc.gov
RDiaz@council.nyc.gov
district19@council.nyc.gov
pkoo@council.nyc.gov
FMoya@council.nyc.gov
nroloson@council.nyc.gov
BGrodenchik@council.nyc.gov
RLancman@council.nyc.gov
dromm@council.nyc.gov
JVanBramer@council.nyc.gov
arasoulinejad@council.nyc.gov
Adams@council.nyc.gov
Koslowitz@council.nyc.gov
District30@council.nyc.gov
drichards@council.nyc.gov
eulrich@council.nyc.gov
slevin@council.nyc.gov
areynoso@council.nyc.gov
LCumbo@council.nyc.gov
district36@council.nyc.gov

District37@council.nyc.gov
info38@council.nyc.gov
lander@council.nyc.gov
meugene@council.nyc.gov
District41@council.nyc.gov
wclay@council.nyc.gov
AskJB@council.nyc.gov
AskKalman@council.nyc.gov
District45@council.nyc.gov
AMaisel@council.nyc.gov
MTreyger@council.nyc.gov
cdeutsch@council.nyc.gov
DROSE@Council.nyc.gov
SMatteo@council.nyc.gov
borelli@council.nyc.gov

Testimony of Juanita Lopez for New York City Council

Budget Hearing – Preschool Special Education

May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Juanita Lopez. I live in Brooklyn. I am the mother of Aiden, a 3-year-old preschool student who has autism.

At Aiden's IEP meeting in October, the DOE recommended an 8-student preschool special education class on Aiden's IEP, but they were not able to offer Aiden a placement in a preschool special education program because all the classes were full. Months went by, but the DOE never gave Aiden a placement. I started contacting preschools on my own, but every preschool I spoke with told me they had no seats available. This became an even bigger issue after Aiden's Early Intervention services ended. Until December 31st, Aiden was receiving 23 hours-a-week of services, but after January 1st, he was sitting at home without any services or instruction. During this period, I was afraid Aiden would lose all of the progress he had made.

In January, I wrote the DOE again about finding a placement for Aiden. They provided me with a list of preschool special education programs, but when I called, I found that none of them had a seat for Aiden. At this point, I asked for help from Advocates for Children. Once they got involved, the DOE agreed to add Aiden to a preschool special education class that was already full. In late February, more than four months after his IEP meeting, Aiden became the ninth student to join this class, even though his IEP – and the IEPs of all of his classmates – require a class of no more than eight students.

It's unacceptable that my child with autism had to wait so long to receive the class and services he needed. Also, as a parent who works full-time, it's a burden to call or visit so many preschools, only to find out that they don't even have a seat for your child, when the DOE is supposed to be finding placements for preschoolers with disabilities.

Aiden is now enrolled in a preschool special education class, but I'm worried about all the children with disabilities who still don't have a class. We need your help. The City must include funding in the budget for the DOE to give every child who needs one a preschool special education class seat next year. Thank you.



May 13, 2020

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Public Safety

Brandon J. Holmes, New York Campaign Coordinator, JustLeadershipUSA

Dear Council Member Richards and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and your leadership in examining the ways that this pandemic has particularly challenged disenfranchised communities. For years, advocates have presented the solutions to addressing public health and public safety concerns in our communities by investing in programs and services that do not prioritize punishment in the process.

Today, I ask you to recognize the opportunities New York City has, but is not currently taking, to immediately invest in the types of community resources that can create safety by strengthening and stabilizing communities. We can do this, even in the face of the financial challenges that have followed the COVID19 outbreak, by beginning the long-overdue work of divesting from overfunded systems of law enforcement. In fact, the unequal impacts of coronavirus have shown us that we **MUST** make this shift and millions of lives depend on it. We can not afford another year of relying on law enforcement to respond to public health challenges and social challenges. That approach has not delivered health or safety, and the current Executive Budget proposal ignores these facts to protect the status quo by ensuring that the NYPD budget remains largely untouched.

New York City has prided itself on uplifting the values of equality, fairness and respect for its 8 million residents. The great reduction of the number of people in New York City jails has been a testament to these values, and to the power of grassroots advocacy. But the administration's misalignment of its budget priorities still flies in the face of those values, and needs to change. Last month, the City Council held an important hearing on the disparate impacts of COVID19 in communities of color. The testimony offered by a range of experts, including community leaders, spoke to the cumulative effects of decades of short-sighted cuts to social services that have left Black and Brown New Yorkers more vulnerable during this crisis. What has created even more devastating effects is the historical pattern of allowing law enforcement to fill the gaps left by an

insufficient social safety net. That is a pattern this administration has promised to continue in this budget. **This Council simply cannot allow that status quo to continue.**

When including expenses, fringes, pension contributions, and debt service, this year's budget proposal allocates \$14B to law enforcement agencies. The Police Department and Department of Corrections represent the majority of that - \$10B for the NYPD and \$2.5B for DOC.

Regarding the NYPD - communities, advocates, and an increasing number of Council members have pointed out the excesses and abuses of law enforcement, which have become even more apparent as they have been deployed to enforce social distancing and clear homeless New Yorkers from trains. Some other examples include the NYPD's presence in schools, their harmful role in mental health crisis response, their harassment of homeless New Yorkers, their occupation of NYCHA developments, their targeting of sex workers through vice squads, their inappropriate role as Youth Coordination officers, and their coordinated entrapment of people who use drugs. We have much more effective ways of responding to all of those situations. Our [#buildCOMMUNITIES platform](#), developed in partnership with communities most impacted by mass criminalization, outlines in great detail what we can and should be doing instead. There has never been a stronger argument for reducing the NYPD headcount. By merely implementing an NYPD hiring freeze, we could save at least \$200M in the next year. That money is badly needed for the social services that actually foster safety. To preserve any funding for vacant positions in NYPD while our public schools, healthcare workers, and others face drastic cuts that threaten not only their jobs but also the wide range of safety nets our communities depend on is unacceptable.

Divesting from aggressive policing will also be necessary to reduce the harms of the State's failures in the areas of criminal justice reform. Last year, the state failed to pass Less is More NY legislation to overhaul parole supervision, and as a result, thousands of people continue to be sent to City jails. But this is not the fault of the state alone. When a person is on parole, they are automatically remanded to jail for any police contact. This applies to all charges, no matter how minor, even if those charges are later dropped, as well as to summonses. We need New York State to pass Less Is More, but the City can also make immediate gains in this area by shrinking the NYPD headcount and ending broken windows policing.

We were also deeply disappointed by the rollbacks to bail reform that were implemented by the State legislature as part of this year's budget negotiations - rollbacks that the Mayor and NYPD Commissioner shamefully supported. The Center for Court Innovation estimated these rollbacks could result in up to 430 more people in jail in an average day, or 3,000 more people over the course of a year. The rollbacks to bail reform added some new charges back into the category that are now eligible for detention pre-trial, and added some new considerations like if someone has been arrested multiple times. We must look at these rollbacks through the lens of addiction, for example, or mental health needs. The rollbacks made it possible to jail someone charged with drug possession, when it would be far cheaper to provide them with quality treatment. The rollbacks also made it easier to jail someone if they've "caused harm to property," which could include a person who has stolen to finance their addiction. As another example, if someone with

a mental health need has been repeatedly arrested for a low-level offense, but never been offered quality treatment, why would yet another trip to jail make any difference? It costs more than \$700 per night to keep a person in City jail, in addition to the salaries of the officers arresting them. By further investing in supportive services instead - like housing, mental health treatment, and harm reduction - New York City can save money and can make us all much safer by making sure people's needs are met.

We need you, the Council members who understand the importance of resourcing other priorities, to urge the Mayor to make the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fairer, and more progressive City.

Sincerely,

Brandon J. Holmes
JustLeadershipUSA
brandon@jlusa.org



**Testimony of Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez
Before the Committees on Public Safety and the Justice System
City Council Budget Hearing
May 20, 2020**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today regarding the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021 January and Executive Budget Plans. The main message that I want to convey in my testimony today is that I fear shortsighted cuts to our budget will result in junk justice, something I have spent my entire career trying to move us away from in Brooklyn.

COVID-19 Office Changes

Like all businesses and all agencies in New York City, my Office has been consumed in the past two months by trying to adjust to the new reality brought by the COVID-19 health crisis. Unlike many other agencies and businesses, my office's work does not stop for a pandemic. People continue to commit crimes, continue to be arrested, and continue to generate cases that my office must handle. The fact that arrests are down and courts are handling a fraction of the cases they saw just a few months ago may have created what appears to be a lull in our system, the possibility of breathing room that appears to have temporarily increased our capacity to handle our cases, which, as you will recall, was severely strained at the beginning of this year as a result of changes to our bail and discovery laws. But this lull is actually an illusion.

We have a tremendous backlog – hundreds if not thousands of cases – that will explode once we begin to reopen our courts.

One issue that we are dealing with right now is a backlog of felonies we haven't been able to indict because there are no grand jurors; we have now begun to do preliminary hearings in these cases. We have roughly 50 of these cases, and since last week we have conducted just three preliminary hearings. Technological problems have made these hearings grindingly slow; we simply lack the technology to conduct hearings with a witness and an ADA in the same room while maintaining social distancing, and while connecting virtually with the judge, court staff, the defendant, and defense counsel.

It seems likely that this type of hearing will be part of our practice for some time, and will expand beyond the grand jury to become the new normal in all or nearly all cases. Additional investments – both capital and otherwise – will be necessary to permit us to conduct virtual hearings. Investments in our IT infrastructure (and that of our partners in the criminal justice system) will be required to allow parties to connect efficiently, consistently, and effectively.

The costs of the transition from a staff of 1200 people in our office to fewer than 25, with the rest working from home, have been enormous. To date, my office has reallocated and spent over \$1.2M in FY 20, \$600,000 of that for technological upgrades alone. While some of these are one-time costs that we were able to absorb this fiscal year, many of these technology upgrades come with ongoing maintenance costs. Additionally, as the restrictions are eased, the courts begin to reopen and we begin to transition back to working in the office, the need to redesign our office space to ensure the safety of our staff and visitors will impact our budget

going forward. These are costs we could not have anticipated prior to the pandemic and cannot continue to absorb.

I am well aware that this health crisis has also presented a very real financial crisis for the City. But it is essential that, in this time of belt-tightening, our funding not be reduced to the point where we are unable to do the work that has kept our communities safe while making the Brooklyn DA's Office a national model of what a progressive prosecutor's office can be. I am talking about all the work my Office does to reduce incarceration and criminal convictions, and to reduce the lasting impact of criminal justice system involvement on individuals and communities of color – things like counseling, drug and mental health treatment, job training and referrals, re-entry programs, our nationally renowned Conviction Review Unit. Each of these things could be said to be outside the “core function” of a DA's office – the prosecuting of crime – and thus vulnerable to being cut when times are hard.

I don't see it that way, and I know you don't either. These things are not ancillary to my core mission, they are essential to it. I often say that reducing incarceration and keeping our communities safe are not inconsistent, but, in fact, they go together and reinforce each other. Having fewer of our fellow citizens in jail, and having fewer of them carrying the burden of a criminal conviction, makes us more safe, not less.

But this increase in safety doesn't happen by magic; it only happens if we are able to offer people accused of crimes something that addresses the underlying causes of their criminal behavior. If our current health – and financial – crisis causes us to make short-sighted decisions to eliminate or sharply reduce our ability to do that, we will just be back to being case processors, pushing cases through, dispensing junk justice. This is not why I ran for DA and is not why you have supported the various reform initiatives of my Office since I was elected.

Budget Changes

Let me paint a picture for you about where we are with our budget right now: When the legislature passed criminal justice reform last year, everyone recognized that compliance would cost money. We surveyed the needs of our office and worked hard to come up with a request that we felt genuinely reflected our anticipated needs. The amount we requested was \$22.8M – \$12.4M in Personal Services and \$10.4M in Other Than Personal Services. In the November Plan, my Office received \$7.3M in total funding, less than a third of what we requested. This funding included \$6.1M in PS and \$1.2M in OTPS.

I'll be honest with you: before the Covid-19 crisis, our ADAs were buried under their discovery obligations. We experienced record attrition, as our ADAs burned out and sought less demanding jobs for more money. The health emergency, while temporarily reducing court appearances and caseloads, has added additional burdens to obtaining discovery – police officers have gotten sick, agencies have shut down – so we're actually not able to catch up with our discovery obligations, people keep getting arrested, and as we start to ease back into something like normal life, our ADAs will be buried once again. We must be able to hire the additional staff we were promised to be able to comply with the new discovery requirements and keep up with staff attrition.

As noted above, last fall, our Office received \$6.1M in Personal Services to implement the new criminal justice laws. This funding was provided to hire 175 new employees to help us meet the challenges of our new discovery obligations. Unfortunately, the funding that was provided was calculated to cover only nine months' worth of salary costs. This means that we were able to hire only a fraction of the total number of employees that was authorized by OMB. When the funding was provided, OMB thought we would have nine months to examine if these

positions were necessary. Unfortunately, a global pandemic hit and changed the landscape of this fiscal year. Through March, we had hired 40 of these positions with 35 in the pipeline – far short of the 175 that OMB authorized. We are requesting that OMB provide the additional \$1.5M to the baseline so that we can move forward with these critical hires, both those that were in process as well as the remaining 100 at the start of FY 2021.

In addition to OTPS funding, we received \$8.4M in capital funding for upgrades to technology, including to our network capabilities and IT storage – all critical infrastructure required for us to comply with our new discovery obligations. However, OMB informed us that Capital projects unrelated to COVID are on hold at this moment. In order to keep our staff, victims, and witnesses safe during the COVID crisis, we need to expand our virtual capabilities; these needs require \$126K in funding. We ask that OMB allow these projects to move forward, as we are showing cracks in our technology that render it unsustainable both for COVID response and discovery compliance.

Budget Reduction – PEG Target

During the Executive Budget, OMB came to us with a PEG target of \$3.5M. We were told we could take this reduction in the current year or in the next year fiscal year. We identified accruals in Personnel funding which allowed us to achieve the PEG target. We were then asked to make additional cuts. To meet that request, we gave up \$1.6M in FY 20 allocated for a lease for our new warehouse. In total, my Office made cuts in funding totaling \$5.1M to achieve the PEG target.

I am glad that, due to responsible fiscal management, we were able to make these cuts. However, additional cuts to the budget going forward will be unsustainable.

Conclusion

I once again thank the City Council for your tireless support. Each year, I come before this body to thank you specifically for once again funding for the Domestic and Other Violence Emergences Program (DOVE). I also want to thank DCAS and OMB for continuing to move forward with the Family Justice Center—which plays a critical role in our ability to serve domestic violence victims—and for supporting our expansion of the Center.

I would also like to thank the City Council for the one-time funding to cover the lost grant funding for the Brooklyn Young Adult Court and our Brooklyn Rising Against Violence Everyday Program (BRAVE) for a total of \$458K. I ask that the Council provide this one time funding again in FY 21 through the Adopted Budget. These critical programs previously funded by Federal grants remain in Brooklyn for yet another year due to the Council's commitment.

I ask for the Council's support as we continue to make the case to OMB for the critical funding needs I discussed today. With these needed resources, I am confident that we can continue our efforts to keep our communities safe while strengthening trust in our criminal justice system.

**New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing - FY 2021
Committee on Justice System & Committee on Finance
May 20, 2020
Joint Written Testimony of The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services,
The Legal Aid Society, The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem,
New York County Defender Services, Queens Defenders**

We submit this joint statement on behalf of all of the public defenders providing trial-level criminal defense representation to indigent individuals throughout New York City. Our clients and the communities we represent are not only deeply affected by the ongoing health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by its crushing effect on the criminal justice system. The need to maintain vigilant and quality defense representation remains all the more important during these unprecedented times. We recognize the fiscal concerns facing NYC - and localities across the country - but now is not the time to reduce funding to indigent defense providers. To the contrary, maintaining funding at current levels, as well as ensuring the City meets its commitment to provide phase one pay parity funding, is more critical than ever in order to preserve the integrity of the criminal justice system and to protect the rights and liberties of those who come through this system in New York City.

Vital Role of Criminal Public Defenders Generally

As criminal public defenders we have a powerful mission, an ethical obligation, and a constitutional mandate to protect and uphold the rights of the accused against the powers of the state. Our role is multifold: We represent our clients at arraignment and fight to ensure their release from custody, so that they may be at liberty as they challenge the allegations against them rather than be held in lengthy pretrial detention. We challenge the lawfulness of arrests and recovery of evidence in order to ensure that law enforcement acts within the bounds of the law and consistent with the requirements of the New York and United States Constitutions. We test the weight of the prosecution's evidence throughout the pendency of a case and ultimately at trial. And all along the way, we strive to ensure that those arrested and accused of crimes are treated with dignity and respect within the criminal justice system.

As criminal public defenders we not only provide direct representation to our clients, we also advocate for criminal justice system reform. We were at the forefront of the recent bail and discovery reforms in New York State that went into effect in January 2020, and we have led ongoing decarceration efforts as the City works towards its goal of closing Rikers Island by

2026. We work collaboratively with other stakeholders to expand alternatives to pretrial detention as well as to increased availability of alternative to incarceration programs.

We work with our clients, and the communities we serve, to identify the causes leading to criminal justice system involvement in the first place. And we strive to identify the myriad ways in which justice system involvement may create enmeshed penalties, including consequences for employment status, housing, and one's ability to remain in the United States, among other things, for those we represent. In addressing the consequences of justice system involvement, we work closely with other stakeholders within the justice system, other government agencies, and program providers, to minimize the impact of system involvement in our clients' lives.

Our efforts to decarcerate our local jails, to prevent justice system involvement in the first place, and to minimize the negative consequences for those who are justice system involved serve the dual function of assisting our clients in fundamental ways and decreasing overall direct costs, such as the enormous cost of incarceration, and societal costs, such as the loss of individuals in the workforce and housing instability.

Work of Criminal Public Defenders During COVID

Our clients and their families are among those most affected, and devastated by, the coronavirus pandemic. It is not just what we know from speaking with our clients that tells us that. The data demonstrates it clearly. As has been widely reported, "Many of the neighborhoods with the highest number of cases per capita are areas with the lowest median incomes and largest average household size."¹ At the same time that these communities have been ravaged by the pandemic, they have also continued to be highly policed. Law enforcement has not ceased as a result of the current health crisis. And, in fact, NYPD's own data, as well as that maintained by OCA, demonstrates that while arrests dropped significantly in the last two weeks of March 2020, arrests since that time have increased. On many days, the number of individuals arrested in boroughs across the city are the same, if not higher, than in pre-Covid times. At the same time that arrests are continuing, and individuals are being brought into the justice system, the criminal court system as a whole is largely on hold. Arraignments continue to occur daily in virtual arraignment courtrooms, and emergency proceedings are conducted virtually in "special application parts" in criminal and supreme courts. But these proceedings represent a tiny fraction of those conducted daily, in courtrooms throughout the city, prior to the Covid health crisis.

¹ New York City Coronavirus Map and Case Count, N.Y. Times, updated May 17, 2020, at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/nyregion/new-york-city-coronavirus-cases.html>

Despite these obstacles created by the current health crisis, criminal public defenders have been on the frontlines since the first days of this pandemic, working to protect the health and safety of our incarcerated clients and to fight to protect the rights of the accused to the fullest extent possible during this time. Before courts turned to completely virtual proceedings, our lawyers and advocates were in the courthouses daily, defending our clients at great risk to their own safety and well-being. They staffed arraignment shifts and emergency application parts for days after city schools closed and when most businesses across the city were already shuttered. Our staff were there in court, fighting for our clients, because that is what we do, day in and day out, regardless of the personal cost. We immediately identified our most vulnerable clients in city custody -- those over the age of 50 and those at high risk medical risk -- and pursued multiple avenues to obtain their release, including seeking bail reviews, advocating with adversaries for release, and filing individual and mass writs of habeas corpus in courts across New York City. We worked with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to support the city's own release efforts, and have continued to advocate for more releases by advocating with city agencies and elected officials. By reducing the population of individuals in New York City Department of Corrections (DOC) custody, we have not only protected those individuals released from exposure to Covid-19 in jail but have also rendered DOC facilities less crowded for those who remain in custody and those who work there. We saved lives in those early efforts, and we continue to do so as this pandemic continues. We have shone a spotlight on conditions within DOC facilities and advocated -- both in court, through public testimony, and in collaboration with allied organizations -- to improve conditions for our clients who remain in custody so as to decrease the risk of their exposure to Covid-19.

We have worked closely with stakeholders, including MOCJ, OCA, the District Attorneys, and supervising and chief administrative judges in our courthouses, to transition from in-person court appearances to virtual remote proceedings. At the same time that we have worked to ensure as seamless a transition as possible to remote proceedings, we have also advocated for increased expansion of these proceedings. We have also maintained vigilance protecting our clients rights to due process and access to courts. In times of crisis there are, often understandable, sweeping uses of executive power aimed at protecting the public. If left unchecked, those powers have the ability to jeopardize individual rights and liberties. As criminal public defenders, we remain an important check on that power, and we take seriously our role in protecting the fundamental rights of all of our clients.

We continue to advocate for court appearances beyond those deemed "essential" by OCA and to open the courthouse doors, albeit virtually for the time being, for all of our clients. Defenders are not only ready and available to perform the daily work of public defense, we are eager to do so. Since Governor Cuomo first declared New York "on pause," we have been advocating for increased access to criminal courts. We have advocated with local administrative and

supervising judges, as well as with Judge Marks, to expand the scope of “essential matters,” to lift the suspensions of C.P.L. 180.80 and to provide for preliminary hearings, as well as to lift the suspensions of C.P.L. 170.70 and 30.30, and to reinstitute discovery and other statutory timelines. Since Executive Order 202.28, issued May 7, 2020, reinstated C.P.L. 180.80, we have advocated for the release of clients held beyond C.P.L. 180.80 time periods, filed writs of habeas corpus for those denied release, and advocated for the immediate scheduling of preliminary hearings. We have begun litigating these virtual preliminary hearings, and we continue to work with OCA and other stakeholders to expedite scheduling, demand timely provision of discovery materials, and advocate for meaningful due process during the course of these hearings.

For so many individuals, the fact of an open criminal case may have negative consequences, including those affecting employment, one’s housing situation, or even one’s ability to return to a place of residence. For clients involved in court-mandated programs, we have worked together with clients, providers, and the courts to achieve program completions even during this time and have worked wherever possible to resolve cases. But without the means to meaningfully access the court system or to advance cases towards resolutions, most individuals face indefinite delays in their cases. We want to remedy that delay and seek to work collaboratively with stakeholders to reopen the courts to the fullest extent possible. In the meantime, we have continued to work on our cases, negotiate resolutions with adversaries, and to prepare for eventual court reopening by achieving as much work on individual cases as can be achieved during this time.

Maintaining contact with our clients -- both those in custody and those at liberty --has been all the more important, and critical, during this time period. Clients look to us not only to explain what is happening with court closures and to explain why cases are on hold, but also to provide vital information about staying safe during this time. We have provided information about local relief efforts, including access to food banks, healthcare in the community, and personal protective equipment (PPE). We have continued to reach out to clients on a regular basis to check in on their well-being and have remained accessible remotely to the communities we serve.

The impact of our work as criminal public defenders is evident in the numbers. Collectively, we have achieved the release of hundreds of individuals from custody, which is in addition to individuals released through the City’s own release efforts. We have been integrally involved in the successful re-entry of our clients back to the community upon release -- a particularly important role during this health crisis. We have worked closely with clients released from custody, along with their families and community-based programs, to ensure a return to a safe and healthy environment. In addition to ensuring that clients have a safe and stable place to live,

we have connected clients with food and medical resources, as well as to PPE, and remain a steady resource to them.

The Role of Criminal Public Defenders in the Future

While we have been able to accomplish much on behalf of our clients despite the ongoing court closures, much of our work on behalf of clients remains on hold. And the number of pending matters only continues to rise. As arrests continue, and in fact, increase, our intake numbers increase as well. But the restrictions on “essential proceedings,” leaves us unable to fully litigate, let alone resolve, the majority of our cases. As a result, the backlog of resolved cases is growing exponentially. The carrying caseload of individual attorneys is on the rise and, if left unchecked, will reach numbers unseen in recent pre-Covid times. Even when courts reopen, jury trials may be on pause for some considerable period of time, only furthering the backlog of cases pending in any given courthouse. It is not just the sheer number of cases that is increasing, but much of the work on those cases that cannot be accomplished at present. For instance, because many prosecutors have stopped turning over discovery in cases, criminal public defenders will be inundated by a crushing load of discovery that will need to not only be downloaded and saved but also reviewed in order to adequately represent and defend. We were just beginning to work through discovery turned over in the months immediately following the implementation of discovery reform, only to have the current health crisis throw a logjam into that process by thwarting the continued flow of discovery to the defense. As the crisis continues, we anticipate the need for assignment of criminal public defenders to increase, as fewer people can afford private counsel.

The work to be done is there and mounting every day, and we are ready and eager to do it. It is what we do. But we do so with the recognition that with our new realities comes growing costs to running public defender offices. In order to continue providing quality representation to our clients, we have incurred unforeseen expenses. We have purchased and provided laptops to staff members who need, but did not have, access to computer equipment at home in order to be able to work remotely and have purchased new software vital to performing remote work. We have provided PPE to staff members who continue to work in the field or otherwise leave home to perform essential work functions, and have engaged deep cleaning services to keep our office space as safe as possible. The longer that remote work continues and what seemed at first to be a temporary stop gap measure becomes a longer term situation with no end in sight, the unanticipated expenses mount (e.g., increased internet capacity necessary for remote work, office supplies for home office use). Public defenders already face a well-documented technology gap when compared to District Attorneys Offices, the budgets of which dwarf those of criminal public defenders. With NYPD staffing slated to remain at current levels, we anticipate policing and arrests to continue at present rates. In order to not only keep up with rising caseloads, but

also to provide quality representation to all of our clients, we must, at a minimum, maintain funding at current levels and ensure that the City meets its commitment to provide phase one pay parity funding.

We recognize that fiscal responsibility is key for all stakeholders during this time. We take seriously our responsibility to save costs where possible and prioritize spending. As we continue to do that as the City's criminal public defenders, we seek to ensure that the same is true for prosecutors and law enforcement. We cannot effectively defend the rights and liberties of our clients if we operate at a funding deficit as compared to those agencies and actors within the criminal justice system whose goal it is to arrest and prosecute the very individuals we seek to defend.

Conclusion

We are committed to meeting the current and future needs of our clients. We take seriously our commitment to our clients and the communities we serve, and we will continue to fight for, and on behalf of, them to the fullest extent of our abilities. We seek to continue the feats we have achieved to date to reduce mass incarceration and to reduce the direct and indirect cost and harm of mass incarceration to those we serve and to the city as a whole. We have demonstrated our passion for our work and dedication to our clients -- as well as our capacity for creative and collaborative problem solving -- since the very first days of this pandemic. We will continue to do so, but we depend on the continuation of adequate funding in order to achieve quality representation for those whose voices we must uplift and whose liberty interests and freedoms we must vigilantly protect and uphold.

Hello, My name is Aaron Mesa, I use they/them pronouns, I live in Brad Lander's district in Brooklyn and I go to school at Bard High School Early College Queens. I am writing to oppose the cuts to Fair Student Funding and the five year hiring freeze on new teachers. These allow for many crucial programs; one very close to my heart is my debate team. Debate taught me how to write by showing me that I have something to say. It is also how I know many of my closest friends. In the past few years, our team has improved dramatically and we have begun competing against larger and better established debate teams. While we are fully student run—we write lesson plans for meetings, figure out the train routes to travel for field trips and make teams, to list some—there are some things only an adult can do. For larger tournaments, for instance, we need a teacher chaperone. These tournaments often last multiple days with rounds starting at 8:00 AM and ending at 9:30 PM or later. Without Fair Student Funding, our school will not be able to pay chaperones for the valuable work they do, which will make our ability to find chaperones much harder. While we are doing as much as we can ourselves, we can not become DOE chaperones. This is just one way that I foresee the proposed budget cuts hurting my school.



New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings
Testimony from the New York Immigration Coalition

May 21, 2020

Good evening. My name is Abdullah Younus, I'm the Director of Political Engagement at the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella policy and advocacy organization that works statewide with over 200 immigrant-serving member organizations. Thank you to Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, and the members of the Committee on Finance for allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of the budget, particularly this one, being centered around providing for and protecting New York's communities of Color, with a strong emphasis on immigrant communities.

The condition of New York would have been unimaginable last year. One year ago this city passed a budget and was able to add \$150 million to a robust rainy day fund that afterwards totaled \$1.15 billion. One year later and COVID-19 has completely decimated our City; Over 16,000 confirmed deaths and another 4,800 probable deaths, with well over 12,000 confirmed deaths in New York City, the horrific impact of COVID-19 on New York City as a whole cannot be understated. This disease does not discriminate. It does not care about your race or ethnicity. It has, however, been preying on communities of color that were already affected by many long-standing policies that have led to both health and economic disparities.

On the economic front, it is obvious to see. The five ZIP codes with the highest rates of positive tests for the coronavirus are in the neighborhoods of Corona, Cambria Heights, East Elmhurst, Queens Village, and Jackson Heights. All of these are low-income communities of color with large immigrant populations, in Queens, which has been hit the hardest. The estimated Per Capita Income is \$17,595, \$22,638, \$35,141, \$30,059 and \$28,107 respectively. This pandemic has resulted in catastrophic job losses for so many of the immigrants who make this City run. In late March, a CUNY study showed that more than 40% of the City's Latinx population either had lost their jobs or had a household member lose their job. The impact on the City's Chinese and Asian immigrant businesses has been severe even before the pandemic hit, due to anti-Asian discrimination and wrongful notions around the Chinese community. The economic toll on our City's diverse immigrant population has been devastating.

But beyond economics, the life-and-death impact of this pandemic has been tragic. The racial disparity is very evident with the overwhelming amount of deaths by Black and brown New

Yorkers in relation to their population. Black New Yorkers make up 33.9% of non-fatal hospitalized and 29% of the deaths even though they are only 24.3% of the City's population. The same is true for Latinx New Yorkers who make up 24.8% of the population, but account for 27.5% of COVID-19 related deaths. This is no surprise as race directly correlates with poverty, a lack of sick leave, exposure to pollution, jobs that leave employees exposed to the coronavirus, and a need to take subways and buses, which can be a source of exposure.

The effect on immigrant communities of color has been felt beyond those who have contracted the virus as well. According to The New School Report 'The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of Covid-19 in New York City' while foreign-born workers held 49 percent of all private jobs before the pandemic crisis, they account for 54 percent of the lost jobs. Jobs lost by undocumented New Yorkers make up one in six New York City jobs lost due to the pandemic, yet undocumented workers were intentionally excluded for the federally funded unemployment benefits or the cash assistance relief that was authorized by Congress.

So how can the Council address this? We join the members of Communities United for Police Reform, in calling for FY21 NYPD cuts to bolster the recovery of our low-income immigrant communities that have been hit the hardest by this pandemic. As part of our NY United campaign we have identified several common-sense measures to ensure our immigrants and communities of color across NYC can remain safe and healthy. I want to identify a few of the topline asks. The rest can be found on our website www.NYIC.org

- Create an emergency cash assistance fund for those New Yorkers cruelly left out of the federal relief packages, including direct cash payments and help for both individuals and small businesses. New analysis by ANHD based on data from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) finds that the full cost of matching the one-time payment amounts stipulated by the CARES Act for all undocumented New Yorkers, including children, would be \$578,088,000[1]. If the City were to match the need for mixed-status families, the total cost would reach \$1.2 billion.
- Restore and baseline \$12 million for Adult Literacy Funding to address the immense, inequitable gap in digital literacy, systems navigation skills and access to information in English between immigrant parents and many other New Yorkers, which is preventing immigrant children from accessing remote learning.
- Renew \$58.2 million in funding for immigration legal services to ensure continuity of services and to help defend immigrants against the aggressive, anti-immigrant policies from Washington that continue even during this pandemic.

Once again, thank you for allowing me to testify. Myself, our entire organization and the 140 NYIC members across New York City look forward to continuing to work with you all to come up with solutions that ensure that everyone enjoys full and equal opportunity to recover from the threat of this virus and the worst potential economic downturn since the Great Depression.



61 E. 4th Street, New York, N.Y. 10003
tel: (212) 228-8210; fax: (646) 602-2260
email: csc@coopersquare.org
website: www.coopersquare.org

MAY 22, 2020

SUBMITTED TO:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Good afternoon, I'm Steve Herrick, Executive Director of the Cooper Square Committee. Thank you for your leadership in addressing the array of public health and economic impacts created by Covid-19.

The Cooper Square Committee, formed in 1959, serves the Lower East Side/East Village of Manhattan, which is a multi-racial, culturally and economically diverse community. People of color comprise roughly 60% of our community: 29% Hispanic, 19% Asian, 8% African American and 40% White non-Hispanic. 35% of households are low-income (below 60% of AMI). An estimated 26% of CB3 residents live in poverty.

The Mayor's Executive budget for FY21 has eliminated funding for the Commercial Lease Assistance (CLA) Program which provides pro bono legal counseling to small business owners, the vast majority of whom are people of color and immigrants who are often taken advantage of by large, predatory equity real estate firms. Some are given month to month leases, or just have verbal agreements, and many have been taken advantage of when it comes to allocating the cost of real estate taxes, build out of their spaces, and terms of lease renewals as their communities have gentrified.

This modestly funded program has enabled a network of non-profit legal service organizations and community based organizations to partner to ensure that small business owners facing lease signing or lease renewal issues can have their leases reviewed by an attorney who can remove clauses in the lease that void their rights, and put them in unsustainable positions regarding their leases, saving many small business owners thousands of dollars in rent, security and legal fees.

The CLA Program has benefitted hundreds of small business owners over the past 2 years. It is needed now more than ever as many small business owners are fighting for their survival in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many are at risk of losing their business, as well as their security deposits, as landlords have often been unwilling to negotiate rent reductions or waivers while they were forced by government order to shut down. I urge you to restore funding for this valuable and effective program.

Sincerely,

Steve Herrick

Executive Director



Made in NYC Budget Request FY 20-21 Ref: 93062

Testimony Before: New York City Council Small Business and Finance Committees

By Adam Friedman, Executive Director

May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Adam Friedman, Director of the Pratt Center for Community. For almost 60 years, Pratt Center has provided technical assistance to community groups throughout the city to build a more just, equitable and sustainable city.

I am requesting that you renew funding for Pratt's Made in NYC program which works with more than 200 companies each year to help them expand their markets, create jobs and anchor them to their communities.

During this crisis, virtually every city and state definition of "essential service" has included manufacturing.

Since Covid19 threatened our city, Made in NYC has used its network of more than 1,300 local manufacturers to both create new supply chains to produce Personal Protective Equipment and to ensure that companies can navigate the plethora of emergency programs. Specifically, Made in NYC has:

- Created a database of companies that can **produce PPE** and connected numerous companies to EDC which is providing the purchase orders for the PPE for the Health and Hospitals Corporation and DOH;
- Set up a website listing **emergency financial assistance** for manufacturers and other small businesses, which includes a calendar for tracking all the panels, information sessions, etc. and,
- Implemented a series of **Town Halls and Office Hours** to give companies an opportunity to ask questions of experts on city purchasing, emergency financing, legal, real estate and human resource issues, and reopening.

And as the city prepares to reopen, Made in NYC is launching the **PPE-Marketplace** to help smaller buyers such as supermarkets and neighborhood retailers to find locally made facemasks and other PPE.

Made In NYC provided these emergency services while it continued to implement the training, workshops and assistance covered in last year's contract! More than 100 companies participated in remote, online workshops in photography, the use of social media, marketing strategies and brand development. (Please see attached testimonials from the New York manufacturers.)

Finally, it takes a whole ecosystem to build a vibrant, resilient economy. The work of the Industrial Service Providers with whom Pratt has strong, synergistic relationships, is essential to the city's ability to both address the threat of this pandemic and other future challenges and to the absolute necessity of having a city with well-paying jobs.

The industrial sector has proven it is essential to the city's wellbeing. I urge renewed funding for Pratt Center's Made in NYC and the Industrial Service Providers.

Thank you.

What Made In NYC Companies Are Saying:

"I decided to launch Ojala Threads while managing a chronic illness and surviving on a public assistance allowance of \$189 a month. Made in NYC has been the lifeline to keep my business going. From classes to free photography they have allowed my company to thrive in ways I could not have anticipated.

- Ramona Ferreyra, Ojala Threads, Bronx

"Because we are a small business funds are very limited, but Made in NYC has made it possible to captivate our product and give 5 Island Blend Pepper Sauce and Hot Sauce a vibrant look. These photos have help grab the attention of our customers."

- Randall & Guiatrie Sapp, 5 Island Blend Hot Sauce, Bronx

"I want to say thank you for all your support and the beautiful video. Having my own business is not easy, and I'm often having to remind myself to stay positive. It wonderfully illustrated the "why" behind the brand."

- Milène Jardine, Milène Jardine Chocolatier, Queens

"I want to thank you and your team for helping us in these terrible times. Your classes were like a medicine for me. It made me forget what is going on out aside the world. I learned so much and so much thinking methods that I wouldn't have learned anywhere else."

- Selmin Karatas, Kazani Hair, Queens

"Thank you so much for hosting the Office Hours, its hard as a business owner to learn on your own. These opportunities to talk to someone or direct me to the right solution has been so helpful and a relief. A lot of us appreciate this."

- Priscilla Terrero, Morito Chocolates, Brooklyn

*NOTE: This testimony was prepared by the Pratt Center for Community Development.
It does not necessarily reflect the official position of Pratt Institute.*



71-07 Woodside Ave.
Woodside, NY 11377
(718) 937 - 1117

Adhikaar Testimony For New York City Executive Budget
Submitted to the joint hearing:
New York City Council Committee on Finance and Committee on Immigration

May 20, 2020

Adhikaar is the only women-led worker and community center serving and organizing the Nepali-speaking community on workers rights, immigrants rights, access to healthcare and language justice issues. We are one of the newer and most rapidly-growing immigrant communities in New York City. According to [South Asian American's Leading Together's 2019 Demographic Snapshot](#) there was a 207% rise of Nepali immigrants in the U.S. over the last 10 years, the highest of any other population included in the report.

We're writing today to ask the Committee to advocate that Adhikaar receive city support to provide immigration services. Adhikaar is located in Woodside, Queens and serves more than 10,000 Nepali-speaking people a year. Our members who are domestic workers, nail salon workers, restaurant workers Uber/Lyft drivers, and other informal industries mostly live in Jackson Heights, Woodside, Elmhurst, Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Jamaica and Flatbush.

We are in the epicenter of the COVID crisis. This has had severe impacts on our community for the last two months and will change our community for the long-term. We have served over 2,500 individuals with direct service needs in the past ten weeks, addressing things like unemployment benefit support, health care, language access to government resources and emergency funds, medical and food supplies. And this does not include checking in one-on-one with 3,100 members.

This is the exact moment that the city must invest more in immigrant services and not cut the budget, as we are being hit the hardest. Working with communities concentrated in Queens, in neighborhoods like Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, so many in our community are excluded from benefits like the stimulus check or unemployment insurance. Even if people qualify, the state and federal inefficiencies have made it so that our members have been living without any financial support for months, still waiting for support to come their way.

Workers like Brinda, a domestic worker: "I was so worried about where I was going to be able to earn money, how would I pay my rent and bills? Without work, there is no money coming. I was waiting for the \$1,200 but not sure where it is yet. I was also able to file for unemployment, but that is getting stuck in DOL and I have not heard back. I am still waiting."

Nail salon workers with young children are running out of food at home and are fearful to return to work, Uber and Lyft drivers have gone months with no word from the government about



71-07 Woodside Ave.
Woodside, NY 11377
(718) 937 - 1117

unemployment benefits, domestic workers are finding themselves forced to return to work under additional health and safety scrutiny.

We have fielded more than 1,340 calls through our hotline alone in the last two months. In this moment, immigration we have risen to the need, and we will have to do this with or without funding. But we are being flooded with needs and requests and if we are to remain sustainable and collectively work for these communities, the city must step in.

There has been little support for the immigrant workers that are holding this city's economy on their backs, and we need to ensure that the city will show that immigrant communities are a priority by allocating the resources needed this coming year. Bishnu, a member from Queens shared, "As a delivery worker, right now, there is danger and stress about COVID-19 everywhere, but I need to go to work anyways. I am the only one in my family that is able to work. My single income pays for everything from school tuition for my kids, rent here and in Nepal, to everyday expenses. I am a simple person, I don't live on a lot nor do I ask for a lot. As an essential worker, I know my value - and I know that this economy depends on us."

We submit this testimony today representing nearly 5,000 members of Adhikaar. We are currently training our members to engage online with their elected officials, but this will take time. We know there are many who wanted to voice their concerns personally today but did not get the chance to. We ask the committee to explore alternative ways to ensure accessibility outside of giving testimony online or engaging elected on twitter. We know that language interpretation is offered when giving testimony over the phone, however, we believe there are ways in which the city can come to the community. Civic engagement in the time of quarantine excludes a vast majority of our members, and in order to ensure participation, it takes more than a few days to educate, support and prepare testimonies. We invite you to join us at Adhikaar to talk specifically to our members as a starting place for this engagement with our community.

Dear Councilman Torres,

My name is Aileen Loran and I am a proud parent of a scholar that attends South Bronx Classical Charter School that thrives on a very high level of educational performance and life skills.

While many of the students at SBCCS are receiving a very high quality education some are living under unfortunate circumstances. Homelessness, inadequate living conditions due to lack of affordable housing for families and barely any food to eat.

We see many signs on new upcoming buildings expressing affordable housing yet, the rent is three (3) times higher. The next cruelty is credit scores to be evaluated in low-income neighborhoods. The people are trying to stay afloat with daily battles to survive one day at a time and we all know that credit scores are very low or non-existing. Even for families that receive government assistance are still scrutinize and shown housing that are unacceptable to anyone.

Due to Covid-19 homelessness has escalated dramatically to a higher and dangerous level. There has to be a more productive and humane way to help the people into adequate housing. Credit scores is a form of discrimination to the poor.

Our children of tomorrow should not have to worry about a safe home, nourishment and great education. The Bronx and all low-income communities need the government to rectified this situation in every way possible.

Thank you

Constituent Aileen Loran



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OF NEW YORK
AT NYU LANGONE



City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

May 2020

I, Alan Mendelsohn, MD, am writing on behalf of New York University and City's First Readers to provide testimony as to why it is absolutely critical to continue to support the **City's First Readers** Initiative during the terrible period fostered upon us by the COVID pandemic. I make this request not only as a pediatrician, professor, and scientist at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health+Hospitals / Bellevue, but also as a parent of two grown children and resident of New York City.

The COVID pandemic is a catastrophe for families with very young children, even though children have been relatively spared from the disease itself. Parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers have been sheltering in place at home, with preschools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and in-person support groups closed, and many other vital services being cut. Parents are under incredibly high levels of stress due to loss of employment and income, lack of access to food, worry about protecting their children, and grieving over deceased or ill family members. All families are suffering greatly, but low-income families are being hit the hardest by this crisis and will struggle the most to recover both financially and emotionally.

Our city is hurting right now, and parents are hurting, but **we can help protect our youngest children**. Warm and nurturing parenting acts as a buffer for children, protecting them from experiencing the full trauma of COVID-19. The services provided through **City's First Readers** give parents tools and resources for talking, teaching, reading, and playing with their young children. Studies have shown time and time again that these activities are critical not only for helping boost children's school readiness and early literacy, but also for providing routines that children need to thrive at a time when nothing else feels stable. **City's First Readers' support for parent-child relationships and routines is especially important given the trauma that is being experienced by families on a daily basis during this crisis, and CFR's support will continue to be critical in its aftermath.**

Importantly, my research (rigorous randomized controlled trials) funded by the National Institutes of Health has shown that City's First Readers programs help families cope with stressors of parenting, reduce maternal depressive symptoms, reduce early harsh discipline that can lead to child maltreatment, and prevent child behavior problems that interfere with learning. **By helping parents cope with the stressors of this crisis and even maintain some possibility of normalcy in their relationships and activities with their children, City's First Readers has the potential to protect children against long-term impacts on mental health and school achievement, and even reduce large costs that the city will otherwise face to address this calamity.**

Parents across the city are finding themselves suddenly thrown into the position of supporting their child's education as schools, preschools, and daycares become virtual, and many parents are struggling in the face of this seemingly impossible task. The core tenet of **City's First Readers** is that parents are a child's first teacher – and all of the work we do is focused on providing parents with resources, tools, and skills to help their child learn, even before they start school. **It is critical** that we do not take away these services at a time when parents and children need it most.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, we have quickly adapted the services provided by City's First Readers in order to best meet the needs of incredibly vulnerable families during this time. My program, Video Interaction Project, is already being delivered remotely by internet or phone to families across New York City at NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue, Woodhull, Gouverneur and Elmhurst and at the NYU Langone Brooklyn Family Health Center in Sunset Park, and will shortly be delivered remotely at NYC H+H/Queens and at Children's Aid. This is happening directly as a result of New York City Council support and **already helping support families during the COVID pandemic.**

It is critical that we are able to continue to provide City's First Readers' services for parents and young children in Fiscal Year 2021, when we anticipate that the need for both in person and remote parent support will be even higher as the implications of this crisis become fully known.

There are going to be so many incredibly difficult decisions on everyone's plate regarding the upcoming year, but my plea to you is to **maintain funding** for these incredibly important services from parents, infants, and toddlers. The economic and educational impacts of such a decision will be felt by children for their entire lives.

Please find attached some additional information on the types of services that City's First Readers provides, and the accomplishments that we have made over the past few years as an initiative.

Sincerely,



Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health
Director of Clinical Research, Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Director, Video Interaction Project
New York University School of Medicine and Bellevue Hospital Center
alan.mendelsohn@nyulangone.org
(646) 831-7156



City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

FY21 Initiative Funding Request \$6,000,000

The Citywide Need for Robust Early Childhood Resources:

Decade after decade, research demonstrates that children living in poverty experience the important pre-reading activities of talk, sing, read, write, and play far less often than their wealthier peers. Consequently, they arrive at school less prepared to learn. The achievement gap begins with an opportunity gap. City's First Readers creates equity in access to the opportunities that help children succeed as readers.

Prevention Beats Intervention

The literacy crisis is real. Across the city and the country, children are failing to transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." They fall further and further behind in school, a situation that impacts children of color and those living in poverty disproportionately. Children in poverty who cannot read fail to graduate from high school on time at a rate 13 times greater than their middle-class peers. The serious consequences of low levels of literacy are well documented - dependence on public assistance, low levels of civic engagement, significantly poorer health outcomes and the "school to prison" pipeline.

Right Now in New York City

There are 442,837 children living in poverty and at high risk of failing; 30.6% are under the age of 5.

All City's First Readers partner organizations provide opportunities that support children and families in acquiring literacy. Working together, our impact is extended, and we are more effective. **City's First Readers is the only NYC Council initiative with a backbone partner and an independent evaluator.** Literacy, Inc. (LINC) has been the facilitating partner for this collaboration since it began in FY15. Partners for FY21 in addition to LINC include: The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Hunts Point Alliance for Children, JCCA, Jumpstart, New Alternatives for Children, Parent-Child+, Reach Out and Read, Video Interaction Project, the Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library, and New York Public Library. Our request for FY21 will support:

- Increased numbers of constituents who can be reached and benefit from early literacy programs
- Development of a mobile app for "Read the City!" to connect families to local programming
- Extended outreach efforts to engage the hardest to reach families
- Increased visibility of public education messaging through extended community placements of "Read the City!" materials
- Strengthened evaluation and impact assessment to inform programming and coordination across all partner organizations.

To learn more about City's First Readers, please visit our website: <http://www.citysfirstreaders.com> or contact Emily Gertz at, egertz@lincnyc.org or 212.620.5462





City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

City's First Readers FY19 Programmatic Results Reaching New Yorkers in Every Neighborhood

City's First Readers is the Council's Early Literacy Initiative, a consortium of libraries and nonprofits that provided research-proven programming to approximately **1.3 million families** across New York City in FY19. United in their respective mission to support literacy, these organizations partnered to create an array of direct and 2-Generation services. The Council's funding of City's First Readers creates opportunities for families with children 5 years old and younger, living in poverty, to support their children on the path to reading proficiency.

Delivering Tangible Resources to Families

- Engagement at 463 locations across NYC
- Programming in every Council District, meeting the challenge of targeting economically high-poverty areas where parents may not provide critically needed pre-reading activities for their families
- Distributing 370,000 free books to build home libraries
- Distributing 62,101 early childhood literacy kits (books + resources, tips & strategies information)

Comprehensive Programming for Parent, Caregivers, and Children

- Library storytime attendance increased by 28% from first quarter to fourth quarter
- Thirty-two library partners reported an increase in storytime events - overall up by 17%
- Partners provided 975 educational workshops and 795 parent/caregiver coaching sessions
- Direct services for children facilitated by six partners
- Five partners provide training or professional development for childcare providers, early childhood educators and/or family childcare providers

"Read the City"

- Robust public education and marketing campaign activating families to attend local literacy events
- Hyper-localized information about events for 13 communities across all five boroughs
- 356 placements at 123 locations with 382 posters and nearly 8000 posters resulting in more than 18M out of home impressions about the importance of talk, sing, read, play, write
- Effective use of social media resulting in 915,157 impressions and 4,081 link clicks
- Enhanced website with almost 6,000 visits





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Video Interaction Project (VIP)

Poverty And The Achievement Gap

Decades of research all point to the same conclusion: Poverty causes significant barriers to a child's scholastic success and reduces opportunities for early learning and educational achievement. These poverty-related gaps in achievement originate in infancy, continue into early childhood, and grow wider over time in the absence of intervention. **Although the causes of disparities in school achievement among children are complex, we know that children from poor and low-income households often face two common challenges:**

1. Lack of attainment of early reading and math skills
2. Lack of readiness to learn (e.g. inability to pay attention or control behavior).

Parents Hold The Key

Approximately *50 percent* of disparities in school achievement in children of low-income families can be traced to fewer opportunities for early learning activities with parents, including talking, teaching, playing, and reading.

The VIP Solution

VIP reduces educational achievement gaps before children reach the classroom by utilizing **pediatric primary care** to:

1. Help parents understand their critical role in their child's development; and
2. Arm parents with the skills and confidence to engage in activities that will stimulate brain development and foster the behavioral skills needed to learn effectively.

How VIP Works



VIP is an individualized program delivered at the time of every pediatric well visit from birth to five years.
At each session:



- 1 VIP coach leads a 5-10 minute discussion of child development, including suggested activities & goal-setting with the parent
- 2 Families receive a developmentally appropriate toy or book to take home
- 3 A 3-5 minute video is made of the parent(s) interacting with their child during reading or play.
- 4 The coach watches the video with the parent, reinforcing strengths and identifying opportunities for further interaction.

Why is VIP Unique?

Although a host of programs exist to support early learning through enhanced parenting, few of them have VIP's level of evidence, and cost remains a barrier for widespread dissemination.

1. VIP is designed to take place in pediatric primary care, and can seamlessly be integrated into existing clinical services and flow
2. VIP is a primary prevention program, which means that it prevents problems in the parent-child relationship and in child development before they occur
3. VIP is evidence-based, and has already been shown to have impacts in randomized controlled trials
4. VIP costs less than 1/10 of many home visiting programs at approximately \$200 per child per year

VIP is scalable, impactful, and low-cost



2 in 5

Number of children living in poverty in the U.S.

50%

Number of children in poverty who lack skills needed for learning at school entry

25

Minutes required for each VIP session

22

Number of age-specific VIP sessions available between birth and age 5

\$200

Approximate cost of VIP per child, per year

8

Number of locations delivering VIP by spring 2019



City's First Readers
An Initiative of the New York City Council

Research Findings

VIP has a strong body of evidence showing large benefits for parents and children, including:



1 Increased Reading Aloud, Play, and Talking



2 Enhanced Parent-Child Relationship



3 Improved Child Development

VIP is especially helpful for child behavior problems that interfere with learning. For example, the percentage of families with significant child hyperactivity at school entry was reduced from 9.1% to 2.8% overall and from 15.8% to 0% for those at the highest risk category—a reduction of between 70 and 100 percent, respectively.

Growth Plan and VIP Center of Excellence

Alan Mendelsohn, MD and his team have been developing and studying VIP at NYC H+H/Bellevue since 1999 as part of a thriving research program. In 2014, VIP was in a second site: NYC H+H/Woodhull. To support large-scale expansion, NYU Langone Health together with Children of Bellevue have developed a VIP Center of Excellence (COE). By mid-2019 VIP will have been implemented at eight locations nationally, with six locations in NYC. This work is guided by a business plan developed with the Community Resource Exchange to inform sustainable expansion.

The VIP COE works closely with new and existing sites, particularly during the first two years of site start up, providing implementation support, program training and supervision, and maintenance of fidelity at new sites. In addition, the VIP COE works centrally to continuously study and optimize VIP, ensure systems are in place for model fidelity, and to adapt to the needs of new sites and populations.

Video Interaction Project Locations

- Manhattan**
1. NYC H+H/Bellevue (1999)
 2. Children's Aid, Milbank (2018)
 3. NYC H+H/Gouverneur (spring 2019)
- Queens**
4. NYC H+H/Elmhurst (spring 2019)
- Brooklyn**
5. NYC H+H/Woodhull (2014)
 6. NYU Langone Brooklyn (spring 2019)
- Outside NYC**
7. Hurley Medical Center (Flint, MI)
 8. Oakland Primary Care (Pittsburgh, PA)



Ongoing Work and Future Goals

Next steps for VIP include:

- Expansion to additional locations across NYC Health+Hospitals and the NYC metropolitan area
- Formalizing integration with other programs (e.g., Healthy Steps)
- Adaptation across cultures and languages (currently English and Spanish; Chinese in progress)
- Adaptation for specific high risk populations (e.g., developmental disabilities, prematurity, foster care, opioid use)
- Application in new platforms (e.g., WIC, community centers)
- Continued work and expansion outside of NYC, including large-scale expansion in Pittsburgh, PA, and a randomized controlled trial in Flint, MI of impacts of VIP on families impacted by the Flint Water Crisis

Funding

VIP in NYC is supported by: NIH / Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Children of Bellevue, Inc.; Marks Family Foundation; Tiger Foundation; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, Inc.; Rhodeback Charitable Trust; KiDS of NYU; NYU Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI); Academic Pediatric Association; NYU Langone Community Service Plan; New York City Council Early Literacy Initiative (City's First Readers); New York City Councilmembers Stephen Levin, Antonio Reynoso, Dan Garodnick, Rosie Mendez, Carlina Rivera, and Keith Powers; New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

www.videointeractionproject.org

Alan Mendelsohn, MD
Alan.Mendelsohn@nyumc.org

Anne Seery, PhD
Anne.Seery@nyumc.org

NYU Langone Health, Department of Pediatrics
Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics

Testimony to NYC Council Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget Hearing

The hearing was held via ZOOM on May 21, 2020. I was part of a Dignity in Schools Campaign panel.

<https://dignityinschools.org/>

Hello. My name is Alan Singer. I am a professor of education at Hofstra University and a former New York City high school teacher. I am also a parent, a grandparent, a life-time resident of New York City, and a graduate of New York City public schools. In my testimony today, I only represent myself.

We are at a crucial moment in the history of New York City and an entire generation of young people is at risk. Meanwhile state and city leaders propose massive cuts in educational budgets at a time when additional funds should be poured into schools and a greater investment be made in the city's children.

The last time New York City schools faced a crisis of this magnitude was when the city went bankrupt in 1975, thousands of teachers were laid-off, and children were stuffed into overcrowded rooms and forced to sit on tables and radiators. It took a decade for the school system to recover and the education of millions of children was sacrificed to financial concerns.

Many of New York City's children fell behind during the Corona virus despite the great efforts of families and teachers. New York is a city where over 100,000 students are homeless during the course of a school year.

In September we will need more teachers and smaller classes to help children catch up. We will need health professionals in schools to ensure that our children are safe and healthy. We will need social workers to help young children and teenagers grapple with the impact of Corona on their lives including the death of loved ones. We will need attendance teachers to knock on doors and convince disengaged youth to return to school. The schools will need a lot more money just to tread water.

Hoping to capitalize on Corona pandemic school closings, ersatz school reformers are "reimagining education" to shift it online and towards private profit. It is a cheap but substandard solution. Educational research continually demonstrates that most students learn best in intensive groups, with teacher feedback, and when teachers they are related to have high expectations for their success.

The Network for Public Education conducted a survey that supports the value of in-class learning experiences for students and underscores the limits of online instruction. Over 80 percent of parents reported that their child misses classmates, and over 60 percent reported they miss their teacher. 39 percent of parents reported that their child regularly expresses feelings of loneliness." Only 9.5% replied that "their child prefers remote learning to classroom learning."

In response to intense pressure from parents and teachers, Governor Andrew Cuomo has backtracked on his plan to "reimagine education" as online instruction. In an Albany press

briefing this week, Cuomo conceded “There is no substitute for classroom teaching. Saying a kid is going to be on the other side of a computer remotely, that is the classroom experience. It’s not. There is no substitute for the teacher-student relationship.”

I don’t know where the needed money will come from, but if you don’t find the money and invest in the education of our children, all of the efforts to combat the Corona virus will go for naught.

Thank you.

Good Afternoon,

I'm a voting constituent in District 26, I'm a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, instead of abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it *on video*. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, *more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined* is unconscionable.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to over police and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.

Sincerely,

Alena Acker



Alexander Roman

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Alexander Roman and I work for ArtsConnection at MS266 in Park Slope Brooklyn.

The mission of ArtsConnection is to provide innovative educational & arts programming to millions of students in the New York City public school system and enhance children's intellectual, personal and social growth.

Our after-school arts & education enrichment program has served the Park Slope Brooklyn community for 6 years. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we have adapted our physical classes into remote learning opportunities for students since the school building is closed. Through our working experience with families and students we've realized that beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences has been a bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Cuts to the resources we depend on to serve our community will end our ability to be a resource for them. We would not be able to clearly assess families and students' social-emotional needs and

have sufficient ways to support them. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Alexander Roman

I'm a voting constituent in District 46, a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I am writing to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

This is not the city I want to live in.

We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it *on video*.

This is not the city I want to live in.

To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD — *more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined* — is unconscionable.

This is not the city I want to live in.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

This is not the city I want to live in.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.

Alex Zucker
2171 Bragg St, Apt 3B
Brooklyn, NY 11229



Date May 20, 2020

Alexander S., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Hello, my name is Alexander Santana. I am a youth in care who gets a great amount of support from my Fair Futures Coaching. I have recently obtained supportive housing, and I am living independently on my own. Before entering care, at the age of five, I was being raised in Staten Island where I was born. Once I entered foster care that is when the moving around, from home-to-home started to occur, I have been placed in many homes in almost every borough.

I currently live in a studio apartment located in Manhattan, Washington Heights. I am a youth advocate, who was given the opportunity to work with Fair Futures, my role in Fair Futures is to attend events that we are invited to and speak on behalf of the youth in care. I give insight on the positive impact of having a coach. I speak on what a coach could provide to a youth that struggles in care.

Fair Futures has become a very important program in my life, although I discovered them many years later after being in care for so long they have shown me in the short period of time that I have worked with them that there are people who are out there that care for my wellbeing as a young adults in care who are struggling every day in life. My fair Futures coach helps me gain support and motivation, decrease my depression, and encourage me to further my education.

Fair Futures want to fight for us, and they want to fight with us. Due to the positive impact of my fair futures coach, I want to be a part of the fight as well, and advocate with youth and my coaches to extend fair futures funding to help youth like myself. I want to speak up for those who are scared to speak up for themselves. I want to be that hope for others, and for that I say thank you to My Fair Futures Coach.

My Fair Futures Coach is important to me because without them I would have not accomplished a lot of things. COVID-19 has been a crucial time for a lot of individuals including myself. Due to this virus outbreak it has prevented me from attending school; which caused a setback. For a while I was unsure how to attend school and didn't know what was going to happen. I constantly wonder would I ever finish, but with the help of my coach, I was able to gain access to a laptop that they provided to me, so I can finish my schooling via online.

Not only am I a full-time student, I also had a paid internship. Due to the virus, I lost my source of income. My coach is currently helping me seek employment during this pandemic. She has checked in with me via text, call, email, and video chat to make sure that I am doing ok and

have all the things I need. Without her help, I would have probably been lost frustrated, and struggling. Fair Futures provides me with great support, and I am truly grateful because I have no family and live on my own. I could only imagine what great impact a fair futures coach would have on a young person in need of assistance and guidance throughout their life. My coach has helped me tremendously, and the funding for Fair Futures must continue, as it would help other youth like myself. Please renew funds for the fair future grant for 2021, as the fight that Fair Futures is fighting, for all young adults to have coaches, is very important to others and myself, in order to gain/maintain access to support for a more promising future.



City Council Committee on Finance Budget Hearing

May 21st 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Phoebe Flaherty, I'm an Organizer at ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York. ALIGN is a community-labor coalition dedicated to creating good jobs, vibrant communities, and an accountable democracy for all New Yorkers.

We co-coordinate the Climate Works for All coalition, a coalition of environmental justice groups, labor, and community organizations all working towards reducing emissions to fight climate change through the lens of a just transition. We recently worked with the City Council to pass the dirty buildings bill, Local Law 97.

We are in the middle of tough times right now. I want to commend the leadership of the City Council in the fight against COVID-19 to protect all New Yorkers.

Though we are focused now on public health and safety as a result of the COVID crisis, we must not forget that we are also in the middle of an economic and the climate crisis. The unemployment rate for New York City is 22%, with 900,000 New Yorkers expected to be out of work by the end of this quarter. That means one in five New Yorkers could be out of work by June.¹ The Climate Crisis, which has already destroyed New York City communities and continues to impact New Yorkers daily, will worsen rapidly if we fail to take more aggressive action. According to the UN IPCC panel, we have only ten years left² before our city will irreversibly be on the path to being underwater, unlivably hot, or destroyed by storms. At the intersection of these crises are New York's low income black and brown communities, who are experiencing higher rates of death from COVID-19, high rates of job loss, and the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis and environmental injustice.

We must take action now to address both these crises at once if we want a future for our city. We must invest in infrastructure projects that put New Yorkers back to work in good, union jobs, and move us towards our emissions reductions goals. We must fight for solutions for New York's Environmental Justice communities and communities of color.

The Climate Works for All coalition has developed the New York City Climate and Community Stimulus Platform which details shovel ready infrastructure projects that address our climate needs, from training

¹ <https://nypost.com/2020/05/05/stringer-1-in-5-nyc-residents-could-lose-jobs-by-end-of-june/>

² <https://www.vox.com/2018/10/8/17948832/climate-change-global-warming-un-ipcc-report>

our workforce for climate jobs, to expanding public transportation, retrofitting homes and buildings, public land resiliency projects, and more. If these projects are implemented, it could mean the creation of more than 100,000 jobs for New Yorkers.

In the short term, we must move forward with the implementation of Local Law 97, which could create more than 40,000 energy efficiency jobs with relatively little investment from the city. We must move forward the city's solar installation goals. And we must continue our composting program, which creates hundreds of jobs and prevents 42,629 MTCO₂e emissions annually. We must not cut programs and projects in this year's budget that worsen our economic recession by cutting off opportunities for job creation and move us further from our climate goals.

Funding outside of the city's budget is available now for a number of projects within the New York City Climate and Community Stimulus Platform. We must access existing and newly available FEMA funds to go towards public land resiliency projects and building retrofits. We must also take advantage of state and federal workforce development grants and explore other grant opportunities. We expect funding for local infrastructure projects should become available through CARES 2. But we also must continue to advocate for increased stimulus money to come down to local municipalities. We also must increase our state revenue by taxing the rich.

We have to invest in our communities now if we wish to have a liveable New York for future generations. Now is the time to invest in an equitable recovery from COVID-19 through the creation of good career-track jobs in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and resilient infrastructure.

Thank you

ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York

50 Broadway, 29th FL

New York, NY 10004

T: 212-631-0886

F: 888-370-3085

www.ALIGNny.org

ALIGN is a local affiliate of Jobs with Justice and the Partnership for Working Families

Good morning,

Thank you for your service to New York City, and for considering my testimony in support of community composting.

I implore you to renew all public funding for composting in NYC, and especially support the community composting done by the Lower East Side Ecology Center. It would be an enormous loss to New York City, and to my family personally, if we lost the ability to drop off our compost at the Union Square Farmers Market and other drop-off locations around the city. Having dropped off my food scraps at the farmer's market and also at the 23rd St and 8th Avenue drop off site, multiple times each week, for more than a decade, I can attest to how much less waste my household of three produces. Ten years ago, we used to throw away a large kitchen garbage bag of waste nearly every night. Now, we throw away one to two medium kitchen garbage bags per week.

But community composting yields even more benefits for my family. Because I am dedicated to getting my food scraps to the drop off locations, I visit the farmer's market more often than I would otherwise, which not only gets me additional exercise, but it also causes me to buy more vegetables and products from the farmer's market while I am there, improving my family's diet with local, fresh produce, as well as putting more money into our local economy. I also learn about waste-reducing initiatives, and important events going on around the city (electronics recycling, Shred Fest, etc.), because the drop-off locations are a hub to receive and share information. I see many senior citizens dropping off as well, thereby getting more exercise, having increased social interactions, and doing their part to help this wonderful city get closer to Zero Waste.

It's essential to retain these programs so as not to lose the existing recycling infrastructure, knowledge and habits that will be difficult to rebuild once eliminated.

Cutting these programs will reverse the progress that we have made by diverting food scraps and toxic electronic waste from landfills. When in a landfill, food waste is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and electronics leach heavy metals and toxins into our soil and waterways. We can't let the current budget crisis allow us to lose sight of the looming

climate crisis and we must continue to divert these materials from landfills to reach our sustainability goals.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future to continue. These programs give people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope during our current crisis.

I ask that the City restore funding to community compost and e-waste collection programs.

Sincerely,

Alison Masick
252 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
(917) 202-2027

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council Committee Public Testimony on the FY21 Budget

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Chaim Deutsch
From: CEKPET, Ltd./Malenkaya Kompaniya/KidzHOME – House of Multicultural Education
Date: May 21, 2020

Dear Councilmember,

Thank you for your leadership to address the impact of COVID-19 on communities in New York City. One issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council discretionary funding. We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However, any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations serving immigrant communities. Grassroots organizations led by and serving those communities often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process.

We represent a small volunteer-based non-profit organization offering cultural and education programs for children from immigrant families, with our past and current cohorts representing families from countries of the Former Soviet Union or Latin America, as well as from mixed Russian-Latin American families. Our programs are geared to help these children develop and improve their performing and creative skills while keeping their heritage language or learning a new one. We offer classes in drama, puppetry, singing, arts and crafts, Russian and Spanish languages, and run two children's theater studios, in Russian and in Spanish, whose productions are free and open to the public. In addition, we offer singing and art classes, a homework assistance program, and tutoring and test preparation services – serving approximately 80 immigrant families at any given moment. For these activities we rent space at 1633 Sheepshead Bay Rd. 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

On March 15, 2020 we stopped our activities on the order of the Governor, to protect our constituents, staff, and general public, and have no revenue. Besides, many families have requested that we refund what they had paid for the remainder of the semester, and we granted these requests. We are not eligible for the PPP loan as we are all volunteers. We understand that we have 90 days rent freeze. However, our landlord has already warned us that we will have to pay the whole amount upon the reopening (\$19,776, or an equivalent of three months rent of \$6,592 per month if we reopen in June). Considering unprecedented financial impact that COVID-19 already has on our operation, and financial uncertainty upon the reopening, this request is devastating for our organization. It will result in our imminent closure and interruption of essential cultural services that KidzHOME has been delivering since 2008 to immigrant families.

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for 0.42% of the city budget. Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities.

With that, we are urging your support in introducing the bill that will protect vulnerable non-profit volunteer-based organizations by:

- Requiring a lease deferment provisions for non-profit tenants impacted by COVID-19 by extending the lease.
- Prohibiting the landlords from requesting a lump-sum payment from tenants impacted by COVID-19 upon the reopening to recover rent payments missed due to a freeze resulting from COVID-19 closures.
- Prohibiting the landlords to evoke Personal Liability provisions of leases for non-profit tenants impacted by COVID-19.
- Increase amounts of discretionary funding and ease the requirements for small volunteer-only non-profits impacted by COVID-19.

These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

We greatly appreciate the work you are doing on behalf of our communities.

Thank you,

Alla Markova,

CEKPET, Ltd./Malenkaya Kompaniya/KidzHOME – House of Multicultural Education

Education “Reformers” Jump on Online Instruction – Alan Singer on Daily Kos

https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2020/5/11/1944212/-Education-Reformers-Jump-on-Online-Instruction?_t=2020-05-11T03:49:47.983-07:00

Hoping to capitalize on Corona pandemic school closings, ersatz school reformers are “reimaging education” to shift it online and towards private profit. Unfortunately, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, who has provided admirable national leadership during the Corona pandemic, is buying into their magical promises. He announced a plan to partner with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation “to convene experts and develop a blueprint to reimagine education in the new normal.” Cuomo is also working with former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, who will head his “blue-ribbon” reimaging commission. So far, I have not been invited to contribute.

<https://dailygazette.com/article/2020/05/05/cuomo-gates-foundation-to-help-state-reimagine-education-announcement-sparks-quick-backlash>

<https://theintercept.com/2020/05/08/andrew-cuomo-eric-schmidt-coronavirus-tech-shock-doctrine/>

Advocates of permanent online instruction in K-12 schools include a line-up of usual suspects. In an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*, Jeb Bush, former Republican governor of Florida and chair of the Foundation for Excellence in Education, attacked teacher unions and school officials while promoting online learning as the wave of the future, not just as an emergency Corona response. Bush wants Congress to fund a transition so public education can “continue without access to classrooms,” and incidentally, as a \$200 billion bonanza for edu-tech companies. The Bush initiatives one million dollar plus funders are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the Walton Family Foundation. Other big donors are Facebook, Pearson, News Corporation (Fox), Charter Schools USA, and the Koch brothers through their Charles Koch Foundation. This is a galaxy concerned with profit and their own agendas that should be allowed nowhere near children and schools

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/05/03/jeb-bush-its-time-embrace-distance-learning-not-just-because-coronavirus/>

<https://www.excelined.org/about/meet-our-donors/>

“Microsoft Bill” Gates, who championed small schools and then abandoned the idea, who funded teacher development programs that he then dropped, who views schools, teachers, and students as “customers,” and financed Common Core and its testing mandates to promote “market forces,” is now in the “reimaging education” business. Gates pushes online programs like Gooru, which he funds through his foundation and which has financial ties to Google, Cisco, and Pearson. Microsoft is funding the research and development of Gooru’s Learning Navigator.

<https://deutsch29.wordpress.com/2020/05/06/no-need-to-imagine-bill-gates-interferes-with-education/>

<https://www.gatesnotes.com/Education/Technologys-Promise-to-Education-Reimagining-Textbooks>
<http://gooru.org/about/press.html>

In one bit of educational ingenuity, Gates actually compared the way children learn to electrical sockets. In a push for standardization, Gates wrote: “We don’t have 50 different kinds of electrical sockets—we have just one. And that standard unleashed all kinds of innovation that improved lives. The same thing will happen with consistent standards for what students should know.” But as every parent with multiple children and every teacher with 30 students in a classroom knows, children are not standardized like electrical sockets, they learn in different ways and at different rates and they have different interests. Bill Gates has three adult children. I wonder what they think of his analogy.

<https://www.gatesnotes.com/Education/Speaking-Up-for-Common-Core>

Eric Schmidt, the anointed head of New York’s ‘blue-ribbon’ commission, is not an unbiased educational philanthropist either. He owns \$5.3 billion stock shares in Google’s parent company, Alphabet, so his push to take education permanently online will only make him richer. Naomi Klein, author of the book *The Shock Doctrine*, calls the push to take everything online the “Pandemic Shock Doctrine” and dismisses it as the “Screen New Deal.” She fears a high-tech dystopia that will lead to increasing wealth inequality, shifting so much power to elites that democracy is threatened, mass layoffs, ignoring the impending climate catastrophe, and invasions of privacy that will put fundamental human rights at risk.

<https://theintercept.com/2020/05/08/andrew-cuomo-eric-schmidt-coronavirus-tech-shock-doctrine/>
<http://tsd.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine/>

Pearson, formally an educational textbook and testing company, is trying to salvage itself and its profits by pushing online education. The Corona pandemic has brought Pearson an “explosion” in demand for its online learning products. The company claims traffic across its platforms quadrupled as millions of children were closed out of schools and families turned to home schooling including 500,000 new Pearson customers in plague ravished Italy. If celebrating the pandemic and 300,000 deaths as a boost to business sounds ghoulish, that’s because it is.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/business/online-learning-virus.html>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-education-pearson/online-learning-rockets-in-coronavirus-pandemic-says-pearson-idUSKBN21D384>

“We’ve seen a huge increase in the appetite for digital resources,” he said. “Across all our platforms globally we are seeing about a 400% increase in activity (...) and that demand is growing day-by-day.”

Pearson, which provides textbooks, assessments and digital services in 70 countries, trained an additional 24,000 teachers in online learning and gained 500,000 new learners in Italy, he said. Italy is the country with the most deaths, and the second most cases after China, to date in the pandemic.

Jumping on board the online bandwagon, the New York Times published an extremely well-written op-ed piece by a middle school student who complained about student behavior and teacher frustration in regular school classes. In the essay, she explained why she felt she learned better online without other students around to interrupt her.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/opinion/coronavirus-pandemic-distance-learning.html>

But what works for this young woman may not be working for other students, especially those who lack adequate computer hardware and Internet connection at home or parents who can help them with their schoolwork.

There are other things about education that the young woman and advocates for online instruction didn't consider, the value of social interaction in a classroom setting and the importance of human connections between teachers and students. Middle school is a difficult period in the life of young people as they mature physically, intellectually and emotionally. School and teachers provide guidance and support to help young people navigate those changes.

Maybe the most important lesson you learn in middle school, probably more important than math or social studies, is how to work with others in a team, to negotiate, assist and share. These are skills that become increasingly important as you progress through school, enter the work world, and develop adult relationships. These are skills students don't learn working in online isolation.

Educational research continually demonstrates that most students, but maybe not all students, learn best in intensive groups, with teacher feedback, and when teachers they are related to have high expectations for their success.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/business/online-learning-virus.html>

The Network for Public Education conducted a survey that supports the value of in-class learning experiences for students and underscores the limits of online instruction. An article by its director, Carol Burris, discussed interviews with educators and parents and survey results. "Over 80 percent of parents reported that their child misses his/her classmates, and over 60 percent reported they miss their teacher. Fifty-eight percent of parents told us their child misses sports and extracurricular activities, and 39 percent said he or she regularly expresses feelings of loneliness." Only 9.5% replied that "their child prefers remote learning to classroom learning."

<https://networkforpubliceducation.org/emergency-remote-learning-survey-results/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/04/27/teachers-parents-principals-tell-their-stories-about-remote-learning/>

A Florida parent with four children commented on the difficulty of managing multiple children in a remote learning environment. She reported that although she and her husband have sufficient tech equipment in their home, they are “juggling to keep their children on task” while they struggle with having to work remotely from home. In contradiction to the New York Times op-ed, the women told the interviewer that “Distance learning for middle-schoolers is probably the worst possible choice.” she said with a laugh.

According to New York State United Teachers President Andy Pallotta “Remote learning, in any form, will never replace the important personal connection between teachers and their students that is built in the classroom and is a critical part of the teaching and learning process. If we want to reimagine education, let's start with addressing the need for social workers, mental health counselors, school nurses, enriching courses, advanced courses and smaller class sizes in school districts across the state.”

<https://dailygazette.com/article/2020/05/05/cuomo-gates-foundation-to-help-state-reimagine-education-announcement-sparks-quick-backlash>

Governor Cuomo, you're doing such a good job helping us understand and survive the Corona pandemic. You warn us not to make hasty decisions, to listen to experts, and not accept miracle cures without scientific testing. Don't get into bed with online snake oil salesmen.

Sign the Petition - Say NO to NY Permanent Virtual Education

https://www.change.org/p/nys-board-of-regents-say-no-to-ny-permanent-online-education?use_react=false

Follow Alan Singer on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ReecesPieces8>

AH New York @ the Pillars
289 St. Nicholas Ave
New York, NY 10039
telephone (212) 268-7219
fax (212) 947-9418



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

Friday, May 22, 2020

Arts Horizons
One Grand Avenue, Suite 7
Englewood, New Jersey 07631
telephone (201) 567-1766
fax (201) 567-5312

toll-free (888) 522-ARTS
info@artshorizons.org
www.artshorizons.org

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Founder
John R. Devol

Executive Director
Allison J. Davis

In Memoriam
Celeste Holm
LeRoy Neiman

A Non-Profit
Arts-in-Education
Organization

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. We would like to introduce ourselves as Allison Davis and Dena Isles, and we are the Executive Director and the Director of NYC Residencies and Special Populations, respectively, for Arts Horizons New York (AHNY) located in Harlem.

The mission of AHNY is to enhance the lives of people of all ages and abilities by creating equitable opportunities to engage in the arts. AHNY has impacted the lives of innumerable children and adults in schools, hospitals, senior centers, community centers, and other community-based settings through the power of the arts. We are committed to making the performing, visual, literary and media arts and artistic expression equitable and accessible to diverse people of all ages and abilities. Each year we serve approximately 130,000 students, teachers, artists, families, and seniors each year in the NYC metropolitan area.

Since mid-March, AHNY has experienced a significant loss of income and work due to COVID-19 restrictions. In an effort to maintain some of our existing programs and partnerships, we have developed and launched Arts Horizons Distance Learning with several pilot virtual programs at some of our partnering NYC DOE schools using Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding. Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city.

Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Further budget cuts to these critical departments would adversely impact our ability to sustain our organization, compensate our teaching artists and staff, and to continue our mission of providing high-quality arts education experiences in NYC. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allison Davis".

Allison Davis
Executive Director, Arts Horizons

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dena Isles".

Dena Isles
Program Director, Arts Horizons

Dear Committee:

Please reconsider cutting NYC compost programs during the coronavirus pandemic. The threats of climate change remain serious for New York City and all who live here, even during a pandemic. We must continue our actions put in place, even when they are not the most convenient, to limit the impacts of climate change. This includes continuing to compost as a replacement for disposing of organic waste in landfills where it contributes to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases. Any steps backward in the fight against climate change put us farther away from securing a safe and healthy future for New Yorkers now and for generations to come.

I'm sure you all are aware of the potential impacts from climate change facing New York City, some of which we are already seeing, like extreme heat and flooding/sea level rise, both of which threaten our city's economic stability and the health and safety of those who live here.

I understand the coronavirus brings unprecedented challenges to city management and adjustments must be made to address the pandemic. I ask that if the city must cancel the curbside pickup program, that the city create an alternative compost service that may be less costly. Right now, I cannot use curbside pickup or dropoff services usually provided by local businesses and farmers' markets so without the expertise and products to compost fully in my own apartment, I am forced to send my organic waste to the landfill.

Additionally, I support Councilmember Reynoso's bill that will open compost dropoff sites throughout the five boroughs. This will be a smaller operation than pickups from individual homes and will cost less money for the city. There must also be an effort for compost dropoff sites to be placed in low-income or neighborhoods that are primarily inhabited by people of color. We cannot disregard certain neighborhoods from this service unfairly.

Thank you!
Allison Kruk

May 21, 2020

To NYC Council Members:

I am writing today on behalf of Showing Up for Racial Justice to urge you to stand up to the Mayor's budget proposal because it is unethical, and promotes racist, violent policing of the most vulnerable populations in NYC.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails — nearly \$6 billion! — virtually untouched.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to criminalize and harass these same communities.

What we need is housing, health care, jobs and education. We need the NY City Council to commit to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. What is your idea of budget justice for NYC? What are you willing to fight for to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*? Increasing the number of NYPD officers is an active measure to *harm* NYC residents. There is no proven need.

Amanda Lefer

Sunnyside, Queens

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Lefer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



Testimony of the American Heart Association
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 21, 2020

Robin Vitale, Vice President of Health Strategies
Greg Mihailovich, Community Advocacy Director
American Heart Association, New York City

Thank you, Chair Dromm and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. On behalf of the volunteers of the American Heart Association, we are grateful for the opportunity to present testimony related to key health initiatives that our organization believes will support healthy behaviors in New Yorkers. As the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, of which approximately 80% of diagnoses are preventable¹, the American Heart Association is deeply concerned about the public health crisis facing our country. Our top priority regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) is the health and well-being of individuals and their families today and in the future, in every community, everywhere. Our mission – *to be a relentless force for a world of healthier, longer lives* – is more important than ever. We are continuing our mission-critical work in these challenging times and we know that people with cardiovascular diseases are more likely to be seriously impacted by the virus than others.

Blacks, Hispanics and other medically underserved populations are more likely to have chronic conditions including heart disease, hypertension and diabetes that may put them at higher risk for COVID-19 complications. They also are more likely to face systemic obstacles to good health, such as lack of access to quality care, jobs, education and housing, that can have devastating consequences in the face of a public health emergency.

As the New York City Council moves forward with the budget process and New York City is forced to make some tough financial decisions, we ask that you

¹ "Preventable Deaths from Heart Disease & Stroke." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Sept. 2013, www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/HeartDisease-Stroke/index.html.

remain vigilant in supporting policies that ensure New Yorkers – particularly those most in need – can protect and promote their own health in the face of COVID-19.

Access to Care

With our hospital system still managing the influx of COVID-19 patients, we applaud NYC Health + Hospitals continuing to provide guidance and care through their Phone-a-Clinician Hotline and telehealth visits. Telemedicine and self-monitoring are an important tool to keep people out of clinics and hospitals so we can prioritize care for the most afflicted, while making sure that people with existing health challenges can do something to prevent their condition worsening at home.

Two years ago, New York City invested in blood pressure kiosks and placed them in strategically necessary neighborhoods – specifically those where noted disparities existed for unmanaged high blood pressure – to support self-monitoring. With the current social distancing rules in place, it is not safe nor practical to expect people to go to a public place and use a device touched by numerous different people. If New York City invested in self-monitoring devices, such as blood pressure cuffs and pulse oximeters, to provide to community partners (FQHCs, Health Systems, other clinics, CBOs), essential care can be remotely provided to medically underserved populations and continue to lessen the impact of COVID-19 through physical distancing. We ask that you include funding for self-monitoring devices

Reducing Food Insecurity

We are thankful for New York City's ongoing effort to provide emergency food access to anyone who requests it. Supporting food pantries and soup kitchens around the city to keep this safety net available at a time when many food services are shutting down due to limited resources, or reduced staff and volunteer support, will help keep the most vulnerable fed during this crisis. While we understand the fiscal responsibility of purchasing non-perishable and shelf-stable food, we ask that every effort be made to provide higher-nutrition foods for the best possible health outcomes.

Beyond COVID, every family should have affordable access to the foods that help support a balanced diet and a healthier life. Unfortunately, research shows that access to healthy food can vary dramatically from neighborhood to

neighborhood.² 1.2 million NYC residents live in lower income communities with limited access to healthy food retail³, and these same neighborhoods often struggle with high rates of diet-related chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. That lack of access may be even worse once this crisis passes.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's largest nutrition assistance program and provides monthly cash benefits to 1 in 5 New Yorkers to reduce food insecurity and help those households rise out of poverty. According to recent testimony by HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, the number of NYC SNAP applicants tripled in March and April, and there were 19,000 applicants just during April 13-16. Given the uncertain economic landscape, SNAP enrollment will likely continue to increase. HRA has retrained and redeployed almost 1,400 staff to accommodate the increased SNAP workload, but that is not sustainable once the city opens up again. We need to include additional funding in the coming budget to provide the resources needed to expand and administer SNAP so that New Yorkers struggling through this crisis can feed themselves and their families.

Tobacco Cessation

According to the World Health Organization, smokers are likely more vulnerable to severe and potentially life-threatening cases of COVID-19. Smokers often suffer from lung disease and reduced lung capacity, which would greatly increase the risk of serious complications from COVID-19 infection. While there is currently no direct data about the role of vaping in COVID-19 infection or outcomes, a growing body of evidence shows that vaping can harm the health of your lungs. While more research is needed, limited evidence suggests that using e-cigarettes may suppress your immune system, making you more susceptible to respiratory infections and delayed recovery.

The growing evidence around tobacco and e-cigarette use and adverse outcomes from COVID-19 has strengthened the American Heart Association's position that we need New Yorkers to quit their addiction as urgently as possible. With the enactment of the city law banning all flavored e-cigarettes – hopefully to be soon followed by companion legislation restrict access to all flavored tobacco products, including menthol – New York City needs to invest in more cessation programs and support for those now struggling with a nicotine addiction because of heavy e-cigarette use. Those cessation resources also

² Bell J, Mora G, Hagan E, Rubin V, and Karpyn A. (2013) Access to Healthy Food and Why it Matters: A Review of the Research. PolicyLink. Oakland, California. www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GROCERYGAP_FINAL_NOV2013.pdf.

³ "Food Metrics Report 2017," NYC Food Policy, 2017, p.32. www1.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/2017-Food-Metrics-Report-Corrected.pdf

need to available virtually or online to be easily accessible during for these socially distant times.

Access to safe spaces to be physically active

While we are still dealing with COVID-19, New Yorkers need to be physically active in a way that keeps them appropriately distant from one another. The American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least five days a week for overall cardiovascular health, and an average of 40 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity three or four days a week to help lower blood pressure and cholesterol. Staying active also provides benefits beyond the physical. Stress can affect your mental and physical health in many ways. Long-term activation of your body's stress response system may put you at risk for health troubles like digestive problems, anxiety, headaches, depression, sleep problems, weight gain, memory and concentration issues, high blood pressure, and heart disease and stroke.^{4 5} Spending non-active time outside in nature can help lower your stress and result in better health outcomes. We applaud the collaboration between the Mayor, the NYC Council, and NYC DOT to develop an Open Streets plan to create temporary space for pedestrians and bicyclists so we can be active at a safe distance during the crisis.

While we understand that there are tough budget decisions to be made as a result of the current crisis, New York City should do what it can to avoid taking away funding from active living and active transportation options when New Yorkers need them the most. As the weather gets warmer and people seemingly skittish about taking mass transit, we will see more people travelling by foot or by bike. We are already seeing a shortage of bicycles in local bike shops⁶ and NYC needs to have the infrastructure to safely accommodate the increase in riders. The Green Wave program to build out the NYC bike network by building new protected bike lanes and closing the gaps in our many greenways should be seen as an essential project for the health and safety of New Yorkers.

We realize this is a dynamic and challenging situation, and we thank you for everything you have done and will do to protect the lives of the people of New York City. The American Heart Association is a reliable and trusted source of information based in credible science, and we will continue to be your partner in ensuring the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, Stress and your health. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/stress-and-your-health>

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coping with Stress. <https://www.cdc.gov/Features/CopingWithStress/index.html>.

⁶ Goldbaum, Christina. "Thinking of Buying a Bike? Get Ready for a Very Long Wait." The New York Times, The New York Times, 18 May 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/nyregion/bike-shortage-coronavirus.html.

I am submitting testimony concerning New York City's FY 2021 Executive Budget. I am deeply outraged by the \$800 million cut to education, including DYCD, which provides essential programming for young people and immigrants, especially English language learners. Although in-person classes are suspended at the moment, distance learning is just as essential and needs funding to continue! Additionally, it is disgusting that the city is prioritizing racist and harmful agencies such as the New York Police Department, District Attorneys offices, and the Department of Corrections over the education and wellbeing of our most in-need and marginalized residents.

I urge the New York City council to reject the budget increase allocated towards NYPD, DAs, and the DOC and to instead fight for a budget that invests in uplifting our communities, not incarcerating them.

Respectfully,
Ami Tian
NYC Resident



May 20, 2020

Amy C., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

Hi My name is Amy Brianna Carpio. I am from the Bronx, New York. Fair Futures is important to me because they are there for me, and I have someone I can go to when I'm having a bad day. My coach helps support me and helps me work towards my goals and what I want to achieve in life. Academically, I have improved because I felt someone believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. During this pandemic, I have given up because I felt like I did 4 years of high school for nothing, but my coach is always encouraging me to do and be the best on everything!!!!!!

Fair Futures matter to me, and has helped me. Please, fund Fair Futures for 2021

Thank you



**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget
May 21, 2020 Hearing**

Hello, Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. I'm Amy Dorin, the President & CEO of The Coalition for Behavioral Health. The Coalition's membership includes 100 community-based behavioral health organizations, who collectively serve over 600,000 New Yorkers.

Behavioral health services are essential, and behavioral health providers and staff have been on the frontlines of the COVID epidemic, working to keep our communities healthy and safe. Staff have left the safety of their own homes to connect with clients who haven't answered calls, have brought groceries to clients' doors, and have delivered phones and tablets to keep clients engaged with the world. This has come at a significant cost – over twenty behavioral health staff have died from COVID, and more than 800 have isolated due to COVID symptoms. This is almost certainly an undercount, as it is based on a response of just 30 providers. Despite these risks, behavioral health providers continue to show up everyday because we know that behavioral health saves lives.

Programs that can operate via telehealth quickly transitioned to provide services this way. Agencies with City Council funding used peers to teach clients how to use videoconferencing technology, purchased phones and tablets for clients, and implemented new systems to check-in with clients. The Coalition for Behavioral Health's training division, which receives Council funds, quickly developed trainings to teach frontline clinicians how to effectively provide services via telehealth and telephone, including one training that had 430 clinicians. City council funded agencies have connected clients to food and meals, set up prescription delivery, and provided ongoing services to help clients maintain their mental health and manage substance use disorders during this incredibly challenging time.

The importance of mental health and substance use services has perhaps never been clearer than at this moment, when New York City faces an unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral health services. According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Health Opinion poll, 54% of New Yorkers have symptoms of anxiety.ⁱ 37% of New Yorkers have symptoms of depression, an increase of 25 percentage points compared to the 2018 baseline.ⁱⁱ Calls and text messages to NYC's mental health hotline increased by about eighteen percent for the first weeks of April, compared to 2019.ⁱⁱⁱ

The increase in demand for behavioral health services is only going to grow. Research shows that for every one percent increase in unemployment, opioid overdose deaths rise by 3.6% and suicide deaths rise by 1.6%.^{iv} Community-based behavioral health providers are on the frontlines of these crises. These deaths are preventable – by ensuring continued funding for behavioral health, providers can continue their life saving work.

Behavioral health funding simply cannot be cut. Providers are already seeing surges in demand that they cannot always meet – a recent survey of our members found that 21% were not able to meet the demand for additional services from new and existing clients.^v The City must commit at this moment to fund mental health and substance use services and ensure that our communities are able to recover from COVID.

It is clear that the pandemic is not only a physical health crisis, but a behavioral health crisis. As social supports and structures fade away, while an invisible threat looms seemingly around every corner, New Yorkers are struggling. There is no reason that we cannot step up and meet this need.

The City Council has recognized the importance of behavioral health services in the past, funding programs through the Mental Health Initiatives along with veterans' mental health programs, social workers in the schools and more. We strongly urge the Council to continue this essential support for behavioral health at this critical time.

Behavioral health providers were struggling before this crisis began, with contracts and Medicaid reimbursement frequently failing to cover the full cost of services. Programs operated with high staff turnover and vacant positions, as salaries are not high enough to recruit and retain staff. COVID has amplified these challenges:

- Individual agencies lost from \$45,000 to \$2.4 million since the state of emergency was declared, resulting in total losses to the sector of an estimated \$63 million.^{vi}
 - 21% of organizations have already had to furlough or lay off some staff.^{vii}
- Providers have increased costs of \$311,000, on average, from purchasing technology for staff and clients, buying personal protective equipment (PPE), adding additional cleanings, and paying staff overtime and incentive pay.^{viii}

With continued funding, however, we can ensure that behavioral health providers survive to help New York recover. City Council funding is a key part of ensuring New Yorkers can access services, particularly those in the hardest hit communities. Council funding allows providers to serve undocumented individuals and those without insurance. It provides funding for harm reduction and clubhouse services that are not covered by insurance, even for those who have it.

The Council's Geriatric Mental Health Initiative provides services for seniors in their home, a particularly crucial service currently. Services are provided in English, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin and Cantonese to over 8,000 older adults annually. One program that receives GMHI funding has used a portion of this funding to support a senior with serious mental illness whose roommate died from COVID. Because of GMHI funds, the provider has been able to offer counseling every day to the senior, supporting her through her grief and ensuring that she has access to additional services.

The Children Under Five Initiative provides early childhood mental health services to young children and families. It allows organizations to work with children to develop psychosocial and educational skills, as well as cope with trauma resulting from witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or physical or mental abuse. This funding provides services to about 1,800 children and families, in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Creole, Arabic and American Sign Language. Unfortunately, we know that domestic violence is rising due to COVID. This funding is critical to ensuring that these children receive the support they need and able to gain resilience and grow up healthy.

The Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative supports neighborhood-based prevention and treatment efforts around opioid abuse. Opioid deaths continued to rise in the Bronx and Staten Island in 2018, and we expect that deaths will rise citywide as a result of COVID: research finds that for every one percentage point increase in unemployment, opioid overdose deaths rise by 3.6%.^{ix} This funding, which supports providers with deep connections in the hardest-hit communities, will be critical to stopping that statistic from becoming a reality in our neighborhoods. Opioid deaths are preventable – the services funded by the Council save lives.

The Council's Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services and Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiatives both provide critical support to individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. These individuals are particularly vulnerable at this time, as many of their long-standing supports are not available. The necessity of social distancing leaves many of these individuals isolated, with their only contact with the outside world coming from the providers funded under this initiative. When one provider visited a client who had not answered their phone for two weeks, the client cried at seeing their social worker and realizing that there was someone checking in on them.

The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative supports programs that help identify teenagers with criminal justice involvement who require mental health services. Family services, including counseling and respite, are also provided. These services are critical at a time when the majority of supports for youth have disappeared, including the end of the Summer Youth Employment Program and the closure of many drop-in centers. These youth are at high-risk at this time; these programs will help them work through this trauma and come out healthy.

These are just a few examples of the hundreds of ways that behavioral health providers are serving their communities every day. This funding is essential for New York to recover with strength from COVID.

ⁱ NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Health Opinion Poll 7. Late March, 2020.

ⁱⁱ NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Health Opinion Poll 7. Late March, 2020. 2018 Community Health Survey.

ⁱⁱⁱ NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. NYC Well Weekly Reports for the weeks ending in March 29, April 5, April 12 and April 19.

^{iv} Hollingsworth et al, Macroeconomic conditions and opioid abuse. Journal of Health Economics. Phillips JA, Nugent CN, Suicide and the Great Recession of 2007-2009: The Role of Economic Factors in the 50 U.S. States. Social Science & Medicine.

^v The Coalition for Behavioral Health. Member Survey. Conducted April 15-24.

<https://www.coalitionny.org/behavioralhealth-survey>

vi Ibid.

vii Ibid.

viii Ibid.

ix Hollingsworth et al, Macroeconomic conditions and opioid abuse. Journal of Health Economics.

SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING in NYC

To: Honorable Brad Lander

CC: financetestimony@council.nyc.gov

Re: Community Composting

My name is Amy Plattsmier, and I am disheartened to learn that the City is planning to eliminate funding for community composting and zero waste outreach programs. I'm a passionate home composter who has also dedicated innumerable hours for over a decade to composting education in schools, synagogues, and my neighborhood.

The first Participatory Budgeting project I ever worked on was a 2011 winner for an industrial shredder to be installed on the site of an NYC Salt Lot and managed by the Gowanus Canal Conservancy's composting program, the purpose being to have a way to compost lunch trays from local schools who were dedicated to getting rid of styrofoam years before the city ban but who had no place to ecologically process the compostable trays. It seemed impossible back then that we might have a curbside pickup option, but here we are. And those little victories that so many dogged and committed citizens, teachers, and environmentalists have fought for are finally adding up.

Convincing folks to change their habits and their mindset around waste requires patience and time and is incremental work requiring multiple fits & starts before the gears begin to move and momentum takes over. I am deeply dismayed by the short-sightedness of the City cutting support for anything related to the City's Zero Waste mission, but losing composting cuts deepest because it is so personal. After so many years of work I am finally witnessing firsthand that we are reaching a tipping point where waste separation and mindfulness are becoming a part of our citizens' daily habits. To put the brakes on the momentum now would not just cause us to lose a vital waste diversion but would also be flushing down the already overloaded combined sewer overflow the hard work of volunteers like me and the personal investment into composting that the citizens of New York have made these past few years. Community composting programs are essential and are finally, after so much education and labor, part of the fabric of daily life in NYC. The City has experienced such tremendous loss already, and we desperately need to hold onto the simple routines of our daily lives, especially the ones that give us the agency to actively make our world a better place.

I recognize the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, but we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one

of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future. The City's Community Composting programs give people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope during our current crisis.

I implore the City to restore funding to Community Composting and Zero Waste Programs.

Sincerely,

Amy Plattsmier

71 Chester Avenue, Brooklyn 11218

Andres Nicolas Chaves
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Andres Nicolas Chaves, and I work at the Atlantic Theater Company.

The mission of the Atlantic Acting School, is to equip our students with the physical, emotional, and analytical tools to discover their truths, and prepare them for success beyond our doors. We have trained and mentored outstanding artists for more than 30 years. No matter their age or background, our students learn to break through their creative comfort zones in service to bringing essential human stories to life.

We are currently in partnership with two full time High Schools in New York City. We work with hundreds of kids every year. Having us come into these schools to provide arts education for these kids has been one of the greatest successes of our organization. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My personal request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. If schools around the city lose their arts budget this could lead to the eradication of important programs such as ours that have and hopefully will continue to provide a lifelong service to all children in our community. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Andres Nicolas Chaves



TESTIMONY

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings:
“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:
Worker Cooperatives As A Tool for Small Business Recovery and Resilience”

Presented to:

New York City Council, Committees on Finance, Immigration and Subcommittee on the
Capital Budget

Hon. Daniel Dromm, Chair
Hon. Carlos Menchaca, Chair
Hon. Vanessa Gibson, Chair
Thurs. May 21, 2020

Prepared By:

Anh-Thu Nguyen
Director of Strategic Partnerships

Julian McKinley
Senior Communications Director

New York City Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative
Democracy at Work Institute
115 5th Avenue, 6th Floor
New York, New York 10003

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, Chair Menchaca, Council members and staff of the Committees on Finance and Immigration, and the Subcommittee on the Capital Budget for this hearing. It is always an honor to address you. It is especially so today as I submit testimony in support of the hardworking individuals and families in our communities. My name is Anh-Thu Nguyen and I am Director of Strategic Partnerships at Democracy at Work Institute, also known as DAWI by our partners.

On behalf of DAWI and the 13 organizations that make up the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), we thank you for the opportunity to speak about the work that WCBDI has accomplished in the past 5 years since the initiative has been funded, share with you the continuing successes and positive community impact as our work has grown each year, and emphasize the importance of supporting the growth and development of worker cooperative businesses as a means for small business recovery and resilience in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

DAWI supports worker ownership as a tool for sustainable economic development in NYC, throughout the U.S. and internationally. Created to expand access to worker ownership for communities affected by economic and social injustice, we provide training, technical assistance and direct business development, conduct an annual census of firms, monitor growth and impact of the sector, and identify trends, successes, and challenges. I share this because this work gives us a unique view -- a birds-eye assessment combined with an intimate approach to supporting existing and aspiring worker-owners in NYC.

Over the past five years, we've recorded a significant shift that began when New York City Council made the historic act of investing in community wealth building through its support of WCBDI: Thanks to City Council support, WCBDI has built a comprehensive ecosystem capable of bringing new jobs to communities most in need; building successful local businesses, and providing the technical assistance, education, and outreach required to ensure success. The outcome is that New York City is now the largest worker cooperative ecosystem in the United States, surpassing the San Francisco Bay Area this year. We are home to the largest worker cooperative in the country: Cooperative Home Care Associates in the south Bronx, which has more than 2,000 staff, the vast majority women and immigrants of color--all essential workers.

NYC's efforts have become a model for establishing worker ownership as a tool to build sustainable, local economic development and growth across the country. ***Now, more than 20 cities across the nation are looking closely, replicating, and catching up with NYC.*** Some cities that have already passed similar legislation include: Madison, Philadelphia, Oakland, Boston, and Santa Clara.

The city has become a model for equitable economic development through its support of worker cooperatives development, and the impact on our communities is being felt. ***While many traditional businesses struggle with paying their workers a minimum wage of \$15, worker cooperatives are paying their workers an average of nearly \$19.67 an hour.*** While diversity can be an issue in many workplaces, worker cooperatives are a haven for entrepreneurs who have been traditionally marginalized.

Historically underserved communities are leading the charge in worker cooperative development in NYC, with ***70% of worker-owners in NYC being immigrant workers, and 76% of worker-owners being women of color.*** It is also being led by workers in traditionally low-wage industries, such as janitorial services, home health care, and child care, helping them bring home living wages, build assets that contribute to financial stability, and transform industries over time.

These facts show worker cooperatives can address chronic economic and social inequalities faced by our communities' most vulnerable residents. Since FY15, your support has helped WCBDI transform this potential into real change for families in our communities, including:

- Creating more than 631 new jobs and pathways to business ownership.
- Reaching more than 8,000 entrepreneurs with education and technical assistance services.
- Launching more than 130 new worker cooperative businesses.

On a growing scale, worker cooperatives are not only being used as an economically sound plan to start a business, but the form is proving to be a sound tactic for saving businesses. As more and more business owners near retirement age and lack succession plans, accelerating their timeline for retirement due to the economic climate, transitioning a business to worker ownership is keeping thriving businesses open by saving jobs that would otherwise be lost, helping family-run businesses access capital for growth, and keeping wealth in our communities. ***Nationally, employee-owners have a 92% higher median household net worth; a 33% higher median income from wages, and median job tenure is 53% higher.***

Our work has continued unabated through the COVID-19 crisis, with an uptick in outreach to DAWI and WCBDI partners on how the worker cooperative model can be used to save and preserve small businesses. This crisis, compounded with the so-called Silver Tsunami of retiring Baby Boomer business owners--impacting at least 46,000 businesses in NYC and over 500,000 workers of color alone--highlights the precariousness of small business survival and longevity in NYC. We have an even greater sense of urgency to preserve NYC small businesses by converting them to worker-ownership.

We also see the continuing needs for immigrant workers without safety nets and those with precarious employment, especially in the gig economy and low-wage industries. This has become especially glaring amidst this health crisis, with these workers--many deemed essential--bearing the brunt of illness and loss of work without any access to social safety nets. Worker-owners in NYC and nationally have been able to use their reserves to stay afloat and offer mutual aid to cooperative members, which is especially valuable to members who do not otherwise qualify for government assistance or unemployment benefits.

Worker cooperative businesses are unique in their ability to establish, grow, and retain community wealth, and to make entrepreneurship accessible for low-income and well-resourced people alike. We believe that it is critical to continue the work that we are doing to support small businesses, primarily in immigrant communities and communities of color keep their doors open, create new opportunities for high road work, offer a means to build and root wealth in neighborhood and communities, and sustain and grow the diversity of the small businesses in NYC for the next generation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to continuing the work to build wealth for our communities through entrepreneurship.

TESTIMONY
Finance Committee Hearing
MAY 20, 2020

Ann Cook
Executive Director
New York Performance Standards Consortium
www.performanceassessment.org

I am Ann Cook, executive director of the NY Performance Standards Consortium, a coalition of 36 New York City public secondary schools that graduate students using a well-established system of performance-based assessment in lieu of Regents exams.

Thank you Speaker Johnson and Finance Committee Chairman Drumm for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to comment on Mayor DeBlasio's budget with particular attention paid to the City Hall's proposed cuts to the Department of Education.

Budgets – whether they be for schools or families – reflect values and priorities.

If the rhetoric of public officials is to be believed, our city values its children – we are told that our city's future depends on them. We are often reminded that children's needs are paramount, that their development and well being are of utmost importance. The Mayor's signature pre-K program was, we were told, initiated as a symbol of adherence to that value.

Yet now, in the midst of Covid 19, this claim seems hollow. The priorities revealed by the budget cuts don't match up with what we've been told about a commitment to children.

City Council speaker Corey Johnson has acknowledged that this is a time when New Yorkers "desperately need to have confidence in their city government." Yet, Instead of looking to a post COVID world with optimism and hope, our schools are now in danger of leaving thousands of our children far behind with funding cuts that betray that trust.

Just how daunting is the task faced by our schools come September and with what resources will educators have to respond? Here is what we know so far:

We are told by the DOE that more than 160,00 students will need summer school – (that's more than a 400 percent increase over last year). That astronomical increase is not simply the result of a hardware shortage or limited access. It is also because, as we have learned in profound ways, remote instruction is simply no substitute for person-to-person teaching and learning.

Children depend on in-school experiences and real life relationships with teachers and peers to become healthy human beings. Even the most progressive adaptation of remote learning cannot replace shared and engaged classroom interactions. That explains why so many Silicon Valley parents choose to send their children to schools built on relationships and active learning that do NOT rely heavily on technology. And it is why so many children failed to thrive during the lockdown.

Aside from the responses from exhausted and fraught home-schooling parents trying to help their children make meaning out of remote learning, many observers have called attention to the consequences of social isolation. Pediatricians are noticing disturbing

trends in the behavior of young children, while experts at NYU's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry cite a 337% increase in the number of crisis calls made in March alone. They tell us that our children face an unprecedented wave of stress and anxiety unlike anything New Yorkers have seen before.

Academically, experts like Richard Rothstein, Distinguished fellow at the American Economic Institute, warn that the achievement gap -- already dangerously wide before COVID -- seems destined to explode, “

.

In other words, more than ever before, our children need their schools, their teachers, their school counsellors, and their social workers. Looking ahead to the opening of school, they will need more, not less.

So what to do in this fiscal and medical crisis? Certainly we must reject what Naomi Wolfe refers to as “shock doctrine” policies that we saw applied as Katrina ravaged New Orleans and which resulted in the wholesale destruction of New Orleans public schools and their replacement with a system of charters.

Every study shows that low income minority communities have been devastated by Covid 19's impact. We cannot continue this trend as we make plans to open our schools.

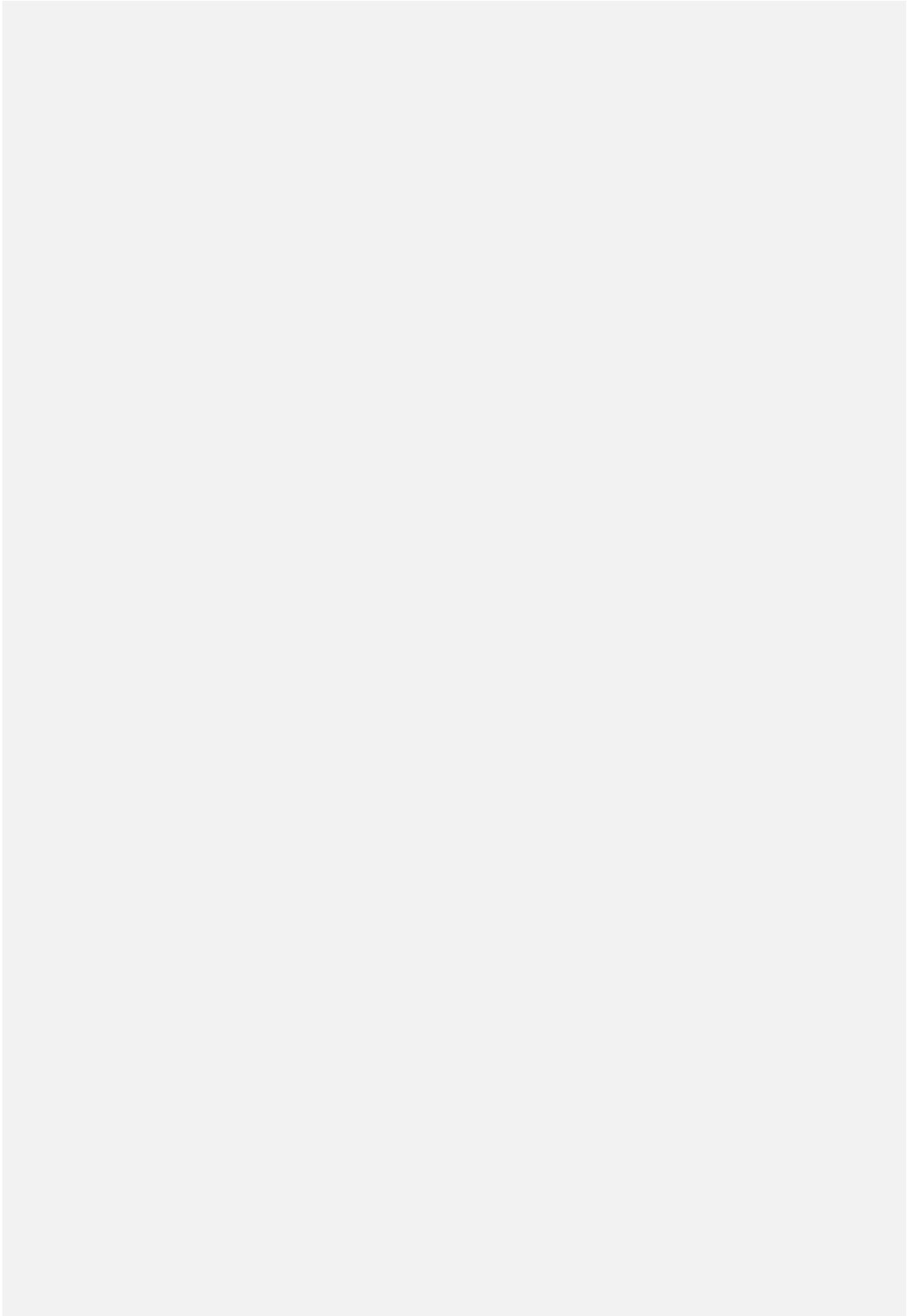
We understand the dilemma: we must reduce spending. But we must also pay attention to who should decide where and how to make those cuts and focus on approaches that we know work; protecting classrooms and support services should be the top priority.

Fair student funding, Single Shepherd, College Access for All — presently considered as cuts to “central” are not. From an operational perspective, they are more accurately understood as cuts to classrooms and support services

So, here are three recommendations for the council to consider in navigating cuts in a fair and equitable manner:

- Prioritize the cuts according to their impact on schools – on classrooms and support services.
- Decentralize the process. If cuts must be taken at the school level, allow schools themselves to recommend how to prioritize those cuts. School administrators and staffs know best what will harm their children LEAST. and
- Do not assume that the road to fiscal solvency resides in turning over the education of our children to remote learning. Technology certainly has its place, but it must never replace schools as essential learning communities. Downgrading person-to-person contact will have serious consequences for our democracy.

Chief Learn



Dear Finance Committee,

I am a voting constituent in District 11 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

We need a just budget now more than ever. The proposed \$2 billion cut should be across all areas. Sparing the NYPD budget at a time when we need to provide support to children and families with education, housing and healthcare services. There is no justifiable reason to spend MORE on NYPD at a time when our other budget areas have an increased need for support.

I am alarmed that the NYPD has focused on policing Black and Latinx New Yorkers to such a degree that it is reminiscent of the Jim Crow south. The statistics show that white New Yorkers are allowed to violate social distancing rules while people of color in this city stay confined or severely limit their freedoms out for fear of getting sick without adequate healthcare, sick leave or social safety net resources. The viral images of violent social distancing enforcement creates further fear that one might be humiliated and risk punitive consequences from over policing.

Please know that voters will not support this type of budget. I know that if things continue in this direction I will actively join others who protest this misuse of public funds. Please do not support this proposed budget.

Thank you,
Ann Lane

**New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing - FY 2021
Committee on Justice System & Committee on Finance
May 20, 2020
Joint Written Testimony of The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services,
The Legal Aid Society, The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem,
New York County Defender Services, Queens Defenders**

We submit this joint statement on behalf of all of the public defenders providing trial-level criminal defense representation to indigent individuals throughout New York City. Our clients and the communities we represent are not only deeply affected by the ongoing health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by its crushing effect on the criminal justice system. The need to maintain vigilant and quality defense representation remains all the more important during these unprecedented times. We recognize the fiscal concerns facing NYC - and localities across the country - but now is not the time to reduce funding to indigent defense providers. To the contrary, maintaining funding at current levels, as well as ensuring the City meets its commitment to provide phase one pay parity funding, is more critical than ever in order to preserve the integrity of the criminal justice system and to protect the rights and liberties of those who come through this system in New York City.

Vital Role of Criminal Public Defenders Generally

As criminal public defenders we have a powerful mission, an ethical obligation, and a constitutional mandate to protect and uphold the rights of the accused against the powers of the state. Our role is multifold: We represent our clients at arraignment and fight to ensure their release from custody, so that they may be at liberty as they challenge the allegations against them rather than be held in lengthy pretrial detention. We challenge the lawfulness of arrests and recovery of evidence in order to ensure that law enforcement acts within the bounds of the law and consistent with the requirements of the New York and United States Constitutions. We test the weight of the prosecution's evidence throughout the pendency of a case and ultimately at trial. And all along the way, we strive to ensure that those arrested and accused of crimes are treated with dignity and respect within the criminal justice system.

As criminal public defenders we not only provide direct representation to our clients, we also advocate for criminal justice system reform. We were at the forefront of the recent bail and discovery reforms in New York State that went into effect in January 2020, and we have led ongoing decarceration efforts as the City works towards its goal of closing Rikers Island by

2026. We work collaboratively with other stakeholders to expand alternatives to pretrial detention as well as to increased availability of alternative to incarceration programs.

We work with our clients, and the communities we serve, to identify the causes leading to criminal justice system involvement in the first place. And we strive to identify the myriad ways in which justice system involvement may create enmeshed penalties, including consequences for employment status, housing, and one's ability to remain in the United States, among other things, for those we represent. In addressing the consequences of justice system involvement, we work closely with other stakeholders within the justice system, other government agencies, and program providers, to minimize the impact of system involvement in our clients' lives.

Our efforts to decarcerate our local jails, to prevent justice system involvement in the first place, and to minimize the negative consequences for those who are justice system involved serve the dual function of assisting our clients in fundamental ways and decreasing overall direct costs, such as the enormous cost of incarceration, and societal costs, such as the loss of individuals in the workforce and housing instability.

Work of Criminal Public Defenders During COVID

Our clients and their families are among those most affected, and devastated by, the coronavirus pandemic. It is not just what we know from speaking with our clients that tells us that. The data demonstrates it clearly. As has been widely reported, "Many of the neighborhoods with the highest number of cases per capita are areas with the lowest median incomes and largest average household size."¹ At the same time that these communities have been ravaged by the pandemic, they have also continued to be highly policed. Law enforcement has not ceased as a result of the current health crisis. And, in fact, NYPD's own data, as well as that maintained by OCA, demonstrates that while arrests dropped significantly in the last two weeks of March 2020, arrests since that time have increased. On many days, the number of individuals arrested in boroughs across the city are the same, if not higher, than in pre-Covid times. At the same time that arrests are continuing, and individuals are being brought into the justice system, the criminal court system as a whole is largely on hold. Arraignments continue to occur daily in virtual arraignment courtrooms, and emergency proceedings are conducted virtually in "special application parts" in criminal and supreme courts. But these proceedings represent a tiny fraction of those conducted daily, in courtrooms throughout the city, prior to the Covid health crisis.

¹ New York City Coronavirus Map and Case Count, N.Y. Times, updated May 17, 2020, at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/nyregion/new-york-city-coronavirus-cases.html>

Despite these obstacles created by the current health crisis, criminal public defenders have been on the frontlines since the first days of this pandemic, working to protect the health and safety of our incarcerated clients and to fight to protect the rights of the accused to the fullest extent possible during this time. Before courts turned to completely virtual proceedings, our lawyers and advocates were in the courthouses daily, defending our clients at great risk to their own safety and well-being. They staffed arraignment shifts and emergency application parts for days after city schools closed and when most businesses across the city were already shuttered. Our staff were there in court, fighting for our clients, because that is what we do, day in and day out, regardless of the personal cost. We immediately identified our most vulnerable clients in city custody -- those over the age of 50 and those at high risk medical risk -- and pursued multiple avenues to obtain their release, including seeking bail reviews, advocating with adversaries for release, and filing individual and mass writs of habeas corpus in courts across New York City. We worked with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to support the city's own release efforts, and have continued to advocate for more releases by advocating with city agencies and elected officials. By reducing the population of individuals in New York City Department of Corrections (DOC) custody, we have not only protected those individuals released from exposure to Covid-19 in jail but have also rendered DOC facilities less crowded for those who remain in custody and those who work there. We saved lives in those early efforts, and we continue to do so as this pandemic continues. We have shone a spotlight on conditions within DOC facilities and advocated -- both in court, through public testimony, and in collaboration with allied organizations -- to improve conditions for our clients who remain in custody so as to decrease the risk of their exposure to Covid-19.

We have worked closely with stakeholders, including MOCJ, OCA, the District Attorneys, and supervising and chief administrative judges in our courthouses, to transition from in-person court appearances to virtual remote proceedings. At the same time that we have worked to ensure as seamless a transition as possible to remote proceedings, we have also advocated for increased expansion of these proceedings. We have also maintained vigilance protecting our clients rights to due process and access to courts. In times of crisis there are, often understandable, sweeping uses of executive power aimed at protecting the public. If left unchecked, those powers have the ability to jeopardize individual rights and liberties. As criminal public defenders, we remain an important check on that power, and we take seriously our role in protecting the fundamental rights of all of our clients.

We continue to advocate for court appearances beyond those deemed "essential" by OCA and to open the courthouse doors, albeit virtually for the time being, for all of our clients. Defenders are not only ready and available to perform the daily work of public defense, we are eager to do so. Since Governor Cuomo first declared New York "on pause," we have been advocating for increased access to criminal courts. We have advocated with local administrative and

supervising judges, as well as with Judge Marks, to expand the scope of “essential matters,” to lift the suspensions of C.P.L. 180.80 and to provide for preliminary hearings, as well as to lift the suspensions of C.P.L. 170.70 and 30.30, and to reinstitute discovery and other statutory timelines. Since Executive Order 202.28, issued May 7, 2020, reinstated C.P.L. 180.80, we have advocated for the release of clients held beyond C.P.L. 180.80 time periods, filed writs of habeas corpus for those denied release, and advocated for the immediate scheduling of preliminary hearings. We have begun litigating these virtual preliminary hearings, and we continue to work with OCA and other stakeholders to expedite scheduling, demand timely provision of discovery materials, and advocate for meaningful due process during the course of these hearings.

For so many individuals, the fact of an open criminal case may have negative consequences, including those affecting employment, one’s housing situation, or even one’s ability to return to a place of residence. For clients involved in court-mandated programs, we have worked together with clients, providers, and the courts to achieve program completions even during this time and have worked wherever possible to resolve cases. But without the means to meaningfully access the court system or to advance cases towards resolutions, most individuals face indefinite delays in their cases. We want to remedy that delay and seek to work collaboratively with stakeholders to reopen the courts to the fullest extent possible. In the meantime, we have continued to work on our cases, negotiate resolutions with adversaries, and to prepare for eventual court reopening by achieving as much work on individual cases as can be achieved during this time.

Maintaining contact with our clients -- both those in custody and those at liberty --has been all the more important, and critical, during this time period. Clients look to us not only to explain what is happening with court closures and to explain why cases are on hold, but also to provide vital information about staying safe during this time. We have provided information about local relief efforts, including access to food banks, healthcare in the community, and personal protective equipment (PPE). We have continued to reach out to clients on a regular basis to check in on their well-being and have remained accessible remotely to the communities we serve.

The impact of our work as criminal public defenders is evident in the numbers. Collectively, we have achieved the release of hundreds of individuals from custody, which is in addition to individuals released through the City’s own release efforts. We have been integrally involved in the successful re-entry of our clients back to the community upon release -- a particularly important role during this health crisis. We have worked closely with clients released from custody, along with their families and community-based programs, to ensure a return to a safe and healthy environment. In addition to ensuring that clients have a safe and stable place to live,

we have connected clients with food and medical resources, as well as to PPE, and remain a steady resource to them.

The Role of Criminal Public Defenders in the Future

While we have been able to accomplish much on behalf of our clients despite the ongoing court closures, much of our work on behalf of clients remains on hold. And the number of pending matters only continues to rise. As arrests continue, and in fact, increase, our intake numbers increase as well. But the restrictions on “essential proceedings,” leaves us unable to fully litigate, let alone resolve, the majority of our cases. As a result, the backlog of resolved cases is growing exponentially. The carrying caseload of individual attorneys is on the rise and, if left unchecked, will reach numbers unseen in recent pre-Covid times. Even when courts reopen, jury trials may be on pause for some considerable period of time, only furthering the backlog of cases pending in any given courthouse. It is not just the sheer number of cases that is increasing, but much of the work on those cases that cannot be accomplished at present. For instance, because many prosecutors have stopped turning over discovery in cases, criminal public defenders will be inundated by a crushing load of discovery that will need to not only be downloaded and saved but also reviewed in order to adequately represent and defend. We were just beginning to work through discovery turned over in the months immediately following the implementation of discovery reform, only to have the current health crisis throw a logjam into that process by thwarting the continued flow of discovery to the defense. As the crisis continues, we anticipate the need for assignment of criminal public defenders to increase, as fewer people can afford private counsel.

The work to be done is there and mounting every day, and we are ready and eager to do it. It is what we do. But we do so with the recognition that with our new realities comes growing costs to running public defender offices. In order to continue providing quality representation to our clients, we have incurred unforeseen expenses. We have purchased and provided laptops to staff members who need, but did not have, access to computer equipment at home in order to be able to work remotely and have purchased new software vital to performing remote work. We have provided PPE to staff members who continue to work in the field or otherwise leave home to perform essential work functions, and have engaged deep cleaning services to keep our office space as safe as possible. The longer that remote work continues and what seemed at first to be a temporary stop gap measure becomes a longer term situation with no end in sight, the unanticipated expenses mount (e.g., increased internet capacity necessary for remote work, office supplies for home office use). Public defenders already face a well-documented technology gap when compared to District Attorneys Offices, the budgets of which dwarf those of criminal public defenders. With NYPD staffing slated to remain at current levels, we anticipate policing and arrests to continue at present rates. In order to not only keep up with rising caseloads, but

also to provide quality representation to all of our clients, we must, at a minimum, maintain funding at current levels and ensure that the City meets its commitment to provide phase one pay parity funding.

We recognize that fiscal responsibility is key for all stakeholders during this time. We take seriously our responsibility to save costs where possible and prioritize spending. As we continue to do that as the City's criminal public defenders, we seek to ensure that the same is true for prosecutors and law enforcement. We cannot effectively defend the rights and liberties of our clients if we operate at a funding deficit as compared to those agencies and actors within the criminal justice system whose goal it is to arrest and prosecute the very individuals we seek to defend.

Conclusion

We are committed to meeting the current and future needs of our clients. We take seriously our commitment to our clients and the communities we serve, and we will continue to fight for, and on behalf of, them to the fullest extent of our abilities. We seek to continue the feats we have achieved to date to reduce mass incarceration and to reduce the direct and indirect cost and harm of mass incarceration to those we serve and to the city as a whole. We have demonstrated our passion for our work and dedication to our clients -- as well as our capacity for creative and collaborative problem solving -- since the very first days of this pandemic. We will continue to do so, but we depend on the continuation of adequate funding in order to achieve quality representation for those whose voices we must uplift and whose liberty interests and freedoms we must vigilantly protect and uphold.

Hello, my name is Anna Larson von Muehlen and I am the Sustainability Coordinator at Compass Charter School in Fort Greene, Brooklyn (and also a mama to two little ones). Compass Charter School is an intentionally diverse, progressive, public elementary school that opened in the Fall of 2014. Our inquiry-based, integrated curriculum focuses on sustainability and the arts. For this testimony, I bring with me the voices of children at Compass, and I'm sure, many other school children, who know the absolute importance of composting. As we say in Education for Sustainability, "there is no such place as away" and that is why composting is so valuable to our city - our waste becomes our gold. As a city, we have been working to teach our children to compost at school and at home. These are city kids, who historically may not be used to getting their hands dirty, may not have known about the magic of worms and other decomposers, but now, as a city we have taught them the amazing gift of composting and nature's natural ability to recycle. Understanding composting at a young age sets them up to be strong community members and responsible citizens of this planet. Why would we take this away? These children merely ask that, as grown-ups, the City stands by its word - do not give up on Climate Justice and Zero Waste. Their future depends on grown-ups now not giving up. What do you plan to tell all the children who have been taught daily how important it is to compost?

Here's what our children can tell you about composting:

- Composting is healthy for the dirt (O, age 7).
- Composting is good for worms, snails, slugs, and other bugs (L, age 5)
- When you make compost the worms eat it, they help make plants, plants give us air, and it helps us breathe (S, age 7)
- Compost makes less garbage to put in the landfill (B, age 5)
- Worms actually poop what they eat (L, age 5)
- When you compost, you can't put some things - not plastic (D, age 5)
- You can't compost dairy & meat (in some places) - (O, Age 5)
- When you put stuff in the compost it makes better soil than the normal soil - (J, age 5)

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling education and outreach and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. There has to be a way for kids to compost at school. This is how they learn and if those brown bins disappear they will feel that what they learned was not important.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New

Yorkers to continue to source-separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- At least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- At least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- At least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- The City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to our community at Compass Charter School, our larger Fort Greene Community, and all the kids in our city who have high hopes for their future and believe in the sustainable practices our city has taught them. For our children, I hope the Council stands by their word (to fight for Climate Justice and Zero Waste), as grown-ups should, and prioritizes composting in the budget process.

Thank you.

Anna

SHELTERING ARMS

Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony submitted by Anthony
Prepared for the NY City Council Finance Committee
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
May 21st, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Anthony, and I'm a youth in foster care at Sheltering Arms. Thank you to Chair Dromm and to the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to share my story and submit testimony in support of continued funding for Fair Futures.

Sam has been my Coach since November 2018, and she has been a major asset to me. In early 2018, my Case Planner resigned and I felt like I didn't have anyone to confide in who genuinely cared and would listen to me about my day-to-day issues. I was very close to my former Case Planner, and had a hard time adjusting to my new one. I became very distant from my Case Planner and the agency, and was lost about what I wanted to do before I aged out of care. Since Sam's been my Coach, though, I've been happier and actively trying to get my life together – applying for jobs weekly, staying on top of my housing, and ensuring a better budget before aging out of foster care. I have also learned to speak up for myself and am currently working on becoming the best version of myself.

Having a Coach is different from having a Case Planner because most Case Planners only check on your living situation and if you're working or going to school – mostly asking you questions rather than sitting down and really listening about how your day was. A Coach helps you bring up self-esteem, encourages you, and makes you more comfortable opening up.

During the COVID pandemic, being trapped in the house and being stuck in one place can mess up your mental health and the way you move. But Sam has helped me during this time by texting and calling me to see how I'm doing and being a listening ear. I think Coaches are very important to have while this pandemic is going on so that when youth are having issues at their home they have somebody they can confide in versus them running away and going AWOL and losing out on allowance, or more importantly catching COVID. With a Coach checking in on you daily, they work with you to help you plan out something to do to keep you occupied while we're facing this dilemma. For me, for instance, before COVID made us go into quarantine Sam helped me find a certification internship, so for the last couple of weeks I have been able to do an internship online through Zoom and be paid and also receive my OSHA 30 in construction. I

think that's very important, because if I didn't have a Coach right now I would probably be broke while this whole pandemic is going on.

Coaches are really necessary to make sure that youth in foster care are prepared and supported to age out with a plan, especially now that so much is changing in the world. We need this support more than ever. Please fulfill the City's promise to youth in foster care and support funding for Fair Futures.

Thank you,
Anthony

New York City Council

Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget Hearing

Key Budget Priorities for COVID19 Recovery

May 22, 2020

Testimony from Anthony Tassi of Literacy Partners

Introduction

Good afternoon members of the Committee. My name is Anthony Tassi. I am the CEO of Literacy Partners and I am pleased to have this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you about key budget priorities for COVID19 recovery.

FY 2021 Budget Priorities

In order to provide the most effective COVID-19 relief, and the most effective COVID-19 recovery, we respectfully urge the Council to

- 1. Maintain Funding for City's First Readers**
- 2. Maintain & Baseline Funding for Adult Literacy**
- 3. Maintain & Expand Funding for Digital Inclusion**
- 4. Create a "Percent for Parents" Approach to Education Funding to Ensure Focus on Parents & Families:** Serving low-literate and limited English proficient parents of struggle K-12 students can be one of the best ways to promote and sustain student progress while powerfully addressing a key equity issue. The Council could recommend a specific percentage of educational funding (e.g., out of school time funding, literacy coaching, etc.) to be designated for the support of parents as students' first and more important teacher.

Literacy Partners Background

Literacy Partners operates in all five boroughs of the City of New York with the singular goal of enabling low-income and immigrant families to achieve their fullest potential. Our unique role

in the City’s education system is to focus on parents of young children and our unique approach includes working with mainstream media to create content that engages and inspires Latinx families. We partner with Head Start programs, UPK and 3-K programs, elementary schools, and other community-based organizations to offer educational programs that meet the needs of low-income and immigrant parents and caregivers of young children.

Our free classes, community workshops, and educational media programs help parents develop the skills they need to achieve success for themselves and a bright future for their family. Our programs support community development, help break the cycle of poverty, improve job prospects, and close the achievement gap among children before they even begin school.

Literacy Partners COVID19 Response

In early March, Literacy Partners saw the need to suspend in-person program and make a transition to online programming. The last day of our in-person programming was March 10th, and we spent the next five days working with our teaching and other support staff to move our programming online. Our first day of online English for Parents (ESOL) classes was March 16th. We have been using What’sApp to stay in communication with our students, Zoom to host our classes, and Google Classrooms to share class materials and assignments with our students. In addition, we have been posting segments of each of our classes on YouTube for students who miss classes or would like to review what was covered in previous class sessions. Since the suspension of our in-person programming, we have moved our La Fuerza de Creer (Spanish language program for parents), We Speak NYC, and Adult Literacy programs online and have continued to remain connected to the families we serve.

The Promise of Educating Immigrant Parents – with Head Start & UPK

Our primary objective in our English for Parents program this year, in addition to family literacy, has been health literacy and child-well visits in collaboration with our partner the Sunset Park Family Health Centers of NYU Langone. Despite our transition to online programming, we have continued to be successful in achieving our key performance indicators for the program.

Class:	FY18	FY19	FY20 YTD
% Increase Frequency Parents Reading w/ Children	58%	72%	76%
% Increase Time - Parents Reading w/ Children	-	52%	55%
% Increased Confidence Speaking English	48%	63%	64%
% Class Helped Improve English	99%	99%	100%
% Class Helped Reduce Stress	90%	94%	92%
% Child Benefited from What Parent Learned	98%	97%	93%

% Would Recommend Class to Friend or Family	98%	100%	99%
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As we transitioned to online programming, we found that not all of our students would be able to continue in the program due to increased childcare responsibilities, the challenges of helping young children with their online school work during the day, or not having access to reliable internet service or the necessary technology needed to attend online classes. The week children started online schooling in NYC, our attendance dropped significantly, and we worked closely with our students to move the program from a morning schedule to an afternoon and weekend schedule that would allow a majority of our students to continue participating in our classes. We have since retained 72 of 96 students in the transition from in-person to online programming.

At the request of our students, we shifted from reviewing previous course topics to covering new material and have been able to continue our health literacy curriculum and child-well visit intervention that we had been working on since the start of the winter semester in January, which our students have continued to engage with and find helpful for themselves and their families. We are currently in the process of working to connect the students in the English for Parents program with volunteers who will host 30 to 45 minute weekly video calls with our students in order to provide additional English speaking practice outside the classroom.

In response to COVID19, we have worked with the Sunset Park Family Health Centers of NYU Langone to provide important resources to the families we serve. Through our partner organization, we have been able to provide our students and their families with access to a food bank as well as assistance with signing up for SNAP, WIC, health insurance, and other important services at this time. We have helped connect our students with COVID19 testing centers and antibody testing centers, and continue to support our students and families with all that we can during this time.

The Promise of Helping Young Adult Parents Transition to College – with High School Equivalency Programs & CUNY

Our Leadership for Education and Parenting program with students currently enrolled at Bronx Community College for the winter/spring semester was designed to provide continued to support for the parents of young children who had participated in our program last year. We were able to enroll 10 of our former program participants into the program, but had to transition the program online after the in-person orientation due to COVID19 and the city's stay at home orders.

In order to ensure all of the students had the equipment they needed for the program, we purchased Chromebooks and headsets for each of the students and provided two students with WiFi hotspots, so they could participate in our program and continue their college studies.

Throughout the current programming, we have had the students assist us in making videos of the program for the Literacy Partners' YouTube channel with the intention of sharing the real-world experience of our students excelling in their college classes while raising young children.

What it Takes (Literacy Partners College Transition): <https://youtu.be/ZgZCsjf5PXc>

Mothers & Daughters (Literacy Partners College Transition): <https://youtu.be/NpbMWSwG6aE>

The Promise of Parent Education for Spanish-Speaking Parents and Caregivers – with Head Start, UPK, & CBOs

Literacy Partners, working in conjunction with Univision, has developed a unique program to address this inequity: *La Fuerza de Creer* parent education workshops. *La Fuerza de Creer* is a 5-episode mini-series about a community center threatened by real estate development. The families who rely on the center for child care must rally together with the staff to save the center. Woven into the narrative arc of the story are scenes of parents interacting with their children in ways that are known to promote early learning and social emotional development.

The miniseries was broadcast nationally on Univision in 2019 with average daily viewership of 1.4 million Hispanic viewers, including 284,000 average daily viewers in the New York metro area.

Before COVID19, the *La Fuerza de Creer* in person programming was showing excellent results across all indicators for the program. We had been hosting in-person programming at a number of Head Start, UPK, and CBO programs across the city and working with partners in Texas, Florida, and Pennsylvania to lead the programming in their communities.

Class:	FY20 YTD
% Increase Frequency Parents Reading w/ Children	38%
% Increase - Parents See Themselves as Their Child's Best Teacher	59%
% Parents Who Can List 3 Language Rich Activities w/ Their Children	74%
% Parents Who Have Implemented 2 or More Strategies Learning in LFDC	99%
% Parents Whose Knowledge of Child Development has Improved	89%
% Parents Who Agree That Building Child's Vocabulary (about Feelings) Increases Literacy Skills	98%
% Class Helped Reduce Stress	100%
% Child Benefited from What Parent Learned	100%
% Would Recommend Class to Friend or Family	100%

During our COVID-19 response, our program has helped parents with their digital literacy skills and with their children's remote learning.

New Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Total -- 8 Groups
% of Parents Increasing Frequency in which they use online resources to read with their children	61%
% of Parents Increasing Confidence Using Online Resources w/ their Children	53%
% of Parents Increasing Confidence Using Online Educational Platforms [Self]	54%
% of Parents Increasing confidence helping children use online educational platforms	53%

In response to COVID19, the *La Fuerza de Creer* programming was temporarily suspended while the program shifted online. In addition to continuing on-line programming utilizing the *La Fuerza de Creer 2* video series, we are in the process of creating a new website with digital media that all Spanish speaking families will be able to access and utilize. We are currently producing a short daily show, finalizing some of our Moments of Connection videos, and are compiling video recorded read alouds of children's books in Spanish that will all be accessible upon the launch of the website.

Conclusion:

I want to thank members of this Committee for convening this important and informative hearing. It is clear from your remarks and the testimony of all those who appeared today that this Committee has a unique opportunity to redress the systemic failures of our education system in the past and strike a blow for a brighter, more equitable future.

My name is James Antonaglia, a new resident of Astoria. I moved here last August for a teaching position at Bard High School Early College Queens, fresh out of my PhD. I'm thrilled to live here and am in love with my neighborhood and the city. In the midst of this crisis, however, I'm worried that the city is severely cutting funding for education as the budget gets tighter and tighter. As a new teacher, I'm personally afraid for my job's security, and if my own job is not in danger, the jobs of my new colleagues and friends may be. Class sizes will swell and materials and supplies for classes will dry up.

I've already grown so close to the immensely talented students of the Bard High School community. To swell the student to faculty ratio any further would be an immense disservice to our students.

I implore the committee, do not cut funding for Fair Student Funding, and do not enact a hiring freeze on teachers! Our students deserve the best, and our teachers need help now more than ever to let them do the best they can. Instead, raise taxes on the wealthiest of New Yorkers, rather than allowing education for New York City's most vulnerable to vanish.

City Hall Testimony
Areed Sheikh



Good Morning, Thank You for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Areed Sheikh and I am a junior at Bogota Jr. Sr. High School. I am an alumna of Generation Citizen and its Community Change Fellowship Program. When I think about civics education, the first experience I think about is when I wanted to speak about discrimination and racism in my school, but I was too scared. Although I went to a very diverse school, students were experiencing bullying based on their race and religious expression. During my Action Civic's class we learned how to research the problem and advocate for the rights of all students.

Skills such as self-advocacy taught through civic classes are extremely important for young students like myself who want to stand up for the right things, but are afraid their voices will never be heard or the issues that they care about have zero value in front of others. For example, Generation Citizen's Action Civics classes provided me with the political knowledge and advocacy skills that have helped me take pride and fight for the issues I care about that are impacting me and my community.

Before taking Generation Citizen Action Civics classes, I didn't know how to make my voice count among others. I continued to stay civically engaged through GC's Community Change Fellowship Program where I completed an internship at Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). This experience helped me improve my public speaking skills, how to serve people in the community and work in a professional setting. This morning, I'm here testifying in front of the New York City Council to advocate on behalf of Action Civics and organizations, such as Generation Citizen, that help students like me to grow and be a helping hand in our communities.



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

**New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing FY 2021
Honorable Daniel Dromm, Chair**

**Submitted by:
UJA-Federation of New York**

May 21, 2020

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
Committee on Finance, Executive Budget Hearing FY 2021
May 21, 2020

Thank you, Chairperson Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testimony on the New York City FY 2021 budget.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need. Our organization identifies and meet the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA connects people to their communities and respond to crises in New York, Israel and around the world, and supports nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

UJA submits the following recommendations and requests for the New York City FY 2021 budget:

Supporting Older Adults Throughout COVID-19 and Beyond

Providers of services for older adults have played a critical role throughout New York City's COVID-19 ongoing response and recovery efforts. Whether small community-based organizations or large nonprofits serving clients in all five boroughs, each has provided essential services to vulnerable older adults forced to remain in their homes throughout the pandemic crisis.

Each year, the City Council invests more than \$28 million to support Department for the Aging Core Services, Council Initiatives and discretionary funds to provide services for New York City's seniors. As New York City begins its long road to recovery, investments in senior services must be maintained or appropriately expanded in the FY21 Budget to support those deemed most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative

UJA urges the Council to maintain its \$4 million investment in the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative in FY21. In the wake of COVID-19, New York City's estimated 36,000 Holocaust survivors are among the most vulnerable to its impact.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, social workers funded through the Survivor Initiative have continue to provide the specialized care that survivors require due to the trauma they experienced during the Holocaust. There are many unique struggles survivors face today: the isolation, the return of memories of hiding, rationing food, being away from family, as well as sickness and death. They are also among the most vulnerable and susceptible to COVID-19. Because of this funding, survivors are not alone.

Restoration of \$4 Million will support:

- **Case Management to access benefits and support.** Case Managers are specially trained

in the psychological impact of the Holocaust.

- **Mental Health Services** including home visits to help survivors work through the traumas that now manifest in sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression and inability to trust
- **Trauma Informed Care** provided by professionals who recognize and avoid possible triggers, thereby reducing the potential for re-traumatization
- **Crisis Prevention** to help stave off eviction and hunger
- **Legal Services and entitlement counseling**
- **Emergency Financial Assistance** for food, housing, prescriptions, medical and dental care
- **Socialization Programs to reduce isolation**
- **Socialization Programs** to reduce isolation
- **Training & Support** for Caregivers and home health aides working with survivors
- **End of Life Care** including hospice and ethical wills

New York City must continue its commitment to Holocaust survivors. It is crucial to provide specialized care and support programs for survivors to enhance their quality of life and allow them to live out their remaining years with dignity. **UJA asks that \$4 million be restored to support Holocaust survivors living in poverty.**

Senior Centers

The senior center “model budget process” that began in 2017 remains unfulfilled. To date, only half of the \$20 million allocated to this exercise has been released; the remaining \$10 million promised for FY21 was not included in the Mayor’s executive budget proposal.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, senior centers have played a critical role in the wellbeing of more than 30,000 older adults. Senior Center staff have worked to ensure access to food; provided regular wellness check-ins, and swiftly shifted to virtual programming. Now more than ever, senior centers play an important role in connecting older adults to services and community supports. The “model budget process” was meant to right-size senior center budgets; however, these funds neither supported all of New York City’s senior centers, nor did they cover the full cost of services.

In addition to the remaining \$10 million promised, UJA supports an additional \$3.2 million investment in senior centers to increase equity across the system. A total of 38 centers were not included in the “model process” and have gone without funding increases.

\$26.2 Million for Home Delivered Meals Program (HDM)

The Home Delivered Meals Program has played a critical role in New York City’s COVID-19 response efforts. As older adults must remain at home, many do not have family or friends that are able to help them acquire food. While New York City has launched GetFood to help address this issue, demand for the HDM program also increased, with as many as 4,500 new clients now enrolled. The HDM Program currently serves 21,000 homebound older adults throughout the five boroughs, a number that continues to grow due to COVID-19.

Beyond simple meal provision, the HDM Program provides important supports for homebound older adults. Recipients of home delivered meals are chronically disabled due to heart disease,

mobility challenges, diabetes, arthritis or severe vision impairment and are reliant on these supports, that now, in a pandemic, serve as a critical lifeline for these older New Yorkers. Regular meal deliveries provide health and psychological benefits beyond nutrition and can act as an access point for other critical support services, which help older adults continue to live healthfully and safely in their homes.

However, New York City funds home delivered meals at a reimbursement rate that is far below the national per meal average for urban areas¹. This low rate does not reflect the actual cost of meal provision and delivery, nor does it account for the high cost of culturally competent meals, such as kosher or halal. A survey by LiveOn-NY of New York City showed that nonprofit HDM providers lose thousands of dollars every year providing home-delivered meals.

UJA requests the following investments to support the Home Delivered Meals Program:

- **\$8.5 Million for FY20 COVID Related Expenses**
- **\$14.7 Million for FY21 Increased Demand and Adequate Rates**
- **\$3 Million for FY21 Weekend Meal Needs**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

Classic and Neighborhood NORCS are multi-age housing developments or neighborhoods, respectively, that were not originally developed for older adults, but are now home to a significant number of older people. Throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, NORCs have provided vital response services to thousands of older New Yorkers, making continued investment in this program critical. NORC staff provide wellness checks to address mental health and social isolation; assist seniors in accessing food and other supplies, and coordinate services in residential buildings not developed specifically for seniors. These activities were crucial prior to COVID-19 and have become even more important since.

Without the support of the City Council many NORC programs would not be able to continue to provide critical services to so many older adults in New York City. In order to sustain and strengthen the NORC program, three key supports are needed in the FY 2021 City Budget:

1) Restore \$5.3 million to the NORC City Council Initiative, including \$1.3 million to support health and nursing services.

The FY 2020 adopted budget included \$5,325,325 in City Council NORC Initiative funding to support dozens of NORCs and Neighborhood NORCs. This included \$1.3 million to fill a funding gap for health and nursing services in NORCs, as well as funding to open five new NORCs. The Council must restore these funds to ensure these programs can continue to provide services to NORC residents.

2) Baseline \$1,000,000 for NORC Programs

The FY 2019 and 2020 budgets included \$1 million from the Administration to support certain NORC programs previously funded by the Council; however, these funds were never baselined. If this funding is not restored, the future of these NORC programs is uncertain.

¹ www.mathematica.org

3) Achieve Salary Parity for DFTA-Funded NORCs: \$1.7 million

While successfully providing healthcare, social services, and socialization opportunities to thousands of New Yorkers – and helping to defray Medicaid costs – NORC staff have been struggling with chronically low salaries, as contracts do not include cost escalators and have not allowed for meaningful raises in many years. The NORC network has seen high turnover rates for all positions, including directors and case managers. This is particularly challenging given recent increases to senior center staff salaries through the Department for the Aging (DFTA)’s FY 2018 “model budget” process. The disparity created through this exercise has yielded a scenario where senior center and NORC staff have similar responsibilities, workload, and client demands, but one staff makes significantly more than the other. On average, systemwide, senior center staff make roughly \$15,000 more than NORC staff.

Service Coordination in Senior Housing

UJA requests \$1.8 million to expand Service Coordination in Senior Housing. The Senior Affordable Rental Assistance Program (SARA) administered by the Human Resources Administration (HRA) currently does not provide service coordination funds for seniors referred to the program for the general lottery system. A \$1.8 million investment would allow for expanded services to an initial cohort of roughly 600 SARA units. COVID-19 has shown the gaps in services for seniors; this funding would help older adults access the services they need now and in the wake of the pandemic.

Restore and Baseline \$12 Million Investment for Community-Based Adult Literacy Programs

Thank you to the NYC Council for supporting and advocating for investment in adult literacy programs over the last four years. UJA-Federation urges the Council and Administration to restore and baseline \$12 million in critical funding for adult literacy education. This funding supports over 7,500 adult basic education (ABE), high school equivalency (HSE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students annually through programs in community-based organizations, CUNY colleges, and libraries across New York City. Losing this funding would eliminate hundreds of adult literacy classes at a moment when the need for digital literacy; health literacy; the ability for parents to independently support their children’s education, and the need to access, understand, and interpret complex information has never been more urgent.

There are approximately 2.2 million adults in New York City who lack basic literacy, English language proficiency, or a high school diploma. Limited skills impact almost every aspect of their lives, making it difficult to support their children in school, access health care, secure and maintain living-wage jobs, advocate for their rights as workers, and fully participate in the political process. Yet funding for adult literacy education is so limited that only 3% of these adults are able to access classes in publicly funded ABE, HSE, or ESOL programs in any given year.

Many of these adults are currently on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing essential work that is sustaining our communities. Some are the grocery store workers, delivery workers, and home care workers risking their lives to maintain their livelihoods and to care for us all. Others are the restaurant workers, salon workers, and domestic workers who have lost their jobs and

incomes and face a harsh reality with little or no safety net. Adult literacy education – and the additional support services that adult literacy programs provide – will play a vital role in helping to stabilize the lives of many of our most essential New Yorkers.

Over the past two months, adult literacy programs have quickly and effectively pivoted to remote learning and support for their students, adapting class activities, providing information on the rapidly changing health crisis, and transforming programming to ensure that adult learners do not get left behind. Using online platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom, students are continuing to build their reading, writing, and math skills, preparing for their high school equivalency exams, and increasing their English conversational skills. Parents are being supported by their programs to take on a greater role in the education of their school-aged children, a role that has become even more critical during these times.

Moving forward, adult literacy programs have the potential through remote learning to reach thousands of additional adults who may not have been able to previously dedicate the time to continue their education. The educational gains made over his time could prepare these adults to help restart the economy and ensure greater security for themselves and their families, rather than leaving them even more vulnerable and marginalized.

Food Insecurity

UJA thanks the Council and Administration for investing an additional \$25 million to support emergency food providers that have experienced increased demand and costs due to COVID-19. The pandemic has caused massive damage to the food pantry system, forcing many pantries to close due to pantries taking precautionary measures or facing a lack of volunteers. This funding is critical to ensuring that food pantries will be able to meet the demand as rates of food insecurity rise over the next few months.

Additionally, thank you for expanding the grab and go meals program to serve all children and adults in need and ensuring access to culturally appropriate meals at sites throughout the five boroughs. UJA-Federation looks forward to continuing to work with city partners as the \$170 million food plan is rolled out and presents the following recommendations:

- 1) Provide Emergency Food Providers with additional funding:** In addition to the allocation of \$25 million to the city's emergency food providers, UJA urges the Administration to increase funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program for expenses including: personnel costs; fresh, healthy, local food; and Personal Protective Equipment for staff. It is anticipated that food insecurity will increase among vulnerable communities in the coming months including those 18 and under who have lost access to food through the school meals program; those over age 60 who previously relied upon meal programs at senior centers, and those with disabilities who have relied on caregivers now impacted by COVID-19 and the need for social distancing. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of NYC individuals and families impacted by the economic downturn are newly food-insecure; they are now relying on the emergency food system to meet their needs.

In addition, UJA urges the city to provide guidance to emergency food providers for safely distributing and serving food during this crisis.

- 2) **Ensure New Yorkers are aware of the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot launched in April of 2019:** Last year, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service launched a SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot which allows SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase food online on Amazon, ShopRite and Walmart's websites. Due to COVID-19, the ability to shop and use benefits online is critical as many SNAP recipients are seniors and among those who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. UJA urges the City to invest in efforts to publicize this program so that SNAP recipients are aware of this option. UJA also urges the City consider ways to remove barriers to participation in this program, such as the delivery fees or expense of food available through the participating vendors.
- 3) **Expand, promote and streamline students' access to food through Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT):** P-EBT was recently expanded to New York State eligible households. This program will provide households with school age children additional benefits through their existing EBT card. Additionally, the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) is working to identify children in households that are not receiving Medicaid, SNAP or Temporary Assistance but are receiving free and reduced-price school meals. These households will be receiving a temporary EBT card with their benefits. UJA urges the City to invest in outreach to publicize this program to eligible families through avenues such as the Mayor's daily coronavirus briefings, the COVID-19 text alert service and the City's Covid-19 Food Assistance resource pages. Additionally, UJA urges the City to ensure that HRA is appropriately resourced and staffed to meet the increased enrollment needs as a result of P-EBT and Disaster SNAP.
- 4) **Advocate for all community college curricula to be classified as "career and technical education" for the purposes of qualifying for SNAP:** Food insecurity among college students is a growing concern with several recent studies suggesting that both two-year and four-year college students are more likely to be food insecure than the general U.S. population. Prevalence of food insecurity on college campuses ranges from 14 % to 56%.² According to the Healthy CUNY study, about 15% of students throughout CUNY campuses report they had gone hungry sometimes or often in the past year because they lacked resources to buy food, and almost a quarter reported that they had to skip a meal because they could not afford food.³ Based on this survey, about 60,000 CUNY students experienced food insecurity.

UJA also conducted a survey of CUNY students, specifically those affiliated with campus Hillels. Out of the over 600 students who responded to the survey, only 56% reported having consistent, dependable access to food. This is especially concerning

² Dubick J, Mathews B, Cady CL. *Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students*. College and University Food Bank Alliance, 2016.

³ CUNY SPH Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy. *Healthy CUNY: Promoting Health for Academic Success: An Assessment of Challenges and Opportunities at City University of New York*. February 2018. http://sph.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Promoting-Health-for-Academic-Success.2.12.18_-FINALpdf-2.13.18.pdf

because food insecurity is associated with lower academic success. Furthermore, COVID-19 has likely served to increase the numbers of food insecure college students.

The New York State budget included a provision requiring OTDA to expand eligibility for SNAP for college students by establishing a state policy that community college students engaged at least half-time in career and technical education courses of study are exempt from the requirement to work 20 hours weekly to qualify for SNAP. **To reduce the administrative burden of implementing this policy on OTDA, UJA urges the administration to designate all community college programs as “career and technical education programs.”**

Ensure Access to Summer Programs for Children and Youth

COVID-19 has forced cuts to the FY20 and FY21 Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) summer programming budgets, greatly impacting the lives of low-income youth and children and the financial stability of nonprofit providers throughout New York City.

UJA’s network of nonprofits provides summer programming and support to children and youth throughout New York City. Five of UJA’s partners oversee Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP); three oversee Beacons; two run Cornerstones; seven have COMPASS programs, and eleven provide programming for youth through SONYC programs. The majority provide summer programming for the children and youth in their communities. The proposed elimination of all DYCD funded summer programming for children and youth has devastated UJA’s network of nonprofits. More importantly, this will impact approximately 175,000 children and youth across New York City (many of whom are served by UJA’s partners) by limiting their options to engage in organized programs this summer.

UJA recognizes the economic impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on New York City. UJA also acknowledges the role summer programs can play in progressing New York City’s recovery from the pandemic. SYEP, for example provides income for youth that many will use to buy products from local businesses in their communities, and families of SYEP participants often rely on the income participants receive to assist with household expenses. SYEP also offers valuable workforce experience for the youth who engage in the program.

Summer COMPASS and SONYC programs not only offer participants structured programming during the summer, but also provide relief for parents and guardians who want to ensure their children are safe while they are out of school. If social distancing measures are relaxed or ended by the summer, many parents will be expected to return to work. The families that UJA’s network of nonprofits serve will most likely not be able to afford other childcare options, making COMPASS and SONYC programs a necessity for many to return to employment outside their homes. If social distancing measures are still in effect, community-based organizations who operate youth programs have the expertise and relationships with young people to ensure that they can remain safe and positively engaged indoors during the summer months. Many will be drawing on the virtual options they already have been offering children and youth since New York City’s schools were closed in March.

Community-based organizations stand ready to carry out creative solutions to support young people and their families through the summer, if New York City is still social distancing or just coming out of social distancing. **UJA urges the Administration to ensure families have the summer programs that they need to recover from this unprecedented crisis.**

Education Programs

Supporting UPK Programs in Community Based Organizations During COVID-19

UJA's network of nonprofit partners provides both half and full-day pre-kindergarten classes to communities in every borough of New York City. Each of these classes is usually located in a multi-service community center that offers care for children beyond the full day UPK program hours. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted how UJA's nonprofits educate children in their pre-kindergarten classes. During the early onset of the pandemic, nonprofits worked with families to ensure they had access to technology that would allow them to virtually participate in classes. Teachers had to quickly become experts in using Zoom and Google Classroom to connect with their students and advance their lesson plans. Programs have also provided additional support to families through phone calls and emails that include updates and resources for supporting children engaging in virtual learning. Despite these challenges, UJA's network has continued to provide high quality educational opportunities for the children enrolled in their pre-kindergarten classes.

Providers are concerned with their ability to transition from virtual learning back to teaching in-person while social distancing. In early May, programs were contacted by the DOE about Pre-K enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year with nothing included in the communication about how programs will have to operate in the fall due to the impact of the pandemic. UJA's partners have stated that they need guidance from the DOE on how their pre-kindergarten programs will need to adapt to adhere to social-distancing principles. **UJA urges the DOE to provide guidance to pre-kindergarten programs in community-based organizations as soon as possible on how to maintain the health and safety of the children in their programs when they are once again required to teach in-person.**

Pre-kindergarten programs are also concerned with reimbursement policies related to social distancing guidelines and decreased student-teacher ratios. Currently, pre-kindergarten programs in community-based organizations are reimbursed based on how many children are enrolled in their program. If programs must limit the number of children in their programs, they will be reimbursed less but will still have to maintain the salaries of the teachers and assistant teachers in their programs and continue to cover increasing costs like building maintenance. Space will also be an issue for programs, as well as having enough teachers and teacher assistants to oversee smaller groups of children. Lastly, programs will need additional cleaning supplies to sanitize their classrooms and will need access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for both the adults overseeing the program and the children attending. **UJA urges the DOE to work with pre-kindergarten programs in community-based organizations to understand the additional costs that are impacting programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and amend contracts to address the additional financial burdens programs are experiencing.**

Salary Parity for Early Childhood Educators

UJA thanks the City Council for their commitment during the FY 20 budget process to ending pay disparities between the DOE and community-based organization (CBO) early childhood education workforce. The pathway to parity agreed upon in July 2019 provided much needed hope for the CBO workforce that the City is committed to partnering with them to provide early childhood education services in their communities for the foreseeable future. UJA's network largely belong to DC 37-Local 215. Their updated labor contract that includes salary increases for their early childhood education workforce was recently ratified. Unfortunately, funds have not been added to their contracts to cover the additional costs related to achieving salary parity. **UJA urges the DOE to amend contracts quickly to fund the salary parity agreement so the early childhood education workforce in UJA's network can benefit from these increases.**

Birth to Five Services RFP

The due date for proposals for "Birth to Five Services" RFP was delayed until August 5th, 2019. Due to this delay, the DOE extended current contracts for 3-K, pre-K, and EarlyLearn center-based services through June 30, 2021. New contracts are anticipated to begin on July 1, 2021. As CBOs wait to hear if they have been awarded contracts in the DOE's new Birth to Five system, there are a number of issues they are concerned about, such as contracts not including COLAs, lack of cost escalators, and enrollment issues in programs.

The Birth to Five Services RFP provided approximate core day and year per child rates with \$12,000 per child proposed for 3-K for All participants and \$11,000 per child proposed for Pre-K participants. These rates are subject to revision and approval from city, state and federal funding sources. However, the RFP did confirm that the final per child rates will remain consistent throughout the length of the contract. This means regardless of additional costs, such as salary increases or the annual increase in health insurance costs, community-based organizations will be paid the same amount every year. The cost of providing high-quality early childhood education services increases annually. **UJA urges the Department of Education to include COLAs in UPK contracts and allow providers to adjust contracts to support cost escalators for rent, insurance, supplies and utilities, and appropriately account for fringe benefits over the life of the contracts.** Implementing these recommendations is critical to maintaining the financial health of UPK programs at community-based organizations.

The number of DOE UPK programs in public schools in an area impacts a CBO's ability to maintain full enrollment in their classes. Increasing the number of the DOE UPK programs has decreased the number of children attending programs at CBOs, harming their enrollment numbers and ultimately impacting their ability to remain financially solvent. The payment model in the Birth to Five Services RFP proposed calculating payment based on monthly enrollment, committing to paying a portion of the annual maximum contract value if a program is under-enrolled. While this alleviates some financial burden on CBO providers it still means programs will operate with less money than they previously budgeted for if they are under-enrolled once their new contracts begin in 2021. **UJA encourages the DOE to support CBOs to maintain full enrollment in their programs.**

Ensuring Access to and Achieving Salary Parity for Staff of Pre-School Special Education Programs

Young children with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are entitled to receive the services and supports included in their IEP. Preschool special education programs provide these mandated services and supports. Unfortunately, NYC does not have enough seats available in preschool special education programs to serve children in need of these specialized classes. Prior to the pandemic, hundreds of preschoolers with disabilities were sitting at home due to the City's shortage of preschool special education classes; some of them had been sitting at home for months. The DOE's own projections showed a shortfall of more than 1,000 preschool special education class seats for the spring.

Over the past two years, the City opened additional DOE-run preschool special education classes, increasing the number of seats by more than 1,000. However, the City is still falling far short of providing seats to all children whose IEPs mandate them. In fact, while the DOE opened more preschool special classes, a number of CBOs—which run the majority of the City's preschool special education classes—closed their doors due to insufficient funding. Unless government leaders intervene, hundreds of children will remain at home, fully excluded from the City's early childhood programming, even as their peers return to school. **We urge the Administration to ensure every child who requires a preschool special education program has access to one by either opening more DOE-run classes or supporting CBOs to serve this vulnerable population of young students.**

The City's shortage of preschool special education class seats is at risk of worsening because teachers who lead preschool special education classes at CBOs often earn salaries that are far lower than other teachers. This makes it difficult for CBOs to recruit and retain teachers. Last year, the City made strides toward salary parity for CBO early childhood educators, setting a schedule for salary increases so that their starting pay would be on par with DOE public school teachers. However, those salary increases apply only to educators in CBO preschool general education classes, excluding teachers working in CBO preschool special education classes. As a result, CBO preschool special class educators will now be some of the lowest paid teachers in the City, despite serving some of the City's highest-need students. Without ensuring salary parity for this group of teachers, the City runs the risk that this talent will leave CBO preschool special classes in pursuit of higher salaries at public schools and CBO EarlyLearn/3-K/Pre-K classes—thereby exacerbating the troubling shortage of preschool special class seats. **The City must extend salary parity to teachers of CBO preschool special classes so they may continue to support preschoolers with disabilities.**

Increase Supports for Students in Foster Care

When school buildings reopen, the DOE must ensure that every student has access to transportation to help them get to school. Federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students placed in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools.

Although the City Council Fiscal Year 2020 adopted budget stated that “the Administration has agreed to use existing resources to ensure bussing for students in foster care,” the DOE has refused to guarantee bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students.

While schools were open, the DOE continued to offer some students MetroCards, even when MTA services were insufficient to get the student to school. At this time, when the DOE will need to figure out how to make transportation work in light of social distancing requirements and the potential of staggered scheduling, the DOE must honor its commitment and ensure that students in foster care are included in its door-to-door transportation plans going forward. **UJA urges the Administration to ensure that the final budget includes sufficient funding for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.**

During this pandemic, students in foster care have faced significant barriers to meaningful participation in remote learning. These experiences have highlighted the need to have staff at the DOE with expertise on students in foster care.

There are specific laws and protections that apply to students in foster care, and the DOE needs staff members who have expertise in these areas and are tasked with developing and implementing policies to improve outcomes for these students. Personnel are also needed to answer questions that arise related to students in foster care, such as who signs consent for special education evaluations; who attends parent/teacher conferences, and whether the school can release records to the student's parent or foster parent.

Currently, there is not a single staff member at the DOE focused full time on students in foster care. While we recommend a small DOE office for students in foster care with a senior-level leader and borough-based liaisons, at a minimum, given the current budget challenges, the DOE needs one senior staff member focused on this population. **UJA urges the administration to ensure that the final budget includes funding for a DOE full-time senior staff member focusing on students in foster care.**

Lastly, UJA with the Fair Futures coalition recognizes that older youth transitioning out of the foster care system require additional supports to ensure academic and/or vocational success as they age into adulthood. The COVID-19 crisis has left youth in foster care feeling isolated, confused and scared. While so many other New Yorkers can lean on their families to get them through this challenging time, these youth require additional supports to assist them during and after the pandemic. Additional supports can include providing foster youth with access to a long-term coach from the start of high school through age 26, as well as providing social-emotional supports for foster youth in middle school. This is a proven strategy for increasing graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment, preventing system involvement, and helping youth get on a pathway to becoming self-sufficient, successful adults. Unfortunately, only 12% of NYC foster youth have access to this comprehensive coaching model.⁴ UJA is grateful for the \$10 million of one year funding the Administration included for the Fair Futures program in FY20. **UJA supports the Fair Futures FY21 budget request to include \$50 million in baseline funding for long-term, comprehensive support for all foster youth from middle school through age 26.**

⁴ <https://www.fairfuturesny.org/>

Increasing and Maintaining Investments in Mental Health Initiatives

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of New Yorkers with depression symptoms has increased from 12.1% to 36.8%.⁵ According to the Coalition for Behavioral Health, 70% of surveyed providers have seen an increase in the demand for services from new and existing clients.⁶

During and before the COVID-19 pandemic, UJA's nonprofit partners have provided vital community-based services to individuals experiencing depression, anxiety, grief and substance use. UJA's partners receive funding through a number of Mental Health Initiatives including: Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Children Under Five, Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health, and Medicaid Redesign Transition. UJA submits the following recommendations that will allow its nonprofit partners to continue to serve vulnerable populations through FY21:

Restore Funding for the Autism Awareness Initiative: \$3.2 million

UJA thanks the Mental Health, Disability and Substance Use Committee for its continued commitment to expanding City-sponsored services for people with disabilities, including the Autism Awareness Initiative. Seven of UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through the Autism Awareness Initiative.

The Autism Awareness Initiative funding allows UJA's partners to provide wraparound services to autistic children and youth in afterschool and summer programs. It also supports trainings for parents, guardians and caregivers of children diagnosed with autism. Most importantly, these supports and trainings are offered to individuals with autism and their families who are not eligible for services through the State's Office of People with Developmental Disabilities. In many cases, this is one of the few supports these individuals and their families can access in the community. Many providers stated if they lost this funding it would be extremely difficult for them to continue to provide the same level of services. The individuals who benefit from these services come largely from low-income households who would not be able to pay for these services on their own.

When the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to provide services in person, UJA's nonprofit partners began offering services funded by the Autism Awareness Initiative remotely. One of UJA's nonprofit partners provides workshops for caregivers and or parents of individuals with autism. These workshops provide participants with the tools they need to provide support to individuals with autism in their families. At the onset of the pandemic, this provider began offering their workshops virtually and has served more than 225 caregivers over 12 sessions, providing much needed support and structure to individuals with autism and their families during this traumatic time.

⁵ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Health Opinion Poll and Community Health Survey

⁶ The Coalition for Behavioral Health April Member Survey

Increase funding for the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI) by \$950,000 for a total of \$2.8 million

The GMHI supports organizations to provide individual and group counseling to older adults in non-clinical settings such as senior centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and food pantries, while also supporting in-home services for homebound elderly. The GMHI also provides financial support for in-home services such as psychiatric evaluations and counseling; such services are often not covered by insurance companies or are poorly reimbursed. By offering these services in a non-clinical setting, providers are able to adapt services to the needs of communities, without stigma.

One of UJA's nonprofit partners uses GMHI funding to provide outreach services for homebound elderly; operates an outpatient mental health clinic; offers social work and psychiatric services at satellite clinics throughout Queens and provides transportation for those unable to take public transportation. This multi-faceted approach to mental healthcare allows UJA's partners to connect older adults to mental health services and treatments they may not have been exposed to if this program did not exist.

Another UJA nonprofit partner focuses on providing in home psychiatric evaluations and counseling to homebound elderly, increasing access to mental health services for the elderly in a part of the city where access is limited.

Additional funding for this program in FY 21 would allow nonprofits to connect more homebound elder adults with the mental health services they need, particularly in the wake of COVID-19.

Maintain funding for the Children Under Five Initiative (CU5): \$1 million

One of UJA's nonprofit partners receives funding through the CU5 Initiative. The CU5 Initiative supports organizations that provide mental health services in clinics, early childhood classrooms, in the home, and in legal settings when families are involved with court proceedings. Through this initiative, mental health services are provided to infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children and their families. Participants develop psychosocial and educational skills and learn techniques for how to deal with trauma as a result of witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or mental abuse. Recipients of these funds provide screening and clinical evaluations, individual, small group and child-parent psychotherapy, consultations to pediatricians, preschool teachers and child welfare workers, and trauma-informed interventions. The CU5 Initiative providers develop and test interventions to find the most effective ways to treat this population and this information is replicated by mental health providers across the City.

Maintain funding for the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative: \$3.4 million

The Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health Initiative is a citywide initiative that assesses risk for mental health concerns and connects court-involved youth with non-profits that are familiar with city and state agencies. The Initiative also provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. These services are essential for preventing entry and re-entry into the juvenile justice system. At-risk youth often lack access to mental health services, family counseling, or other supports that will keep them from juvenile detention. This initiative

addresses lack of access to these important interventions through best practices in support services and referrals.

Maintain funding for Opioid Prevention and Treatment: \$3.5 million

Opioid Prevention and Treatment supports neighborhood-based prevention and treatment efforts related to opioid abuse. One of UJA's nonprofit partners receives funding through the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative. They use this funding to target Jewish Orthodox and Bukharian youth in Queens who are at-risk of engaging in opioid abuse. All participants in the program complete substance use screenings; those who are determined to be exhibiting at-risk behaviors or dealing with substance use issues participate in a 10-week program focused on prevention and recovery tools and resources. UJA is grateful to the City Council for increasing funding for this initiative by \$1.5 million in FY20 and urge the Council to maintain this investment in FY 21.

Maintain funding for Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health: \$2,255,493

This initiative supports a range of programs and services that address the needs of individuals with substance use disorder, developmental disabilities, and/or serious mental illnesses and their families and caregivers. One of UJA's nonprofit partners oversees two programs through this Initiative. One of the programs provides housing and services to ten people with serious mental illness who are transitioning from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization into a less restrictive setting. The second program is at a clinic where adults with mental illness and older adults receive mental health treatments in a group setting. The clinic provides services to approximately 900 individuals annually.

Maintain funding for the Medicaid Redesign Transition: \$500,000

This Initiative helps community-based organizations that provide mental health services transition from a fee-for-service model to managed care and value-based payments, as required under State Medicaid Redesign. The transition of children's services into Medicaid Managed Care, while initially expected to start in January of 2019, actually started several months later as a result of federal delays. Providers are in the midst of this transition and require support to ensure they are able to continue serving children and families. One of UJA's nonprofit partners receives funding through this initiative and uses the funding to cover the salary of the staff responsible for implementing electronic health records in their agency. UJA urges the City Council to maintain funding for this initiative at \$500,000 in FY 21.

Domestic Violence Services

Maintain funding for the Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative: \$9.3 million

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for domestic violence services. In an April 2020 needs assessment survey, UJA's network of nonprofit partners were asked what issues were currently impacting the populations they serve. More than 10% stated that domestic violence is impacting the clients they serve, with one agency stating survivors of domestic violence are one of the populations most negatively impacted by the repercussions of COVID-19.

The DoVE Initiative supports a range of services for individuals impacted by domestic violence that include case management, crisis intervention, referrals, counseling, empowerment

workshops, legal advocacy and referrals. Nine of UJA's nonprofit partners received funding through the DoVE Initiative in FY20. UJA strongly urges the City Council to maintain funding for the DoVE Initiative at \$9.3 million in FY 2021.

Supporting the Frontline Human Services Sector

New York City's human services sector was underfunded long before COVID-19. Government contracts do not fully account for the true cost of mandated service implementation—paying roughly 80 cents on the dollar. This created fiscal distress for many government-funded nonprofits pre-pandemic; these same organizations are now struggling to be nimble and respond quickly to New Yorker's needs throughout the City's pandemic response and recovery. The human services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust to make sure that individuals receive immediate, lifesaving services, as well as long-term support for their own recovery. To ensure continuity of service, New York City must commit its support to the financial stability of the human services sector.

While the City has committed to reimbursing for certain COVID-related costs, cash flow challenges for human services providers have only been exacerbated.

Human services workers are on the frontlines of New York City's pandemic response. The FY21 budget must provide human services workers with a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts; this investment would cost \$48 million. The previous COLA for human services workers is set to expire at the end of FY20. Further, UJA asks for the City Council's support and partnership in securing incentive pay retroactive to March 23, 2020, for all frontline human services workers that continue to show up for work during this crisis.

It is also vital to ensure that budget deficits are not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services.

UJA, along with its network of nonprofit partners, asks that the City Council further support the human services sector and ensure that no bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts. It is also imperative that City Council commits to holding New York City's historic investment to cover the true indirect costs on human services contracts steady.

Conclusion

As New York City begins its long road to recovery, UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs, services and resources that assist our City's most vulnerable and neediest older adults and the organizations that serve them.

I founded New Alternatives for Children (NAC) in 1982 to provide high quality services in support of birth, foster, and adoptive families caring primarily for medically complex children. During NAC's 38-year history, we have developed numerous innovative programs, have embedded critical medical and mental health services, and have continuously cultivated and offered opportunities that seek to enhance the overall well-being of the people we serve through education support, recreation programs and an array of different therapies. We are proud of our all the work we do and that we do it for the most vulnerable children within the child welfare arena.

NAC is a proud member of the Fair Futures Coalition. Fair Futures supports our young people in and aging out of foster care with wraparound support to achieve their goals as they approach adulthood.

Our Fair Futures staff has worked tirelessly to make sure that youth have access to housing, remote learning devices, household supplies, and programming to get through the crisis. They are delivering resources in vehicles, creating youth development opportunities that can be accessed online, and advocating in schools for things youth need to learn. They are coaches, education specialists, housing specialists, and vocational specialists. They are providing emotional support, when many programs and services that youth relied upon have been disrupted.

For the last 38 years, NAC has been working to provide foster youth with opportunities where they didn't exist before. Fair Futures is an essential component of this effort. This initiative goes where others have not, in providing funding for the staffing, tutoring, and services required to make sure children succeed beyond high school.

All of us at NAC urge the City to fulfill our responsibility to foster youth. We ask that the City Council work collaboratively with the mayor to continue funding this crucial initiative in the City's FY2021 budget.

Dear Speaker Johnson and Members of the NY City Council,

As the City Council continues with Remote Hearings and deliberations on FY21 Budgets, our theater joins other arts and culture organizations citywide in urging you and your staff to please look after the wellbeing of our sector. We hope that you will choose to exert your leadership in defense of DCLA's Culture Development Fund, Initiatives, Capital Projects, and Discretionary funding for arts and culture, which are all especially important for our communities of color.

Our unwavering promise: We will continue to make theater, music, dance, and film/media that's accessible and of value to everybody. We will continue to build a model nonprofit home for the arts in New York City. We will continue to join hands with diverse dreamers and collaborators everywhere.

Year in and year out, the City's arts and culture nonprofits bring in private philanthropic investments and generate local economic activity in diverse neighborhoods, effectively magnifying the impact of each public dollar allocation. FY21 will be no exception.

We recognize and applaud the tremendous labor of our elected officials during pandemic, and are carrying our part in keeping New Yorkers inspired and engaged while on pause, and excited about eventual reopening and recovery.

With much gratitude and appreciation, on behalf of all of us at Pregones/PRTT,

[Arnaldo J. López, Ph.D.](#)
[Managing Director](#)

[PREGONES / PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER](#)
[Bronx: 571-575 Walton Avenue, The Bronx, NY 10451](#)
[Manhattan: 304 West 47th Street, New York, NY 10036](#)
[718-585-1202 | \[pregonesprtt.org\]\(http://pregonesprtt.org\)](#)

[Get On The Bronx-Manhattan Theater Express!](#)

City Council Parks Committee Budget Hearing 3/13/20

Good Morning:

Chairman Koo, Council Members, thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns and request for much needed funding for Athletic Field Maintenance.

I am Aurora Flores on behalf of the United Athletic Association (UAA) a Not For Profit advocacy group representing some 16 Sports organizations throughout NYC. We're also members of the New Yorkers 4 Parks Play Fair Coalition and helped to get last year's increased budget for Parks.

We are back today asking for continued funding of parks and additional monies for a seriously needed **Field Maintenance Program**.

Please roll the videos & mute the sound. https://youtu.be/-BV_E5Qvk7Q

We will present our concerns and offer some recommendations.

We've compiled some footage we'd like to play that highlights damaged fields.

With no current maintenance program in place for natural surface grass and dirt fields compounded by the current lack of rules, regulations, and guidelines, these fields will continue to become unsafe and unplayable shortly after their construction or reconstruction.

The damage begins right after a couple of rain falls on reconstructed natural surface grass and dirt fields where the drainage system is hampered by improper removal of the water puddles throughout the fields. They quickly become uneven and rapidly worsen with every rain fall. Without proper water removal, standing water can sit for days—even in sunny 70 plus degree weather, the fields remain unplayable.

We want to call your attention to this video of a recently renovated field.

For those of you that also play on AstroTurf fields shared with soccer, you may have noticed that goals are not secured when dragged into position for a soccer game on oval fields that are made for Baseball and Softball. We've videotaped the metal goalposts being dragged against the grain causing damage and tearing the turf apart at the seams.

This field was resurfaced with a new turf just six months ago and cost us the taxpayers, and the City, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and is already in need of repair. You can see the damage taking place here on this video:

One way to avoid and ensure further unnecessary damage done to fields is the allocation of permits. Parks should follow their own Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines and only permit the sports appropriate to a particular field.

If Parks current rules and regulations are properly followed and fields are properly assigned and maintained, reconstructed fields can and will exceed its life expectancy remaining safe and usable throughout.

Currently there are no dedicated maintenance workers responsible for athletic dirt and grass fields outside of Central Park. Having a dedicated trained field crew performing the simple task of properly removing the water in the morning hours and allowing the sun to dry them will save everyone lots of frustration, time, and money.

We support the tremendous investment this body and the City has and continues to make in our Parks and Athletic Fields. Proper Field Maintenance must be given the importance and priority it deserves if we are to preserve the investments currently being made to upgrade and renovate these fields. We need to do better. **We need a maintenance program for Athletic Fields.**

We have more documentation highlights of these issues that we can present to you at your convenience.

Thank you for your time.



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ysaleagues.com

uaasports.org

RENEWING LOW-WAGE WORKER INITIATIVE FUNDING FOR FY21

Testimony from Magdalena Barbosa, Catholic Migration Services
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021
Executive Budget Hearings May 21, 2020

My name is Magdalena Barbosa and I am the Managing Attorney for the Workers' Rights Program at Catholic Migration Services. Catholic Migration Services is an affiliated agency of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens and provides free legal services to more than 3,000 low income New York City residents each year in the areas of workers' rights, tenants' rights and immigration. Catholic Migration Services is also a member of the Leap Coalition, a coalition of 18 of New York City based legal services providers.

I submit this testimony in support of the renewal and expansion of the Low Wage Worker Initiative funding. Now, more than ever, there is a tremendous need for the city to support free employment legal services for the City's most vulnerable workers, including low wage immigrant workers.

The Low Wage Worker Initiative has allowed organizations like Catholic Migration Services to represent workers, who have been denied their earned wages by unscrupulous employers, or need assistance obtaining work-related benefits through government programs. Workers throughout the city's immigrant communities rely on programs from legal services organizations, as many cannot access or afford private legal representation.

When workers' wages are stolen or they are prevented from taking paid sick leave or lose their employment due to discrimination, their families struggle to afford basic necessities, like putting food on the table and paying rent. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the need for funding of programs that protect the economic security of low wage workers has increased.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of millions of workers, including thousands of immigrant workers throughout New York City. Within the last two months, our

attorneys have responded to calls from hundreds of immigrants who have lost their jobs, fear for their health and safety on the job, and who have become sick or who have balanced the demands of working and caring for sick family members or children whose schools have closed.

A recent report by the Center for Migration Studies found that remarkably 70% of the undocumented labor force consists of essential workers.¹ Our team has counseled dozens of immigrant essential workers, such as restaurant workers, delivery workers and home health aides on their rights to be paid sick time and take paid time off from work to care for family members. Recently both New York State and federal government have expanded the scope of paid sick and family leave to those impacted by COVID-19 regardless of immigration status. The need for counseling and legal representation for workers at risk of contracting the virus will only increase as the city prepares to reopen.

Our attorneys have also screened and counseled workers about their eligibility for unemployment insurance, including workers now covered by the expanded unemployment insurance program as a result of recent federal legislation. Many immigrants who we have counseled these last two months, include house cleaners, gig workers, and workers who work off the books. We have helped many individuals navigate the process of applying for benefits, which can be daunting to many non-English speakers. Obtaining unemployment benefits that currently results in workers receiving at least \$600 in weekly benefits for up to 39 weeks is a lifeline to families.

The loss of funding of the Low Wage Worker Initiative would take vital services away from low-wage and immigrant workers in New York City just when they need these services the most. While we appreciate the constraints of the city's budget in the face of unprecedented

¹ <https://cmsny.org/new-york-essential-workers/>

economic turmoil, an investment in legal services for low wage workers will help keep workers healthy and improve their ability to pay for basic necessities such as rent and food. Catholic Migration Services calls on the City to fully renew the Low Wage Worker Initiative and to preserve this critical funding stream for years to come.

Bayside High School Funding

Gentlemen:

We are Alums of Bayside High School class of 1952. It always holds a special place in our hearts because we met their in 1950 and here we are 70 years later and still very much in love and happy to be married and alive.

We recently learned of the upcoming vote on the City budget that, If allowed to go forward, will permit the Department of Education to make even more financial cuts to our alma mater. We are asking each of you **not** to pass the budget without guarantees that the Department of Education will not cut school budgets and will correct long standing inequalities in the ways it funds schools. We are proud to say Bayside High School is our Alma Mater, and thank you for your consideration of a vote that will protect her and the future students that will be as proud to be Alums of Bayside High as we are.

Robert & Barbara Festa



May 19, 2020

Bridging Education and Art Together, Inc. (DBA: BEAT)
44-02 23rd Street, Suite 414
Long Island City, NY 11101
www.beatglobal.org
EIN: 27-4244192

Dear New York City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of arts education. My name is James Kim, and I am the Executive Director of Bridging Education and Art Together, Inc. (BEAT), an arts nonprofit organization based in Long Island City.

BEAT's mission is to unlock the social, emotional, and creative potential of underserved youth and people with disabilities through our Hip Hop-based arts education. We believe in the transformative power of Hip Hop to uplift and heal our bodies and minds -- especially during this time of great need for hope and encouragement.

Before the pandemic, on average, we positively impacted over 1,000 lower-income students and students with disabilities per academic year through our beatboxing, breakdancing, and lyricism workshops. NYC's Department of Education and Department of Youth & Community Development have been our two biggest partners in providing a safe haven for our youth to creatively express themselves through our culturally responsive programs.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city.

Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. Immediately following mandated closures due to COVID-19, we pivoted our programs to online platforms to continue offering our programming to our students in support of their emotional wellness. Based on their feedback, we know that the arts will play an increasingly crucial role in restoring the hopes and dreams of our youth.

Engagement in the arts supports the development of important life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and empathy, which help our youth thrive in the future. Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts through school-based programming. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city and need continued support to explore the arts.

NYC's arts and cultural organizations, like BEAT, are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to make our communities stronger as we rebuild. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Kim', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

James Kim
Executive Director, BEAT
917-862-7208
james@beatglobal.org



**Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
Thursday, May 21 2020**

Submitted by Beatriz Diaz Taveras
Executive Director
Catholic Charities Community Services

Good afternoon to Chairman Dromm and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. I am Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding the work of Catholic Charities in the delivery of social services and the challenges we will face in the long term as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on our economy, our clients and our City.

For over 70 years, Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York (CCCS) has provided comprehensive, professional human services to vulnerable, low-income City residents in the poorest communities of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Its network of services enables a participant in any of our programs to access a continuum of services which include: case management services to help people resolve financial, emotional and family issues; long-term disaster case management services; eviction and homelessness prevention; emergency food; immigration legal services; refugee resettlement; ESOL services; specialized assistance for the blind; after-school programs at summer camps and community centers; and supportive housing programs for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. Through its programs, CCCS serves more than 100,000 individuals each year without regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

The Challenge:

The impact of COVID-19 on the communities we serve, particularly immigrants and communities of color, has been and will be harsh, disproportionate, and lasting. Even before the pandemic, clients reported high levels of anxiety, distress, uncertainty, instability in family life, economic insecurity, lack of income, and food insecurity. This combination has effectively acted as a pre-existing condition, intensifying the health, social, economic, and financial challenges that, with each day, have become increasingly dire.

Compounding the challenges facing these communities is that their members are more likely to have “essential” jobs that put them on the front lines of the war against the virus. Holding positions as healthcare professionals, grocery store clerks, delivery truck drivers or day laborers increases their likelihood of contracting the virus due to inability to practice social distancing and an overall dearth of PPE. Breadwinners often face a stark choice between risking health and losing the ability to pay rent and utilities. In the Bronx, where COVID-19

deaths are highest and where the March unemployment rate was 5.7%, individuals and families increasingly rely on pantries for food and household goods. Immigrant families face additional obstacles, as questions of status preclude them from most federal financial assistance.

Intertwined with economic and safety concerns are the educational difficulties disproportionately experienced by communities of color. Technology shortages have left students without the devices or connectivity to participate in remote learning, and multi-language learners have had difficulty navigating remote learning because of language barriers. With the suspension of both Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and the summer day camp programs, our the most vulnerable and underserved youth in our city will be facing a devastating summer. The cancellation of summer day camps will leave thousands of children without constructive activities and guidance during otherwise idle summer months. Children will not be able to gain the valuable career experience and life skills that come with the SYEP program. Additionally, many of these children rely on summer income and contribute to their own family's household expenses. The loss of this income will add to the ever increasing financial crises that many of our clients are already facing.

Catholic Charities Responds:

Catholic Charities is grateful for the City's partnership in responding to the deluge of case management needs brought on by COVID-19. In collaboration with City agencies, we have migrated our CCCS Helpline and the Immigration Assistance Hotline to a telephonic model that connects case managers and New Yorkers in need of services or referrals, including eviction prevention, mental health services, applying for government benefits, and emergency food. Food pantries throughout the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island have switched to a grab-and-go model, and eviction prevention sites in the Bronx and Harlem have implemented a hybrid office-remote work model to continue providing services to those at risk of becoming homeless.

Complementing case management efforts, our Immigration and Refugee Services and Day Laborer Outreach and Services divisions have mobilized quickly to respond to the needs of vulnerable immigrant families. Within a few weeks of the pandemic's strike, our Immigration and Refugee Services Staff reached out to our client base and identified over 950 families and 3,000 individuals who had lost work and run out of financial resources. A rapid response was organized that over the course of the past three weeks has supported 426 households with the most basic of these needs. Staff visit *paradas* three times per week sharing information on social distancing and proper hand washing and sanitizing, provide daily wellness calls monitor health and economic status, hear concerns and testimonies, and provide short- and long-term planning.

The Alianza Division of CCCS is at the forefront of providing youth and community resources to the Washington Heights, Highbridge and Harlem communities. Staff have engaged 2,600 students and families in wellness calls, distributed 3,100 bags of food, and provided 110 tablets to students lacking access to remote learning. Multi-lingual students

receive in-depth support from staff, including trouble-shooting computer/internet issues and providing academic assistance, to ensure they do not fall behind.

Conclusion:

New York City' wealth of diversity of nationality, ethnicity, culture, and race makes it strong and unique, even as the COVID-19 crisis disproportionately impacts its communities of color. Loss of life, widespread unemployment, vanishing incomes, a shrunken job market, and emotional stress and trauma, among other challenges, will require a multi-year recovery effort geared towards the most heavily impacted communities in New York. The pending recession will require extra resources in case management, workforce development and even to meet the most basic needs of food and housing. In particular, the shifting economic landscape will create new opportunities that demand new skills. The rising need for individuals trained in administering COVID-19 tests and conducting contact tracing is just one such example. Funding should be allocated to mount a strong workforce development program that will help New Yorkers take charge and thrive in these emerging occupations.

Recognizing the challenges faced by state and local governments and the uncertainty of receiving further federal assistance, we have partnered with other nonprofits to employ creative measures to secure assistance for vulnerable New Yorkers. We have requested that New York State submit an application for FEMA-funded Disaster Case Management assistance, a proven vehicle that helped New York recover after 9/11 and Super Storm Sandy. Available resources will only be effective if they are accessible to the vulnerable communities they intend to serve, and those who are struggling with multiple problems will need all the supportive elements that this program provides: timely and accurate information, an individualized recovery plan, benefits coordination, resource sequencing, appropriate referrals, facilitation of interagency communication, and most importantly, client advocacy.

Catholic Charities is proud to partner with the City and other nonprofits to help these communities meet the challenges of this pandemic, and looks forward to continuing these partnerships in helping usher a period of sustained and equitable recovery.

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/20/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Becca Bernard. As a teaching artist who has worked within all 5 boroughs with over 5 organizations, New York City Children's Theatre and the Theatre Development Fund to name two, bringing arts education to NYC Public Schools, I would like to advocate on behalf of the inclusion of arts programming in public schools. I saw it happen just yesterday, on a remote call with a public school in Queens where I am co-leading a bilingual residency that focuses on literacy through the use of theatre, play-writing and music. The smiles on student's faces as they act out different emotions, move their bodies and have the opportunity to share words in their home language. It's almost as if a light goes on in their brain. Every time I work with a new group I become nervous—will the students be interested in sharing their ideas in this way? Yesterday in particular, with the new Google Meet format, I held my breath as I waited for the responses of students—we had asked them to type one word into the chat box to describe how they feel about the upcoming workshop...one by one the answers came in....excited, happy, excited, excited... Often I work with teachers who tell me certain students begin speaking in class for the first time during and after our workshops.

Here is a little more info on the stats of one of the main organizations I work for: Every year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K-5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all 5 boroughs. We are dedicated to serving every New York City student, and have designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and MLL's.

Currently, 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging virtual programming:

We are currently running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, and creating a database of online programming named "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online.

We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district.

We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students.

We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences.

New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on the grant programs that we receive each year from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be

unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development.

Please consider the work that these programs do for our young people and how especially now they need these programs to help make sense of the world.

Thank you,
Becca Bernard

I offer heartfelt testimony in support of NYC's vital arts and culture sector.

Not only am I employed by a non-profit organization in the sector, but arts and culture are at the center of how I live and thrive in NYC.

The arts are, frankly, a reason that I and so many of my friends and colleagues choose to stay in the city year after year. (It is certainly not the astronomical rents, rising cost of living, or overcrowded subways and buses keeping us here.) It is the all-are-welcome-here community of creators, the vibrant cultural landscape, the sheer diversity of creative expression we find across all 5 boroughs that keep us here.

We are a vibrant economic sector with a significant multiplier effect for local small businesses. It is not in the city's economic interest, nor is it true to who we are as a community, to cut funding to the sector. Diminish our arts and culture sector, and I think you know that we will see a massive brain drain of our creative economy from our beloved city. That cannot possibly bode well for our long-term recovery.

I am a member of museums and a performing arts subscriber. I patronize organizations, large and small, in all 5 boroughs, because they are so representative of the nature of our city of neighborhoods. These places bring the whole world to our doorstep through food festivals, cultural centers and local performances. They show us that the arts exist in every corner of the city, not just Museum Mile and Lincoln Center. They make our city a center of the world, a clearinghouse for new ideas, experiences and ways to imagine the future together.

Please, do not let the anticipated citywide budget cuts fall disproportionately on DCLA, which supports so many small community-based arts organizations. Public funding is life-or-death for so many of them. And let's not slash arts education funding at DOE, telling our city's young people that their creativity is a disposable "extra."

Our city's recovery will require creativity, imagination and heart. What other sector embodies these values more than arts and culture?

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Hannah Berson
Astoria



**Testimony of
Beth Finkel
AARP New York**

**New York City Council
Committee on Finance**

Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing

May 21, 2020

**Remote Hearing
New York, New York**

Contact: Beth Finkel (212) 407-3717 | bfinkel@aarp.org

Good morning Chairperson Dromm and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Beth Finkel, and I am the State Director of AARP New York which represents 750,000 members age 50 and older in New York City. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the important funding decisions you must make. These decisions are made all the more urgent by the increased health and economic challenges facing older New Yorkers.

For nearly a decade AARP New York has been conducting research to inform everyone about the challenges facing our aging population and about the changes we must make to help them safely and securely age in the communities and homes they love.

Our research has made clear that pocketbook issues are the greatest source of stress facing City residents ages 50+. Those residents account for nearly a third of our population, and their numbers are expected to increase by 30% in the next 20 years.

Financial hardships are felt most acutely by our aging African American, Hispanic, and Asian American residents. As a matter of fact, our most recent report, *Disrupt Disparities 2.0: Solutions for New Yorkers Age 50+¹*, identified that in gentrifying neighborhoods, the median annual income for older Whites is as much as \$100,000 higher than for older African American or Hispanic residents. Moreover, residents ages 50+ are now facing a completely new host of challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating both their health and financial difficulties.

The Council has been generous over the years with its support for older New Yorkers. But now, more than ever, we must do more. Hundreds of thousands of older New Yorkers are counting on you to help see them through this crisis.

Nonprofit senior serving organizations are counting on you, too. They are shouldering too much of the cost of caring for seniors, and we are concerned about their long-term sustainability, especially as many of them struggle to raise funds because of the recession.

¹ <https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/7c/47/7311bf8d4933b35b2f9f15d06de9/dd-booklet-2020-pdf-for-web.pdf>

More than 21,000 homebound older adults are receiving home delivered meals across NYC, a number that continues to grow due to the pandemic. However, many of the nonprofits who serve these meals lose thousands of dollars every year on the program because of the gap between what the city pays per home delivered meal and the actual cost of that meal.

That is why I am here to urge you to add \$26.2 million for home delivered meals, to finally cover the gap in funding that existed before the crisis, and the increase in costs, so that we can ensure that homebound older adults don't go hungry as a result.

Beyond that, we ask you to increase investments in older adults and the people who provide them with services and support.

We'd like to see \$1.7 million for staff pay parity in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and \$1.8 million to expand service coordination in the Senior Affordable Rental Apartments program. Those two investments alone will impact nearly 12,000 seniors.

We also would like to see increased investment in senior centers, which serve approximately 124,000 older New Yorkers. In particular, we would like to see the remaining \$10 million in funding that was promised as part of the Model Senior Center Budget process that took place in 2017, but was not included in the Executive Budget.

We would also like to see last year's \$9.7 million Council investment baselined, which included funds for home delivered meals, senior centers, NYCHA community spaces, and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities.

We also urge the Council to not make any cuts to senior services discretionary funds. Each year you generously include over \$28 million in funding for these initiatives, in addition to individual discretionary investments. Social isolation is a bigger threat for older New Yorkers than ever before, and these programs are crucial to supporting them through this crisis.

In context of the overall City budget, this isn't a lot of money. But it would amount to significant support for older New Yorkers and the organizations that serve them, and its absence could be devastating. We

are counting on you to protect older New Yorkers, and you can count on AARP's support to do what it takes to get it done.

In addition to these requests, I would like to bring some other key issues to your attention—Vision Zero, pedestrian safety, subway accessibility, and access.

Transportation has always been a priority issue for older New Yorkers. Our transportation networks hinder or help older New Yorkers get to where they are going. Transportation policy and laws impact the livability of neighborhoods, and whether on the streets or the tracks, greatly affects the safety of older New Yorkers.

Moving around 8.4 million residents, plus millions of out-of-town commuters and tourists, was complicated enough before the pandemic. It is certain to get more complex now as funding streams for services and upgrades get tighter, and people change their transportation choices and behaviors because of the pandemic.

What is also certain to stay constant is the need to provide residents – especially older New Yorkers who account for nearly a third of our population, and whose numbers are expected to increase by 30% in the next 20 years – with safe, accessible and convenient transportation options.

As you know, incidents of speeding have gone up, which can make our streets less safe for pedestrians. Although there is increased enforcement, for which I'd like to commend the NYPD, we are concerned that as more people start going out and more cars get back on the road, there's a greater potential for pedestrian injuries and even fatalities. This is especially concerning in communities of color. Our report, *Disrupting Racial and Ethnic Disparities: Solutions for New Yorkers Age 50+²*, found that neighborhoods of color have more pedestrian accidents. We hope that the city will continue their commitment to Vision Zero initiatives and keeping New Yorkers safe.

We are also concerned about the progress the MTA will continue to make with subway accessibility. As you know, too many stations lack elevators, making it impossible for too many seniors to use our

² <https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/99/73/da48247723efcc428025125d3ddb/aarp-disparitiespapersummary-booklet-final.pdf>

extensive subway network. Again, this is a bigger problem in minority neighborhoods. Our research shows that a lack of accessible transportation has a real impact on African American, Black, Hispanic and Latinx New Yorkers ages 50+, including missed doctor's appointments, forgoing medical treatment, failing to get prescriptions filled, and becoming isolated from friends and family.

The pandemic has already had a huge impact on the system and the budget. McKinsey & Company put the total economic impact of the pandemic on the MTA operating budget this year between \$7.1 billion and \$8.5 billion.

Once the NY-PAUSE order is lifted, New Yorkers 50+ will need accessible subway options. Additionally, when we re-open, New Yorkers and commuters will still want – and need – to maintain social distance. However, they – all of us – will also want to go out and resume at least some of our normal activities. We believe this will require us to rethink the use and accessibility of our streets, sidewalks, and open spaces.

AARP New York appreciates the efforts of the Council to address mobility and spacing in the current environment. We would like to be a part of further conversations on long-term solutions to address these needs, given the complicated budget situation.

Lastly, we urge you to do all you can to preserve and sustain our community-based organizations. Our CBOs and not-for-profit organizations provide critical services and resources to our communities, and in times like these are finding themselves doing more with less. We must ensure that these necessary organizations are protected and sustained through this crisis and beyond to enable them to continue the work of lifting up our communities.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to testify today.



New York City Anti-Violence Project
116 Nassau Street, 3rd Floor
New York, New York 10038
212.714.1184 voice | 212.714.2627 fax
212.714.1141 24-hour hotline

AVP Finance Hearing Testimony for May 21 (Held Jointly with Capital, Immigration)

Good afternoon, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and Chair Menchaca, my name is Beverly Tillery, and I am the Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). I am grateful to be testifying at this Finance hearing at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic makes AVP's work that much more important. My testimony today lays out the funding restorations we are seeking from the City Council that allows us to do our vital work.

We appreciate the Council's past support of AVP, and our work with and for LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. AVP is the only LGBTQ-specific victim services agency in New York City, and the largest organization in the country dedicated exclusively to working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence, and the majority of those we serve (65%) are queer and trans communities of color. AVP's work has a special focus on intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence (SV), hate violence (HV), hookup/pick-up/dating violence, stalking, and institutional violence. AVP contracts with HRA as the City-Wide provider of non-residential domestic violence services to LGBTQ communities, and we are the only LGBTQ-specific rape crisis center in New York State. We operate a 24/7 hotline that is bilingual in English and Spanish and provide legal services, counseling, and community organizing and advocacy to our community. All of our services are free, confidential, and have moved online and remote as a result of COVID-19.

During this time of crisis, AVP's core client base, those most impacted by violence and underserved, are even more vulnerable and are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The people we serve includes: low-income (including homeless) individuals; transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) communities; undocumented immigrants including those seeking asylum; people of color (including Black and Latinx New Yorkers who have some of the highest COVID-19 related fatalities in the city); individuals who are incarcerated or involved in the criminal legal system; sex workers; and those at the intersections of these identities.



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116 Nassau Street, 3rd Floor

New York, New York 10038

212.714.1184 voice | 212.714.2627 fax

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Given that LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities already have poorer health outcomes than their non-LGBTQ peers living without HIV, the issues for our communities, particularly for queer and trans communities of color, in this pandemic are acute and urgent.

In addition to the health concerns, right now, many in our community are facing instability in other ways; many have lost part-time and full-time work, their access to health care may be limited, or they may be unable or afraid to seek resources because of their immigration status. For example, an AVP asylum client was kicked out of his home after testing positive for COVID-19. Many of our clients are sheltering in place with the very person causing them harm, whether it is an intimate partner, a roommate, or a family member, as intimate partner violence incidents rise during this pandemic.

We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. But even with federal aid, we understand the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However, any cuts to City Council discretionary funding will grow inequities in this city and will have a damaging impact on organizations serving LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities of color. AVP holds other competitive contracts with HRA and MOCJ, and we use discretionary funds to expand that work further into marginalized communities. It is deeply disconcerting to have our remote work honored in one contract, but not others. Additionally, the discretionary funding process is deeply important to engage grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color who often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process. We encourage the City to maintain its discretionary budget and find other ways to find savings and efficiencies in the FY21 budget.

On that note, AVP is seeking a restoration in our funding around general operations, DoVE, the Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative, the Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services initiative, Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence, and Legal Services for the Working Poor Initiative.



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212.714.1184 voice | 212.714.2627 fax

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General operations (Request for \$125,000, Speaker's Initiative). City funding supports our most core and important work of operating our bilingual hotline and providing citywide, free direct social services including counseling and legal support, outreach, education, information, safety planning, and leadership development to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence.

DoVE (Request of \$45,000). Additionally, a restoration of funds for DoVE citywide will support AVP to work with LGBTQ survivors of violence and their specific needs when experiencing intimate partner violence. AVP will be able to continue to provide intake, crisis intervention, safety planning, and case management, including counseling, information, and referrals to provide support and safety for LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence through this funding. We thank the Speaker and Council Members Powers, Rivera, and Van Bramer for their past support of this funding.

Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative (Restoration of \$77,500, Enhancement of \$72,500. Total request: \$150,000). AVP is also seeking a restoration under the Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative. AVP played a key role in establishing the HCP initiative last year, and the funding supports our work to collect data about hate crimes against LGTBQ people, provide support services to survivors of hate violence, do community education including upstander/bystander intervention trainings, and do rapid incident response. AVP took leadership for the NYC Day Against Hate in February, joining eight other partners to lead 20 bystander/upstander intervention trainings that trained hundreds of New Yorkers on effective techniques to de-escalate potentially violent incidents. This funding remains critical as violence against LGBTGNC people has not ceased during this time of social distancing, and anti-Asian bias and anti-semitism continues to rise. With a restoration in funding, AVP will continue to deliver bystander and upstander intervention trainings online, operate community-based, culturally competent reporting of hate violence incidents, provide free counseling services, and do rapid incident responses to violence.



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Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services initiative (Restoration of \$100,000). AVP also seeks to sustain funding to support outreach work to LGBTQ sex workers and those involved in the sex trades who are survivors of violence. As part of this new initiative in FY20, AVP has worked to outreach to people in the sex trades and assess their needs for the planned services center, and has collaborated with community members to both plan outreach (now online) and support leadership development.

Additionally, AVP has received past funding under the **Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence (Restoration of \$55,000)** and **Legal Services for the Working Poor Initiative (Restoration of \$47,500)**, and seeks renewals under these initiatives. Our legal staff have expertise in working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected low-income and/or immigrant survivors of violence (including specific types of immigration relief such as asylum, VAWA petitions, U and T visas). This funding allows our legal department to continue to provide legal services around with civil legal matters such as name changes, asylum, family law, housing, public benefits, and outreach to the community including emergency legal clinics for immigrants, Know-Your-Rights Trainings; legal trainings for attorneys, judges, and advocates, and more.

Lastly, AVP is also seeking funding around **Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary Immigration Legal Services Initiative (Total coalition ask: \$800,000. Request from AVP: \$220,000)**, a new initiative to provide funding, spread among six organizations, to bolster the resources of agencies that have experience providing legal services to transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary (TGNCNB) immigrants. Our legal staff have seen a 30% increase in the number of clients seeking assistance with immigration matters in 2019 over 2018, with demand only continuing to increase. This funding is very important in serving this extremely vulnerable population, as TGNC immigrants and people with unstable documentation status are even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis. These community members are not eligible for the stimulus checks distributed by the federal government, are often employed in unstable employment situations or informal economies, and are subjected to anti-TGNC bias and violence, both here in the United States and also back in their country of origin if deported.



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We appreciate our consideration of these requests of funding. We stand with our partners in the nonprofit sector advocating against any cuts to discretionary funding now or in FY21. The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for 0.42% of the city budget. Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities.

We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19. AVP is also a part of the Communities United for Police Reform coalition calling for proportional cuts to the NYPD so the City can spend that funding on vital services for marginalized New Yorkers including LGBTQ survivors of violence.

AVP looks forward to our continued partnership with the Council to ensure that NYC's LGBTQ communities have access to culturally responsive, inclusive, and affirming safety, support, and services, during and after this pandemic. We appreciate your past support of AVP, and our work with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence, and hope for your continued support as we serve these populations during this tumultuous time. Thank you, Chairs Dromm, Gibson, and Menchaca for the opportunity to testify.

Beverly Tillery

btillery@avp.org



590 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10011
212-633-9300
www.nyfoundling.org

**Testimony of Bill Baccaglini
CEO and President
The New York Foundling**

**To the New York City Council
Finance Committee**

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Bill Baccaglini, and today I am speaking to you on behalf of The New York Foundling. As one of New York City's oldest and largest nonprofit providers of human services, The Foundling is deeply in tune with the needs of our community, and we are grateful for all that the Council has done in the past year to ensure that those needs are met. As the City faces a historic crisis, it is crucial that the City Council's investment in vital resources, like those provided by The Foundling and our peers, rises to meet the growing challenges.

Since 1869, The Foundling has served the New York City community, protecting and nurturing the wellbeing of our neighbors. Today, our work touches the lives of 30,000 people every year, with a focus on helping our neighbors navigate complex systems and address intersecting needs—including medical and mental health care, education, housing, accessibility, and social services. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on New York City, The Foundling has stepped up as a leader in our community's crisis response, responding with creativity and commitment to strengthen wellbeing across our spectrum of services. I am pleased to share that every single one of our programs is continuing to provide services during the pandemic that are adapted to the current situation. However, maintaining the current level of services is not enough to meet the growing needs of a community that has suffered severe loss as a result of the virus. The Foundling and our peers in the human services sector require increased resources and investment to strengthen our community and help our neighbors weather the crisis and the toll it has taken on their physical, emotional, and economic wellbeing.

This year, the New York City Council's support was integral to combatting the threat of child abuse in our City through your support of The Foundling's Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP). Under the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of funds again threatens CAPP—even as the public health threat of unreported child abuse is growing.

CAPP educates children and the adults in their lives about their right to safety and to how recognize, resist, and report abuse. Each CAPP workshop includes a presentation using life-sized puppets followed by an opportunity for children to speak to a trained counselor to ask questions, or to report abuse—disclosing traumas they have never been able to speak of before. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of children who participated in the workshop were given the words and courage to speak up about experiences of abuse that would have otherwise gone unreported. Now—as the stresses of social



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New York, New York 10011
212-633-9300
www.nyfoundling.org

isolation, anxiety, and economic insecurity strain family relationships and internet predators seize the “opportunity” presented by increased online activity—we expect the need for this program to surge in the coming year.

It is for this reason that we are requesting an increased grant of \$450,000 for CAPP, which would enable us to operate the program at full capacity, promoting child safety in 150 schools across all 5 boroughs, reaching 20,000 children per year. During the current program year, which saw 8,215 students to date, 37 children disclosed incidents of abuse which were reported to the State Central Register or law enforcement. This history shows that if the program received the funding necessary to operate at its full capacity, the program would expect to bring to light 90 serious cases of abuse which would otherwise go unreported.

The Foundling is also requesting funding from the Council to support Mental Health Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. This largely immunocompromised population has significant health needs, and tends to be disproportionately impacted by co-occurring mental health diagnoses. Many have also been affected by histories of trauma resulting from abuse, isolation, and/or institutionalization. Their traumas have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many have difficulty understanding the restrictions put in place for their health. An allocation of \$100,000 would allow our staff to continue providing trauma-informed support for people who experience retraumatization, anxiety, depression, and grief while coping with the loss of familiar routines—and in many cases, the loss of neighbors, relatives, or friends.

The Foundling has long served as a champion for youth, and we continue advocating for young people whose educations have been disrupted in this troubling time. After seeding and scaling the Dormitory Project—a program that provides year-round housing, academic supports, and college success coaching to college students in foster care in collaboration with CUNY and ACS—we were disheartened to see students vacated from the dorms this March. We continue to advocate for our students, who even before this crisis were at an educational disadvantage due to disrupted schooling, trauma, and other crises that impede learning. As a founding member of the Fair Futures Coalition, we are calling upon the City to fully fund the Fair Futures model, which is designed to give young people in foster care the comprehensive supports they need to succeed, including long-term coaching and robust academic, career development, and independent living supports. Fair Futures uses a proven strategy for increasing graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment, preventing system involvement, and helping youth get on a pathway to becoming successful adults. This is even more needed in the COVID era when many of the youth we work with are facing increased risk of homelessness, health crises, and disconnection from school and work.

Once again, on behalf of all of us at The Foundling, we are grateful for the Council’s commitment to supporting our community through this crisis. We hope to continue our partnership in the coming year to ensure that all New Yorkers are supported and protected during the pandemic.

**Trusting in the Power and
Potential of People. Since 1869.**



Testimony for May 21, 2020 Public Hearing on NYC Budget

By Boris Santos

Introduction

Hello everyone, my name is Boris Santos and I am a proud supporter of the East New York (ENY) Community Land Trust (CLT), and a member of the interim Steering Committee of the ENY CLT. Prior to officially stating my demand of the City, I want to highlight some facts that are essential to my demand.

Facts

- The only fully established CLT in NYC as of 2019 was the Cooper Square CLT. However, as of last year, and due to the \$870K in discretionary funding that the City invested in the Community Land Trust Initiative, there are upwards of a dozen CLT's that have been established or are en route of being established.
- The ENY CLT is one of those. I've been able to partake in the interim Steering Committee of the ENY CLT and there has been tangible progress that we have made to finally make the CLT a reality. We have held many forums/townhalls to increase community participation and form an interim Steering Committee, we have established a mission statement and held several meetings to discuss the production of by-laws, and we have poured countless amount of volunteer time to generally set up the infrastructure to move us closer to having a board. A portion of the discretionary funding investment that the City made in the 2020 Fiscal Year has helped to give our Steering Committee the resources to make progress. This includes allowing for a full-time salaried coordinator and the materials to enact our outreach. I quickly want to thank Hannah Anousheh – the coordinator – who has been vital in this effort.
- CLT's are vital in ending the speculative trends of the real estate market forces that have led to the displacement of people of color. It may not be a panacea to ending displacement, but it is one pillar among others that can help alter the reality that we see in ENY – that LLC's and predatory equity companies – are the major purchasers of homes in that region today.
- The City has already pledged to temporarily end the pilot program that would legalize basements as apartments, another form of affordable residential living. This was a promise made through the ENY Rezoning. But without adequate representation – as the publication The City highlighted in a piece – we currently have no Council Member; it is politically easy to do so. Please do not fail East New Yorker's by ending funding for CLTs. We cannot be a community that gets the shortest end of the stick during these times, this is especially true when a neighborhood like Starrett City, located within Community District 5, has seen the most amount of deaths out of any other NYC community.

Conclusion

I demand that the City continue funding the CLT Initiative, this time with an allocation of \$1.5M. I want to conclude by saying, these are difficult times and it is easy and, in some cases, necessary to make cuts to certain services in order to be fiscally responsible. But let's not be too quick to specifically cut funding that would stall progress on measures that would help disintegrate the very same disparities that we are seeing now as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rather be quicker to cut funding to those institutions that have let us down time and time again and have not proven to be statistically successful. Institutions like the NYPD, who's budget has been bloated year after year during this Mayor's tenure must be cut before vital initiatives like the CLT initiative; Thrive also is an initiative that has not proven to yield results.

**Bowen
Public
Affairs
Consulting**

Testimony before the New York City Council Committees on Immigration, Finance, and
Subcommittee on Capital Budget
Carlos Menchaca, Chair – Immigration
Daniel Dromm, Chair – Finance
Vanessa Gibson – Chair, Capital Budget
May 20, 2020

My name is Andrea Bowen, Principal of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting. I advocate on policy matters that advance the cause of economic justice. Thank you Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, Chair Menchaca, Council members and staff of the Committees on Finance and Immigration, and the Subcommittee on the Capital Budget for this hearing, and for the opportunity to speak today.

I am making budget requests in favor of several clients and causes this year. I will be brief, but include factsheets on all of the asks mentioned in this testimony.

On behalf of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP), and along with other legal services providers, I ask for \$800,000 in funding to providers of immigration legal services for transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary, or TGNCNB, people. This funding will support legal and support service staff lines, as there is a long-standing lack of free legal service providers that are affirming of TGNCNB people, and understand the complexity of immigration cases of TGNCNB people. TGNCNB immigrants have been especially hit hard by COVID because many work in service industry jobs, or in jobs off the books. As the factsheet explains, their legal needs in light of the COVID crisis are amplified.

On behalf of the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, I request an extension of its Speaker's Initiative funding from FY20 of \$100,000 to support provides essential legal services to individuals working in the sex trades by choice, circumstance, or coercion. This community needs a plethora of legal services, from housing and family law to workers' rights support, and relies on City Council discretionary funding especially because state and federal funding is far too restrictive to serve the actual needs of these vulnerable workers.

On behalf of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, or COFCCA, our main long term goal is to work toward pay parity for contracted ACS workers (compared with ACS staff), but in this season, we ask that Council work with the Administration to avoid cuts to preventive services. A major aspect of not cutting preventive is restoring summer program services, wherein we support the ask of colleagues from the Campaign for Children. Children who engage in the City's various summer programs include children and youth are served by the child welfare system and the myriad of services provided by the child welfare system, and the braiding and blending of all of these streams allow our agencies to maintain the staff required to maintain our supports for our children, youth, and families.

On behalf of the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives, I request that you continue funding for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, or WCBDI. Colleagues from WCBDI will testify about how they have worked hard in the last five years, and overtime since the start of the COVID crisis, to support businesses primarily run by immigrants and people of color.

Finally, as a volunteer planning board member of the American LGBTQ+ Museum, we ask for small contributions from Council Members so we can continue our momentum in building the infrastructure for a cultural and history museum that can, among other things, hold

the stories and material culture of aging LGBTQI+ people, so that we are ready to capture a generation's worth of movement and community history and culture before it's too late.

The organizations involved in the TGNCNB immigration legal services initiative, the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, COFCCA, NYC NOWC, and the American LGBTQ+ Museum Planning Board members look forward to working with you, your staff, and fellow Council Members and staff, as budget season concludes to provide more detail to these asks. I appreciate the opportunity to go on the record presently and outline this issue and request. You can ask me further questions at andy@bowenpublicaffairs.com.

Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary Immigration Legal Services Initiative

The new Transgender, Gender Non-Confirming, Non-Binary (TGNCNB) Immigration Legal Services Initiative respectfully requests \$800,000 across five organizations in effort to bolster the resources of agencies providing legal direct services to transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary (TGNCNB) immigrants.

Organization	Application ID	Amount Requested
New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP)	90199	\$220,000
Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS)	86845	\$120,000
Bronx Defenders (BxD)	92642	\$120,000
Make the Road New York (MRNY)	91969	\$220,000
Urban Justice Center - Peter Cicchino Youth Project (PCYP)	93418	\$120,000

- Funds will be used to meet the specific needs of individual legal services providers, and to strengthen the small network of legal services providers that have experience serving TGNCNB immigrants.
- This new initiative will empower existing legal service organizations to:
 - fund new attorney staff lines;
 - fund staff that can provide supportive services in legal cases; and/or
 - backfill immigration legal positions that lack dedicated funding, which will free up resources that can be used for wraparound services.
- Organizations will represent TGNCNB clients in affirmative immigration applications, detained and non-detained removal proceedings. This representation will range from applications for asylum to applications for U and T visas for victims of serious crimes and human trafficking to deportation defense, all with a culturally competent lens to affirm the experiences of TGNCNB clients and translate those experiences into the immigration legal system's context, which will increase the likelihood of success in their cases.

What is the need/focus/urgency?

- A systemic lack of resources, even for the most experienced providers:
 - There is a lack of free legal service providers that are affirming of TGNCNB people, and understand the complexity of immigration cases of TGNCNB people.
 - This proposed new initiative would support these affirming and knowledgeable providers to strengthen a system of support for TGNCNB immigrants.
- This remains vital especially in light of COVID-19: One of the attorneys who works with the TGNCNB community says, in the current crisis:
 - "My TGNC clients have been hit *so* hard by COVID. Almost all of them are without work because they were working in service industry jobs or similar off the books jobs. Many of them live in rented rooms under informal arrangements, and so the moratorium on evictions isn't especially useful to them when they're landlord is actually living in the same apartment as them (and this sets them up for harassment and puts them in a really vulnerable situation).

"The financial, emotional, and psychological toll has been really unbelievable. Many of my clients were also involved with Lorena Borjas and her support groups, so the loss of Lorena has hit them really hard. Also, a number of my clients have tested positive for COVID-19 – many live in Queens – and have limited access to medical care. MANY of them are immunocompromised, which makes a positive diagnosis and a fear of going to medical centers absolutely lethal. Everything that they are struggling with is amplified by the fact that they are immigrants and have limited access to resources and benefits, AND there is really limited access to information and resources in Spanish. My TGNC clients are really struggling right now. I can't imagine how bad things are for those who are similarly situated as these clients but don't have access to institutional support like attorneys or social workers to help guide them through things."

- Increasing numbers of TGNCNB clients over the last few years, even the last year:
 - AVP's legal department has experienced escalating demand for services: a 30% increase in the number of clients seeking assistance with immigration matters last year over the year prior, with demand only continuing to increase. 44% were full legal representation for a transgender/gender nonconforming/non-binary (TGNCNB) client (compared to 38% in the previous year).
 - Peter Cicchino Youth Project (PCYP), which also receives other immigration legal funding from the NYC government, has a wait list going back almost a year, which can be problematic to people seeking asylum or special immigrant juvenile status.
 - BDS and BxD have both seen significant increases in the number of TGNCNB immigrants seeking representation in legal cases.
 - This is a long-recognized need. In 2016 and 2017, several TGNCNB-serving organizations engaged in five borough needs assessment forums. TGNCNB community members identified a need for increased immigration legal services, identifying an overstretch of legal resources for TGNCNB immigrants.
- TGNCNB immigrants present with more complex legal cases than other immigration clients, requiring more cases per client, more time to work on those cases, and greater need for wraparound services.
 - TGNCNB immigrants, unlike people who identify as cisgender, do not come with networks of families.
 - The need for individual survival, both in escaping violence in home countries and in surviving economically in the United States, indicates client services and cases that are not necessarily seen in other immigration cases:
 - cases relating to identity documents,
 - to criminal cases arising out of survival activity,
 - and to complexities of reengagement that are specific to the TGNCNB experience (greater levels of homelessness and unemployment than cisgender people, stressing the importance of building a trusting bond with an affirming provider and also providing resources to find clients who have fallen out of contact).
 - PCYP's Managing Director notes, "because TGNCNB New Yorkers experience homelessness, staying engaged in their case is not the most pressing survival need, which makes cases take longer and cost more. That's why we need money for this population—they're navigating additional systemic barriers and their cases can be more complex and time-consuming. Lawyers who aren't transphobic and who can keep clients engaged are in demand...Wait lists are potentially deadly for TGNCNB people if they get sent back to their transphobic home countries."
- Deliverables for the organizations funded under this request should take into account the need for more cases per participant, the need for greater funding per case, and more time to achieve outcomes.

The background of one client can give a great deal of clarity to the complexity of these cases. One of our providers explains:

"We're working with a trans woman right now. With her asylum application pending, she fell out of touch, when they scheduled her asylum interview, we learned she had three different criminal cases pending. Our lawyer went to all criminal cases even when not representing that client, had to get the person into supportive housing, and mental health supports. She is in removal proceedings, and has her next hearings in immigration court scheduled for 2023. She came to us in 2016, and will be our client for at least 7 years. If she has other issues that come up, of course we're the first place she goes. She was a survivor of trafficking, and the criminal aspect of her cases, which relate to trauma that can be linked to her gender identity, makes these cases more complex."

Thank you so much for your consideration. For more information about this request, please contact:

Andrea Bowen,
Principal of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting
andy@bowenpublicaffairs.com
(917) 765-3014



**In support of A Recovery Summer for the Youth of NYC
The Child Welfare Perspective**

Who are we?

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) is the principal representative for nearly all the not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. COFCCA is comprised of over 100 member organizations, ranging in size from small community-based programs to the nation's largest multi-services agencies — all of which share the mission of serving children and families. COFCCA works with its members and government to ensure quality services for children and their families.

We unequivocally support the A Recovery Summer for the Youth of NYC campaign.

The Mayor's Executive Budget proposal eliminates all funding for summer programs for youth. We are united with other nonprofit youth service providers in calling for a recovery summer in NYC that includes safe, comprehensive services for youth in our most high need communities. These children have been left behind for far too long, their communities have been the most impacted by COVID, they struggle to use the school remote learning and they have been isolated, often in cramped apartments for months. And now they face a summer with nothing to engage them. We cannot let them fall even further behind this summer.

This is an issue that directly impacts youth and families receiving child welfare services in NYC

These children and youth are served by the child welfare system and the myriad of services provided by the child welfare system. The braiding and blending of all of these streams, along with others from the Department of Education, DYCD, and Administration for Children's Services, allow our agencies to maintain the staff required to maintain our supports for our children, youth, and families. Without services provided by the child welfare system, prevention, foster care, early childhood and others, the families of NYC fail to thrive and we as a city fail to thrive.

The summer recovery needs of education, social-emotional learning, health, and family and home supports, are necessary to keep families intact and children safe

Youth need to continue their education, especially after the semester of distance learning. Youth and families need access to the safety nets provided by case planners, family assessment, and provision of services based on those assessments. Youth and families need access to mental health services and medical services. Youth need the socialization opportunities, with appropriate measures, provided by community-based agencies.

On the preventive and well-being side, we need to ensure that youth are engaged to avoid what may happen when youth are disconnected or unengaged this summer. We have the responsibility to engage in safe preventive measures to protect the well-being of our youth by keeping them meaningfully engaged.

We fervently hope that the predicted surge in reports of abuse and neglect as the isolation ends and schools and day care re-open does not occur, but a summer with no meaningful way to engage these children and youth would only exacerbate that problem. We need to provide these supports now — this summer — to avoid higher costs later. The child welfare community providers, all with strong roots in the communities that they serve, fully support a recovery summer that would enable youth, especially in communities hardest hit by this pandemic to thrive and grow.



Who are we?

The mission of the American LGBTQ+ Museum will be to preserve, investigate, and celebrate the dynamic histories and cultures of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, as well as the emergent and adjacent identities among our communities. Using exhibitions and programs, we seek to advance LGBTQ+ equality through the lens of social justice movements, including, but not limited to, race, gender, class, immigration, and disability.

FY21 Discretionary Expense Request:

- **Ask:**
 - The American LGBTQ+ Museum requests a grant in New York City Council discretionary funding to support the museum in building its organizational infrastructure and allowing it to begin unveiling its public presence. **It is vital that we continue our work in light of COVID-19, as we work with older generations of LGBTQ+ people and ensure they have a reputable history and culture museum that can collect their stories, material culture, and truth of their existence for future generations.**
- **Amount:** Smallest increments possible from Council Members who have space in their budget under current circumstances
- **Application ID:** 82165
 - our application exists under the title “Fund for the City of New York (on behalf of the American Museum of LGBT History and Culture)”
- **Initiative applied to:** Speaker’s
- **What will this pay for?**
 - This includes funding for:
 - staff positions, including funding for an Executive Director and administrative/development staffing, as our current operations require increased staffing;
 - further community engagement, among other forms of pilot programming;
 - no more than 30% of a total funding amount toward consulting services for the Museum project, which would include continued use of our current consultant, AK Cultural Planning, for further museum-focused consulting (e.g., identifying expenses associated with ramping up Museum planning and operations, elaborating collection development and strategic partnerships), development consulting, etc.

Why this program?

Thanks to New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and other Council Members' generous and enthusiastic support of the American LGBTQ+ Museum, the growth and success of the Museum project thus far means we will be primarily funding staff and, within Council rules, consulting fees, to move this project toward a public phase. Our Council funding thus far has allowed us to build the Museum concept with ample public participation and the hiring of a highly respected museum consultant, Amy Kaufman.

In the FY21 fiscal year, this staff and consultants, along with the Museum's Planning Committee, will plan and execute several tasks, including:

- public unveiling of the Museum, via website launch and social media;
- continued community engagement, among other forms of pilot programming;
- selection of the Museum's design team;
- search for real estate for the Museum's eventual home;
- further business planning (e.g., identifying expenses associated with ramping up Museum planning and operations); and



- development of strategic partnerships to allow for both museum growth and elaboration of the Museum's collection development.

With the Council's support thus far (\$125,000 in City FY19 and \$145,000 in City FY20), we have been able to build to the point of:

- Pursuing viable and credible partnerships which will allow us to open doors to a physical location within a few years;
- Securing our Museum charter from the New York State Education Department Board of Regents;
- Creating a detailed strategic and business plan (known within the museum planning field as the “museum concept”) for the American LGBTQ+ Museum;
- Finalizing a dedicated working board that reflects the LGBTQ+ community, with members reflecting a broad range of racial, gender, and professional diversity;
- Being ready to hire an Executive Director, a necessity due to the increasing complexity of our incoming potential partnerships and serious pursuit of major individual and institutional philanthropic donations.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this request.

For more information, contact Andrea Bowen, member of the Museum’s Planning Committee,
andy@bowenpublicaffairs.com, 917-765-3014.



Brooklyn
Parks &
Open Spaces
Coalition

May 20, 2020

Daniel Dromm
Chair
Committee on Finance
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Testimony for Committee on Finance on May 21, 2020, 9:30am re
Opposition to Funding Cuts at the Parks Department**

Dear Chair Dromm,

The City's plan to cut 340 jobs at the Parks Department comes at a time when our parks are filled each day with families who are seeking a safe place of refuge from the demands and fears caused by the coronavirus pandemic. More people will come to parks this year because pools, beaches and other open spaces will remain closed for the foreseeable future. **The Brooklyn Parks and Open Spaces Coalition (BPOC) opposes any job cuts in the Parks Department.**

Thank you for your attention to this written testimony.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Mayock", written in a cursive style.

Joe Mayock
Steering Committee Member



May 21, 2020 New York City Council Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony submitted by Friends of Morningside Park President Brad W. Taylor on behalf of our organization in support of the Play Fair Coalition FY 2021 budget requests in support of our city parks.

Dear Chair Dromm, Speaker Johnson and Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the NYC Fiscal 2021 budget.

Our organization has an almost 40 year history as a partner to the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation in the remarkable revitalization of Morningside Park - Harlem's Scenic Landmark. We are also a proud member of the PlayFair Coalition put together by New Yorkers for Parks.

We fully support the Coalition's Play Fair 2020 campaign calling for \$47 million to be added to the NYC Parks Expense Budget and ask you to do the same. In light of the city's current fiscal predicament this call is greatly reduced from the Coalition's \$200 million pre-pandemic ask.

The current pandemic has made all New Yorkers more aware of the immense importance of having well maintained parks in which we can enjoy nature and the outdoors while staying safe. This year's Play Fair Campaign focusses on protecting and creating jobs, and ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe, healthy, and beautiful parks, gardens, and natural areas. This is imperative given the increased use of parks during the pandemic and the likelihood that usage will increase even more once it is again safe to gather in large groups.

This is NOT a time to be cutting back on the hard won gains which the coalition advocated for and the Mayor and Council supported in FY20. Specifically we are asking for:

\$10M to baseline the 100 City Park Worker and 50 Gardener staff lines added in the FY20 budget.

\$9M to baseline and preserve the 50 new Urban Park Ranger and 80 new Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created in the FY20 budget.

\$7.4M to baseline 15 Green Thumb and 47 Natural Resources Group staff added in the FY20 budget.

\$5.5M to create 100 City Seasonal Aide positions for Parks Opportunity Program participants citywide.

\$7.85M to invest in recreation and programming, new positions in a Natural Turf Management citywide crew, and additional staff to host structured sports and afterschool programs.

\$3M to create an in-house comfort station improvement team to target a comfort station in every borough, with 18 full-time staff, and 20 seasonal positions.

\$950K to more than double the NYC Parks staff conducting the critically needed citywide needs assessment.

\$520K to hire four full-time crews to conduct lake and pond maintenance.

\$2.5M to bring much-needed maintenance equipment to all 51 Council Districts.

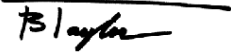
340 parks workers may lose their livelihoods on July 1st, 2020, if the funding for their positions is not renewed for the FY21 budget. After serving on the frontlines during this pandemic to keep parks safe, we can't let these essential workers lose their stability, and NYC Parks lose personnel and funding for maintenance and care.

Today, May 21,2020, the city celebrates its frontline park workers through the #GoingGreenForParkies campaign. We wear green and light up some of our most iconic monuments this evening to show our appreciation. Yesterday our organization got a head start on this effort, donating meals to the frontline workers in Morningside Park while simultaneously supporting our local business alliance and a local restaurant.

We need to ensure that these are not just tokens and empty gestures. Tomorrow and every day going forward let's not let these workers, our parks and our citizens down.

We urge you to support these modest yet incredibly important budgetary asks.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Taylor", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Brad W. Taylor
President



**New York City Council's Committee on Finance Hearing on the Executive Budget
Testimony Of Breaking Ground for the New York City Council**

May 21, 2020

On behalf of Breaking Ground, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

Now celebrating 30 years of service to New York City, Breaking Ground is the largest nonprofit developer and operator of supportive housing for low income and chronically homeless New Yorkers. We currently operate over 20 buildings with 3,800 units of permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx – and have a development pipeline of nearly 1,000 additional housing units over the next five years. We also operate the City's street outreach program in Brooklyn, Queens, and Midtown Manhattan, which connects the most entrenched, long-term homeless individuals with housing and other critical support services.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow. Breaking Ground's supportive housing projects rely on a variety of capital funding sources, most prominently the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Supportive Housing Loan Program. The threat of these cuts has left HPD uncertain of their ability to fund new projects, forcing them to delay previously scheduled closings.

We are incredibly grateful for the Council's approval and support of 90 Sands, which will create 508 much needed affordable apartments to low-income households and formerly homeless individuals. However, our ability to move forward with the project is contingent upon the HPD closing. We expected to close in FY 20, however this date has now been pushed back.

Furthermore, these cuts impact our ability to secure support from investors on new developments. Bridge lenders want at a minimum a soft commitment from HPD in order to have some confidence that there will be a source to take out their bridge loan. Due to the proposed budget cuts, HPD is putting a hold on issuing such soft commitments. We recently had a fully negotiated contract of sale for a site in the Norwood section of the Bronx to create 175 new units of supportive housing. However, we are unable to execute because of the risk of not being able to secure bridge acquisition financing. It's going to be very challenging to build a pipeline without having access to such funding.

Pushing out closing dates for projects and delaying or cutting off the ability to build the pipeline of future projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. These draconian cuts put into serious jeopardy the City's commitment to bring 15,000 new units of supportive housing into operation.

Housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID cases and fatalities.

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has been nimble, adapting quickly with creative ways to deliver essential services, and keep tenants and clients safe. Our staff sprang into action to help educate tenants on how to protect themselves and their fellow tenants. A rapid pivot to providing supportive services primarily through tele-consultation helped to alleviate solitude, check in with tenants and clients regularly, and assess and address urgent needs such as food insecurity. We developed tracking tools to monitor tenants who have been exposed, tested positive, or are presumed to have COVID-19. Furthermore, we worked independently and with our coalitions to source PPE for staff and vulnerable clients and tenants.

Supportive housing development also creates jobs: On average, each Breaking Ground development creates 220 construction jobs, and 25 permanent jobs upon completion (including property management, security, program, and social services staff). Many jobs are filled by people who live in the surrounding neighborhoods, resulting in an array of tangible and intangible benefits to the communities we call home.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our vulnerable neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted by:

Brenda Rosen

President and CEO

Breaking Ground

505 8th Ave - 5th floor

Ph: (212) 389-9356

Email: brosen@breakingground.org

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

**New York City Council Finance Committee and Capital Budget Subcommittee
Hearing on FY2021 Executive Capital Budget**

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and members of the finance committee and capital budget subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about Mayor Bill de Blasio's fiscal year 2021 capital budget. I am Brendan Cheney, Director of Policy and Communications at the New York Housing Conference. NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

Mayor de Blasio's executive budget proposes 40 percent cuts to the HPD capital budget in the current fiscal year and in the coming fiscal year 2021. We oppose these cuts and we hope the City Council will help reverse those cuts. Cutting the capital budget for affordable housing production at this moment is shortsighted. Such a drastic cut will mean far less affordable housing will be produced precisely at a moment when housing is needed more than ever. It also misses an opportunity to help the city recover from this economic and health crisis.

The serious health and economic impacts of coronavirus on our city are profound. There are 198,000 sick, 20,298 dead and 900,000 are expected to be unemployed. Of course none of this harm is distributed equally, the burden has disproportionately fallen on minority working class neighborhoods where data shows have twice the death rate as wealthy neighborhoods. The federal lifeline of unemployment insurance will expire in July. Some small businesses will prevail with the aid of federal loans but many will not. For hundreds of businesses that normally thrive on tourism and a commuting workforce, a viable future is not in clear view. A tragedy of massive unemployment and housing insecurity is facing our city.

Prior this health pandemic, NYC was already facing a dire shortage of affordable housing. Two thirds of low-income renters were paying more than half their income towards housing. We reached record levels of homelessness in recent years and housing discrimination and segregation continue to contribute to significant zip-code based disparities relating to health, wealth and education.

In January, Mayor de Blasio committed to improve his housing plan by deepening affordability. That was the right decision before the pandemic and is still the right decision. Now is the time to stay the course and build on the progress already made under this ambitious housing plan. Mayor de Blasio's housing plan is the cornerstone of his fight against inequality because affordable housing is also central to creating opportunity for families. Housing is the launching pad for success and is needed now more than ever.

Affordable housing production is also a powerful and efficient economic engine. Each dollar of city capital leverages four additional dollars of private, state and federal spending. Annually about 20,000 jobs are created. Spending on each development is keeping plumbers, electricians, masons and laborers employed. It is also keeping affordable housing suppliers and subcontractors in business. After the foreclosure crisis in 2008, the construction cranes dotting the NYC

skyline were mostly on affordable housing development sites. When private capital retreats from housing construction as experts are predicting, public spending must fill the gap to keep people working while providing affordable housing. With tax exempt rates so low, the cost of government borrowing is too. The housing budget must be protected as affordable housing investment is the counter-cyclical tool that can jumpstart jobs, spending and the local economy.

Cuts to the housing budget will also impact affordable housing in the pipeline. With more than 20,000 units being developed and preserved each year in the Mayor's housing plan, stalling financing on needed affordable housing is impacting projects that are ready to close. This will certainly be a costly burden on those developers- both for-project and non-profit organizations. The Administration claims that this funding will be restored in future years but it is required now. We can't afford to wait.

We have also seen more clearly during the current pandemic that housing is health. The importance of housing is evident in the safety of isolation it provides, slowing the spread of the virus. Every one of us needs a home right now and that home cannot be a cardboard box on a formerly crowded midtown sidewalk, it cannot be the A train needed to transport essential workers and it cannot be an 851-bed shelter. We need the housing plan to continue as before to protect individuals, families and the community.

Currently DHS is housing 8,000 homeless adults in hotels, but this is only a temporary solution. Instead of housing the homeless in hotels to social distance, NYC should think bigger about solving homelessness during this pandemic and convert those hotels, which are most likely to be in financial distress, to permanent affordable housing.

With the economy on pause, real estate prices are sure to drop and overleveraged rent stabilized multifamily buildings will come on the market. NYC's housing plan will need adequate funding to adapt quickly to take advantage of these opportunities to preserve this important housing stock. Good stewards of these buildings are needed to preserve them for another generation of New Yorkers and there is no shortage of experienced and reputable housing operators among NYC's affordable housing community. The city should bring back the Neighborhood Pillars program, which was established for the acquisition and rehabilitation of rent stabilized housing prior to major reforms in the rent laws last year. This is the time to act before another wave of unsavory investors extracts value through repositioning of these assets.

We also want to be on the record opposing one expense budget cut at HPD. In the executive budget, Mayor de Blasio proposed cutting \$1 million from the basement apartment pilot program. This would essentially gut this essential program. The pilot program creates safe housing for low income tenants and can bring steady income to low and middle income homeowners. Safe and legal basement apartments are critical to creating healthy and affordable environments, particularly for low-income and immigrant New Yorkers.

Coronavirus is loosening its grip on New York City, but it has squeezed a lot of life out of us. The vibrancy of the neighborhoods we love, the hustle and bustle of our daily commutes, the noise of our busy lives. As we restart our city, investing in affordable housing must be part of our recovery – to bring back jobs, to stimulate the economy and most importantly to keep us safe and healthy.

Thank you for hearing our testimony. I am happy to take any questions.



April 28th, 2020

To: New York City Council
Re: WCBDI work as essential

Dear City Council:

For many years, WCBDI has championed equitable economic development through the creation and support of cooperative businesses. That work, always very important, has suddenly become a central need for New York City in the COVID-19 crisis. As a result of COVID, our work increased dramatically as we helped businesses create swift hibernation plans, understood ways to work within city and state guidelines for essential businesses, and planf modified reopenings to fit new circumstances. We have also helped businesses qualify for state and federal supports, including raising over \$2,000,000 in Payroll Protection Program loans and Economic Injury Disaster loans, bringing in much needed federal dollars to the New York City economy. Not a single business we work with is planning to close down, but none of this would have been possible without the support of WCBDI.

Not only do small businesses in our network need continued and additional support, but a great number of small business owners who were considering retirement are now choosing to just shut their doors, creating a whole new crisis. Purchase by their workers for conversion to worker-ownership is one of the few options that could save these companies. No financial support can help find new leadership for these companies, and one of the only concrete solutions that has been proposed is the work of WCBDI to create worker-owned cooperatives as a way to keep these businesses from closing down.

It will take extraordinary work to rebuild New York City in the wake of this crisis. WCBDI offers one of the most concrete options the city has to keep tens of thousands of jobs from vanishing in a small business closure crisis and rebuild robustly. The reward for using cooperatives to rebuild is that not only can we save and grow our economy, we can do it more equitably as well.

Brendan Martin
Executive Director
The Working World

Testimony for May 21, 2020, NYC Council Committee on Finance Hearing

I am a voting constituent in Council District 39 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC. I urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

From my work as a family public defender, I have seen parents across Brooklyn struggling to provide for their families and maintain bonds and visits with children who may not be living with them. The common theme is lack of money and resources—to get to and from family visits safely, to feed their families healthy and nutritious meals, and to pay rent during a time when many parents are losing their jobs. New Yorkers want to keep their families safe and adhere to public health guidance, and if given the support and resources to do that, they will. The mayor's budget, by cutting core social services, makes that harder for working class and poor people across our city.

The mayor's focus on aggressive, violent and racist policing as a response to any social problem in the city is also putting New Yorkers in harm's way. We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police "enforcing social distancing" are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it *on video*. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined is unconscionable.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.

-Brian Holbrook

36 Dahill Road, Brooklyn, NY 11218



**Testimony of Raji Kalra, Chair of the Bronx River Alliance
FY21 Budget Hearing - Thursday, May 21, 2020**

During this time when New Yorkers are turning to their parks more than ever, the Bronx River Alliance urges the NYC Council to provide adequate funding to support parks. We ask the Council 1) to support the \$47M Play Fair Coalition request, 2) to renew the Park Equity Initiative at FY20 levels and 3) to renew discretionary allocations at FY20 levels. Together, these funding streams will protect jobs; keep our parks clean, green and safe; and address fairness across the city.

The Bronx River Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting, improving and restoring the Bronx River corridor and greenway so that they can be healthy resources for the communities through which the river flows. Since the earliest days of our efforts, the Bronx River Alliance, working together with NYC Parks and dozens of community partners, has:

- Removed 650+ tons of garbage and debris from the river, including 20,000+ tires and 89 cars
- Opened 22 new acres of waterfront parkland in the South Bronx
- Led 24,500 people on paddling adventures
- Empowered 19,000+ volunteers to donate 120,000+ hours to the river and its parks
- Enabled 3,600 educators & 19,000 students to use the river as an outdoor classroom
- Planted 130,000+ native trees and plants & removed 4 million cubic yards of choking, invasive vegetation

The transformation has been remarkable, thanks to this unique partnership powered equally by community and government resources. Once an abandoned, trash-filled river, today the Bronx River is a healthy community resource and source of pride.

The Bronx River Alliance is pleased to be part of the Parks and Open Space Partners-NYC that has come together to grapple with the impact of COVID on our public parks. We are also pleased about the announcement of NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund to help keep those parks open and safe. However, this private philanthropy is no substitute for public support for the public parks system.

Summer 2020 will be unlike any we have ever seen: public pools will be closed, concerts and other public programs are on hold, summer camps are cancelled, youth activities and employment are hamstrung by lack of funding and opportunities to congregate.

But we New Yorkers will still be here. Many in cramped, unairconditioned apartments. Many without jobs, much less second homes to escape to. Where will we go to cool off, exercise, and de-stress? We



will go to our parks. Our parks will see unprecedented usership this year, which, combined with reduced funding for maintenance, will put even more stress on already overwhelmed park workers.

The Bronx River Alliance urges the Council not to cut funding that flows into our public parks, but rather to:

- Support the Play Fair Coalition's request for an additional \$47 million for NYC Parks to protect jobs and ensure that our parks are clean, green and safe.
- Renew the Council's own Parks Equity Initiative at FY20 levels. PEI addresses fairness across the city by supporting public programs run by 80+ nonprofits, including the Bronx River Alliance.
- Renew discretionary allocations at FY20 levels. These allocations provide critical support for non-profit organizations that support parks, such as the Bronx River Alliance.

Without adequate support, the Parks Department and the Bronx River Alliance will be forced to institute widespread furloughs and reductions of maintenance and volunteer support at a time when New Yorkers need green space more than ever.

We ask the Council to recognize parks as essential infrastructure. Our parks and open spaces are more important than ever as sources of mental and physical health, especially for communities most affected by COVID-19. We must ensure that our public parks are clean, green and safe spaces for health and healing during this devastating time

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council Committee Public Testimony on the FY21 Budget

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Daniel Dromm
From: Brooke Brailey, Alliance for Positive Change Director of Administration
Date: May 22, 2020

Dear Councilmember Dromm,

Thank you for your leadership to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in New York City. We know the city is in a challenging financial position, however, any cuts to City Council discretionary and initiative funding will have a damaging impact on The Alliance for Positive Change, and organizations like ours who serve communities of color.

As you know, The Alliance for Positive Change (Alliance) has been on the front lines of the HIV/AIDS epidemic for 30 years. We have decades of experience providing services to individuals living with multiple, chronic, and complex health conditions such as HIV, hepatitis, substance use, mental illness and other behavioral health challenges. We believe that any reduction or loss in City Council discretionary funding is unwise and counterproductive to combating COVID-19, and improving health for New Yorkers.

Alliance relies on discretionary and initiative funding from the Ending the Epidemic and Viral Hepatitis Prevention initiative lists. Alliance receives NYC Council ETE Initiative funding to conduct services through Alliance-NewYork Presbyterian collaboration called “HASA Bottom Up Pilot” with a goal of using Healthix alerts and HASA contact information to locate and engage NYP HIV-positive patients who have fallen out of care. The program components are essential to achieving NYC ETE goals of ensuring access to HIV care and treatment so that individuals living with HIV can achieve viral load suppression. Alliance also receives NYC Council ETE Initiative funding to conduct services through Alliance HIV Prevention Network, in collaboration with NYP, with a goal of engaging HIV-negative people in the Upper Manhattan and South Bronx communities with integrated HIV/HCV testing and navigation to clinical sites for PEP/PrEP screening, education and related medical and support services.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, Alliance and NYP have modified our successful service model to include screening, prevention education, linkage and navigation to medical care, access to telemedicine, referrals and navigation to meet immediate needs, for all individuals served by providing services that cover three areas: COVID-19, to understand symptoms, ensure access to telemedicine should symptoms exist, and adopt prevention strategies; Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), to identify immediate needs re: access to food, housing, medications, mental health services to address depression, anxiety, etc., and make appropriate referrals; Bridge to HH care management and medical care, as needed.

Alliances receives NYC Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative funding to engage HCV or at-risk individuals and Lower East Side of Manhattan communities in combination HIV/HCV prevention services through both onsite syringe exchange and/or harm reduction services at Alliance’s LES Harm Reduction Center, as well as through Peer Delivered Syringe Exchange via Alliance’s mobile outreach services. Hepatitis C navigators and peers continue to reach out to clients remotely to support them during this time (for social service needs, medications, emotional support, etc).

Alliance is proud to be an Essential Service Provider during COVID-19, continuing to provide access to safe syringe exchange, HIV/HCV prevention, navigation to PEP/PrEP, and re/engagement of high risk HIV+ New Yorkers who have fallen out of care through collaboration with NYP and Healthix. Alliance has both modified and enhanced NYC Council ETE Initiative support to incorporate education, screening and resource connection for COVID-19, Social Determinants of Health, and resource connection to meet identified needs. Continued NYC Council ETE Initiative support will ensure continued access to life saving treatment and services for low-income, high need individuals living with HIV.

Alliance for Positive Change and other community-based organizations (CBOs), can and should play a key role in conducting COVID-19 screening, when the technology is available, in the same way that we received waivers from the NYS health department to conduct HIV screening, and subsequently HCV screening. The CBO network and infrastructure that currently exists for HIV and HCV can be expanded for COVID-19, both in terms of ensuring access to and conducting screening, as well as ensuring access to and providing vaccines (when available). Alliance has been successfully conducting testing and linkage to medical care for low-income, high need, at risk and vulnerable populations and communities for decades—our existing community-based infrastructure, medical collaborations, trained Peer/Community Health Worker workforce, and our community credibility make us essential service partners and providers. We are committed to supporting New Yorkers with education, information, peer navigation, HIV/HCV screenings and referrals, basic needs like food and housing, and social, behavioral and mental health access through our open community centers and remote services. Alliance staff and peers are trained to provide—by telephone and/or in-person—essential services during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

We urge the NYC Council, in partnership with NYCDOHMH, to continue to commit funding for this HIV Prevention Network and HASA Bottom-Up Pilot in collaboration with NYPresbyterian Hospital, and Alliance's Hep C Peer Navigation at LESHRC, providing essential services for high need communities. Continued NYC Council Initiative support will ensure continued access to life saving treatment and services for low-income, high risk communities of NYC.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight the work that The Alliance for Positive Change, and other organizations like ours, are doing to combat COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other chronic illnesses in New York City. We have made great strides, but we must continue our work – collectively – through continued investment and commitment in the programs that ensure that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to live full, healthy, productive lives.

We appreciate your time, thank you.

Caitlyn McCain
New York City Children's Theater

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
20 May 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Caitlyn McCain, and I work as a Teaching Artist for New York City Children's Theater across all five boroughs of NYC.

New York City Children's Theatre is dedicated to promoting children's literacy and social development through professional theater productions and arts-in-education programs. We demonstrate that engaging young people in the arts has a positive impact on their cognitive, emotional and social development, and furthers a lifelong appreciation of the arts.

Every year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K-5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all 5 boroughs. We are dedicated to serving every New York City student, and have designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and MLL's.

Currently, 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging virtual programming:

- We are currently running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, and creating a database of online programming named "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online.
- We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district.
- We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students.

- We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences.

New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on the grant programs that we receive each year from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development. And the sad reality is, that the young people most negatively affected by these cuts to funding will be those who are already in the most vulnerable populations.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences and our children's development. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through this work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Caitlyn McCain
Teaching Artist, NYC Children's Theater



Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget

May 21, 2020 Hearing

Greetings Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. My name is Cal Hedigan and I am CEO of Community Access. Community Access is a New York City based mental health and advocacy organization serving thousands of New York residents each year. Our mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and other healing-focused services.

We provide affordable and supportive housing to over 1,300 households across three boroughs (the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan) and serve 3,500 New Yorkers each year through a range of services – including crisis respite, peer specialist training, supported education, intensive mobile treatment and ACT teams, as well as psychiatric rehabilitation and treatment services.

Every one of us is vulnerable to experiencing mental health difficulties, and the economic and personal stressors brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic will only increase the number of New Yorkers in need of the supportive and affordable housing and mental health services Community Access offers. This pandemic has unfolded in an economic and social context, and it is exposing many of the inequities that live within our systems and institutions. It has certainly laid bare some of the particular dangers of homelessness. Funding to the human services sector, a sector that serves communities most severely impacted by this public health crisis, cannot be cut if New Yorkers are to continue to have access to the support and mental health services they need to successfully navigate these difficult times.

While many New Yorkers have lost their jobs, and many are working from home, many of Community Access' staff continue to work at our housing sites and on New York City's streets delivering essential services to some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. This work has been critical to lessening the impact of COVID-19 on our community. Frontline nonprofits in the human services sector, including Community Access, had to quickly adapt service delivery so that we could continue to provide essential services to our tenants and participants, many of whom are at high risk for being severely impacted by COVID -19.

These adaptations included transitioning to remote service delivery wherever possible, implementing essential staffing patterns and incentive pay for on-site service delivery, intensive outreach to recipients to monitor their health status, changes to service sites to encourage social distancing, increased cleaning of shared spaces, procurement of personal protective equipment and emergency supplies for our workforce, and procurement of telephones and service plans for service recipients who had previously lived without phones.

All of these changes were required to respond to the needs of our constituency during this public health crisis. Many of them involved previously unbudgeted expenses. We are projected to spend over \$450,000 in incentive pay by May 30th. We have also had to invest more than \$100,000 in supplies and equipment, including technology to support telehealth services for our participants and remote working capabilities for our staff. In addition to increased expenses, we face revenue losses due to the cancelation of our annual fundraising gala, losses in Medicaid revenue and rental income shortfalls. We, like the city, are grappling with the multi-layered economic fallout of this pandemic.

Long before COVID-19, the human services sector, Community Access included, has advocated for more funding from our city and state partners to secure the financial sustainability of the sector, so that we can continue to provide the essential services desperately needed in our city. We are not in a position where we can have funding cut and maintain service delivery.

Our organization receives over \$11 million each year in city contracts with DOHMH, DHS and HASA. Our four-hundred strong workforce supports 3,500 individuals and families, including people being discharged from psychiatric centers and other institutions, and individuals who are experiencing homelessness and living in the shelter system or on the streets. Without this funding, we would not be able to deliver these services, and New York City – as such – would not have the infrastructure it needs and relies on to support the most vulnerable people in the city.

We understand that the City Council faces difficult choices in this new economy as budgets shrink and needs increase. Community Access joins with our colleagues to respectfully urge you to prioritize an investment in this city's vital safety net services including affordable and supportive housing and community based mental and behavioral health support services. These investments pay dividends over time in decreased healthcare utilization, less need for emergency shelters and a more equitable city for us all.

Community Access is committed to helping New York City recover from COVID-19. We will work tirelessly to help individuals work through the grief, depression, anxiety and economic hardship brought on by this pandemic, and we will continue to develop and advocate for more affordable housing — because all New Yorkers deserve a home. Access to stable affordable housing is an absolute necessity for the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of our communities.

I thank the committee for considering our testimony.

Cal Hedigan | she, her, hers
Chief Executive Officer, Community Access
communityaccess.org

CLAIRE FLEITZ- THEATER TEACHING ARTIST

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/20/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Claire Fleitz and I work for New York City Children's Theater, an organization that serves students across New York City.

Every year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K-5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all 5 boroughs. We are dedicated to serving every New York City student, and have designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and MLL's.

Currently, 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging virtual programming:

- We are currently running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, and creating a database of online programming named "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online.
- We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district.
- We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students.
- We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences.

New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on the grant programs that we receive each year from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

I implore you to think of what you and your families have done during this quarantine. You have watched television and movies together. You have listened to music and danced to your favorite songs. Your children have used their imagination for creative play and theatrical games. Each night at 7pm, when the city applauds the essential workers, my neighborhood and many others blast Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York." These are the arts in play every day. In a time where the arts are providing comfort, solace, and purpose to people everywhere, it would be a shame to cut the funding that supports this creativity.

Sincerely,

Claire Fleitz

CAMBA
Testimony Before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020
Joanne M. Oplustil

Council Member Dromm and Members of the Committee, my name is Joanne M. Oplustil and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of CAMBA. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA is one of New York City's largest and most trusted community-based organizations and is unique among peer agencies in scale, quality, and responsiveness. Founded in 1977 as a merchants' block association, the agency has grown in direct response to the needs of the Brooklyn community and beyond. Today, CAMBA provides services to 65,000 individuals and families annually through an integrated set of six program areas: Economic Development, Education and Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing, and Legal Services. Through our comprehensive continuum of care, CAMBA provides people with the tools and resources that they need to achieve their full potential.

I want to share with the Committee my belief that our City must take a holistic approach to the needs of children and families in our COVID recovery. We must preserve the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development budget funding year-round, so that our staff can help sustain and support New York City's children and families in the COVID 19 response and recovery.

We at CAMBA – and countless other New Yorkers – are deeply grateful to the City for its herculean efforts to maintain a functioning school system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing distance learning across the nation's largest school system is truly remarkable, as are the City's efforts to ensure that low-income families who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch do not go hungry just because their school buildings are closed.

I want to urge the Council to remember that, in the same way as schools, non-profits like CAMBA provide crucial services across the entire City that are necessary to ensure that children, families, and communities are healthy and thriving in every way – physically, socially, and economically. This is true during good times and it is especially true as the City grapples with the COVID-19 response. The cuts that the Mayor has proposed for summer programming are much more than cuts to services for children, youth, and families. These cuts decimate a critical neighborhood-based communication and support system for COVID communication and response. While the impact on families would itself be devastating, these cuts would require providers to lay off full-time, year-round staff, such as multi-site supervisors and site directors, and to absorb losses in fixed costs across these programs. The affected employees would lose their income and their health insurance. They are experienced, dedicated professionals who all have deep expertise in the principles of Positive Youth Development and close relationships with the children, youth, and families that we serve. These staff members have deep ties to the communities they serve – many are former program participants who grew up in the neighborhoods where they now work. Laying them off and other cost-cutting measures would destroy the youth development infrastructure of every non-profit, large and small. It would set the field of youth development back by a decade or

more and would dismantle the City's capacity to meet the needs of its most vulnerable citizens. According to research by SeaChange Capital Partners, even New York City's large non-profits are at the financial breaking point. The failure of large providers would "tear the fabric of the City's social safety net with devastating consequences for all."

New Yorkers in the neighborhoods CAMBA serves are being disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple City data points show the fact that the very neighborhoods that struggled to overcome structural racism and entrenched health disparities prior to the pandemic are among those that have the poorest outcomes now. According to data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the COVID-19 hospitalization rate among Black New Yorkers is more than twice that among Whites. Moreover, the disparity in death rates is almost just as high. Even more our clients need our after-school and community center staff to direct them to resources, to offer support, and to deliver critical activities that help children stay positive; follow social distancing, stay-home and stay-healthy guidelines; and promote strength and resiliency.

At the same time as the coronavirus is disproportionately impacting New Yorkers of color, the State is asking its highest-poverty school districts to bear a far greater share of the burden of budget cuts made necessary by the economic shutdown. Indeed, according to a recent article in Chalkbeat, districts like New York City took such a big cut in State education funding that it cancelled out the increase in federal stimulus funding. As the author notes, "high-poverty districts also got less than what they might have received had coronavirus not devastated the State's economy, while more affluent districts are getting roughly the same." This is consistent with the pattern we witnessed in school funding as cuts were made in the wake of the Great Recession. As a City, we cannot afford to let our children with the fewest resources fall further behind.

All children need enrichment, additional supports, and outlets to grow and thrive. CAMBA provides these by leveraging a combination of programs aimed at differentiated age groups and needs. We serve approximately 5,600 youth annually through DYCD-funded programs that include a Summer Youth Employment Program, seven COMPASS after-school programs, three SONYC after-school programs, nine Cornerstone Community Centers, and four Beacon Community Centers. These programs operate in a rich array of neighborhoods across Brooklyn, including Bay Ridge, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Borough Park, Brownsville, Canarsie, Crown Heights, Cypress Hills, East Flatbush, East New York, Flatbush, and Sheepshead Bay. Many of these neighborhoods are home to public housing developments. According to the City, such neighborhoods have had a 30% higher rate of recent COVID-19 hospitalizations. Our programs provide a lifeline to New York City's most vulnerable children, youth, and families that they need now more than ever in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, the model of service has to be reimagined for virtual delivery and limited socially distanced delivery, as allowed by New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene guidelines. We are well aware and eager to work with the City to develop best practice guidelines and models. Our staff have the ability to work with middle and high school students to craft peer-facing messages to support social distancing, staying at home, and using PPE. We can support summer learning through creative use of new technology. Instead tragically, the Mayor's Executive Budget eliminates funding for all summer programming in this portfolio instead of leveraging these well-developed community neighborhood-based resources towards the overall COVID communication and recovery plan.

When the City closed the schools, CAMBA and other providers moved rapidly to design and implement virtual after-school programming for our children. Currently, CAMBA offers an array of virtual components to over 1,800 children, including a mix of pre-recorded and live literacy and STEM enrichment activities, community circle, and creative arts. We can leverage this achievement to offer virtual summer camps that would offer children engaging and enriching activities that would promote social-emotional growth and prevent summer learning loss. Children could retain relationships with familiar staff who could continue social-emotional health and wellness check-ins through daily virtual “campfire circles”. We could provide live programming in the arts, guided field trips to New York City cultural institutions, physical fitness, literacy and STEM enrichment (including coding), culinary arts, and other virtual activities. We stand ready to work collaboratively with the Department of Youth and Community Development to develop a model that will meet the needs of children and families and support parents who need to work. The interest in virtual summer camps is high. In a survey of over 1,300 CAMBA after-school parents, 85% said they would enroll their children in virtual summer camps if they were available. Similarly, we would welcome the opportunity to work with DYCD to build a virtual Summer Youth Employment Program. Such a program could build off of our work providing paid, project-based virtual internships for high school students in our Department of Education-funded Learning To Work programs and would provide youth with much needed preparation for the world of work. It would also provide these young people and their families with much-needed income.

In addition to the direct impact on children, cutting summer programming will also have economic consequences. Many of the low-income parents that we serve are essential workers. They depend upon our summer camps and community centers to provide a safe and enriching environment for their children while they continue to earn a living for their families. If social distancing guidelines are relaxed come the summer, many more parents will need these programs to allow them to return to work. Many also depend on the extra income from the Summer Youth Employment Program to balance their budgets. Indeed, in the summer of 2019, young people ages 16 to 21 earned an average of \$1,950 for their summer work. More affluent parents will have more options of removing children from the City and/or paying for a wide range of enrichment and learning activities. Many of our children will face limited open public spaces with structured activities. A preventative model that works to find the right combination of peer-led activities and coaching to increase youth social distancing is critically needed so the City is not relying on a law enforcement approach only. We know too well the negative ramifications of disproportionate enforcement of guidelines, and these programs can be leveraged positively.

One key advantage of a virtual approach to summer programming is that we can operate our programs with a leaner model with funding for our full-time, year-round multi-site supervisors and site directors and a smaller number of staff. It is absolutely essential for us to retain our full-time staff with salaries and health insurance for July and August. These dedicated employees are deeply versed in the principles of Positive Youth Development, seeped in agency culture, and familiar faces to the children and families that we serve. If we were forced to lay them off for the summer, it would decimate our infrastructure. We could not realistically expect them to still be available to ramp up programming in the fall. Losing such staff at agencies across the City would set the field of youth development in New York City back by a decade or more.

While our DYCD programs have been targeted in the Mayor's budget to be cut, I also want to highlight the importance of the work CAMBA does in partnership with Department of Education. These are highly successful collaborative initiatives that I urge the City to preserve full funding for continued operation. CAMBA operates 11 Learning To Work Programs – 10 at transfer high schools and one at a Young Adult Borough Center – and three Community Schools. These programs are highly effective. Just last year, 753 of our Learning To Work seniors graduated high school. Across this portfolio, we serve over 3,000 youth. These programs also employ close to 100 dedicated professionals. All of these programs are built upon the principles of Positive Youth Development. This includes individual relationships between students and caring adults, a strengths-based approach to youth, and a focus on supporting the whole family.

Learning To Work Programs help to re-engage students who have dropped out of high school or fallen behind in credits and provide them with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. CAMBA provides a wide range of diverse programming at these sites, including academic and student support, career and educational development, college advisement and preparation, work preparation, skills development, and paid internships. The Community School model is designed to foster partnerships between the school, community resources, stakeholders, and the community at-large to provide the entire family with assistance so that it can support healthy, well-rounded students. It focuses on strengthening academics, health, and mental health while providing a robust level of programming through its extended learning model. CAMBA offers academic enrichment at these schools, along with attendance outreach to ensure that students attend school regularly, and programs to improve school culture, engage families, and connect students with other non-profit and public support services to ensure their success.

Our Learning To Work Programs and Community Schools serve the most disadvantaged students in the City, who are now more at risk than ever before. Even in normal times, these young people have a tenuous connection to the school system. Many struggle with challenges such as mental illness, substance use disorders, or involvement with the criminal justice system. CAMBA and other providers offer these students a lifeline of academic and supportive services that empower them to complete high school successfully and move on to post-secondary education and gainful employment.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, these programs are needed more than ever and funding needs to be maintained to keep them whole. Many of our students have suffered unimaginable losses. Indeed, at one Learning To Work site, a student has lost five family members to COVID-19 since schools have been closed. The Program Director reached out to this young man's mother several times to offer support and encouragement and the student's Advocate Counselor remains in contact with the family. Without our support, these students simply could not hold on.

Like the school system as a whole, CAMBA pivoted quickly to continue to provide services remotely. Using tools including email, texts, phone calls, Google Meets, Google Classrooms, and Zoom, our Learning To Work Programs have continued to deliver core services including individual counseling, academic counseling, socioemotional support, post-secondary guidance, tutoring, and even internships. Because students no longer have access to traditional worksites, we have developed innovative, project-based internships. Indeed, our Internship Developers formed a working group where they design engaging, project-based internships to keep our students

employed. For example, our Internship Developers created the Entrepreneurship Project. This internship teaches students the nuts and bolts of how to develop and pitch their own business plans. This sort of project-based learning has been so successful that, in the month of April, 261 Learning To Work students participated in internships, allowing them to earn much needed income while preparing for the world of work. For many families, the income these students earn is essential to making ends meet.

Our Community Schools have used the same array of electronic tools to continue to offer core services, such as wellness and integrated supports, family and community empowerment, and collaborative leadership. For example, at Brownsville Academy High School, we are working with BRIC to provide students with pre-recorded photography lessons to stimulate their minds and to enable them to explore talents and interests. The Arts Empowerment Group is offering parents Zumba classes via Zoom. At P.S. 306, our team – comprised of a Success Mentor, a Mental Health Coordinator, and the Community School Director – has been working diligently to support the ever-changing needs of the school. Each week, we engage in wellness phone calls, attendance mentorship, and social-emotional supports across our school community. We provide supports for the teachers and connections for the parents to create an efficient distance learning model. We also employ online learning platforms for opportunities to connect and offer resources to families. At PS 198, we are working collaboratively with the school administration to provide enrichment and family support to our students and parents. Our team – comprised of the Program Director, the Assistant Director, 10 Group Leaders, and 14 Group Workers – has been working diligently to support the needs of the school community by offering distance learning opportunities for students and parent workshops for parents.

Our model is also trauma-informed and based on the recognition that students bring many life challenges with them when they come to school. These challenges have been greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent article in the Washington Post reported that “Federal agencies and experts warn that a historic wave of mental-health problems is approaching: depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide.” Before the pandemic, these problems were already facts of life for many of our students. Thus, Social Workers that we have in five of our Learning To Work programs are providing virtual mental health counseling sessions, including 195 such sessions in April alone. These sessions are vital supports for fragile young people, and they should not become the victims of the budget ax.

In summation, we recognize and applaud the City’s heroic efforts to sustain the school system. We realize that without some form of Federal aid, some changes will be inevitable. However, we hope that the DYCD-funded summer programming, as well as programs like Learning To Work and Community Schools that serve the City’s most vulnerable students will be spared.

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

TESTIMONY

The Council of the City of New York
Finance Committee

Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020

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

The Legal Aid Society submits this testimony and thanks City Council for inviting our thoughts on New York City's budget for fiscal year 2020-2021.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's largest and oldest provider of legal services to low-income families and individuals. From offices in all five boroughs, the Society annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in some 300,000 legal matters involving civil, criminal and juvenile rights problems. Our 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. Last year, our Juvenile Rights staff represented more than 33,000 children. At the same time, our Criminal Practice handled nearly 220,000 cases for clients accused of criminal conduct last year. Many thousands of our clients with criminal cases in Criminal Court and Supreme Court are school-age teenagers and young adults. Annually, our Civil Practice works on more than 52,500 individual legal matters, including advocacy for families with school-age children. Our Criminal, Civil and Juvenile practices engage in educational advocacy for our clients, in the areas of special education, school discipline, and school placement and programming. In addition to representing these children each year in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients.

Our perspective comes from our daily contacts with children, adolescents, and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and city agencies including the Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Administration for Children's Services.

The Legal Aid Society supports the City Council's efforts to provide adequate funding and oversight for the New York City Department of Education. In particular, we appreciate City Council's attention to the needs of students in foster care, who are among the most vulnerable of New York City's children. Students in foster care have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has prevented them from connecting regularly with their parents and family members, as well as the school personnel and classmates on whom they rely for support. When schools resume, students in foster care will need significant support.

Bus Service for Students in Foster Care

First and foremost, when school buildings reopen, the DOE must ensure that every child in foster care is able to get to their school. The federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008 and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 require school districts and child welfare systems to collaborate in preserving school stability for children in foster care and in providing adequate transportation. Additionally, NY Education Law 3244, provides that the school district where the child attends school must provide transportation to and from the foster care placement and the child's school of origin. Despite these federal and state requirements, transportation remains a significant barrier to preserving school stability for students in foster care in New York City.

Last year, the Administration agreed to use existing resources to ensure busing for students in foster care. See FY 2020 Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary, p.59, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp->

<content/uploads/sites/54/2019/12/Fiscal-2020-Schedule-C-Final-Merge.pdf>. The City has failed to keep this promise.

Currently, the DOE permits students in foster care in preschool through 6th grade to submit an Emergency Evaluation Request for busing. The DOE approves such requests if, and only if, the foster child can easily be added to an existing route. The DOE will not create a new route or significantly alter an existing route to accommodate a child in foster care. Data provided by the DOE pursuant to Local Law 34 shows that during the period from January 2019 to June 2019, only 65% of students in foster care who applied for transportation received DOE bus service. 20% received a MetroCard instead, which is entirely inadequate. Young children are unable to travel alone on public transportation using a MetroCard. Foster parents typically have other obligations (employment, care of other children) that prevent them from accompanying a foster child during a long commute. Foster care case workers are also unable to accompany children to and from school due to their primary job responsibilities.

When children in foster care are denied DOE busing, they are often forced to change schools, which causes emotional, social, and academic harm. When DOE denies busing, ACS tries to piece together a transportation plan, which typically involves the use of expensive taxis, car services and paid chaperones. These ad hoc transportation arrangements are difficult to manage and costly to taxpayers.

No student in foster care should be forced to change schools or foster home placements due to lack of transportation. We urge City Council to hold the DOE accountable for providing yellow bus transportation to all children in foster care from preschool through 6th grade. We ask the City Council to include sufficient funding in the

budget to ensure that the DOE provides legally mandated bus service for students in foster care.

DOE Office for Children in Foster Care

In March 2018, the City's Interagency Foster Care Task Force recommended that DOE create an office to focus on students in foster care. Currently, responsibility for children in foster care rests with a wide range of different DOE staff members and offices: enrollment, transportation, special education, guidance, office of legal services, and academic policy, to name a few. There is no central DOE resource that schools, foster care agencies or families can turn to when they have questions about students in foster care. There is also no central resource to assist in setting policies relating to school stability, transportation, parental rights and involvement, access to records, consent for special education evaluations and services, court orders, data sharing and analysis, or credit transfers for students in foster care who change schools. A DOE office for students in foster care would help provide accurate and authoritative information about the educational rights of students in foster care. At the very least, the DOE should establish a senior level position to focus on the needs of these vulnerable students.

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Contact: Cara Chambers
Director
Education Advocacy Project
The Legal Aid Society
Juvenile and Civil Practices
cachambers@legal-aid.org
212-577-3342
347-423-0458 (cell)

Good afternoon, name is Carla Shotwell. I am a resident of Ridgewood, Queens. In this testimony, I ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. Our household happily brought our food scraps to farmer's markets and local drop-off sites until we received a brown bin. We have since involved our entire apartment building in separating their food scraps into the brown bin, just like they do with their recycling. We have worked with our landlord to ensure the bin is used properly. We and our neighbors are very saddened to now lose any viable option for recycling our food scraps, just when everyone was engaged and participating.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals. There is no doubt we are in a crisis now, however, it is quite likely we will encounter another crisis down the road. We must find a way to maintain more long-term goals, and do everything we can to avoid a climate crisis. Otherwise, what will we be able to maintain as a city in the midst of a devastating climate crisis?

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. Many New Yorkers, my friends and family included, have learned to separate their food scraps to drop-off at farmer's markets and other drop-off sites. We must continue expanding this education and participation. We must have places we can bring our food scraps, and we must have community composting sites to process the compost and help educate the public. There are safe, sustainable ways to do this, even in these times.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a

long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to my family and neighbors, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Testimony for Capital Budget Hearing- submitted by Carole Gordon, Sr. VP for Housing Development for The Bridge
5/21/2020

On behalf of The Bridge, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

The Bridge is a nonprofit housing developer, social service provider, and property manager in New York City. We have been providing social services to vulnerable New Yorkers since 1954 and supportive housing for the last 40 years. Close to 1,400 individuals are living in Bridge housing including 24 buildings, a small transitional shelter, a Safe Haven, and 519 scatter-site apartments throughout Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn. We provide housing with services for adults with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders, individuals exiting the criminal justice system, frail/disabled seniors, veterans with disabilities, and young adults aging out of foster care and residential treatment facilities. More than half of the 1,400 residents were formerly homeless. In addition to housing, we offer mental health and substance abuse treatment, vocational training, healthcare, care coordination, Assertive Community Treatment with 7 teams, and creative art therapies. We receive city capital financing from HPD and HDC and service dollars and rent subsidies from DOHMH (NY/NY 1,11, 111), HPD, NYCHA (HUD Section 8), DHS and HRA (approved NYC 15/15 award for 60 units and NYC 15/15 pending award for 15 units.)

The proposed 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as a serious blow to The Bridge as we have five (5) projects currently in the development pipeline with a total of **486** units of which 298 will serve formerly homeless individuals: Betances Family Apts on NYCHA land with 100 units (70 affordable units and 30 homeless units for persons with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders) to be funded by HPD ELLA and DOHMH; Boone Avenue Project with 65 units (50 supportive homeless units for frail/disabled seniors and persons with mental illness and 14 low income senior units) to be funded by HPD (SHLP) and NYC 15/15; Bridge Rockaway Brownsville Project with 174 units (87 supportive homeless units for frail/disabled seniors, veterans, and people with serious mental illness and 87 affordable family units) to be funded by HPD ELLA and NYC 15/15; Bishop House, a new 87-unit building which replaces an existing 20-unit building (71 supportive homeless units for re-entry individuals and persons with mental illness and 16 low income senior units) to be funded by HPD SHLP and NYC 15/15. Linden Blvd. project- we received a NYC 15/15 award for 60 units for homeless adults with mental illness in this 300-unit development in two buildings to be owned and operated by a private developer. An additional project would offer immediate housing to 15 homeless young adults in a newly constructed building in exchange for a small capital investment of \$1,875,000 plus NYC 15/15 funding to assist this especially vulnerable group of at-risk young adults. We learned this week that the city will not provide the capital funds toward the acquisition. This is short-sighted in view of the funds the city is currently spending on housing the homeless in hotels.

Pushing out closing dates for these projects results in even more people languishing in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the

Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers.

Research shows that *housing is a major social determinant of health*-- a safe, secure and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city's important goal to decrease the shelter and street homeless population will ultimately fail while increasing the risk of future spikes of COVID fatalities.

Supportive housing development creates jobs: The Bridge currently employs 477 New Yorkers as professionals and paraprofessionals, administrators, social workers, clerical staff, property management staff, housing counselors, peers with lived experience, and maintenance personnel.

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. The Bridge has continued to employ our entire staff and they have continued to work in our residential buildings providing on-site services for our supportive housing clients, cleaned and sanitized our program spaces, offices, and residences, and provided the same if not higher level of professionalism and dedication to their work. We have moved quickly to provide many new services needed during this difficult time through tele-health; modalities that have allowed us to expand the number of staff who are able to work remotely and to restrict the number of in-person interactions to keep both clients and staff safe and healthy while also keeping clients connected to vital services.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony today. We welcome your questions and comments.

May 23, 2020

NYC Council Finance Committee

Via financetestimony@council.nyc.gov

Re: proposed NYC budget cuts to DYCD

Dear Finance Committee:

PortSide New York is an award-winning, maritime non-profit located in Red Hook, Brooklyn founded in 2005. We provide programs in culture, education (K through graduate school), job training (youth, individual adults and via a partnership with the union District Council 9), resiliency/community mutual aid and historic preservation. We program on and off an 82-year old historic ship, the MARY A. WHALEN which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Last school year, we inspired Red Hook's PS 676 to become a maritime-themed elementary school, the 1st in Brooklyn and only the 2nd in NYC.

We are testifying about the DYCD budget because we think that funding is ESSENTIAL to NYC as a whole and to neighborhoods like ours. We are not major beneficiaries of DYDC funding, though we did apply this year.

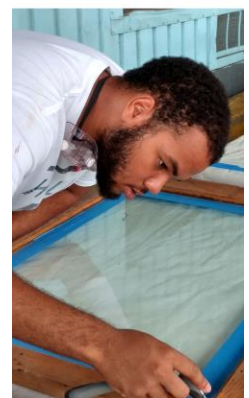
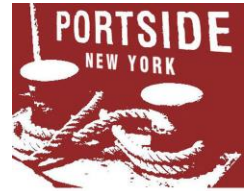
We accept that COVID19 impacts will take a huge bite out of the City budget.

What we do not accept, nor should you, is that DYCD suffer a radically steeper budget cut than other City departments – NEARLY 5X THE CUTS TO OTHER AGENCIES.

DYCD funds community arts programs, youth programs, and summer jobs for youth via SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program). Those are cultural and educational programs that benefit the entire community of the recipient organizations.

Further, a fair COVID19 budget does not gut the programs that serve those most affected by COVID19.

The people served by DYCD are the people most affected by COVID19, black and brown communities who are dying from coronavirus at 2x the rate of whites, who have a higher level of “essential workers” risking their lives than whites, and who are overwhelming over-targeted by NYPD police enforcement of social distancing where arrests, often violent ones, of people of color equal over 80% of total arrests.



PortSide New York, aboard the tanker MARY A. WHALEN
190 Pioneer Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231, 917-414-0565, chiclet@portsidenewyork.org, www.portsidenewyork.org, www.redhookwaterstories.org

portsidenewyork.org
redhookwaterstories.org

We see a lot of merit to the proposal to cut the NYPD budget by 1% to support DYCD.

We also see merit in proposals to use SYEP funds to hire and train youth to be ambassadors about social distancing and health safety practices that prevent getting COVID19. We do NOT think that using the NYPD for such functions will be effective.

NYC needs #NYCBudgetJustice. We need to #SaveSYEP. DYCD should not be the cash cow pillaged to support the budgets of other agencies.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolina Salguero', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carolina Salguero
Founder and Executive Director
PortSide NewYork



**New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020 at 9:30 am**

Testimony of Caroline Iosso, Director of Community and Government Affairs
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good morning. My name is Caroline Iosso and I am the Director of Community and Government Affairs at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). Thank you to the members of the Council for the opportunity to speak today. I am here to discuss how workforce development is an essential element of an equitable economic recovery.

Founded in 1983, OBT is one of New York City's largest providers of workforce development and education services for opportunity youth, ages 17-24, and adults who are disconnected from education and/or employment. We serve over 4,000 youth and adults annually across sites in Brooklyn and Queens. We exist to break the cycle of poverty and inequity through education, job training, and employment. OBT's programs serve as a bridge to economic opportunity for youth, individuals, and families in underserved communities. With programming that ranges from high school equivalency to ESOL courses to industry-certified training programs for high school graduates, we focus on meeting individuals "where they are" and work with them to meet their goals. Our programs have an 87% completion rate. 72% of participants earn employer-recognized credentials during their time with us and 70% are placed in jobs after graduating from our programs.

OBT's Participants

For 36 years, OBT has served young people and adults who face systemic barriers to economic stability. Our participants often struggle with familial poverty, health and mental health issues, and food insecurity. Many are from immigrant, Black, and Brown communities and face the structural racism that those identities engender every day. Our mission has always been to mitigate the inherent inequity in our economic ecosystem through supportive and comprehensive job training and education programs. When students come to us for their High School Equivalency diploma or a job training, they leave with mentors, friends, confidence, and renewed energy towards a vocation in life. The importance of this work cannot be overstated.

Before COVID-19 brought our City's businesses to a halt, fueled mass layoffs, and threw our health and mental health support systems into flux, this work was challenging. For the reasons discussed above, our participants faced an often uphill battle to secure family-sustaining employment.

Now, this work is all the more challenging and urgent. With increased competition for jobs, young people across the country will be at a disadvantage in finding employment. The young people that OBT works with will be at an even more significant disadvantage - which is why, if the City hopes to create equitable financial relief, workforce organizations like OBT must be supported to do the work.

Workforce Development as a Vehicle for Equitable Economic Relief

Job training, education programs and employment placement services have been and will continue to be essential resources to disenfranchised young people, adults struggling with the digital divide, and speakers of other languages. These programs will give these populations a leg up as they struggle to compete in a post-COVID-19 New York.

OBT's programs not only provide skills and support to our participants; we also work with employers to determine need and how our programs can meet that need. That exercise of pivoting to labor market demands and creating programming that matches jobseekers to businesses is a nimbleness that we must exert in the difficult times ahead. Workforce development nonprofits are embedded, trusted resources in communities with relationships with businesses who may be hiring. This combination makes us invaluable assets to ensuring economic recovery reaches those who need it most.

OBT's Vision for FY21

OBT's programming will take on a new urgency and mandate in light of the economic challenges that COVID-19 has created. We will see increased struggle with access to and ability to interact with technology. We may see fewer employment opportunities that provide that first job experience that our graduates need. We will likely see increased demand for industry-recognized certifications that can make our young people more marketable in a competitive hiring environment. And we will definitely see a greater need for collaboration among local stakeholders to develop strategies and solutions. As we plan for the coming year, OBT is focused in three areas:

Focus on Employable Skills: Expanding sector-based advanced programs in healthcare and technology, increasing our scale by leveraging what we're currently learning through remote programming in order to offer blended, flexible and accessible industry-certified training for youth. This will be a critical next step for those who complete a high school diploma. As we know, a high school diploma is a necessary first step towards financial stability - but it is the next steps into advanced training and further education that create pathways to family-sustaining wages.

Building Digital Literacy into all Adult Literacy + ESOL Programming: Building off of existing needs we witness through OBT's adult literacy and education programs, we also know that digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers. The transition to remote has only further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide through city-wide broadband access, and through localized efforts, like ensuring that all ESOL and adult high school equivalency classes include digital literacy.

Cultivating Hyper-Local Employer-Workforce Development-Government Ecosystems: As a workforce development provider, we have relationships with local employers and with

government partners, but an ecosystem of connected efforts does not yet exist. To ensure that local residents are not left behind by economic development efforts, we plan to build forums for continuous communication and collaboration. Only through real-time feedback among employers and the job training community can we keep training relevant to business need and businesses receptive to our trained candidates. As Jobs to Build On program partners, we recognize how important connecting unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers to work is. A forum will enhance this critical work.

Prioritize Job Training and Education in This Year's Budget

COVID-19 has led to unprecedented challenges for us a City. As we determine the best paths forward, it would be devastating to leave young people and adults struggling with language access and digital literacy behind. The programs we are proud to provide will be lifelines to our community members as they work to survive in the economic landscape that we're facing. As a progressive city, I hope that you will pass a budget that places the needs of the most vulnerable in the center.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. With any questions, I can be reached at ciosso@obtjobs.org.

CARRIE ELLMAN-LARSEN

05/20/2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Carrie Ellman-Larsen and I work for several arts and arts education organizations such as The Roundabout Theatre Company, Arts Connection and The Theatre Development Fund as a teaching artist all over NYC.

The mission of each of these organizations is to bring professional artists into schools to work with young people. At Roundabout, I bring students to see a Roundabout production for free and collaborate with a classroom teacher to customize an arts-based residency for his/her classroom. For Arts Connection, I mainly work with ELLs and students with disabilities, using theatre for language acquisition, social-emotional learning and more. With TDF, I bring students to see a Broadway production, many for the first time, and help to customize a residency inspired by that production.

Now that the pandemic has prohibited the continuation of school and arts residencies, each of my organizations are working hard to not only provide continued arts learning remotely, but to envision the future of arts education, whether it be in person, remote or a mix of both. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community

that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Budget cuts would not only affect my livelihood as a teaching artist, but would impact the hundreds of students I work with each year, sometimes for the whole year or over many years. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Carrie Ellman-Larsen

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

May 21, 2020

Hearing on the New York City Budget

Testimony of Carter H. Strickland, Jr.
New York State Director, The Trust for Public Land
on the FY21 budget for the
Departments of Parks and Recreation and Education

Thank you Chairperson Dromm and Members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify on New York City's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21). We previously submitted testimony on March 13, 2020, to the Committee on Parks and Recreation regarding that agency's FY21 budget, and on March 4, 2020, to the Committee on Environmental Protection regarding that agency's FY21 budget. Today we submit testimony on the budgets for the New York City Departments of Parks and Recreation and Education, and the priorities reflected in those budgets. All three agencies – Parks, Education, and Environmental Protection – have policies and programs that affect open space in New York City.

My name is Carter Strickland and I am the New York State Director of The Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit organization that creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. One of The Trust for Public Land's guiding principles – supported by numerous studies – is that parks and open space are critical infrastructure that make cities and their residents healthier, happier, more prosperous, cleaner, greener, and more resilient. Since 1978, The Trust for Public Land has worked with New York City residents to improve their

neighborhoods by creating public spaces where they can safely play, connect with nature and each other, and create resilient communities.

Parks Provide Many Benefits. Especially During the Coronavirus Pandemic

New Yorkers love their parks more than any other infrastructure system in the city, yet parks receive about 0.6 percent of the total city budget. The low budget allocation for parks does not reflect the value they provide for the City and its residents. Parks enhance property values and boost economic development, support local jobs, increase spending at local businesses, and generate local tax revenue. Parks create opportunities for organized events such as art fairs, athletic events, food festivals, and concerts and positive economic impacts to their communities. Parks keep us resilient in the face of climate change, as they can reduce the temperature of urban heat islands by as much as seven to twelve percent (7-12%) and can absorb stormwater. Parks keep us active and address the social determinants of health that drive most non-communicable diseases that cost so much in medical bills, lost time, and lost wages. Parks also maintain mental and social health, strengthening social and community links. All of these services are incredibly valuable alone and in combination.

These benefits are more apparent than ever against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and the related shelter at home orders. For New Yorkers who spend most of the day isolated in our apartments, parks are among the few public places that remain open and usable while following safety protocols. New Yorkers understand that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities, and have provided relief and solace during these unsettled times.

We can think about the value of this open space by imagining NYC without any parks. Isn't it clear that mental and physical health would suffer, our city would not be livable and would lose population, real estate would be worth less, and economic activity would reduce even more? Isn't it also clear that the costs would far exceed the paltry 0.6 percent of the budget we currently dedicate to parks, and does not match the esteem and gratitude that New Yorkers feel for their parks?

New York Parks are No Longer in the Top Ten Nationwide

Every year The Trust for Public Land ranks the park systems of the 100 largest cities in America. In 2017, New York ranked seventh. We came up behind cities like Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Arlington on median park size and spending per resident. In 2018 and 2019, New York was knocked down to ninth place in the ParkScore rankings, as Cincinnati and Chicago moved ahead of us. Yesterday, The Trust for Public Land released our 2020 rankings, and New York City dropped to eleventh place, as we were pushed out of the Top Ten for the first time by Boston. No New Yorker should be happy about that result.

New York's fall from the ParkScore Top Ten resulted from our failure to keep pace with the innovations and investments of peer cities like Boston. According to ParkScore, when all parks and playgrounds are open, 99 percent of New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park, far exceeding the national average of 72 percent for the top 100 cities and average of 55 percent for all cities. New York's final ranking was hurt by our median park size of 1.1 acres, well below the national ParkScore average of 5.2 acres. I note that ParkScore does not rank overall park acreage on a per capita basis, which would have driven down New York City's score, as 284 New Yorkers must

crowd into every acre of park space. New York's ranking was also hurt by the lack of amenities and features especially such critical features as playgrounds, bathrooms, and recreation and senior centers, which are below the national average on a per capita basis. The bottom line is that we need to invest more in our park system – under ParkScore's system New York City ranks well on park spending per capita but is still not at the top, and more troubling, that spending is not translating into amenities that would make our parks as high quality as those in other cities.

Capital Funding and Delivery

New York is renowned for innovation and world class parks but we are falling behind. One innovative way to improve our parks is for the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop cost-effective public-private partnerships for capital projects, similar to its well-established practice of relying on conservancies in big parks and “friends of” groups in smaller parks to fund or even undertake maintenance and operations (and in the biggest parks, on capital projects as well). The City's new authority for design-build procurement should dovetail with a better public-private partnership program to result in faster and less expensive capital improvements to parks.

For example, my organization, The Trust for Public Land, has worked with the city for over 20 years to create publicly accessible playgrounds on school property that also serve as green infrastructure to absorb stormwater and combat the urban heat island effect. We have built 210 to date, at present costs of approximately \$1.5 million per acre, with much of that cost provided by private philanthropy, and our streamlined methods take 12 to 18 months from start of participatory design to construction

completion. We have also overseen the construction of larger parks, such as Heritage Park on Staten Island using Port Authority funds and South Point Park on Roosevelt Island using funds from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. As the Department of Parks and Recreation starts to implement its new design-build authority and otherwise seeks to more efficiently deliver capital projects, The Trust for Public Land would welcome the opportunity to partner with the City to design and build projects on NYC parkland.

Operational Funding

In addition to the need to create more physical amenities in parks through more and smarter capital spending, the structure of our park system requires additional operating funding. As noted above, the biggest difference between New York City and the cities that rank above us in ParkScore is the number of parks in the city system. New York has significantly more parks, and therefore a much bigger task at hand when it comes to maintaining them. In fact, both Washington, DC and San Francisco are comparable to NYC when looking at median park size and parkland as a percentage of city area, but those cities have fewer parks (NYC manages over 1,700 parks, and we also count parks managed by the Federal and State government as well as playgrounds managed by the Department of Education and other agencies, for a total of over 2,300 properties). Moreover, city parks are on average 73 years old and many have not seen upgrades in over 20 years. Therefore, New York City has a greater need for gardening and operational staff because we have more parks and older parks to maintain. Increased operational funding for the Parks Department would help it staff, maintain,

and secure our many, old parks to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to high quality parks.

That is why The Trust for Public Land opposes the proposed reduction of \$61.3 million to the Parks Department's budget in Fiscal Year 2021 under the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) program. These cuts, paired with the dramatic decrease in funds available for private not-for-profit organizations, will have a profound impact on the care and visitor experience of our city's parks. The proposed cuts to NYC Parks through the Mayor's PEG program and FY21 Executive Budget would leave the agency with less staff than in 1977 to 1978, the low point of NYC's fiscal crisis. At that time when NYC Parks were at their most vulnerable, unkempt, and dangerous, and we cannot let that happen again.

Indeed, to keep pace with other cities and the substantial benefits that parks provide, we need to increase operational funding that would get the city closer to a one percent allocation of the city budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation. That is why The Trust for Public Land supports the Play Fair campaign, which was founded by New Yorkers for Parks, the New York League of Conservation Voters and DC 37, the NYC Parks workers' union, and has been joined by over 250 other organizations and grassroots groups. The Play Fair Coalition seeks modest increases in the operational budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation. In 2019, the Coalition sought an additional \$100 million and was successful in getting an additional \$44 million into the NYC Parks budget. In 2020, the Play Fair Campaign adjusted its goals due to the coronavirus pandemic and related budget shortfalls and is seeking \$47 million in investments that prioritize securing frontline parks workers' jobs and increasing their

capacity for maintenance in our parks and open spaces, which are needed by New Yorkers now more than ever for their mental and physical health.

Moving towards a one percent allocation for parks would show New Yorkers that the City understands that everyone deserves a quality park. Especially during this coronavirus pandemic, when parks are needed and used so much, a modest increase for parks would provide hope for the millions of New Yorkers who depend on them every day to stay safe and healthy.

Other Agency Budgets that Affect Access to Open Space

One of the reasons that 99% of New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park is that we count playgrounds that are in public schools but that are open to all after school hours and on weekends. Because playgrounds are closed (statewide) and many other NYC facilities are closed (playgrounds, tennis courts, handball courts, baseball, basketball, golf courses, beaches, schoolyards, historic buildings, botanical gardens, and dog parks), over one million people have lost access to a park within a 10-minute walk from home, dropping NYC's score from 99% to 86%.

The temporary closure of playgrounds shows how critical they are to park access and that the Department of Education plays an important role in providing open space resources to students, their families, and their neighborhoods. For the past 20 years, The Trust for Public Land's School to Playgrounds Program has played an integral part in rehabilitating 210 barren asphalt school lots into lively playgrounds that accessible to over 3.9 million New Yorkers living within a 10-minute walk of the spaces.

Unfortunately, operational funding has not kept pace and threatens to keep these playgrounds closed. As per the governing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the

Trust for Public Land undertakes planning, design, and capital construction while the Department of Education (DOE) and its Division of School Facilities (DSF) are tasked with maintenance and operations. This is done through funding custodians to open and close the gates and keep the playgrounds clean (The Trust for Public Land has rehabilitated equipment, repainted surfaces, stewarded gardens and plantings, and undertaken other physical repairs.) This is a good deal for the DOE, which is obligated under state law to provide playspaces for children. In exchange for a capital upgrade, DOE merely has to ensure that all existing playground sites have the resources and support necessary to remain open.

Contrary to the MOU, however, the DOE has cut SF's maintenance and operations budget have resulted in more than 18 playground sites throughout the city that are not receiving the custodial funding necessary to remain open. We have raised this issue with the Chairs of the Council's Education and Parks Committee, who have written the Chancellor about the issue. We understand that there has been no response from the Administration.

In FY20, the total funding allocated to DSF's maintenance and operation budget was \$14.5 million, which DSF previously said would support all TPL and other Schoolyard to Playground conversions. And yet there are more than 18 playgrounds that have been built – with significant discretionary capital funds from the City Council and Borough Presidents – but that may not open because of shortfalls in custodial funding. More are in the pipeline. We urge the Council to rectify this situation, get answer about how DOE is allocating its budget, and if necessary restore funding for custodial services that serve as operational funding for playgrounds.

Conclusion

New York's park system is good but can be the best in the country. We need to increase funding and explore opportunities for new parks. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.



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www.seiu32bj.org

Testimony of Shirley Aldebol, President of 32BJ SEIU
Committee on Finance
Committee on Immigration
Subcommittee on Capitol Budget
May 21, 2020

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings

Good morning/afternoon Chairs Dromm, Menchaca, Gibson and members of the committees, My name is Shirley Aldebol I'm a Vice President of SEIU Local 32BJ. 32BJ is the largest building service union in the country representing workers from Boston to Florida. 85,000 of our members live here in New York City metro area. Among the city-contracted essential property services workers represented by 32BJ are 6,400 public school cleaners and handypersons employed by New York City School Support Services (NYCSSS).

To keep our school community safe and healthy, City should fully fund NYCSSS, and ensure that adequate resources are available to provide appropriate personal protective equipment and training. These workers continue to be on the front lines in school facilities that are providing childcare and meals for the public and will continue to face demanding conditions when our schools re-open for instruction.

The importance of these workers for the safe functioning of our public schools, is greater now than it has ever been. Guidance from the World Health Organization,ⁱ the Center for Disease Control,ⁱⁱ and the New York Department of Educationⁱⁱⁱ are all in agreement on the great importance that cleaning, and disinfecting schools will have for the safety of students and staff. The work we are asking for this staff to do is not simple or risk free. When there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19, students and staff are to be kept away from the areas frequented by the infected person and cleaning staff are sent *first* to clean and then disinfect the school areas where the positive student or staff had contact.^{iv} The process of cleaning and disinfecting is not simple, it is a 2 step process. In addition, high touch and common areas that are to be subject to additional cleaning must be identified and cleaned more frequently. The appropriate EPA disinfectant for the relevant surface type must be chosen, directions on proper use followed. Workers must wear, and safely remove and properly discard the appropriate personal protective equipment.^v As Donna Perez, a cleaner who has worked at NYC schools for over 20 years notes "the needs and expectations of students, staff, and parents will be much higher than what we know as the norm." As Ms. Perez states "any cuts to current staffing levels would not allow for enhanced cleaning on a regular basis." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how one could have enhanced and more frequent cleaning with a smaller staff. It is important that NYCSSS retain an experienced and trained workforce that can safely perform the tasks that will keep students, staff, and their families safe.

In addition to providing for NYCSSS to operate at full capacity, City should ensure that the budget allows for school cleaners and handypersons, who are serving on the front lines of COVID-19, to be paid the wages owed to them under law. This is what we would expect of any responsible employer, and the City itself should certainly be a model of compliance with laws designed to protect workers. School cleaners earn just enough to make ends meet in New York City, and are facing risks every day to keep our kids safe Every dollar makes a difference in their lives. While the prevailing wage they

receive is set to increase next year, the amount budgeted for NYCSSS in the Executive Budget does not account for this change. This is a problem that must get fixed in the final budget. In a moment where school cleaners are risking their lives and are more essential than ever, we urge the City to fund the fair compensation to which they are entitled, without reducing the hours or positions we need to keep the school community safe. Workers like Mark Espinoza, who has for over 14 years worked in NYC schools, are concerned about what this budget means for their wage standards and their job security. As Mr. Espinoza says “We’re in a cloud of uncertainty, but we’re still doing what needs to get done. I care about the students and teachers and I don’t want them to go through what I did (losing my grandmother and father to COVID-19).” Moreover, as Ms. Perez says, “we are always putting the children first, even at a risk to our own health and the health and well being of our families.”

New York City cannot afford to under-resource school cleaning in the middle of a public health crisis. An investment in NYCSSS is an investment not only in frontline workers, but in the health of the kids, parents, and staff who rely on our public school facilities.

Thank you.

ⁱ https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools-h.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/nysed-covid-19-first-guidance-3-9-20.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/nysed-covid-19-first-guidance-3-9-20.pdf>

^v <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

Laquisha Lewis Testimony on Shelter Budget
Committee on Finance
Thursday May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Laquisha Lewis and I am a security officer in a non-profit shelter managed by Acacia.

I have been a security officer for the last 6 months. I thought it would be an opportunity to serve my community and support my family. I am a mother of two beautiful young children and want to give them a life of dignity and security. Unfortunately, taking care of two kids as a single mother while making as low as the minimum wage is more of a nightmare.

Because most of us only earn the minimum wage, I cannot afford the health insurance offered by my employer. My children and I are on Medicaid. You can imagine how stressful it is as an essential employee, continuing to put family and myself at risk of COVID-19, because I have to work without access to affordable health insurance paid by my employer.

Because of the stay-at-home order, I also find myself struggling to find childcare near my home or work. I have to take my children to two different boroughs to get the childcare they need while I am at work. It is mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausting trying to make our lives work around the fact that I am an essential worker at this time.

As my family continues to make sacrifices while I am on the front lines of this epidemic, I know the City can do better by my coworkers and me. We show up and continue to perform our duties at work, because we understand this is a crisis and we are needed. However, our work should not come at the expense of our lives or health. We need to be paid the prevailing wage and have access to meaningful benefits, like health care and paid days off.



Laquisha Lewis

Marwa Cissie Testimony on Shelter Budget

Committee on Finance

Thursday May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Marwa Cissie and I have been a security guard at a shelter, managed by Acacia, in Manhattan for about a year. I am testifying today as an essential worker in need of affordable health insurance.

As a guard in a non-profit shelter, I earn the minimum wage and do not have meaningful benefits. My employer, Sera Security LLC, offers a health care package that is unaffordable on my currently hourly wage. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I sought for health insurance on the exchange, and was told my hourly wage of \$15 per hour, was too high for Medicaid, and I would not qualify.

I wear glasses and need to have my eyes checked often. Seeing an eye doctor and having an eyeglass prescription is not cheap, and the thought of having to go without or not being able to afford a new pair if something was to happen to the pair I have is overwhelming. Without glasses, the world I know, the world you see, would be taken from me. Because of COVID-19, I now have access to Medicaid, so I will be okay for the next few months—but Medicaid informed me that when this crisis is over, I will return to being uninsured and my minimum wage salary will be considered too high to qualify. If I was paid the prevailing wage, like other security officers in the public shelters, I would have access to meaning benefits like affordable health care.



Marwa Cissie

Michael Gang Testimony on Shelter Budget

Committee on Finance

Thursday May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Michael Gang and I am a security officer at homeless shelter at 980 Prospect in the Bronx. The shelter I work at serves single adult men and women. I have worked at this shelter, now operated by Acacia, since 2007.

From 2007-2016, my job had dignity—it was a good paying job that offered decent benefits and provided security for my family. In 2016, like many others, the City transferred the operations of my shelter to a non-profit provider. As a result, Sera Security LLC took over the security work and my job and livelihood changed drastically. Because of the transfer, Sera Security was not required to pay the prevailing wage in turn, my pay dropped significantly and my benefits were no long in effect. For nine years, I could provide a decent home for my wife and two amazing kids and in an instant that was ripped from us. Now, I struggle to put food on the table.

Today, I earn a dollar more than the minimum wage with no benefits and with no raise in sight. Sera Security offers health insurance but it is too expensive. Before COVID-19, working with no health benefits was stressful, but since my job is essential, working in these conditions—putting my family and myself at risk—is overwhelming. The health risk we are taking does not start and end when we clock in and out at work—it follows us to and from work, the moment we leave our homes.

Since the transfer from DHS operated shelter to non-profit management, having access to our sick days as mandated by NYC law, has been impossible. I have tried to use my earned paid sick days but with Sera Security, it is a battle to be paid.

As the Council debates and allocates funds for the shelter system, I urge you not to forget about the security guards in non-profit shelters. As you know, we are serving a vulnerable population during an extremely uncertain time. Providing us with the prevailing wage, would guarantee us affordable health care, give us paid sick and personal days, give us access to mobility and security, and most importantly, it will give us the dignity and respect we deserve.



Michael Gang

Quinton Kennedy Testimony on Shelter Budget

Committee on Finance

Thursday May 21, 2020

Good afternoon, my name is Quinton Kennedy and I am a security officer in Queens, at a homeless shelter managed by Acacia.

I am here today to testify and urge the City Council to pay security officers like me in homeless shelters the prevailing wage.

Prior to COVID-19 my job was stressful—most of us earn as low as the minimum wage, do not have access to affordable healthcare, and serve a vulnerable population at work and sometimes situations arise that get the best of people's emotions. But, I could leave work at work and enjoy my time off the clock.

However, since this pandemic, that has changed. I take care of my elderly grandmother and every time I leave for work or return home, I am nervous that I am going to bring this virus home to her. If she were to contract the virus—it would be because of me. If I were paid the prevailing wage, I would be guaranteed paid days off and sick time. While paid sick time is a NYC law, I would have extra COVID paid time off protections as stated in the prevailing wage.

I am proud to show up to work and serve New York City by protecting our homeless population. However, NYC needs to make sure that my coworkers and I are also protected. If the City is using taxpayer dollars to fund non-profit homeless shelters, it is has a responsibility to ensure that these essential jobs are good jobs that offer workers affordable health care, paid time off, and annual pay increases.



Quinton Kennedy

Ronniel Booker Testimony on Shelter Budget

Committee on Finance

Thursday May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Ronneil Booker and I was a security supervisor at a family shelter in the Bronx.

As a security officer in the City's shelter system, I felt like I was contributing to the community by serving our homeless population. However, as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, I realized that my life and my family's life did not matter to my employer, Sera Security LLC.

At the start of the crisis, I knew that security officers like me in the shelter system, were at the front lines of this pandemic. Despite our work with a transient and vulnerable population, we were not given hand sanitizer, gloves, disinfectant or masks. Like most people, my coworkers and I watched as the Center for Disease Control and our elected officials in New York instructed people to stay home, social distance, and watch for symptoms. As a supervisor and worker, red flags continued to go off for me while I was working and I watched as clients were never instructed to social distance, as my coworkers and I brought our own gloves and disinfectant, and waited for instructions from my employer on how to protect ourselves at work.

It did not take long for COVID-19 to move beyond the news or red flags at work before it directly hit my family. In April, I lost two family members to the virus and understood the gravity of this disease. Two weeks after the deaths in my family, I noticed a guard coming to work with a mask on—this was before masks were mandatory. This guard told another coworker that she believed to have COVID-19 but instructed them not to tell me because I would send her home. Concerned for their own safety our other coworker told me, and I sent this guard home. I can imagine why she didn't want to get sent home—we make minimum wage and most of us don't have health insurance and aren't paid for our sick days. Sometimes working while sick is the only way we can feed our families.

After I sent home the sick guard, my manager questioned me, "Why did you send her home? She only has allergies—you should not have sent her home." He instructed me to stay for mandatory overtime because I sent her home. I told my manager I did not feel comfortable working a double, continuing to put myself at risk because we didn't have the proper PPE. My manager looked me in the eye and said, "If you walk through the door and don't do the double, don't bother coming back to work." I left at the end of my scheduled shift and was taken off the schedule. I was fired because I stood up and for myself, for my fellow guards, and for our communities.

I am raising two amazing young kids, ages 8 and 3. I feel proud to be able to tell them that I did what was right—even though it cost me my job. Security officers in homeless shelters are on the front lines of this pandemic and we have been overlooked. They City is funding these jobs and should ensure that workers like me are paid the prevailing wage, have access to PPE, and have protection for a voice on the job. As you develop the shelter budget for next year, I urge you to ensure that workers like me are paid the prevailing wage. We have risked our lives to serve our communities and New York City needs to have our backs too.

Omanthis Jordan Testimony on Shelter Budget

Committee on Finance

Thursday May 21, 2020

My name is Omanthis Jordan, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am a security officer at homeless shelter, managed by Acaia.

Throughout this crisis, my coworkers and I have been responsible for getting out own PPE and bringing it to work. I am an essential worker serving one of the most vulnerable and transient populations in the country, without consistent or adequate PPE. I am grateful for the shelter's cleaning staff because they share what little PPE they can. However, this is an act of solidarity from worker to worker, New Yorker to New Yorker, when our employer should be taking responsibility for keeping us safe

As you examine and allocate funds for the shelter system, I urge you not to take this situation lightly. You have essential workers, working in jobs funded with City dollars supporting vulnerable New Yorkers, without access to health insurance or adequate and consistent PPE. I am proud to do my job and serve this population, but we also deserve respect, healthcare, and dignity.

In crisis, we need each other more than ever.

As we do what we can to take care of ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities, safety remains out of reach for countless people in our city — essential workers who do not have the privilege of staying home, un- and underemployed people who are struggling to pay bills on top of just trying to stay healthy, unhoused people who are at greater risk both on the streets and in shelters, and people in prisons and detention centers where social distancing is impossible and protective equipment nonexistent.

This virus has not only created a new crisis, but revealed and exacerbated one that we already knew existed — many of our neighbors do not have access to the healthcare, housing, and resources they need to survive.

At a time when this pandemic is raging, it's not only despicable, but dangerous to continue investing in policing and incarceration over the health, education, and community resources our city's neighborhoods need more than ever.

The mayor's current budget includes more than \$800 million in cuts to education alone, while budgets for the NYPD and Department of Corrections have seen increases and guaranteed capital growth. Already stressed Black, Brown, and poor communities will not only bear the brunt of cuts, but will also be disproportionately targeted by racist policing and carceral policy.

As someone who lives in the West Village, I see every day how white, wealthy people are largely unimpacted by crisis – be it this pandemic or otherwise. I see how we can walk around without masks or social distancing, remaining not just untouched, but protected and encouraged by NYPD (who are also often without protective equipment). Meanwhile, every day, neighborhoods that are predominantly people of color in Brooklyn and Queens are harassed, arrested, and made to suffer even more. Unhoused people are violently expelled from the subway, one of the few alternatives to dangerous shelters where distancing and protection are impossible.

Viruses may not discriminate, but policies like these do.

It's time to end this devastating pattern of divesting from what's actually needed and investing instead in what's harming our most vulnerable neighbors. Echoing the calls from unhoused people's organizing, Black and Brown communities, and inside Rikers and jails, I demand a budget that prioritizes the well-being of people over policing and incarceration. I demand a budget that's about public health, not tax breaks for the already wealthy. I demand that we Free Them All, from detention centers, jails, and prisons. The time to invest, not divest, from education, healthcare, housing, and what communities need is NOW.

Cassidy Regan



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jeanne Houck, and I am the Executive Director for the Creative Arts Team at CUNY, serving all 51 Council Districts in New York City.

The mission of the Creative Arts Team (CAT) is to use theatre and interactive drama as a catalyst to address academic and social issues. Founded in 1974, CAT delivers programs that promote literacy, college and career readiness, social-emotional learning, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and arts learning. CAT works with over 18,000 New Yorkers at 180 schools and community sites annually, delivering programs to Pre-K-12th grade students and educators, college students, parents, and adults.

CAT has been trusted to deliver our culturally responsive, trauma-informed pedagogy at the height of the AIDS crisis and immediately after 9/11, and has continued to do so during the COVID-19 pandemic. CAT has adapted curricula to help meet the social-emotional and academic needs of students and educators due to COVID-19. CAT is currently delivering virtual programs to teachers, parents, public school students, and college students. Our educators and teaching artists are using virtual platforms to deliver asynchronous and live video dramas, lessons, and discussions that are as participant-centered as possible. CAT teaching artists are engaging students and adults in drama, history, arts, and literacy curricula, as well as facilitating workshops that explore topics including staying on track in your education, parenting and privacy during quarantine, managing boundaries, and bettering communication skills. We are continuing our college readiness programs with weekly residencies that support building skills in literacy and learning United States immigration history. CAT is also providing professional development for teachers on creative ways to use virtual tools to engage students in their academic studies.

Because of CAT's participant-centered pedagogy and expertise in using theatre to facilitate conversations and strategies for processing loss and finding hope, we are joining arts and culture organizations throughout the city in using the arts as a tool for moving forward as a society and as citizens.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to continue to fuel a vibrant New York City, restore mental health for families, and engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

I respectfully request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, and Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Our own organization's capacity would be decreased by 50% or more without support from these agencies. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Houck, PhD

Jeanne Houck, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Chris Vine
Artistic & Education Advisor
Academic Director,
CUNY MA in Applied Theatre

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Nancy F. Swartzell
In Memoriam

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
5.23.2020

My name is Catherine Fodge, and I am writing to ask the City Council to reject the disproportionate cuts to the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) in the NYC Budget and instead, invest in the expansive potential of our communities and youth.

The cuts to DYCD are targeted, unfair and devastating, particularly affecting young people in our most socio-economically vulnerable communities across NYC. These communities have historically been under supported. They taken the biggest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our youth greatly rely on DYCD funding to take part in programs that keep them safe, provide after school care, academic enrichment, job training, mentorship and engagement in activities that give stability to their communities and lives. DYCD funds support families who often do not have the means to provide such enrichment activities and mentorship without this support. DYCD supports the programs and organizations most tied to giving ALL youth an equitable chance at future success. While I am aware that cuts must be made to all city programs in this time of crisis, those slated for DYCD are dramatically out of scale with other proposed reductions in the city budget and go against the very values of inclusivity and diversity that make NYC unique. Further, these cuts and this budget as a whole is an expression of disregard for communities already suffering historically unfair disparities, particularly our communities of color.

I speak to you representing Cora Dance. Cora Dance not only provides the highest quality dance instruction, but also provides snacks, homework help, and a place for students to learn lessons that extend far beyond the dance studio. Institutions like those funded by the DYCD will be critical in restoring mental, physical and emotional health for families and engaging restoring community health and safety of all New Yorkers in a proactive way. Most importantly, DYCD funded programs give hope, which cannot be undervalued at this tumultuous time. **In order for this to happen, the restoration of DYCD funding must be the highest priority for the City Council.**

The city's budget cuts should not fall disproportionately on the DYCD. New York has historically been a beacon of creativity, inclusivity and advancement. Let us not tarnish that history by adopting a budget that goes against those values.

Thank you City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony. Should you need to reach me I can be contacted at cfodge@coradance.org.

Sincerely,

Catherine Fodge



TESTIMONY

Preliminary Budget Hearing:

“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:
Worker Cooperatives- An Essential Model for Business Sustainability and Recovery

Presented to

New York City Council, Committees on Finance, Immigration and Subcommittee on the
Capital Budget

Hon. Daniel Dromm, Chair

Hon. Carlos Menchaca, Chair

Hon. Vanessa Gibson, Chair

Thurs. May 21, 2020

Prepared By:

Catherine Murcek, Worker-Owner

Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective

Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective

119 W 23rd Street, Ste. 406

646-964-5772

info@samamkayabackcare.com

www.samamkayabackcare.com

Thank you Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, Chair Menchaca, Council members and staff of the Committees on Finance and Immigration, and the Subcommittee on the Capital budget for the opportunity to submit testimony on a subject very important to me. My name is Catherine Murcek and I am a worker owner at Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective and an elected member of the Advocacy Council organized by the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives, a partner organization of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) and a member of the United for Small Business NYC (USBnyc) coalition.

The current public health crisis we find ourselves in has laid bare the stark inequalities that our economic system has created. This is a system where competition and profit maximization are upheld as the ultimate values to ensure a thriving economy. And yet, as we can see with hospitals going bankrupt as patients die by the thousands, our low-income and communities of color being hit far worse than more affluent neighborhoods, and thousands of our city's vibrant small business community shuttering indefinitely, this is not a system that works for everyone.

Now consider the worker cooperative business model. Worker co-ops adhere to certain principles, including but not limited to inclusivity, paying a living wage, collectively running the business democratically, member economic participation, and concern for the community. My fellow cooperators and I strongly believe this model for running business and institutions is an effective strategy for moving toward a new solidarity economy which would prevent the level of economic and health crisis we're seeing today. Worker co-ops protect and help communities thrive by reducing income inequality within businesses, keeping wealth within the community rather than going to outside shareholders or distant CEOs, helping communities to become more self-sustaining, and empowering workers to choose how they would like to see the profits of their labors spent. Worker co-ops across all five boroughs of New York cover a wide variety of industries ranging from catering to cleaning, construction, dog-walking, tutoring, childcare, home healthcare, and more. The worker owners of NYC are predominantly women, people of color, and others from marginalized communities, some of whom are diligent tax-paying immigrant workers who were nonetheless excluded from the CARES Act. It is a community I am incredibly proud to be a part of and in it have met some of the most inspiringly intelligent, compassionate, and intentional people I have ever met.

Five years ago New York City was the first in the country to make the groundbreaking move of starting the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative which is still directing discretionary funds toward thirteen different incredible cooperative support organizations. It is because of this funding that my co-op which I adore exists, and I cannot fully express the transformative experience I and so many other worker owners have had because of the trainings, legal assistance, and leadership opportunities we have had access to because of the work of great organizations like NYCNoWC, Greenworker Cooperatives, Take Root Justice, and all the supportive and intentional organizations that make up WCBDI. It is an initiative that I believe is truly unique in the democratic and collaborative way they manage themselves, and I think other initiatives should follow their lead. They have continued uninterrupted services to co-ops throughout the quarantine period and in many cases added services to support co-ops

that were outside their original plans, like workshops to help worker owners respond to the crisis, information about available resources, and support for loan and grant applications.

At my own co-op, Samamkaya, my 18 other worker owners and I took nearly a 60% hit in income comparing March of last year to this year because we had to cancel all classes for a week in order to re-adapt our schedule and payments to a fully online system. We are fortunate that we can continue our classes online, but even still our income levels have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. I am so grateful to be part of a team of worker owners who all put many hours into researching and discussing the options together so that we could come up with the best possible solution for both the business and our workers. Other traditionally-run studios I know of have had to reduce teachers' pay and number of classes, let go of teachers, or even close their doors indefinitely. With the high cost of rent and the fact that the market does not place a very high value on wellness services, many small wellness businesses across the city were already struggling to make a profit even before this crisis began. Such businesses offering Yoga, Pilates, Massage, Acupuncture, and others are crucial to the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of so many New Yorkers, but we have all had to close our physical doors to customers in order to do our part to "flatten the curve". However, even though our businesses are expected to close and are making significantly reduced or even no income, somehow we are still expected to make rent...

We were hopeful when SBS announced the Employee Retention Grant and Small Business Continuity Loan, but we were found ineligible for the grant and we really could not consider taking on more debt at this time since we still have debts from building out the studio when we first opened five years ago. We were fortunately able to negotiate a temporarily reduced rent with our landlord, but will likely be expected to pay the difference later on. I find it frustrating that during this crisis, struggling small businesses which contribute in such a quintessential way to the unique qualities of our great city are asked to take on debt and struggle to make ends meet while others who are in a position to make huge profits are not asked for any kind of sacrifices. This does not exemplify concern for community, nor does it fit the personality of the progressive, collective-oriented place New York City takes pride in being.

We appreciate the rapid response efforts the City Council has made thus far, but unfortunately it is not enough considering the horrific toll this crisis is taking on our small businesses and workers. **A citywide commercial rent suspension is within the city's legal capabilities and is necessary** if we want to see even half of our small businesses reopen their doors. We would also like to see **a new round of grants with expanded eligibility to allow for more types of small businesses**. In addition, **excluded workers across the city deserve increased assistance** since the racist policies of the federal government left them out of the CARES Act and the Open Society funds are too limited. **For co-ops specifically, please consider an exemption to the Unincorporated Business Tax** which hits LLC co-ops unfairly. Finally, we need to find a way to **secure an enhancement for WCBDI to \$5 million** so we can continue expanding on building our new, more just economy of the future; an economy that works for EVERYONE. Thank you very much for taking the time to read and consider my testimony.



CHARLES B. WANG
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
王嘉廉社區醫療中心

268 Canal Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10013 | Phone 212.379.6988 | fax 212.379.6936

**Charles B. Wang Community Health Center Testimony
New York City Council Immigration Committee
FY2021 Preliminary Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the Immigration Committee today. My name is Matthew Chin, and I am from the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, which is a federally qualified health center with locations in Manhattan and Queens. Last year we served over 60,000 unique patients for more than 300,000 patient encounters. Eighty-eight percent of our patients are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and 83% are best served in a language other than English.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the Coalition Against Smoking in Immigrant Communities. This Coalition is comprised of community-based health and social service organizations seeking discretionary funds to support a citywide expansion of the Tobacco Use Navigator Model program. We have joined together in an effort to reduce smoking disparities in foreign-born, Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations. This model allows lay community health workers to educate and connect smokers to culturally competent smoking cessation resources.

Data shows that foreign-born, LEP New Yorkers are in need of additional support to address smoking-related health disparities, as well as other public health issues. For example, 40% of New York City smokers are foreign-born and 28% of foreign-born New York City residents do not have health insurance. Considering these statistics, foreign-born, LEP smokers in New York City face disparate access to health resources, including smoking cessation and prevention.

From 2002 to 2017, smoking rates among Asian American men increased from 19.6% to 22.1%. This issue is especially prevalent among Chinese Americans with approximately 78,000 foreign-born Chinese residents in New York City estimated to be current smokers. Chinese-speaking Asian males in New York City have almost twice the odds of being smokers than their English-speaking counterparts. This is reflected in the City's health outcome trends as lung cancer deaths increased 70% among ethnically Chinese New Yorkers from 2000 to 2014, while decreasing 16.4% for New York City residents as a whole during the same period.

The Asian immigrant community is also confronting a new tobacco threat from rising rates of e-cigarette use, especially among youth, with an estimated 20,000 New York City youth who do not speak English at home reporting the use of e-cigarettes products. E-cigarette companies have targeted Asian youth with enticing traditionally Asian fruit flavors such as lychee and taro, and their efforts have paid off. Our Pediatrics Department has observed a spike in e-cigarette use among Asian adolescent patients over the past five years, with some users as young as 13 years old.

While there are many smoking cessation initiatives throughout New York City, few specifically address the high smoking rates that exist in these populations. The New York Smokers' Quitline offers phone-

based cessation treatment to smokers in New York State; however, translation services are only directly available in English and Spanish. For smokers who speak other languages, the Quitline must look for a translator, resulting in long delays or no call-backs. Furthermore, the Quitline's services and resources are promoted primarily in English, further excluding LEP populations from being able to access beneficial services. Barriers like these can discourage LEP smokers from ongoing efforts in trying to quit smoking.

Additionally, the costs of smoking and subsequent health issues, such as lung cancer, are substantially higher than that of improving communities' access to evidence-based smoking cessation resources. The most recently available study data showed that an initial round of lung cancer treatment is \$45,897 over two years. This cost increases to \$120,650 if the initial treatment fails. This cost of lung cancer treatment can be compared to the cost of less than \$500 to provide a year's worth of smoking cessation health counseling services and nicotine replacement treatment as needed to help a smoker quit smoking.

Most relevant to today, smoking history has been identified as a risk factor associated with coronavirus infections progressing to severe illness. A recent NIH study found smoking nearly doubles the rate of COVID-19 progression to more critical conditions or death. This is an especially concerning social justice issue as New York City's communities of color have the highest rates of smoking and have the highest rates of COVID-19 infection morbidity and mortality.

As an organization, we are requesting \$100,000 for our Tobacco Use Navigators to identify and connect approximately 200 smokers and e-cigarette users to cessation treatment that includes free long-term counseling and free nicotine replacement therapy.

Thank you for your time. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to present to all of you today.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts and informal education. My name is Charlotte Martin, and I serve as president of the New York City Museum Educators Roundtable (NYCMER).

NYCMER is a member-based professional organization that provides a forum for museum education professionals to address meaningful issues relevant to our work and to exchange and disseminate current information. Our 700+ members are museum educators, teachers, informal educators, and teaching artists at museums and other cultural organizations across New York City. Our members collaborate with schools, libraries, community centers, day habilitation programs, senior centers, and others, to provide enriching and essential educational, creative, and social-emotional programming to New Yorkers of all backgrounds and resources.

Since the pandemic hit New York, our members have adapted quickly, moving programs online and working with community partners to ensure our audiences, especially those hardest hit by this crisis, still have access to learning and community. On May 11, we hosted our NYCMER Annual Conference virtually, with members sharing how they meaningfully employ people with disabilities, engage girls with STEM, empower LGBTQ+ teens, and bring complex history to life through museum theater, among many other initiatives. This work has changed, but not stopped. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts and informal education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Many NYCMER members have already lost their jobs and their ability to provide their services and expertise because of budget shortfalls at museums. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.



Let us remember that countless New Yorkers discover a passion for art, history, science, writing, or media, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Martin

President

New York City Museum Educators Roundtable

president@nycmer.org

NYCMER.org

Charlotte Exton

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 27th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Charlotte Exton, and I am a graduate student at City College of New York in the Educational Theatre Program.

The mission of the Educational Theatre program is to foster and create arts educators and administrators to work with students of all ages. The Educational Theatre program at City College is dedicated to bringing educators and administrators to schools and communities to teach empathy and spark productivity in students' lives.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Exton

My name is Natasha Cherry-Perez and I am concerned about how we will recover together as a city from this pandemic and the role that our city budget will have in this recovery. I was born in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn and raised and still live in Cypress Hills/East New York, Brooklyn. I love my city and I wish for nothing but the best for all that reside here. There is so much diversity and culture in our city which makes it one of the most unique and best places to live in the world. We are too great of a city to have such grave and stark differences in the ways we support and invest in our residents. This pandemic has put a big spotlight on these disparities, but we can determine how we move forward by placing the resources in the proper areas to eliminate or at the very least minimize the inequities we see across our city. One of our greatest resources as a city is our budget and how we choose to appropriate our funding is a clear indicator of what and who we value as a city.

As a parent I am first and foremost concerned about the hit that our education system will take. As we cutback we can't lose sight of the money that needs to make it to the schoolhouse, into our classrooms to support the students, teachers and staff. With so much uncertainty about how we will return to school making sure we can do so safely with the proper support systems in place (physically and mentally) is crucial. I also work for Uncommon Schools with 24 schools in Brooklyn and 9,000 children and families and I advocate on behalf of them when I say that all children have the same needs no matter what schools they attend – they need to learn and be supported. Funding our schools and supporting our teacher's ability to teach and children to learn is something that we should invest not divest in. The following areas should be protected in NYC's budget:

- Professional development and district/charter partnership - if our teachers and leaders grow and learn so will our children. We need to provide more training around remote learning as well
- Eliminating funding for civics, technology, health education, and art will not benefit our children, that need to be well rounded individuals.
- Summer Youth Employment, summer and afterschool programs - if we want to get our economy back on-line, we need a place for our children to thrive in safe environments during the summer and throughout the school year.
- We have to also invest in closing the technology gap within the city. This will require more focus on increasing the bandwidth and accessibility of technology to areas that lack the infrastructure.

As many other New Yorkers, I would like the budget to direct money towards resources that will provide permanent solutions for the homeless and mentally challenged. We also need to ensure that hospitals and nursing homes have the funding that they need to withstand a pandemic such as this.

Many say that we will never be the same and I hope that we will not, I hope that as a city we will come back stronger, smarter and take the lessons learned from this pandemic to make this city better for **EVERYONE** that lives in the great city of New York.

If you would like to contact me, I can be reached at:
181 Essex Street
Brooklyn, NY 11208
ncherry-perez@uncommonschoools.org
646-634-3544

Respectfully submitted,

Natasha Cherry-Perez

Healthy and Ready to Learn Resource and Training Center: COVID-19 Immediate Response

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its unilateral impact on life, particularly for New York City's school age children and families in immigrant communities or living in temporary housing, the demand for HRL's [online platform](#) and resources has greatly increased. Website utilization increased by 265% and the number of new users increased by 277% between week one and week two of the COVID response. With the technological infrastructure in place, technical assistance and training resources were quickly tailored to meet new challenges being faced by communities and families. This interactive and virtual platform allows the HRL team to share best practices and knowledge for individuals working with students. Topics highlighted for the response include **trauma-sensitivity, meeting families' needs, social and emotional wellbeing, care for the caregiver and community resilience and healing**. Curated content and virtual events including "Coffee Breaks" for NYC educators and "Community Conversations" for NYC families provide a discussion-based space to learn more about a specific topic, ask questions, and interact with community members, reaching from 30 - 90 attendees at each event. The community is also invited to join weekly online mindful moments to provide dedicated time for wellness. All content, including recorded events, are available on [hrl.nyc](#).

The Healthy and Ready to Learn (HRL) Initiative was developed by the Children's Health Fund to address health issues that impact student learning and attendance. Since 2014, the program has partnered with two NYC elementary schools to implement a comprehensive school-based model that provides the school community with health services, education, resources and protocols. HRL addresses health needs rooted in social, racial, and economic inequities by creating relevant content that builds the capacity in the school community. The program has expanded to include technical assistance, training, and an online resource center ([hrl.nyc](#)), through the **Healthy and Ready to Learn Resource and Training Center**.

Funded by the New York City Council since 2017, the Healthy and Ready to Learn Resource and Training Center (HRL RTC) allows Children's Health Fund to reach more educators, health staff, and families across the City through its additional programming. Our technical assistance programs partners with three schools in Mott Haven to build capacity among existing staff to implement the HRL school-based program. **Over 4,000** individuals have participated in our CTLE-eligible in-person and online trainings in our focus areas that have been evaluated to show significant improvements in knowledge and self-efficacy. Training participants include elementary school staff, administrators, parents, and school nurses from all five boroughs. Since the launch of [hrl.nyc](#) in June 2017, approximately **13,000** users have accessed the website to download free materials to support programming centered around health and education.

The Children's Health Fund has received City Council funding since 2016 and were grateful to receive \$750,00 in FY20 for the Healthy and Ready to Learn initiative, which we've used to work with over 200 schools citywide. We increased our request to \$875,000 for FY21 to meet increased demands and needs across NYC. Given the pandemic, the Children's Health Fund is sensitive to the new challenge the City now faces amid COVID-19. Yet we also know HRL services are needed more than ever in FY21 with children struggling to adjust to new distance learning environments, dealing with the stress and pressures that have come with this crisis.

05/18/2020

Chitra N. age 17

MercyFirst Foster Care Youth

Springfield Gardens, NY 11413

Dear Members of the New York City Council,

Good Day, my name is Chitra N., I reside in Springfield Gardens, Queens, and have been placed in Foster Care with MercyFirst since September of 2017. At the age of 17 I graduated John Adams High School a full semester early and am currently completing my first semester at Queensborough Community College. I hope to have achieved a 3.5 GPA and continue towards my goal of becoming an NYPD Detective.

During this difficult time of pandemic, coupled with the fact that I have just made a major transition in my life, I believe I would have been lost without the consistent support of my Life Skills Coach Mr. Abdul. Covid-19 has caused what was an already difficult transition from high school to college become even more stressful as we went from classroom instruction to on-line learning. Mr. Abdul's supports have helped keep me focused on my goals and helped me destress (he always makes me laugh with his bad jokes) during these tough times. Without Mr. Abdul's support I do not know if I could have achieved my academic goals during these trying times.

I am humbly asking that the Members of the New York City Council and the Honorable Mayor De Blasio to restore the funding for the Fair Futures program for the fiscal year 2021.

Respectfully,

Chitra N., 17

MercyFirst Youth

Local Law 97 and Solar Installations Testimony (Chloe Holden) – May 21, 2020

Please prioritize continued funding of Local Law 97.

Last year, New York City outshone other cities around the country and the world on carbon-reduction efforts with this groundbreaking law. If the council fails to fund it, that victory will be hollow.

More importantly for our city, the council promised to deliver 40,000 new green jobs related to enforcing the bill's emissions standards for building. If those jobs are not created, fewer New Yorkers will be able to launch or pivot their careers to energy efficiency and green building, a key pillar of our sustainable economic growth as a city.

We cannot let coronavirus cheat the next generation of green building and clean energy professionals out of their careers.

I live in Bed-Stuy and work for Greentech Media, a news organization focused on renewable energy. In April, my colleague Jeff St John wrote that New York City's 2009 Greener, Greater Buildings Plan didn't go far enough to rein in building emissions in the city, but that Local Law 97 made a huge leap forward for New York's emissions goals.

St John cited NYU research that "Mandatory audits [such as those in the Greener, Greater Buildings Plan], by themselves, create an insufficient incentive to invest in energy efficiency at the scale needed to meet citywide carbon-reduction goals."

In other words, if we fail to invest in Local Law 97 enforcement, New York City essentially goes back to a toothless policy regime.

In these tough economic times it's important to note that Local Law 97 is not a uniform burden across different building sectors. Rent-controlled units, affordable housing and houses of worship are not held to the same standard that high-polluting buildings are, protecting these classes of buildings while setting strict but fair rules around building emissions for serious polluters.

There are funding options for Local Law 97 despite the coronavirus crisis. FEMA funding related to Sandy and COVID-19 can be used creatively for effort related to building decarbonization, resilience and renewable energy development. Municipal liquidity grants and state & general workforce development grants can be called on -- plus any additional funding that might be on its way.

Finally, it's important to note that what New York City is doing on building emissions through Local Law 97 is impressive (if the law is implemented) – but the City has other work still to do. Although ambitious, it would be fair to call Local Law 97 the bare minimum, as it deals primarily with efficiency rather than building the local carbon-free energy generation to supply clean power New York City.

New York City pledged to install 100 megawatts of solar power on public buildings by 2025, and is failing to advance that goal quickly enough to hit the target. As a former employee of a local solar developer, I know how quickly solar installers can create jobs and deliver benefits to the communities where they install.

Invest in the next generation of green building and clean energy professionals. Hiring thousands of eager New Yorkers to help cut building emissions and install more solar is the only path forward for our city.



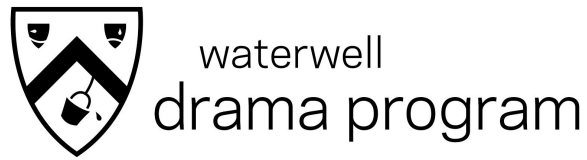
The Next Generation Center

May 21, 2020

Dear City Council,

I was in care, I left because I graduated. I want to go away to college because it looks like fun. Well, I graduated from High School and went to a program downtown. I lived there and I started some classes. They have people there to help you with school, work and I even have to do chores. But every week the same lady, my coach when I lived in the Bronx called and is still calling me. She's my coach. This CORVID thing happened and it really messed me up when it happened in March and the program closed and I had to go back to the foster care house. She's ok but we are not close, her own daughter lives there and she's close to her, I'm just another person there, But my coach is my friend, she calls me when I was in care, she called when I went to the other program and she calls me now.....CORVID is F-up but my coach at the Next Generation Center Cares.

Lorraine J.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
5-22-2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Christina Gonzalez, and I work at Waterwell in Hell's Kitchen but our students come from all 5 borough's of NYC.

The mission of Waterwell Education is to train young artists, innovators, and leaders. Our training addresses the student-artist holistically and challenges students to develop both as interpreter and creator. Waterwell also creates new theater and trains new artists that entertain and enlighten. Waterwell seeks to prove itself a vital presence in the lives of its audience by remaining always responsive: responsive to the events affecting the world at large, responsive to changing modes of expression, and responsive to the individuals attending the performance. Waterwell endeavors to cultivate the inherent danger in live performance to create an exciting and unpredictable event — an event pruned down to its irreducible elements: human beings sharing a space and a story. Through entertainment and education, and through the humor, sadness, and hope its stories evoke, Waterwell hopes to empower its audience to change their lives and the world in which they live.

After schools closed, the Waterwell Education program was given one week to launch online learning. Our staff and faculty created a new digital model for our entire conservatory curriculum (Grades 6-12) and began teaching 7 days later. Matching the resilience of their teachers, our students responded strongly, with attendance actually increasing compared to before the crisis, and we are now in rehearsal for digital versions of three year-end productions. The pandemic has been a catalyst to create new models for online arts education, and we believe we can build on our success so far to reach more students in the near future. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Our most significant challenge has come from the NYC Department of Education. Normally at this time, we'd have \$125,000 remaining in our contract for the remainder of the school year. However, following a COVID-related budget cut of \$150 million, we were told that our payments are no longer guaranteed. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Arian Moayed, Co-Founder and Board Chair

Lee Sunday Evans, Artistic Director

Adam J. Frank, Managing Director

Heather Lanza, Director of Education

Christina Gonzalez, Education Associate

Madelyn Murphy, Producing Associate



Testimony before the New York City Council Finance Committee
Budget Hearing

Submitted by
Christopher Treiber
Associate Executive Director for Children's Services

On behalf of
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL of
Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.

150 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001
(212) 645-6360
chris@iacny.org

May 21, 2020

Good evening. My name is Christopher Treiber and I am the Associate Executive Director of Children's Services for The Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. On behalf of the IAC and our preschool special education providers, I would like to thank the New York City Council and Chair Member Drumm and Gibson for holding this public hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony here today.

The InterAgency Council (IAC) is a membership organization of over 150 nonprofit providers of services to children and adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, and their families in the New York City, Rockland, Westchester, and Long Island regions, along with associate members in other parts of the state. The IAC membership includes early intervention, preschool special education providers, and school-age 853 state approved non-public schools.

Our membership includes more than 50 preschool special education providers, the majority of them in NYC. Our preschools serve thousands of children each day at numerous school sites across New York City.

Who are the children who attend these 4410 preschool Special Education programs?

They are public school children. They are the children who live in your neighborhood and would have gone to the local elementary school or pre-k for all had they not had a disability. Many of these children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy or other developmental disabilities.

We are submitting this testimony to alert the New York City elected officials to the serious impending crisis facing our special education providers and the significant impact it could have on the children with developmental disabilities and families who depend on these critical services.

We are thankful that last year the city council recognized the importance of early childhood education and implemented the Salary Parity Agreement for Early Childhood Teachers In New York City. This was a major accomplishment, but **We are here to remind elected officials that our preschool special education teachers were left**

out of this agreement. This is having a devastating impact on our special education preschool programs and their ability to retain certified special education teachers. As a result of this salary parity agreement most teachers in our schools are now the lowest paid early childhood teachers in NYC.

Certified teachers at early childhood education programs in NYC (**with the exception of 4410 teachers**) will receive the following salary increases over the next two years:

Increase Schedule	With Master's Degree	With Bachelor's Degree
10/1/20	\$62,295	\$55,651
10/1/21	\$68,652	\$61,070

We want to remind you about the importance of our preschools to New York City. Based on the 2019 NYC Mayors Budget Report 4410 preschool special education providers educate **87% of all of the preschool students with IEP's in NYC** but our teachers and programs have been forgotten.

We are calling on the New York City Council to work to address this exclusion and to ensure that teachers in 4410 preschool special education programs receive the same pay raises as all other early childhood teachers in New York City. The teaching staff in our preschools are deeply caring and committed and professionals who work hard every single day to ensure that the children in our schools receive a free and appropriate education.

Our teachers are the hidden heroes of the COVID-19 crisis. No one sees all of the amazing work they are doing. They are working tirelessly to make sure that all of their students have access to remote learning that benefits them. Many are working into the night to prepare video lessons for their students. Some of our teachers have traveled to visit their students at their home and deliver a message of hope. We have had teachers that have travelled to homeless shelters to drop off supplies or a computer device for their student so they can participate in remote learning lessons. Yet these teachers are paid significantly less than all of the other early childhood teachers in NYC.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on communities across New York City we know that there will be many children who will need preschool special education services. **What we do not know is if services will be available for all of the young children who need them.** NYC was experiencing a short-age of preschool special education seats before COVID-19.

In January 2020 Advocates for Children of New York published a report entitled ***Waiting for a Seat - The Shortage of Preschool Special Education Class Seats in NYC.***?"

https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/waiting_for_a_seat.pdf?pt=1

The report projected that New York City will need between 1,000 and 2,000 preschool special education seats in the next few months. When preschools reopen if something is not done there will not be enough preschools seats for all of the children and no certified special education teachers to teach them.

The ultimate question for each elected official is - how will you answer the mother of a 3-year-old who is recently diagnosed with autism and cannot find a preschool special education seat that their child desperately needs.

Why are the children who attend these special preschools not afforded the same rights as a child in a public school to a certified special education teacher? New York City will be held accountable by the children and families who depend on these critical services.

IAC recognizes the serious fiscal challenges that NYC is facing given the COVID-19 crisis and we understand the difficult choices that will need to be made. **But we ask you not to forget our preschool children with developmental disabilities and the teachers who provide these critical special education services.**

Thank you so much.



Coney Island Beautification Project, Inc.
3207 Mermaid Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11224
718-265-0814
cibproject@aol.com

May 21, 2020

New York City Council
Committee on Finance:

I'm Pamela Pettyjohn, President of Coney Island Beautification Project. We've worked as post super Storm Sandy civic; volunteer group with the Parks Department by organizing the CI community around plantings in the neighborhood street tree beds. Blooming from several successful years of Commemorative Day of Service, we migrated into Kaiser Park and Coney Island Creek. We've always worked with dedicated Park Workers.

Normally, Kaiser Park has been a destination for seniors playing tennis and practicing tai chi; students eating breakfast and lunch; engaged residents holding community meetings; families enjoying the playgrounds; youth shooting hoops; sports teams on baseball diamonds; runners along track; picnics; fishing or just enjoying the sunset and so on.

Since the onslaught of pandemic covid19 we have come to recognize the urgent value of our parks and open spaces. Where would we be without parks? CIBP volunteers in the parks because we appreciate the value of the park. But volunteers cannot replace the skilled parks workers. To maintain the upkeep of parks, these valuable assets, enough workers must be appropriately assigned to each park.

Now is not the time to reduce the parks budget line. Parks has revealed its importance to the healthcare of the City. We must prioritize parks status in this year's budget.

We thank you Councilmembers who have supported Parks in past years and those who now recognizes the value of Parks. Continue your support of the Play Fair for Parks Collation, think outside box, vote with courage, vote for Parks! Support essential park workers! Thank you.

Coney Island Beautification Project, Inc.
Beautification through organizing, advocacy, education, greening, resiliency... of our public spaces and waterways.

SLTs United
School Leadership Teams of NYC

May 1, 2020

Sent via email to:

Mayor Bill deBlasio bdeblasio@cityhall.nyc.gov
Comptroller Scott Stringer action@comptroller.nyc.gov
Council Speaker Corey Johnson SpeakerJohnson@council.nyc.gov
Councilperson Daniel Dromm dromm@council.nyc.gov
Councilperson Mark Treyger MTreyger@council.nyc.gov
Chancellor Richard Carranza nycchancellor@schools.nyc.gov

Dear Mayor deBlasio, Comptroller Stringer, Speaker Johnson, Councilperson Dromm, Councilperson Treyger, and Chancellor Carranza:

We, the School Leadership Teams of the undersigned schools, write as parents who are profoundly distressed by what the proposed budget cuts to education spending will mean for our children's futures. We are distraught that our teachers will be the next first responders set up for failure, the next essential workers required to carry unbearably heavy burdens. We reject the proposal that our children, already traumatized by the pandemic experience, will return to schools with fewer resources at a time when they need more.

We know what it takes to lead successful and enriching schools. We know the struggles schools faced—before Covid-19—with insufficient funding and inadequate support for basics such as arts instruction, counseling, and other supportive services. We are intimately familiar with the inequities of how our public schools are funded, a system which leaves students behind and makes achieving excellence a challenge.

Throughout the lockdown, parents have come to understand more fully than ever before what key roles our teachers play in our children's lives. We have watched as our children have struggled, both academically and emotionally, without the guidance and structure their teachers and their school communities provide. We know our kids will be returning to school traumatized. We know that many of our most vulnerable children will have lost family and friends to this virus. New York City's public-school students will need more—not less—care, attention, and resources when they return to their school buildings, whenever that may be.

And yet, despite all of this, we now understand that the City is proposing the most draconian cuts to education spending in recent memory—and that those cuts will fall most heavily on the schools themselves, on their staffs and support structures, including cuts to counseling services, professional development funds, and day-to-day school operating budgets. To this we say: ENOUGH.

We know with absolute certainty that our city's children will return to school in September struggling to make sense of the past eight months. These children, the sons and daughters of the workers we hope will restart our economy, will need MORE support not less. They will need more art classes, more social workers, and more guidance counselors. They will need their teachers and administrators. All of them. To provide the level of academic instruction as well as social and emotional support required to restore our children's education—and their parents' ability to focus on restoring the city's economy through their work—we believe we must increase school funding for the coming year.

We demand a reset. The current budget proposal must be rejected. Before a single dollar is taken from our schools' budgets, every contract with an outside agency must be scrutinized, and, where necessary, cut or terminated. Before we lose a single social worker or administrator from our school buildings, we demand that central office functions be evaluated and eliminated until only the most essential jobs are retained. While layers of superintendents, coaches, and evaluators might play a role in a fully funded system, that is not the case now. Funding must be concentrated in the places where the students are—in the schools themselves.

We demand that our school communities be left whole, and that support for them be enhanced rather than withdrawn. Our children and their families deserve no less.

Sincerely,
P.S. 205
SLT
Brooklyn

Bronx

Manhattan

Queens

Staten Island

Cc: All Members of the New York City Council



**Executive budget hearing for the Department for the Aging
Aging Committee
May 21, 2020**

**Testimony submitted by: Rachel Sherrow
Associate Executive Director
Citymeals on Wheels
355 Lexington Avenue, NYC 10017
(646) 866-6289
Rachel@citymeals.org**

My name is Rachel Sherrow and I am the Associate Executive Director at Citymeals on Wheels. I would like to begin by thanking the Council for their on-going support of aging services and Citymeals on Wheels which will help to deliver nearly 3 million meals to over 20,000 homebound elderly as well as 25,000 formerly congregate and newly homebound citywide this year due to COVID-19, an increase of close to 50%.

I also want to thank the Aging committee, and most especially Councilmember Margaret Chin for continuing to take the lead in advocating for the support of senior services which are consistently underfunded despite the growing population of older adults, and especially while we are in the midst of a pandemic that has affected this population disproportionately including both in regards to health and additionally being forced to isolate themselves for an unknown period of time.

Hopefully you know that Citymeals on Wheels is a not-for-profit agency working together with the aging services provider network of New York City and the Department for the Aging. The Department funds the meals that homebound elderly receive Mondays through Fridays, and Citymeals on Wheels funds the same network to deliver weekend, holiday and most especially right now, emergency shelf stable meals. On the 150 days plus throughout the year, the city does not provide a meal, Citymeals steps in to prevent our aging neighbors from being without food or human company. In fact, Citymeals, as an added benefit generates revenue for New York City through the federal government's cash in lieu of commodities program which reimburses DFTA approximately 67 cents for every meal funded by Citymeals. All of this money goes toward the city-funded weekday meals program, bringing in over \$1.4 million last fiscal year and an additional 180,000 home delivered meals for those who need it.

Studies have shown that access to food and better nutrition, is an effective way to cut medical costs and improve overall health, especially for older adults, thus making meals on wheels an incredibly vital program and Citymeals an essential lifeline to those unable to shop or cook for themselves. Most especially apparent in the current circumstances we find ourselves in and the need for supplemental food in addition to the daily deliveries is crucial for survival for many of our most vulnerable citizens.

Studies throughout the country show that older adults are the fastest growing demographic, and will out-number those under 18 in less than a generation. In addition, 1 in 7 older New Yorkers lives in poverty. Living longer, and on fixed incomes means more struggle over access to food for this vulnerable group.

Unfortunately, for homebound elderly to access supplemental food is a more difficult and often times impossible task, most especially now. Under normal circumstances, they are unable to walk to pantries, or wait in line and carry the bags home, and as we know, 40% of our meal recipients are unable to leave their homes, and many do not have support to help them.

This is why home delivered meals are integral to their survival.

Ensuring that our meal recipients have food throughout the week is what the partnership between Citymeals and the meals on wheels provider network does. Without Citymeals, tens of thousands of (currently over 20,000) homebound older adults would no longer receive meals on weekends, holidays or in times of emergency. And now when the meals on wheels rolls have increased by over 20%, it is imperative for those in need to receive extra, supplemental food in addition to their daily meals because accessing other means of nutrition is less possible now for most of our recipients.

Meals on Wheels is a cheaper alternative to institutionalization, more dignified, and what the majority of older adults prefer, especially in light of the current devastation of life within nursing homes by the coronavirus.

With the recent RFP DFTA released, the price per meal for the weekday meals will increase and Citymeals, after ten years of holding the cost the same, understands the need to ensure our community based partners are receiving the appropriate reimbursement for each meal they deliver to the doors of our older neighbors who need this food on a daily basis. Increasing the reimbursement rate, will enable providers to more adequately support their programs and ensure the need is being met.

We have always known how critical our services are, but not more so in the current environment when meals on wheels staff are essential workers, ensuring their recipients are not without food and a friendly face, risking their own lives to maintain a lifeline for our elderly neighbors. Therefore, Citymeals is requesting \$3 million dollars from NYC Council for FY 21 in order to help get us to the necessary and just reimbursement.

Citymeals as a not-for-profit will continue to raise private dollars in order to meet the needs of our partners in the years to come; with a

strategic plan we have just embarked upon as well as new development personnel and goals. However, we also need the support of our partners in city government to help us reach all of our recipients consistently and without a disruption in service. This kind of partnership is even more crucial in times of uncertainty or when facing potential crises like the COVID-19.

Citymeals, through our Bronx warehouse, has proven it has the capacity to pre-supply both clients and senior centers with shelf stable food in the event of an emergency closure of centers or a suspension of delivery services. **Thus far, in the current pandemic, we have delivered over 400,000 shelf stable meals to over 50,000 older adults, including those normally receiving meals on wheels, in addition to those now considered homebound because they are being asked to stay home and protect themselves.** We are also working with senior housing facilities, NORCS, NYCHA buildings in need and other places older adults are now trapped because they fear the outside and the new reality we are all facing because of COVID-19.

Citymeals on Wheels together with local community based organizations, the Department for the Aging, and The New York City Council, are determined to keep older adults living safely in their own communities and now, at least 20,000 elderly New Yorkers who receive meals on wheels, fed 365 days a year plus some extra. We

hope you, our partner in city government, will help us to continue to advocate on behalf of those who are often forgotten and marginalized and support solvency for senior services and Citymeals on Wheels.

As we move through our 39th year, we thank you for consistently working with us and I hope we can count on all of your support once again this year. Be safe and stay healthy!

Friday, May 22, 2020

Dear Council Members,

I am a high school teacher at the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Queens, a Brooklyn resident, and an employee of the NYC Dept. of Education since 2007. This is my first testimony at a City Council hearing, but my experience as a public school teacher over the past two months, and the mayor's proposed cuts to public schools, have convinced me that we are facing a critical moment at which the wrong choice could mean continuing crisis for hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

For the past two months my colleagues and I have been working around the clock to support our students and their families in remote learning. Our school community, like many around the city, has been particularly hard-hit by Covid-19. We do not yet know the full devastation and grief wrought upon our school. Our school system is providing essential services from 24-hour counseling to tech support, and the burden and strain on our schools will continue to be great into a very uncertain future. I am extremely concerned about the mayor's decision to severely cut the DOE's budget for next year. At a time when we should be pouring more public funds into schools, budget cuts send precisely the wrong message, and will devastate our school community beyond repair. As was glaringly clear from the mayor's hesitance to close schools in the first place, our public schools provide far more than an education- they are a lifeline for many families and the foundation of our promise to provide equality in opportunity to all New Yorkers.

When we (hopefully) return to our school building in the fall we need fully funded schools with enough counselors, social workers, nurses, and teachers to meet the needs of our traumatized students. We will need to replace the hundreds of laptops and iPads we gave out to students in need. More than ever, we will need funding for after-school programs and extracurricular opportunities that support our students and their families beyond 3:20pm.

Will you be voting against the mayor's budget proposal? Will you be pushing to fully fund our schools next year so that our children get the education and care they deserve? Will you stand with the students, parents, teachers, and school staff of this city to ensure that we put education funding at the top of the priority list for 2020? We cannot simply careen from one crisis to another, and investing in schools can help us collectively heal our city. Please stand with us in this fight, and push back against the Mayor's proposed budget for the sake of my students, their families, my colleagues, and the future of New York.

Thank you for your time.

Claire M. Wolff
Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School

Please restore funding for city pools - NYC's youth need to cool off this summer, especially those that can't afford to escape the city and don't have AC at home. Chlorine kills Covid. Otherwise you'll have overheated kids and open fire hydrants!



Testimony by Clarita Bailon
New York City Council
Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020

Thank you for letting me share my story. My name is Clarita Bailon and I am a member of Families for Safe Streets. I am a survivor and I am living on borrowed time.

Everyone assumes when they meet me that I have been in a wheelchair since I was born.

But it's not true. I was born with Larsen Syndrome. But I was not very limited by it. I loved to dance. I was quite good at salsa. I drove a car. I graduated from college with a Bachelor's degree in biology. I had a job I loved and was planning on getting into politics. I was strong and independent. My mother raised me and my sisters that way. They all went on to have professional jobs and homes of their own, including my other sister with Larsen Syndrome.

I expected the same for me.

But on July 5, 2002 all of that changed. I had gone to Macy's to go shopping with my mom. We'd gotten separated and she went outside to look for me. When she didn't see me, she headed back to Macy's and we saw each other from across the street. I waited for the light and was mid-block when an impatient taxi driver swerved around a car ahead of him, who was waiting for me to cross. The taxi driver then crashed into me at full

speed. I don't remember the crash but my mother and other witnesses told what happened in the court proceedings.

My mom says I was screaming and crying, begging the doctors not to cut off my legs. I went into cardiac arrest four times. Then I lapsed into a coma for nearly a week. I spent four months in the hospital. I was not expected to live or open my eyes ever again and possibly remain in a vegetative state forever. Through a higher power, I am alive.

They were able to save my legs but they were shattered in so many places all the way to my hips, the doctors had to fuse my bones together. I now have no knees. I can walk very short distances, slowly, with a walker and I do so because the doctor said otherwise I could develop issues with my circulation and be in danger of having a stroke at an early age. But to really get around, I now have to rely on a wheelchair. I love my electric powered wheelchair because it takes me to most places in NYC. But I miss my real legs.

I sometimes daydream about what my life would be like if that driver had not run me over. Perhaps I would be retiring now from a job I loved and that gave me financial independence. Right now maybe I would have been planning a move to Florida for my retirement and swimming with the sharks.

I did not want to be on Medicaid and SSI. But that is what I depend on now -- government subsidies. I lost my independence. I lost the life I could have lived. I still bear visible and invisible scars. The invisible ones are the most difficult to bear.

A few months ago at the bill signing for the Dangerous Vehicle Abatement Act, I shared something I have not yet even told my family. For the last year and a half, I've been terrified that I had Alzheimer's. I was forgetting things, unable to remember new tasks, regularly misplacing things, forgetting to pay bills and I thought I had paid them. I just learned this week that my memory issues are a result of the traumatic brain injury I sustained in the

2002 crash. The TBI is slowly erasing my memories and who I am. There is no cure for that.

So I'm ok for now. But I'm afraid of the future. What is going to happen to me? Will I drool? Will I babble? Will I do or say inappropriate things?

I do not know what the future will bring, but today I fight for safe streets and speak out because hopefully it will prevent others from suffering.

As we are in the midst of a horrific epidemic, I don't want anyone to forget about the silent killer in our midst. Please do not gut the Vision Zero gains the City has committed to. We need you to go even farther. Reimagine our city and make it a world model. Be visionary. Help us make our streets the safest in the world.



Class Size Matters
124 Waverly Pl., New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212-529-3539
info@classsizematters.org
www.classsizematters.org

Analysis of the NYC education budget and the capital plan in light of the coronavirus pandemic

May 24, 2020

Social distancing and smaller classes will be needed to reopen schools safely next year

It was recently reported that 72 NYC Department of Education employees have died from Coronavirus, including 28 paraprofessionals and 28 teachers.¹ Evidence has also emerged that children can develop serious illnesses after being infected with the virus, and even those who are asymptomatic are often effective transmitters.²

Now that both the Mayor and the Governor have decided that our public schools will be closed through the end of June, it is time to start thinking about how they will be reopened next fall, to maximize the health and safety of students and staff, and strengthen the academic and emotional support that our students will need to make up for the myriad losses they have suffered this year.

As Mayor de Blasio has said, “Next school year will have to be the greatest academic school year New York City will ever have because everyone is going to be playing catch up.”³ And yet he has also proposed over \$800 million in reductions to the Department of Education, including staffing freezes and at least \$140 million taken directly out of school budgets, which would likely cause class sizes to grow even larger, the loss of school counselors and more. How could next year be the best year ever, given such drastic reductions? In fact, our schools will need increased investments to provide the enhanced feedback and engagement that students will so desperately need after months of isolation and inadequate remote learning.

Many countries, including Denmark,⁴ Germany⁵ and France,⁶ are gradually reopening their schools while implementing new protocols including frequent handwashing, temperature-taking and reducing class size, to obtain the recommended social distancing within classrooms and prevent the spread of the virus. Some are lowering class size by limiting the number of students into the school at any one time through split or staggered schedules. The American Federation of Teachers⁷ has recommended class size reduction be achieved in schools throughout our nation as well: “*one of the most important measures districts can take is to reduce class sizes...Class sizes of 12-15 students will, in most circumstances, make it possible to maintain physical distancing protocols.*”

Smaller classes have also been shown through research⁸ to boost learning and provide the social and emotional connections that many students will need from their teachers, given the loss in learning, isolation and stress caused by the pandemic this year. Shouldn't class size reduction happen here too, and if so, how?

Clearly, every available space would have to be used in our school buildings to accomplish the physical separation and smaller classes required. Split sessions would also be implemented in overcrowded schools, and more funding for additional staffing. At first glance, this would appear impossible, especially given the economic crisis the city is facing. Yet considerable savings could be obtained by cutting other, less critical areas of the education budget.

Potential savings that could be used to hire more teachers and counselors next year

As a letter signed by 34 City Council members pointed out, the city should reduce spending on "consultants, administration, cancelled or unnecessary testing, and contract [s]" rather than cut school budgets.⁹

Prominent among potential savings this year is a big chunk of the \$1.1 billion spent annually on school busing, given that these buses have not operated since mid-March. Parents and advocates began a campaign¹⁰ against wasteful spending on unused busing, and the NYC Comptroller sent a letter¹¹ to the Chancellor, pointing out that the city had no legal obligation to renew these contracts in the midst of a pandemic. Following this, the DOE postponed the vote¹² originally scheduled for the Panel for Education Policy on April 22 to approve \$400 million for extending busing contracts through March and April. Cancelling these contracts through the end of the year could save as much as \$700 million.¹³

Considerable savings could also be achieved this year in energy, facilities, and supplies, given the fact that school buildings will be closed three and a half months by the end of June, and will likely shut over the summer as well. About \$570 million was allocated for energy and leases this year – with more than \$175 million for energy and fuel costs alone. Surely, at least \$25 million could be saved in this category.

While DOE has proposed to freeze the hiring of teachers, counselors, and aides, they plan to increase spending on School Safety Agents who are hired by the police, spending a total of more than \$432 million. School Safety Agents already number over 5,500, more than the number of counselors, social workers and school psychologists combined.¹⁴ If the spending on these agents was merely frozen at last year's levels, that would save at least \$5.6 million right there.

There are also considerable cuts that could be made to the bureaucracy. 155 employees were added to the DOE's Central Administration in 2019, and 185 more to Borough Offices.¹⁵ Large raises were awarded to administrators, leading to a 50 percent increase in the number of bureaucrats who earned more than \$200,000 per year.¹⁶

See the below chart from the Independent Budget Office:

	Central Administration	School Support Organization	Total DOE Budget	Central Share	Regional Share
2014	\$ 330,978,696	\$ 158,122,157	\$ 20,049,813,783	1.7%	0.8%
2015	\$ 335,304,439	\$ 271,085,649	\$ 20,954,059,528	1.6%	1.3%
2016	\$ 351,120,558	\$ 282,448,026	\$ 22,373,518,700	1.6%	1.3%
2017	\$ 354,118,865	\$ 307,275,026	\$ 23,462,557,259	1.5%	1.3%
2018	\$ 377,923,903	\$ 340,887,733	\$ 25,082,914,474	1.5%	1.4%
2019	\$ 382,938,909	\$ 340,091,173	\$ 27,016,215,727	1.4%	1.3%
2020*	\$ 382,712,952	\$ 350,887,462	\$ 28,384,056,043	1.3%	1.2%
2021*	\$ 309,010,545	\$ 305,302,220	\$ 27,540,087,033	1.1%	1.1%
Sources: NYC Comptroller's Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, NYC Executive Budget for FY2021 (April 2020)					
*Amounts for 2020 and 2021 are projections based on the NYC Executive Budget for FY2021 (April 2020)					

The category of School Support Organization, which includes Borough offices, has more than doubled in expenditures to \$351 million since de Blasio was elected. If spending on that level returned to what was spent in 2014, that alone could save another \$147 million.

This fall, DOE ordered many schools to administer computerized MAP assessments, which officials testified in the future all students would be required to take several times a year.¹⁷ According to Checkbook NYC, the cost of the contract with NWEA, the company that produces these assessments, is \$5.25 million with \$1.66 million spent to date.¹⁸ Yet a randomized experimental study showed that the use of MAP exams was not correlated with any gains in student achievement,¹⁹ and many educators²⁰ as well as researchers question their validity.²¹

With more than \$570 million in savings described above, we could prevent any cuts to school budgets and allocate at least \$100 million to hire staff to lower class size, as many parents, education experts and advocates urged,²² at standing room only City Council hearings held in February before the pandemic hit.²³

Moreover, about one third of elementary grade classes and 40 percent of middle school classes are inclusion classes, meaning that they include both general education students and students with disabilities and have two teachers per class. Strong consideration should be given to dividing these classes in half, while keeping their inclusive nature, which would allow for class sizes of 10 to 16 without any additional hiring.

NYC schools also have an average of 14 students per teacher, while average class sizes are nearly twice as large. Thousands of push-in specialists, as well as other personnel such as literacy coaches who generally spend little actual time working directly with students are already on staff. Many of these instructional personnel could be re-deployed and assigned to teach their own classes, at no added expense.

If split schedules are introduced, intensive tutoring should be provided to students when they are not attending school, either at their homes, or in community centers or other locales. This could be done by enlisting thousands of volunteers from well-established organizations such as Literacy Inc., as well as recent college graduates whose salaries could be subsidized through the AmeriCorps program.

Finding space for next year's classes and beyond

It will obviously be a huge challenge to find the space needed to resume classes next year, whether through overlapping or staggered schedules. School overcrowding has always been a problem in NYC

but especially now that the coronavirus pandemic has hit hard, as plans for reopening schools will depend upon reducing class size and social distancing, to keep children and school staff safe from the further spread of the virus. According to the latest data from the NYC Department of Education, over 524,000 NYC students were enrolled in schools that were at or above 100% utilization last year.²⁴

As mentioned above, tutoring sessions could be utilized in spaces outside of school, especially for older students. In addition, many PreK centers run by CBOs and by DOE are half-empty; others are underutilized, despite the rapid expansion of PreK over the last few years, because DOE overbuilt in the rush to expand PreK and also drew many students out of the local neighborhood PreK centers. But we must also analyze the capital plan considering the need for the long-term alleviation of overcrowding in our schools.

It is in this light that the NYC capital plan should be considered.

Questions remain of whether the seats funded in the current plan will fulfill the need for new capacity.

Given the current level of overcrowding and continued enrollment growth in many districts, it is difficult to understand how the **57,489** seats funded in the current FY 2020-2024 plan will meet the need to alleviate current and future overcrowding. Local Law 167, passed in 2018, required the DOE to make more transparent its data sources and methodology for projecting the need for new school seats, and yet the DOE has so far failed to comply with this law.²⁵ More on this below.

Also, the capital plan and the school utilization formula has never been aligned with the smaller classes that most experts believe should be achieved to provide an equitable and excellent education, and which will be especially crucial given the social distancing required next year to ensure the health and safety of students and staff.²⁶

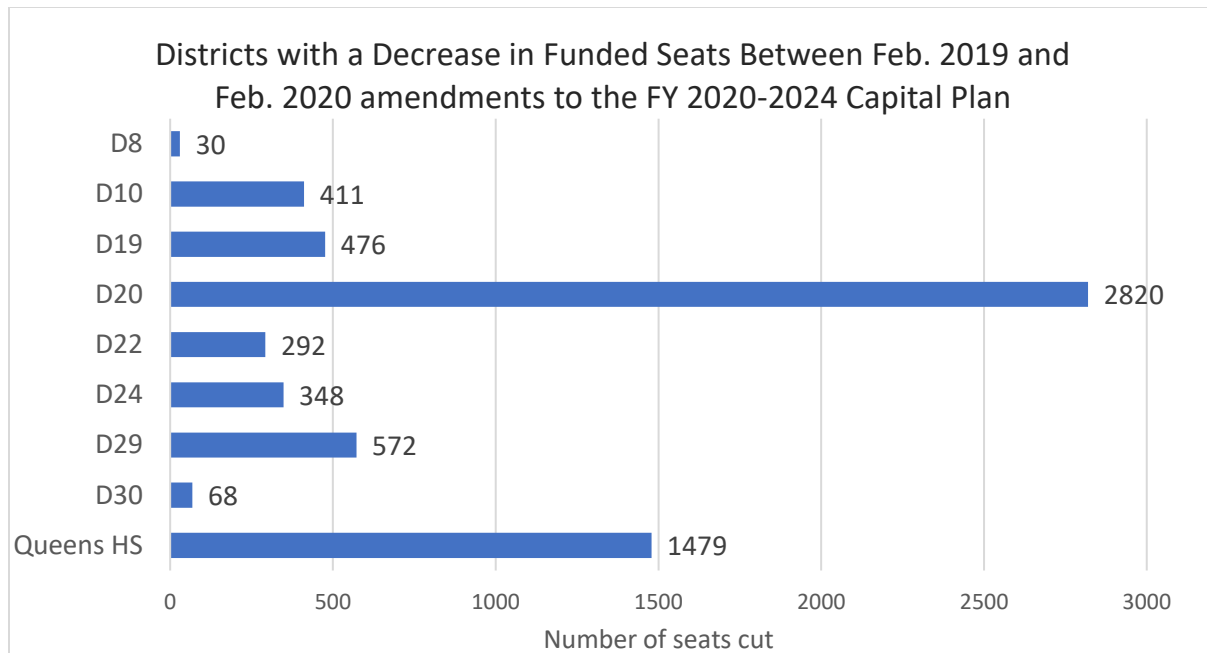
The latest amendment to the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan cuts seats in many districts

Despite chronic overcrowding and large class sizes, the Department of Education's FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Capital Plan decreased funded seats for many districts in the amendments between February 2019 and February 2020.

There were 56,917 funded seats in the February 2019 version of the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan,²⁷ and 57,489 funded seats in the February 2020 amendment.²⁸ While this at first glance appears to be an increase in funded seats for Districts 1-32 and high schools, further analysis reveals otherwise.

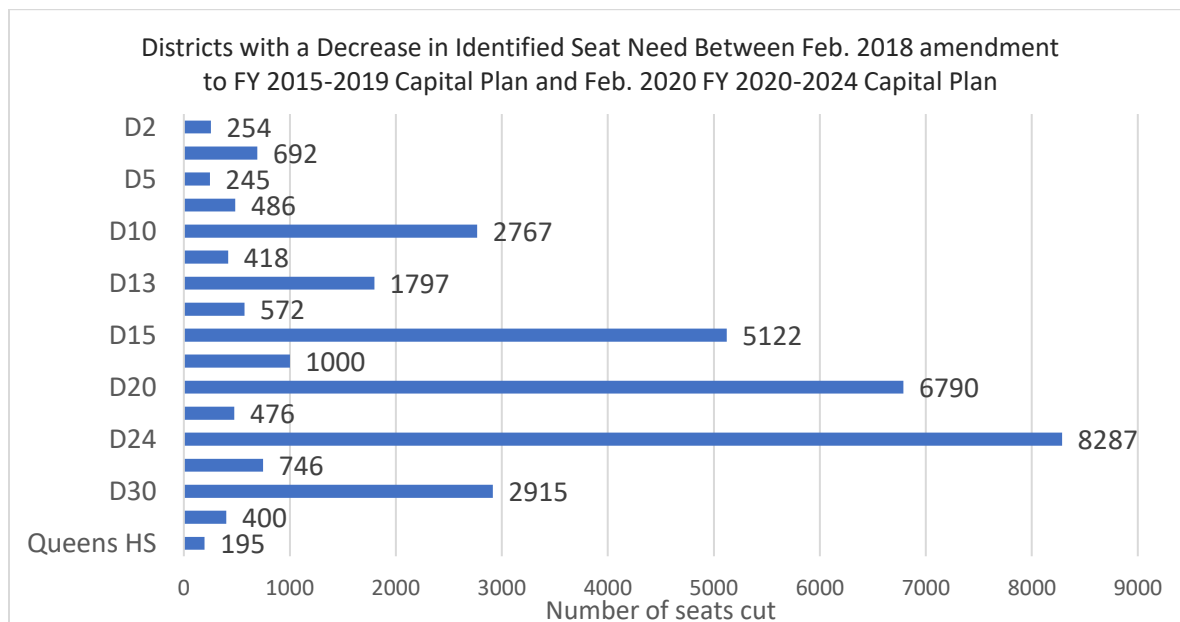
The February 2020 amendment to the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan includes 2,344 additional seats for District 75 special education students, which were not previously included in the February 2019 version. Taking those seats out of the equation reveals a decrease in total funded seats from February 2019 to February 2020 from 56,917 to 55,145 seats for districts 1-32 and high school, a decrease of 1,772 seats.

The following districts had decreases in funded seats between February 2019 and February 2020 in the FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Capital Plan, showing especially sharp cuts in seats for District 20, the most overcrowded district in the city, and for Queens high schools, most of which are also extremely overcrowded. No explanation is offered for these cuts, which are unlikely to have so radically changed due to new enrollment projections or updated estimates of need.



Unbuilt seats from the previous FY 2015-2019 Capital Plan

There is an even larger difference in number of the identified needed seats between the previous Capital Plan and the new one. The February 2018 version of the FY 2015-2019 Capital Plan acknowledged that there was a need for 83,056 seats though only 44,628 were funded,²⁹ and according to the latest Feb. 2020 iteration of the current plan, only about 26,000 seats from that plan have been completed or are in progress.³⁰



The February 2020 amendment to the new FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan has 55,145 seats identified as needed for D1-32 and high schools, all of which are funded. With the 26,000 seats from the previous plan this makes a total of 81,145 seats, which is nearly 2,000 seats fewer than DOE identified as needed in Feb. 2018. Again, no explanation is provided for the decrease.

In December 18, 2018 testimony before the City Council, Lorraine Grillo, President of the School Construction Authority gave several different explanations for the large cuts in funded seats in several districts and most notably in District 20 and District 24 between the previous and the new five-year plans. At one point, she said the cuts were made because many schools had already been sited and built in these districts; at another point, she said it was because it was too difficult to find available sites in these districts.³¹

In D20, according to the latest available data, 32 out of 33 elementary schools are at or above 100% utilization; with 25,414 out of :26,056 students enrolled in these schools (97.5 percent). Six out of seven middle schools are at or above 100 percent utilization, with 8,568 out of 9,781 students in these schools (87.6 percent).

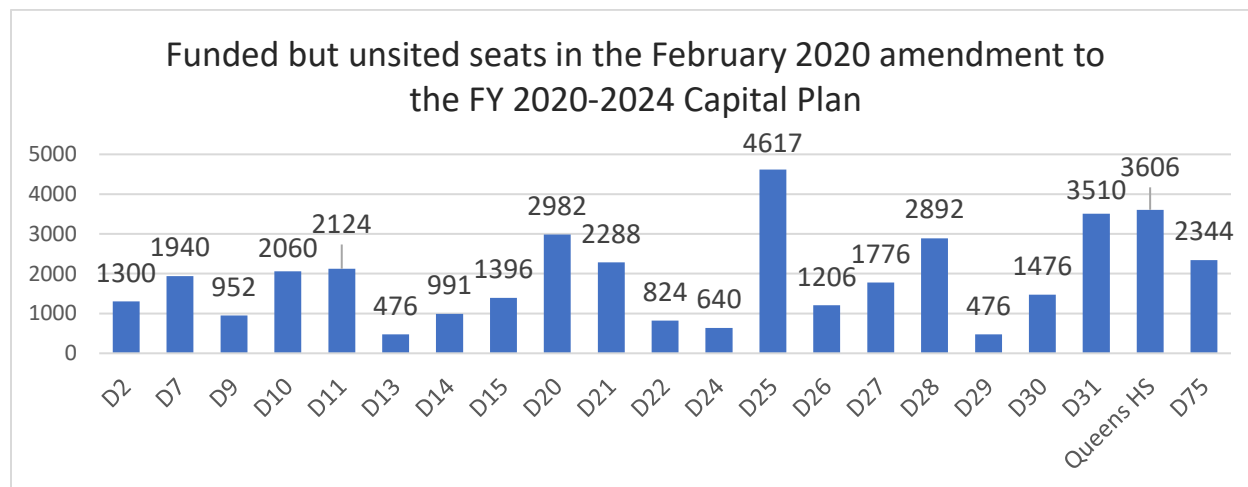
In D24, 25 out of 40 elementary schools are at or above 100 percent, with 23,490 out of 31,807 students enrolled in these schools (73.9 percent); 3 out of 8 middle schools are at or above 100 percent, with 5,610 out of 10,332 students enrolled in these schools (54.3 percent).

Without far more transparency from the DOE/SCA on how they estimate the need for new school seats, it remains impossible to ascertain what the actual rationale is for their adding seats in certain districts and subtracting seats in others.

Unsitd Seats in the current FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan

In the February 2020 amendment to the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan, a total of 17,613 seats are reported as having been completed or in progress from the current plan, leaving 39,876 seats unsited. Only two districts (8 and 12) have all funded seats completed or in progress.

The following twenty-one districts still have thousands of seats unsited in the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan as of February 2020:



This analysis of the Capital Plans brought up several unanswered questions:

- Why was there such a large drop in identified needed and funded seats between the February 2018, February 2019, and February 2020 Capital Plans?
- Why are there such large decreases in number of funded seats for Districts that have been historically overcrowded?
- What is the plan for the additional 39,876 seats in the FY 2020-2024 Capital Plan that still do not have sites?

DOE and SCA non-compliance with Local Laws 167 and 168

Two bills were passed in 2018 by the City Council, with the goal of helping to alleviate school overcrowding: Local Law 167,³² which required the DOE to make more transparent its data sources and methodology for projecting the need for new school seats, and Local Law 168,³³ that created a Task Force for School Siting to expedite the identification of locations where new schools could be built.

Both laws resulted from recommendations made by the City Council Working Group report “Planning to Learn,”³⁴ as well as problems we had previously identified in our reports, including “Space Crunch”³⁵ and “Seats Gained and Lost in NYC Schools: The Untold Story.”³⁶

We analyzed the DOE’s compliance with these two laws and found serious problems with both.

Local Law 167 required the DOE/SCA to post their seats needs projections by December 1, 2019 and annually thereafter, disaggregated by grade level and by sub-district. It also required them to make public whatever non-quantitative criteria went into their estimates, and any other data sources they used, and explain the methodology used in putting all this information together to complete their estimates of how much new school capacity would be needed. The law also mandated them to post the number of school seats lost every year, to lapsed leases, and the elimination of mini-schools and annexes, which according to our report, “Seats Gained and Lost in NYC Schools”, often totals many hundreds or thousands of seats lost each year.

Yet much of the data required by Local Law 167 is still not posted on the SCA webpage devoted to the Law, nearly six months after the legal deadline, and in fact, the DOE is providing no more data or information about the manner in which they project the need for additional seats than before the law was passed.³⁷

None of the information concerning lost seats is posted; nor is there any disaggregated data offered by grade span organized by district and sub-district, as the law requires. Nor is any non-quantitative criteria for decision-making listed offered, or the methodology by which the DOE puts together the various data sources they say they employ, including current school overcrowding, housing starts and enrollment projections, to come up with their final estimates.

The goals set by Local Law 168 have also not been met. The School Siting Task Force was by law supposed to consist of an interagency task force that would issue a report by July 31, 2019 *“to review city-owned buildings, city-owned property and vacant land within the city to evaluate potential opportunities for new school construction or leasing for school use.”*

Yet this Taskforce met only twice, once in February and once on July 29, 2019, when the SCA projected a long list of city-owned sites on a screen and said they had rejected most all of them, for unclear reasons. Sometime after that date, a two-page document that purported to be the Task Force report was obtained by Class Size Matters from the City Council via FOIL. According to the properties tab, it was authored by Cora Liu of the SCA. Two appointed members of the Task Force, Shino Tanikawa, a parent leader appointed by the DOE, and Kaitlyn O'Hagan, then City Council Legislative Financial Analyst, said that they had not had any input on the report or the Task Force deliberations.

The two-page report again identified only two locations out of tens of thousands of city-owned properties as potentially usable for schools, one on Avenue Y in D21 and the other at the former Flushing Airport in D25. Via FOIL, we also obtained the spreadsheet that had been projected at the final Taskforce meeting. Yet we found that the reasons cited for excluding potential sites were often incorrect and/or inconsistent. For example, many sites were rejected in 13 districts – D2, D7, D9, D10, D11, D13, D14, D15, D24, D26, D27, D30 and D31 — with the explanation that these districts either had “all seats sited”, or only “small number of seats to site”, or they had “no seats funded”, even though each of them have substantial seats funded but unsited in the new five-year capital plan.

Other potential sites were removed with the explanation that they were “100% under water” even though a closer analysis revealed a substantial portion of the property that was not underwater; others were removed because the “lot size [was] too small” even though the spreadsheet listed them at 20,000 sq. ft., which meets the size requirements of the SCA.

In addition, as admitted in the document, neither the Task Force nor the SCA had so far analyzed over 22,000 empty lots because they were privately owned. As far as we know the Task Force has not met again. A longer memo that details troubling and confusing inconsistencies in the process and reporting of the School Siting Taskforce is posted on the Class Size Matters website.³⁸

Conclusion: the overriding need to lower class size next year and in the future

Our public schools still have not fully recovered from the last economic recession in 2007-2008, when class sizes increased sharply. This fall, there were more than 325,000 students in classes of 30 or more. The number of children in grades 1st to 3rd in classes that large has risen by more than 3000 percent since 2007.³⁹ Class sizes in NYC schools remain on average 15-30 percent higher than the rest of the state.⁴⁰

As a result, student achievement in 4th grade reading and math in NYC has remained stagnant or declined over the last decade, as measured by the NAEPs, the most reliable national assessments.⁴¹ We simply cannot afford to allow students to lose any more ground.

Through creative thinking and targeted savings that could be used to pay for more teachers, counselors, and tutors, and redeploying other instructional personnel already on staff, smaller classes could be achieved next year and in the future, schools could provide the necessary social distancing, and students could receive the instructional and emotional support that they will need more than ever before.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/15-nyc-children-sickened-with-rare-covid-related-illness-here-are-the-warning-signs/2404162/>
- ² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/health/coronavirus-children-transmission-school.html>
- ³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/health/coronavirus-children-transmission-school.html>
- ⁴ <https://www.insider.com/how-china-denmark-japan-reopening-schools-2020-4#class-and-play-group-sizes-are-smaller-now-6>
- ⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/world/europe/germany-merkel-coronavirus-reopening.html>
- ⁶ <https://apnews.com/7ac01019c566034347c87a225444452f>
- ⁷ https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/covid19_reopen-america-schools.pdf
- ⁸ <https://www.classsizematters.org/research-and-links/>
- ⁹ <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-de-blasio-education-cuts-20200505-7p7bcefy4nfkbivmi6skzhpmoq-story.html>
- ¹⁰ <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2020/04/parents-teachers-students-advocates-and.html>
- ¹¹ <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Stringer-letter-4.17.20.pdf>
- ¹² <https://nypost.com/2020/04/19/city-doe-postpones-vote-on-millions-in-vendor-contracts/>
- ¹³ <https://nypost.com/2020/04/18/nyc-set-to-pour-700m-down-the-drain-on-idle-school-buses/>
- ¹⁴ <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2019/06/05/pol-pushes-for-more-emotional-support-in-schools-says-thrivenyc-isnt-cutting-it/>
- ¹⁵ <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/05/DOE-SCA.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://nypost.com/2019/08/17/salaries-gone-wild-carranza-cronies-pocket-pay-hikes-as-high-as-35/>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-tests-city-schools-20190924-akkmjq4gybccxjtj5kemtylnpy-story.html>
- ¹⁸ https://www.checkbooknyc.com/contracts_landing/status/A/yeartype/B/year/121/vendor/11204?expandBottomCont=true
- ¹⁹ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537982.pdf>
- ²⁰ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/educators-debate-validity-of-map-testing/>
- ²¹ <https://edpolicy.education.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/IreadyandMAPmastheadFINAL.pdf>
- ²² <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2020/02/council-hearings-on-class-size-so.html>
- ²³ <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/2/28/21178673/calls-for-smaller-class-size-grow-louder-nyc-parents-students-and-educators-say-there-s-a-big-need-t> and <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2020/03/02/advocates--parents-and-educators-push-for-smaller-class-sizes>
- ²⁴ “Enrollment, Capacity, & Utilization Report 2018-2019 School Year.” New York City Department of Education. https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Utilization_Reports/Blue%20Book%202018-2019.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=qljS5%2BZRM1H9ApMDhP8o933bmlyqFtGGcAt2yi8CIH4%3D
- ²⁵ Local Law No. 167 of 2018, Council Int. No. 729-A of 2018. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6714467&GUID=ED9C486B-ACA7-4D5B-8D56-F2EA0A950976>
- ²⁶ <https://www.wnyc.org/story/city-make-changes-how-it-accounts-space-schools/>
- ²⁷ “FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment.” SCA, NYC DOE, & Mayor Bill de Blasio. February 2019. https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Capital_plans/02012019_20_24_CapitalPlan.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=aJpFmjNrFacdfbme5LzsQgHK4k5xelgRZtwQV%2BRsul4%3D
- ²⁸ “FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment.” SCA, NYC DOE, & Mayor Bill de Blasio. February 2020. https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Capital_plans/02202020_20_24_CapitalPlan.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=IOuRPmk95aGbwzaOUCMHQZ71nBES%2F22YKSlzY1xJ4n0%3D
- ²⁹ “FY 2015-2019 Five-Year Capital Plan.” SCA, NYC DOE, & Mayor Bill de Blasio. February 2018. <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/February-2018-Capital-Plan.pdf>
- ³⁰ “FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment.” (page 7) SCA, NYC, & Mayor Bill de Blasio. February 2020. https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Capital_plans/02202020_20_24_CapitalPlan.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=IOuRPmk95aGbwzaOUCMHQZ71nBES%2F22YKSlzY1xJ4n0%3D We do not know how many of these 26,000 seats are sited, but according to a Nov. 2019 spreadsheet posted on the SCA

website of school building projects funded by the FY 2015-2019 Capital Plan, 20,488 seats have opened or set to open between 2019 and 2022 “FY2015-19 Projects in Process.” School Construction Authority, Nov. 2019. https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Local%20Law%20167%20Reports/FY15-19%20Projects%20in%20Process.xlsx?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=8Acl58on50ioJaZ2TUFq6FVihnZuY6IT9L%2F%2FcSOPneE%3D

³¹ Leonie Haimson, “DOE and SCA going backwards not forwards in terms of rational school planning,” NYC Public School Parents, December 18, 2018; <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2018/12/doe-and-sca-going-backwards-not.html>; transcript of hearings available here: <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3764311&GUID=F74E4036-3F9C-4C47-B4C4-D4DE383AFCD3&Options=&Search=>

³² Local Law No. 167 of 2018, Council Int. No. 729-A of 2018. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6714467&GUID=ED9C486B-ACA7-4D5B-8D56-F2EA0A950976>

³³ Local Law No. 168 of 2018, Council Int. No. 757-A of 2018. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6715118&GUID=2EE4A502-7E3B-44BF-9A06-EB8BC691F61B>

³⁴ New York City Council. “Planning to Learn.” 2018. <https://council.nyc.gov/land-use/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2018/03/Planning-to-Learn-3.16.2018-high-resolution.pdf>

³⁵ Leonie Haimson. “Space Crunch: Failures in policy and planning leading to overcrowding in the city’s schools.” 2014. <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/SPACE-CRUNCH-Report-Final-OL.pdf>

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³⁷ <http://www.nycsca.org/community/capital-plan-reports-data#Local-Law-167-Reports-352>

³⁸ <https://www.classsizematters.org/local-law-167-168-information-and-memo-to-city-council/>

³⁹ <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Class-Size-FAQ-for-officials-2.24.20.pdf>

⁴⁰ NYSED for 2016-2017. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pmf/>

⁴¹ <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2019/10/30/21109120/nyc-scores-are-flat-on-national-reading-and-math-test>

Dear Councilmember Salamanca:

My name is Darlene Jackson-James and I am a Dean of Students at Classical Charter Schools in your District. As you know, Classical Charter Schools, earned two National Blue Ribbons, in 2014 and recently in 2019. Our ELL scholars have outperformed students in Scarsdale. However the South Bronx has been called the one of the “hungriest” communities in New York City, if not the United States. Nearly 40 percent of the people in the Bronx live below the federal poverty level. COVID-19 has forced a disproportionate number of Black and Latinos to dwell in cramped and substandard housing: rat and roach infestation, poor ventilation, no hot water or heat. Current policies and procedures have blocked families from applying for housing subsidy to obtain suitable housing. The bureaucratic process is a deterrent for many of our parents so they silently suffer because they have no voice or advocate. It this time of crisis, I have seen families shuffled from one bureaucratic processes to another. Meanwhile, their bills pile up, food is scarce and so are their dreams. Gentrification has pushed our families even further to the margins, forcing them to remain in insufficient housing. Dr. King relentlessly spoke of the “fierce urgency of now.” In that statement, he emphasized the importance of urgently and directly addressing inequity, without delay. I am urging you to use your voice and influence to end the cycle of poor housing conditions for our community and families.

Sincerely,

Ms. Darlene Jackson-James
Classical Charter Schools



Kelly Grace Price • co-creator, Close Rosie's • 534 w 187th st #7 New York, NY 10033
• E-Mail: gorgeous212@gmail.com
Web: <http://www.CloseRosies.org>

May 15, 2020

To: Councilwoman Carlina Rivera: NYC Committee Chair Committee on Hospitals

To: Speaker Corey Johnson, Councilman Robert Holden, Councilman Daniel Dromm, Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal, Councilwoman Deborah L. Rose , Councilman Keith Powers, Councilman Stephen Levine et al

Via email:

Ref NYC Council Oversight of Covid-19 Contract Tracing

Dear Chairwoman Rivera, Committee Members and Committee Counsel(s):

I thank you for holding this hearing and also the other members of the council and staff for allowing me to appear today and speak. I am Kelly Grace Price, founder of Close Rosie's (<http://www.CloseRosies.org>). I for many years before my false arrest, unlawful detention and malicious prosecutions worked in top-tier international technology and business as a technology architect and project manager for complex financial and media systems for a corporation privately owned by Bill Gates and banks like JP Morgan/Chase. I appear today to submit comment on the broad outlines of the contract-tracing program as has been presented to date. I have been advocating for accountability and oversight of the NYPD, CCRB and City DAs for the better part of a decade since my false arrests, unlawful detention and malicious prosecutions in 2011 that ended in full dismissals. One

of the narrative thrusts of my advocacy has been to target the NYPD and borough DA's use of PALANTIR that creates algorithms that analyze each citizen's credibility when making complaints to the NYPD etc. Despite my advocacy efforts there is still nary any oversight of these systems and I fear the same potential ebbing within the current effort by H&H to build a covid-19 contract-tracing entity.

Today I wish to quickly broach four main points:

1. Oversight of current NYC technology is oblique, inadequate and byzantine.

A. Why is Jessica Tisch involved? Her track record is dispositive and her family's financial and social ties to Palantir, K2 Intelligence, the Knoll family and the shadowy murky world of law-enforcement technology. Why isn't she here testifying today? From the testimony of H&H the buck seems to be stopping with her ref Covid-19 tracing technology & data. We need MORE details about the architecture of the technology. Will the data be deleted at some point? "COMCARE" is being built w the state to loop in other areas of the state and the build-out for NYC will be ready June 1. Is COMCARE using Salesforce too as well as the tool NYC is building so these platforms are compatible?

B. SALESFORCE?

- i. Will the server admins and database administrators at salesforce have access to our health data in the same way that the techs and admins at Palantir have access to our NYPD profile data?
- ii. Is there a backup environment? Has it already been built and put through a test/environment with de-bugging and Q&A?
- iii. Security: Salesforce stores all data in a CLOUD: is this really the security we need for this data?
- iv. Salesforce has so many known security and database issues. Who made this choice?
- v. Salesforce is well-known to be involved in politics: they even have a political PAC that has given to NY Politicians who lead districts that H&H Hospitals happen to be located in.
- vi. After 9/11 we had a rush to use tech to trace potential terrorists, to monitor them

and identify. When the Patriot Act was rushed through we allowed many egregious tech infringements of our rights that weren't "cancelled" by the sunset clause.

What is the plan for destroying this data when the need for tracing is over and/or when a patient heals/goes home from quarantine? Is there a sunset clause that times-out this program and outlines a protocol for destruction of this data?

2. I 100% agree with CW Inez Barron. This data will be subpoenaable by the NYPD/DAs. How will this data be protected? How long the data will be held and who will have access to it?

I heard Dr. Ted Long respond to Chari Rivera's question of "who will own this data" with a condescending sidestep that DID not respond to her question: he said they are looking at "apps" but that doesn't answer question of who will own this data.

- A. People on parole will be subject to accusations of parole violations: currently technical parole violations are still being interred into our City jails: for women this is the #1 reason we have been caged on Rosie's since March 12th when I began tracking the data. What are the safeguards that will be built in preventing federal marshals, parole officers, DAs, NYPD, law-enforcement/ICE getting their hands on this data?
- B. Everyone I know buys weed. No one calls there weed dealer we just go to the corner store of the spot they operate out of. No one will give up these contacts bc we don't have them and also we don't want our weed dealers arrested. Same applies for sex workers. Right now on my block there is a heroine dealer operating from under the scaffolding build around the Yeshiva synagogue: do you think the zombies that congregate there every night and make the synagogue steps a shooting gallery will give you his phone #?
- C. Again the H&H doctor who responded to her sidestepped CW Barron's question. Is this mandatory? What if people refuse? Will they be arrested if they resist? Dr. Katz DID NOT answer CS Barron question of what will happen if people refuse to participate? CM Moya repeated questions about data safety but he still didn't get an answer. Katz says they will not share or sell data but we need these guarantees built-in from the beginning.

3. Who are the people being hired to be "disease detectives?" If they are "from the

communities most effected are they ex cops? I've heard that the people being hired have been for the most part NYPD Auxiliary cops? Who are these people? Can we make sure social workers women are hired instead of retired cops, auxiliary cops and retired law enforcement? Have members of the NYPD/retired/auxiliary/ family members being given priority in hiring?
Can we call them something else other than "Detectives?"

4. **NYC H&H is vastly inadequate:** they can't even manage the population of 9/11 survivors still living in the city with dangerous respiratory conditions: how can we expect them to get this right? I've been trying to get MH care from the 9/11 Survivors' program for over two years and STILL have not been enrolled in full-time care. This agency is so over-burdened and caustic I can't understand how they think they can shoulder this responsibility.

Thank you very much for considering my comments in forming your oversight to this program.

Best,

Kelly Grace Price

<http://www.CloseRosies.org>

Ft. George, Manhattan

May 15, 2020

Colleen A Marquis

May 23, 2020

130 Bradhurst Ave

Apt 807

New York, NY 10039

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Colleen A Marquis, and I am a mom of a Kindergarten Student at PS 128 - The Audubon School, in Washington Heights

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request, as a mom of Public School student, is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Without Art Programs at PS 128 - Including the Art and Drama teachers herculean efforts during this Home-School process, we would have missed out on so many important, creative moments. My son comes alive during these art and drama projects, and that enthusiasm then carries over to all his studies.

Sincerely,

Colleen A Marquis



On behalf of Concern for Independent Living, Inc., we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

Concern for Independent Living is a 48-year old supportive and affordable housing provider serving 1500 adults and 250 children in Brooklyn, the Bronx and on Long Island in a variety of residential settings. Since 2011, we have successfully developed 580 units of housing in NYC using the Supportive Housing Loan Program and tax credit funding initiatives in conjunction with OMH, OASAS, HCR, HPD, OTDA and numerous other state and city government partners. Our housing has permanently changed the lives of hundreds of New Yorkers and eliminated costly cycles of institutionalization and homelessness.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow. We currently have several projects in development in Brooklyn which are due to close in FY21, include sites at Pitkin Avenue and Cypress Avenue in Brooklyn. Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. New York State must do the same to make sure essential housing, such as Concern's two historic Church developments in the Bronx, is created. Without capital funding we will not be able to successfully finance at least four significant housing projects and hundreds of New Yorkers will lose out on vital supportive and affordable housing opportunities.

Housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities.

Supportive housing development creates jobs: Concern employs over 350 New Yorkers to provide 24/7 services to our tenants, including qualified social service, administrative and property management personnel. Our projects in the NYC pipeline alone would generate another 100 full and part time positions.

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. Since early March, our multidisciplinary efforts to ensure the safety and security of our tenants and staff through a

healthcare in housing model has kept the COVID-19 crisis at bay and resulted in minimal positive contagion and draw on vital healthcare dollars.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Ralph Fasano
Executive Director



mgpalliance.org

May 23, 2020

Department of Parks and Recreation, Fiscal 2021 Executive Plan
Testimony
Connie Lee,
President, Marcus Garvey Park Alliance

Budget cuts, necessary or not are terrifying to community residents in the neighborhoods of Harlem where I volunteer, essentially full time because the need is there. In my neighborhood residents rely on park space for more than access to nature. Our parks serve as backyards, gyms, informal gathering spaces, play areas and provide cultural equity to residents who would otherwise have limited or no access. Parks are sites of cultural significance that inform visitors and preserve cultural identity. They are also the economic engine supporting nearby small businesses.

It surprises no one that the funding needed to have enough park workers on the ground is not adequate, but I am concerned that failure to restore the 9.6 million one-time funding adopted in the 2020 budget is a giant step backwards.

In reviewing the executive plan, I will defer to the city agency to know best what their needs are but I would like to point out that the Parks Equity Initiative and Parks Without Borders programs are the great equalizers improving access for underserved communities.

I will also point out the obvious impact on the environment if green spaces and street trees are underfunded.

Best,
Connie Lee
Email: presidentmgpa@gmail.com

The Marcus Garvey Park Alliance is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization
advocating for green space and cultural equity in the public realm.



May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education and access programs in cultural institutions. My name is Constance van Rollegheem and I am the chair of the Museum, Arts and Culture Access Consortium (MAC) in New York City.

MAC is an organization made up of cultural professionals, advocates, and people with disabilities striving toward increasing access to NYC's cultural institutions for the disability community through connection, education, and advocacy.

As the pandemic recedes, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for people with disabilities, and to engage learning – as they are crucial to anyone's life. Cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with people with disabilities, schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages and abilities. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Cultural Affairs—and subsequently on the disability community. The initial projections for this agency would be a huge setback for arts education and the cultural community programs that are a vital part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on people with disabilities who participate in the cultural community of our city. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and the disability community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

The truth is that countless NYC residents in the disability community find in cultural organization and Cultural Institutions the passion and education for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, which builds important life skills that help them in the future. This community as any other community in the city represents the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Constance Van Rollegheem
Chair



Candice Anderson
Executive Director
Cool Culture
canderson@coolculture.org

May 20, 2020

My name is Candice Anderson, Executive Director of Cool Culture. Each year, Cool Culture offers our target NYC preschool students and their families access to arts and cultural experiences. We have served millions of families since our 2003 founding via our *Citywide Cultural Access (Family Pass) Program* that gives free admission to 90 partner museums. Cool Culture activates partnerships with families, the museum field, and more than 440 schools and early learning programs in Title I school districts throughout New York City.

I would like to thank Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, Speaker Corey Johnson, Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo, Cultural Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, and members of the NYC Council for the opportunity to provide you with some insight into Cool Culture's work to address the needs of children and families throughout the five boroughs that have been affected by the pandemic; and the importance of arts and culture to a strong post-Covid recovery.

I know you are facing incredibly difficult choices as you try to address the great and pressing needs of communities devastated by this crisis, including mental health, health care, food security and education. I ask that you remember the central role of arts and culture in addressing these needs.

Engaging Families, Educators and Museums During the Pandemic

With families under immense pressure, children home from school, and educators in high-need districts badly in need of support with remote instruction, Cool Culture's pandemic programming is supporting our community during these challenging times and bringing the joy, education and mental health benefits of public and institutional art and culture to homebound families.

Community-building—always essential to our work—is critical under these conditions. While Cool Culture has been focused on creating and supporting these ties in person, we are learning quickly how to bring our community together through other means:

- Our staff have created a range of interactive activities for families online, including art-making sessions, open mics, and virtual tours of museums and local public artwork. **These are available to over 50,000 Cool Culture *Passholder Families* and families outside our network, and hundreds of children and families have participated from across NYC;**

- Our *We Are All Curators* program, has offered online professional-development sessions for educators, **supporting their shift to remote instruction**, together with guided activities for families; and
- We are deepening our partnerships with museums to support their **outreach to historically marginalized communities** while closed.

As a trusted community partner, our work remains critical during the Covid-19 pandemic. While Covid-19 is a global threat, its impact is being felt acutely by residents of the same New York City Title I districts where Cool Culture works. Many in these neighborhoods face systemic injustices. They cannot work from home, experience food insecurity, and many have lost their primary sources of income. Others are essential workers balancing work obligations while taking on expanded roles in their children's education with limited guidance from schools.

We strongly urge you to ensure the necessary support for arts and culture, and to include the priorities of cultural organizations in New York in any future Covid response legislation. This support which will enable Cool Culture and other members of the arts and culture community to continue our work to maintain and strengthen social connections under the stay-at-home policies that have forced closings of our school and museum partners.

Thank you.



MAY 21, 2020
PRESENTED BEFORE:
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Good afternoon, I'm Steve Herrick, Executive Director of the Cooper Square Committee. Thank you for your leadership in addressing the array of public health and economic impacts created by Covid-19.

The Cooper Square Committee, formed in 1959, serves the Lower East Side/East Village of Manhattan, which is a multi-racial, culturally and economically diverse community. People of color comprise roughly 60% of our community: 29% Hispanic, 19% Asian, 8% African American and 40% White non-Hispanic. 35% of households are low-income (below 60% of AMI). An estimated 26% of CB3 residents live in poverty.

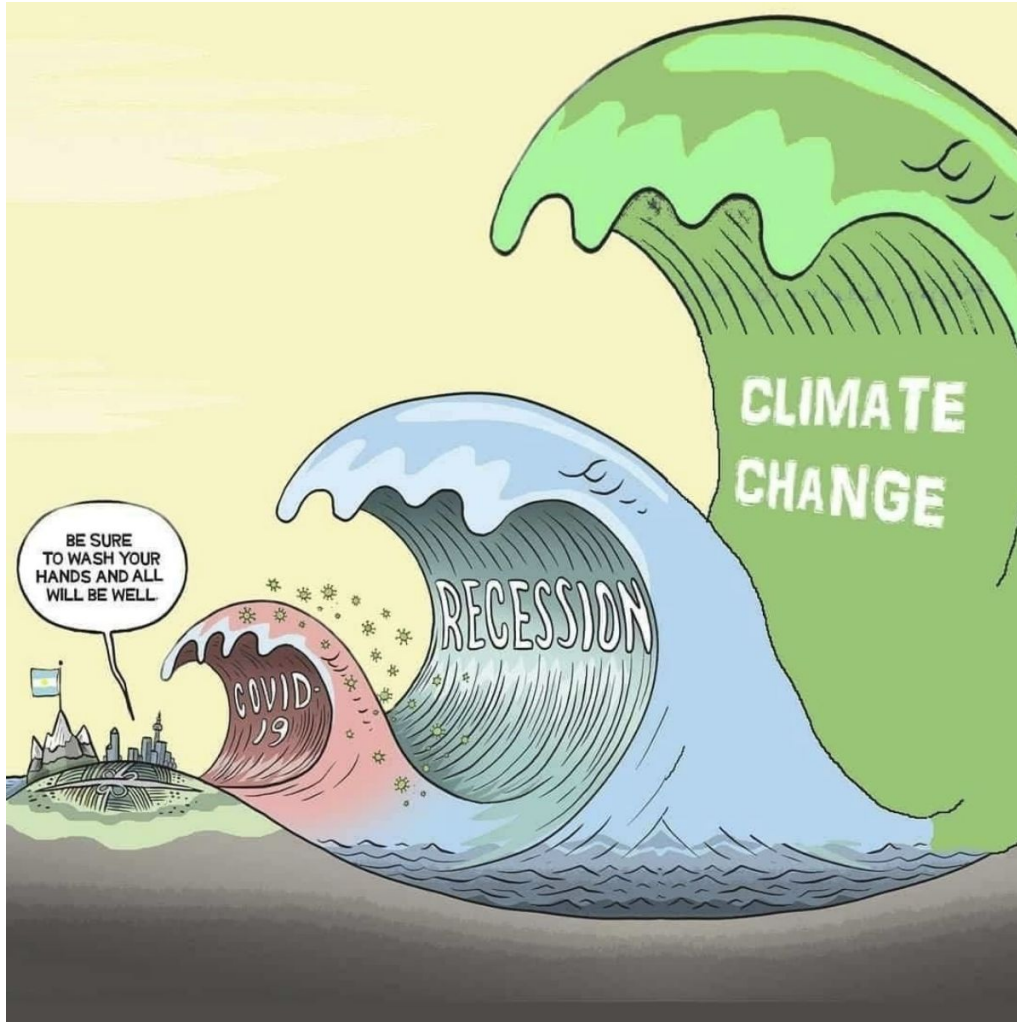
Discretionary City Council funding has always played an important role in addressing unmet community needs by increasing the capacity of NYC's non-profit organizations that are deeply rooted in low and moderate income communities, especially communities of color, and that serve the needs of low income families, seniors, youth and tenants, to cite a few constituencies. While the City looks for federal aid to help close the budget deficits created by this pandemic, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations that primarily serve communities of color. Grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the labor intensive and onerous City agency RFP process.

Cooper Square Committee was awarded \$260,000 in discretionary City Council funding in fiscal year 2020, comprising about 30% of our total budget. Large cuts to discretionary funding would be devastating to our organization and many others that are working to address housing insecurity, health and educational disparities in NYC's diverse communities. Funding from the Stabilizing NYC program and Local Initiatives funding and the N-NORC program have enabled Cooper Square Committee to provide case management services and health, legal and financial workshops for over 250 seniors, and have enabled us to organize scores of tenant associations and 5 multi-building coalitions comprising over 150 buildings with over 2,000 households to push back against the worst predatory equity landlords and minimize displacement in recent years.

By working in coalition with other housing service providers, we won stronger protections for rent stabilized tenants last year, with NY State ending vacancy decontrol, ensuring that we won't lose thousands more rent stabilized apartments in the coming years. Our organizing efforts as a leader of the Stand for Tenant Safety campaign and the Lead Dust Free NYC campaign have won passage in the City Council of a number of laws in recent years that aim to improve code enforcement, and protect tenants' health and safety in occupied buildings undergoing substantial renovation of vacant apartments.

NYC's Independent Budget Office is projecting that NYC will suffer more than 400,000 job losses this year, and that it could take 4 years for employment to recover to pre-pandemic levels. As New Yorkers lose their jobs, many are falling behind in rent payments. Organizations like Cooper Square Committee expect to see a high demand for our services when the moratorium on evictions ends. Our anti-eviction services funded by HPD's Stabilizing NYC program, as well as our N-NORC senior services, including wellness check ins and case management funded by DFTA, are all essential services that are preventing the impacts of Covid-19 from becoming even more devastating to seniors and communities of color.

We stand with our partners in the nonprofit sector advocating against any cuts to discretionary funding in FY 2021. The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for less than half of one percent of the city budget. Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations, most of them led by people of color, get access to public funding. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities.



Original art from Mackaycartoons.net

Hello,

My name is Corinne Nicole Rivera and I was born and raised in our resilient city of New York.

I've been sitting in on the virtual city council budget meetings and know that it is with a heavy heart that these cuts are being proposed in response to our city's financial catastrophe. While short-sighted, I do

understand why we're planning to cut the organics brown bin program until May 2021. Why would we continue to pay for a program where trucks would pick up bins that are only a quarter of the way full?

From an environmental perspective, diverting even a fraction of our food waste from landfill does make a difference when it comes to the release of methane gas (a toxic pollutant that is 84 times as potent than CO₂). From an economic standpoint, we were losing money on organics transportation; a cost not offset by the savings from our landfill contracts. I hope we realize that we missed the opportunity to save money by the lack of proper education and communication from the city. Our city-subsidized community gardens and NGO's picked up the slack around informing citizens, and yet we're proposing to cut all of their funding. States that have mandated compost have not cut their collections programs due to COVID and continue to save money.

The city has made it clear that its priorities are health and food security. However, I have yet to hear a city council representative paint a holistic argument that directly links organic waste to both of these.

I'd like to highlight a few things:

30% of our waste facilities are in the South Bronx, an area that was not allowed to participate in the brown bin program. We will be sending 300,000+ pounds of food waste more to landfills each day now, which pass through these facilities before being sent on barges to the Carolinas. This means an increase in truck traffic highly concentrated in these areas. We know through scientific studies that the increase in truck pollution directly impacts human health. There

are higher cases of asthma and lung cancer in communities close to waste facilities; pre-existing lung conditions have resulted in higher coronavirus deaths among these populations.

The DSNY cuts will also prevent continued funding for rodent prevention. We're about to have millions of pounds more food waste in our trash bags for rats to eat, again highly concentrated in these waste facility areas that expose low-income and high-risk populations to other types of disease and rotten smells.

When the city suspended recycling post 9/11, it took 10 years to get anywhere near the same diversion rates. If we don't fund local community food waste drop off sites, NGO's, and also cut 12 million in waste education, I doubt we'll ever save money (even if it's mandated we only have to look at how well our ban on plastic bags has been with no education), and we certainly won't make our goal of zero waste to landfills by 2030 or even lower our greenhouse gas emissions.

The city is cutting 124 million in youth programs leaving 100,000 kids with no structure or job opportunities this summer and beyond. When it's hot and these kids have nothing to do will we then justify our minimal cuts to the NYPD and new officer hires when they take care of the "riff-raff" despite crime rates down? Can't we get creative? Can't we give these youth green jobs within the parks department? We're cutting funding for tree planting (basically cutting our own oxygen and natural carbon sinks), so can't we support our youth in this recession by also helping our local environment? Surely we can cut new officer funding to do this.

I'm worried it'll take another hurricane Sandy (which yes, is coming), in order for us to re-prioritize global warming. I'll end this testimony discussing the benefits of compost and explain why soil is our greatest tool for reversing climate change.

From a physiological standpoint, part of the reason people don't give mental energy to climate change is that it feels distant; polar bears in the Arctic, fires in Australia, the year 2100. Providing people free opportunities to compost their food waste allows them to better connect with climate solutions. If you compost, you feel the weight of your waste when you go drop it off. You actively feel satisfied knowing that all that waste isn't going to a landfill to turn into methane gas. It is our collective food waste rotting in landfills that warms our planet and intensifies "extreme weather" events we're seeing more frequently around the world. As a city of islands, we will be among the regions hit hardest.

Good habits only form when there is a reward. Composting our food waste rewards us in several ways. As mentioned, it reduces methane gas release, but when we turn our food waste into compost and add it to soil it actually works for us. Compost is a soil additive that generates nutrients and biodiversity. Healthy soils help plants grow stronger roots which increases their ability to draw down carbon from the air and put it in our ground. Soil is the biggest carbon sink in the world; in fact, if we rehabilitated the earth's dirt into soil, we would be able to draw down enough carbon to bring us back to safe pre-industrial levels of planetary warming.

What else does soil do? Unlike dirt, which is lifeless and dead, soil can hold both carbon and water. This helps our land with climate resiliency. When there is a heatwave, our soil is better equipped to withstand drought because it has water reserves. If there is a flood, the soil can absorb the water which helps to lower the flood damage to infrastructure.

Before I continue, I'd just like to mention that we can turn food waste into biogas, a fossil fuel alternative, that we can then sell. It doesn't make sense to me why we wouldn't increase the value of our waste by doing so.

In short, if we make it mandatory to divert food waste from the city we:

- Save money on landfill contracts
- Lower methane gas emissions
- Provide individuals an option to empower their sense of making a difference in reversing global warming
- Prevent increased rat and pest numbers
- Lower truck traffic which pollutes facility areas and impacts human health
- Have the option to create biogas, a fossil fuel alternative we can sell
- Restore soil, which draws down carbon from the atmosphere, and saves freshwater and energy
- Create more green jobs
- Bring us closer to our city's promise of zero waste to landfills
- Support the circular economy

- Expose people to the universal climate solution that is regenerative agriculture, even in the urban space.

I know that we have to cut the brown bin program. I then implore you to continue funding local compost initiatives. With 12 million in waste education cut, we will never teach the public to compost on a massive scale if we don't continue funding free compost options. This will not be a choice we will be proud of down the line; especially once we all realize the financial and environmental cost.

I ask that the CORE act proposed by council member Powers be passed. Localized food and electronics drop off sites are the only step forward. They will prevent transport emissions, reduce electronics chemical waste, empower local communities, and set the foundation needed for when the city does make organics collection mandatory.

If our priority is health and food security for our New Yorkers, then the CORE act must be passed and funded.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Corinne Nicole Rivera

**Youth Impact Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

Program Overview & Experience

Over the past year over 200 youth have been engaged as paid Youth Impact interns. Youth Impact interns have diverted over 300 cases from traditional justice system responses, completed over 50 community impact and revitalization projects, and developed three research and policy projects released city-wide on issues impacting NYC youth.

Youth Impact, a program of the Center for Court Innovation engages youth across NYC to become transformative leaders in their communities and beyond. Youth Impact members work in paid internships to prevent youth involvement with the criminal legal system, support youth leadership, and develop and pilot projects to create positive community impact and address the underlying issues causing youth contact with the criminal legal system. Youth Impact is a unique and impactful approach to youthwork, engaging youth who are street involved, involved with the criminal justice system or at high risk of violence to solve complex neighborhood issues. This approach activates youth at the center of community violence to become the leaders in solving entrenched community issues.

Each Summer Youth Impact serves as a worksite for over 150 SYEP participants in Brownsville, Red Hook, Crown Heights, and Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; Jamaica, Queens; East Harlem, the South Bronx and Staten Island. If our SYEP provider partners are not funded or able to operate this summer due to budget cuts, Youth Impact will not be able to engage youth in this crucial public safety work. This youth engagement model addresses the root causes of youth justice involvement and complex neighborhood issues utilizing crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), placemaking, public health, and community organizing strategies. This model creates avenues for members to impact their neighborhood by conceiving, designing, and implementing changes to public spaces to address community safety. Community healing is at the root of our approach to address systemic harm and support safe neighborhoods. Youth develop and lead community healing initiatives, such as community circles, pop-up wellness and self-care spaces, and cultural events. Additionally, the Center's Cure Violence anti-gun violence programs are experts in violence prevention, building trusting relationships with community, identifying and responding to immediate needs, responding to community crisis, and de-escalation and work closely with the Youth Impact program to ensure holistic community-centered approaches to violence prevention and youth opportunity.

Youth Programs and Public Safety

In the neighborhoods where Youth Impact operates, DYCD funded youth programs are crucial parts of the community infrastructure that reduces violence & crime and supports prevention through services provision, safe space, childcare, food access, and employment for community residents.

Closing all of these program for the summer increases public safety risk by increasing economic and food insecurity, removing access to safe childcare, heightening stressors connected to poverty, and leaving young people with no access to safe spaces to be on the street where they are more likely to face criminalization, as well as more likely to get into negative situations with peers. The trauma, economic insecurity, loss of employment, and additional stress are all factors associated with violence.

Currently, Youth Impact is operating all youth programs virtually and has developed multiple successful strategies to ensure engagement. Youth Impact believes that operating a virtual and/or socially distanced youth employment program will provide crucial opportunity and income for our youth. It could also be leveraged to support a community-based approach to public health messaging and community safety that does not exacerbate negative police-community relations and cause increased violence.

Youth Impact interns are working on virtual projects including a census outreach and engagement campaign through social media, a public education project around teen dating violence, and leading restorative circles for their peers as well as youth in middle schools virtually. Interns are engaging in virtual graphic design instruction, music production courses, and still holding peer diversion services virtually. These types of projects could be implemented over the summer along with projects to survey community members in need of resources and connect them to assistance, developing youth-focused public health materials, and holding virtual restorative circles in communities that have been impacted by police violence. Youth Impact could replicate its virtual youth programs model over the summer, activating young people to develop and implement solutions to address the dual issues of the repercussions of COVID on our most impacted neighborhoods and the need to positively engage young people over the summer. These youth could be leveraged to become credible messengers with their peers supporting COVID prevention efforts and providing crucial public health information, while also working on a broad range of other projects.

Without summer activities, parents can't work or return to work; essential workers can't work; mental wellness issues will be increased with no services; food banks and unemployment benefits will need to be increased. We should invest in the programs and services that we know work. The Mayor and New York's policymakers, City, State and Federal, must ensure that families have the summer programs that they need to recover from this unprecedented crisis. Community-based organizations stand ready to carry out creative solutions to support young people and their families through the summer virtually or through socially distanced programs.

Youth Impact offers a range of peer-facilitated options designed to create off ramps from justice involvement for youth. Transformative Circles are facilitated by Youth Impact members to resolve cases diverted from the family and criminal court systems, NYPD, and schools. Peer Mentorship is used to divert youth from school suspension and/or justice involvement. Gender-Based Initiatives allow Youth Impact to address the unique intersections of youth's identities and the criminal legal system.

Youth develop leadership and build skills as they work with their peers to lead projects, guide program development, and inform Youth Impact priorities. Members have many opportunities to develop professional skills through public speaking, networking, and collaborations with public and private sector organizations. Educational Support including academic goal setting, tutoring, college access support, college trips, and access to alternative education options.

Youth-led community projects address the root causes of youth justice involvement and promote positive community change. Youth develop community organizing and advocacy skills through hands on campaign development around issues impacting our communities and NYC youth at large. Placemaking initiatives create avenues for members to impact their neighborhood and take action to create change. Youth conceptualize, design, and activate changes to public spaces in order to address public safety issues. Youth develop and lead community healing initiatives such as community circles, pop up wellness and self-care spaces, and cultural events. Policy & advocacy opportunities create platforms for youth leadership and voice to be included in conversations they are often left out of. Members are engaged in policy and system change at multiple levels - from neighborhood to national - through participation in community governance, policy development, and engagement with government agencies and elected officials.

Testimony from Youth Impact Youth Leaders

The following testimony comes from Youth Impact participants across the city and highlights the need for the reinstatement of SYEP, as well as the far-reaching effects its cancellation will have.

Luis M.: *“SYEP’s cancellation was very unfortunate for me, as well as plenty of other youth. In March, I got the exciting news that I was accepted into John Jay College, which I am very proud of. I was selected in the SYEP lottery this year and planned to use the funds I earned over the summer to help me start college. I may also miss out on more working experience if I am not employed over the summer.”*

Gabriela H.: *I want to advocate for SYEP staying open this summer because more and more people want you to have work experience. Learning what it takes to work is very important. And young people [in this program often] need money to support their families. With money comes valuable lessons...SYEP is often a teenager’s first working experience in New York City, and can teach them lessons [early] like how to save their money.”*

Truely-Beloved C.: *“A big issue with SYEP being canceled is the fact that the program helps to keep kids out of trouble. When you have a job, you learn how to value something as your top priority.”*

Samiya J.: *“Now that SYEP is canceled, it’s going to be hard for me to make money over the summer. The current job I have now ends at the end of May and after that I’m going to be broke for the whole summer--that’s three months! That’s a long time. This affects me because SYEP helps me be independent and gives me the opportunity to buy my own clothes and school supplies while my mom worries about getting things for my siblings. What I’m trying to do now is get another job before my current job ends but it’s hard because now this quarantine isn’t allowing anyone to do interviews and hire people.”*

Shaniya M: *I first participated in SYEP at the age 14 when I got my first summer job/ job ever. My second job during my SYEP year was the Red Hook Community Justice Center summer of*

2018. During my summer working for The Red Hook Community Justice Center I was presented an opportunity to continue making money and furthering my education even after completing my Summer Youth Year by joining the Red Hook Community Resilience Corps. SYEP over the years has been able to open up doors for me. Not being able to have this this year especially with everything going on with COVID-19 would be a real disservice to other young people including my younger siblings.



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Testimony to the New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020

My name is Jayne Bigelsen and I am the Vice President of Advocacy at Covenant House New York (CHNY), where we serve runaway and homeless youth (RHY) ages 16 to 24. I would like to thank the New York City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony for this Executive Budget Hearing.

CHNY is the nation's largest, non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway and trafficked youth. During this past year, CHNY served over 1,600 young people in our residential programs, as well as through our drop-in center and street outreach efforts. On a nightly basis, we provide shelter to approximately 200 young people, including, LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and mothers with their children as well as survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. Our youth are primarily people of color and over a third of our youth have spent time in the foster care system. Many of our youth have experienced abuse or neglect at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and a disproportionately high percentage of our youth struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes and other educational and job-training programs, as well as a safe house and specialized services for survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. All of these services help young



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people overcome the trauma of abuse, homelessness and exploitation and move toward stability.

We are keenly aware that our city, state, nation and world are in the midst of a global economic recession due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. We also understand that difficult decisions will need to be made due to decreasing tax revenue. However, sadly but unsurprisingly, data from the pandemic has demonstrated that minority groups have been especially hard-hit and have faced a larger death toll respective to their representation in the greater population. As we know too well, global and national crises shine a spotlight on the inequalities that exist in our society with the most vulnerable among us often faring the worst. At CHNY, the most vulnerable among us are exactly who we serve: young people without homes, financial support, adequate vocational or educational skills and little-to-no safety net before they reach our doors. Additionally, rather than closing our doors, youth homeless shelters must welcome and shelter even more at-risk young people during a pandemic. Our direct service staff cannot work from the safety of their home, and instead our essential workers must directly care for our young people at our 41st St. and Bronx based shelters. We therefore implore you not to forget our youth and staff in the New York City budget.



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**Right-size Runaway and Homeless Youth Provider Contracts.
\$3.01M- 3% COLA contract increase for 5 years and an additional 7%
general contract increase for all current DYCD funded RHY contracts**

First and foremost, we are asking that our essential workers/direct care staff, who have risked their lives every day of this pandemic caring for our young people experiencing homelessness, be paid a living wage. New York State has cut human services local aid by 5% annually since 2012. Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running RHY programs. Sadly, it is the human services workforce that bears the brunt of the reduced funding, thereby leaving the average human services employee living at or below the poverty line. It is simply unacceptable for essential workers with full-time jobs, who are jeopardizing their own health to serve others in this pandemic, to be living at the poverty line. Additionally, low and stagnant wages due to insufficient state and city funding cause staff turnover rates in parts of the nonprofit sector that are over 40%. High turnover rates are detrimental to the young people we serve as it is important that our youth develop rapport with the adult staff who act as mentors and guides as they rise out of poverty to lead self-sufficient lives. Frequent staff changes can disrupt that rapport and make it more difficult for youth experiencing homelessness to leave poverty behind. We are therefore asking for a 3% increase on contracts and rates for the next five years and an additional 7% general contract increase for all current DYCD funded RHY contracts. This will “right size” DYCD contracts to



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more closely resemble the true cost of a bed for a young person experiencing homelessness in New York City.

Continue to fund CHNY's anti-human trafficking program

Unfortunately, traffickers like to make homeless youth a primary target. Recent research has demonstrated that approximately one in five of the young people we serve have had experiences that fit the federal definition of 'severe forms of human trafficking' or felt so desperate that they believed they had no choice but to trade sex for basic life necessities, such as food or shelter¹. Many of our survivors have told us that they are finding this period of social isolation especially difficult because it reminds them of being isolated with their trafficker and in some cases makes it harder to access their support systems in person. Additionally, survivors often rely on part-time jobs in the retail and restaurant industries as they get back on their feet and pursue their long-term educational and vocational goals. Unfortunately, many survivors of trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 which increases their chances of relapsing back into the life of prostitution if they cannot find employment. We are extremely grateful to the NYC Council for providing with us with \$50,000 annually towards our anti-human trafficking programming. We are in the process of moving our current safe house for survivors to a new location in the Bronx. We are extremely excited

¹ 13Greeson JKP, Treglia D, Wolfe DS, Wasch S, Gelles RJ. Child welfare characteristics in a sample of youth involved in commercial sex: an exploratory study. Child Abuse & Neglect. 2019;94(1):1-11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104038>



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about the move as it will allow us to serve more survivors in a beautiful home closer to our main 41st St. hub. However, this relocation will be costly, with an increase in both rent and staffing costs. The \$50,000 provided by the NYC Council will help defray some of those costs, and it is therefore extremely important that we continue to receive this funding. Due to these increase costs and the fact that human trafficking survivors are especially vulnerable during this pandemic, we are requesting an increase to \$150,000 per year for our anti-trafficking programming.

Fund two mental health focused TIL Program Pilots. \$2.6M

Living through a global pandemic can exacerbate mental health symptoms in anyone. However, individuals who were previously struggling with mental health concerns and the neediest among us are the most susceptible to declines in mental health. Prior to COVID-19, homeless youth service providers often did not have the appropriate staff capacity or structure to support RHY with significant mental health needs. At CHNY, we are fortunate to have twelve social workers, a part-time psychiatrist and a mental health day program to serve youth with a wide range of mental health issues. Our mental health staff is adept at dealing with mental health concerns including, anxiety, depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder, among many other disorders. However, in recent years we have seen an increase in young people with schizophrenia, psychosis and active suicidality. Young people with these conditions often need more mental health support than we can provide. In these cases, we will advocate to hospitalize the young person in order to ensure their safety. However, frequently the hospital will only keep the youth



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for 24 hours before returning them to our care. The young person is then bounced back and forth between RHY service providers and hospitals and do not receive the intensive 24/7 mental health care that it is essential to their recovery. There are no youth mental health beds in New York City, which means we have had to make referrals out of state. CHNY is therefore asking the City to issue an RFP for two programs to serve RHY with mental and behavioral health needs that would include on-site clinical services and intensive case management to provide these youth with the services they need.

Make CityFHEPS vouchers available to RHY immediately

Over three years ago, RHY in the DYCD system were promised access to city sponsored housing vouchers. To date, they still do not have access. Time and time again, our dedicated and experienced aftercare housing managers struggle to find housing options for young people who are about to leave Rights of Passage (ROP), our transitional living program (TIL), even when the client has met all of their individual and program goals. This can create a bottleneck as a young person in our crisis program will not be able to move into our TIL until there is a bed available. Yet we will not release that bed until we can be assured that the young person exiting our TIL has an appropriate place to stay.

Ultimately, youth who have successfully completed a TIL need access to affordable housing, and a CityFHEPS Voucher would be an essential tool in making that happen. However, since our clients are receiving services from a DYCD funded shelter instead of an HRA funded shelter, they are currently denied the opportunity to receive an



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HRA voucher. It simply does not make sense that because a person is accessing services through a different city agency, one that specializes in developmentally appropriate services for their age group, they should be denied a major pathway to achieving housing stability.

Although the current rules do provide an avenue for a youth in a DYCD shelter to receive a CITYFHEPS voucher, it seems to be written as an exception as opposed to allowing for general eligibility for DYCD youth in the CITYFHEPS program. In order to be eligible for CITYFHEPS, the regulation requires that the individual be referred by the Commissioner of another city agency and that the HRA Commissioner determine that due to the particular circumstances of the household, CITYFHEPS rental assistance is needed to avert entry to a DHS shelter. CHNY believes that eligibility for CITYFHEPS should be based on someone's lived experience with homelessness and not dependent on which agency they have sought shelter from. We therefore recommend that any young person who receives services, whether residential or outreach, from a DYCD provider be granted equal access to CITYFHEPS.

Award the contract for the NYC Unity Works Program

CHNY urges the City to immediately award the contract for the NYC Unity Works Program to be administered by DYCD that was scheduled to begin on July 1, 2020. In October 2019, the City announced the NYC Unity Works program, explaining that it was the "Nation's Most Comprehensive Workforce Development Program for Homeless and Runaway LGBTQI Youth."



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As LGBTQ young people are overrepresented in the homeless youth population, we were disheartened to learn that the awarding and implementation of this groundbreaking initiative is being placed on “pause” indefinitely. This funding is especially vital in the wake of the unemployment and financial recession caused by COVID-19. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and a number of other organizations have just begun to underscore the inequalities and inequities experienced by LGBTQ populations related to employment. Of note, transgender/gender-nonconforming individuals experience unemployment at four times the national average. Current realities have demonstrated the people of color are disproportionately impacted by both the health and financial repercussions of COVID- 19. A large majority of the LGBTQ young people we serve and the general population of youth we serve at CHNY are people of color. These youth will undoubtedly be disproportionately impacted, and we have already seen many lose their employment or have a drastic reduction to their income due to COVID-19. Therefore, at a time when marginalized communities are already being disproportionately impacted financially by the COVID-19 crisis, it is even more important that a program that was intentionally developed to address income inequality faced by LGBTQ youth be awarded as planned.

We again thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We understand that the City has difficult spending decisions to make in this unprecedented time. However, we also know that young people experiencing homelessness in NYC were already marginalized and that the current economic realities will make it even harder for them to break free from poverty. Additionally, many of our frontline staff are barely



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making a living wage yet continue to heroically risk their health to care for our young people. We believe that the above recommendations, particularly the 3% COLA for five successive years and the 7% contract increase, are essential steps to ensuring that the people who serve homeless youth are compensated fairly and that young people experiencing homelessness in NYC have an opportunity to thrive instead of falling further behind.

Jayne Bigelsen
VP of Advocacy
Covenant House New York
(917)842-6911
jbigelsen@covenanthouse.org

**Testimony of Heather Lubov
Executive Director, City Parks Foundation
On behalf of the Parks and Open Space Partners NYC Coalition
FY21 Budget Hearing - Thursday, May 21, 2020**

I'm Heather Lubov, Executive Director of City Parks Foundation (CPF), a non-profit that leads free sports, arts, environmental education, and community building programs to encourage New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces.

COVID-19 has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities. When the crisis hit, we at CPF reached out to our colleagues, ultimately bringing together 20+ open space nonprofit groups to form the 'Parks and Open Space Partners- NYC' coalition. I'm here today to testify on their behalf.

Many members of this coalition operate, maintain, and program city-owned land to supplement public dollars. These organizations raise more than 85% of their budgets through private donations and earned revenue, yet now face up to 60% in revenue losses due to COVID-19 - totaling \$37 million fewer dollars for park care. A group of private foundations has launched the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund to help keep those parks open and safe, but this fund simply cannot replace public support for the parks system.

Parks will see an unprecedented number of visitors this summer, which, combined with reduced funding for maintenance, will put even more stress on already overwhelmed park workers. This is why we urge you not to cut the budget, but rather to support the Play Fair Coalition's request for an additional \$47 million for NYC Parks to protect jobs and ensure that our parks are green and clean. We also urge the Council to renew its own Parks Equity Initiative, which truly addresses fairness across the city by supporting public programs run by more than 80 parks nonprofits as well as training, resources, and intensive outreach for the Partnerships for Parks network of nearly 600 volunteer parks groups.

Without adequate support, the Parks Department and many nonprofits will be forced into widespread furloughs and maintenance and volunteer reductions at a time when New Yorkers need green space more than ever. We ask the city to recognize parks as the essential infrastructure they are - and provide funding to ensure that our parks are safe, well maintained, and can provide health and environmental benefits to communities across the City.

Parks and Open Space Partners - NYC includes but is not limited to:

Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Broadway Mall Association
Bronx River Alliance
City Parks Foundation
Fort Greene Park Conservancy
Freshkills Park Alliance
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Green Guerillas
Hudson River Park Friends
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
Madison Square Park Conservancy
Natural Areas Conservancy
New Yorkers for Parks
New York Restoration Project
North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
Prospect Park Alliance
Randall's Island Park Alliance
Riverside Park Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
Washington Square Park Conservancy
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PARTNERS – NYC | COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PARTNERS – NYC

REPORT ON COVID-19 IMPACTS ON PUBLIC SPACES

MAY 01, 2020

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities. In New York City, over 25 nonprofits have official agreements with the government to provide maintenance, operations, programs and community services for city-owned land. These organizations, which support 50% of public parks and open spaces in the city, rely primarily on private support.¹

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, these organizations – which raise more than 85 percent of their annual operating budgets through private donations and earned revenue – have reported an anticipated decrease in revenue of up to 60 percent for 2020, which will translate into at least **\$37 million fewer dollars invested** into New York City’s public spaces. This includes approximately **40,000 lost hours of maintenance** and **110,000 lost hours of horticultural care city wide**, threatening core program service delivery to parks and open spaces at a time when New Yorkers need green space more than ever before. Groups expect an unprecedented number of people spending time in parks in the summer of 2020 which – along with deferred seasonal maintenance as a result of this crisis – will put even more stress on the already overwhelmed park workers.

This perfect storm of decreased staff capacity and increased use of public space will ultimately harm the overall condition of parks. A coalition of parks advocacy groups came together in April 2020, referring to itself as “Parks and Open Space Partners - NYC,” to help address the impacts of this crisis. This report shares the results of a survey of 20 of those organizations to examine the loss of operating revenue on staff positions, maintenance, programming – and the overall condition and usability of New York City’s parks. It is clear that, while public funds are critical, support from private philanthropy to sustain core operations will also be essential.

¹ New Yorkers for Parks Analysis of New York City Parks Data, April 3, 2020.

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-park-funding-cuts-will-have-a-devastating-effect-11589292000>

METRO MONEY

New York City Park Funding Cuts Will Have a ‘Devastating Effect’

As finances take a hit, officials are looking to residents to help tend such urban oases as Prospect and Central parks



By [Anne Kadet](#) / Photographs by Anna Watts for *The Wall Street Journal*

May 12, 2020 10:00 am ET

Like many New Yorkers living in the coronavirus lockdown, I’ve spent a lot of time this spring wandering local parks, and it always produces a little lift. But last week’s visit to Brooklyn’s Prospect Park? Not so much.

I got a mini-tour with Sue Donoghue, president of the Prospect Park Alliance, one of 25 private nonprofits that officially partner with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to support city green spaces. The Alliance plays a big role in maintaining Prospect Park. It raises \$12 million a year—roughly two-thirds of the park’s total operating budget—and supports all 585 acres with its staff of 100-plus workers and 4,000 volunteers.

We started at the historic brick Picnic House, which is typically booked solid for weddings and parties this time of year—at rates topping \$5,000 a day. But this spring, it is closed. Due to the lockdown, the Alliance has so far lost out on more than \$3 million it would have earned from sources ranging from its memorial tree-planting program to its annual Party for the Park fundraiser.

And that means big service cuts, including spring planting. The Alliance typically plants thousands of trees, shrubs, and ground covers ranging from Red Maples to Blue-stem Goldenrod, said Ms. Donoghue, as we strolled through the central forest. This year, it hasn’t planted so much as a tulip.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

New York City Council Committee Public Testimony on the FY21 Budget

To: The Honorable City Council Member Daniel Dromm
From: Craig Goodwin-Ortiz de Leon, Board Treasurer & Grants Committee Chairperson,
Empire City Men's Chorus *cg*
Date: May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Dromm:

Thank you for your leadership to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in New York City. We defer to public health experts on the social determinants of health and environmental drivers contributing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. However, we join in our city's concern and call for resources and attention to the fact that Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID. Furthermore, fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second- highest in the city.

One issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council discretionary funding. We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However, **any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations serving communities of color.** Grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process.

Empire City Men's Chorus is a forward-thinking, urban men's concert chorus that works to refresh men's choral music and the people who experience us. A group of gay men formed what was then known as the Gay Gotham Chorus in 1993 to show strength, solidarity, and provide a safe space to meet at the height of the raging AIDS epidemic. As our organization grew, our membership became more diverse to include men of all sexual orientations, races, and gender identities, leading to our new name. We are proud to have a diverse audience base that comes from all five boroughs of our wonderful city.

This new pandemic is different from the AIDS pandemic in that we are unable to comfort each other with our physical presence. We have turned to technology to meet this need in the best way we can. Our members still meet weekly via Zoom to stay connected and look after each other. As a creative organization, we are thinking of new ways to bring music to our audience that will help them cope during this unprecedented crisis. There has never been a greater need for music in our world, so governments must include arts organizations in any discussion of essential funding.

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for **0.42%** of the city budget. **Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding.** Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies while maintaining a low-cost budget line with a significant impact on underserved communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community-based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

David R. Jones
President & Chief Executive Officer

Steven L. Krause
Executive Vice President &
Chief Operating Officer

Community Service Society of New York
Testimony before
New York City Council Committee on Finance
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing

May 21st, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Juan Pinzon, Director of Health Campaigns and Government Engagement at the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). CSS respectfully submits this testimony for the Executive Budget Hearing of the Finance Committee of the New York City Council.

CSS is a 175-year-old 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to fighting poverty and strengthening New York. It seeks to address economic disparity through research, advocacy, and innovative programs that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers. CSS recognizes that access to quality affordable healthcare is essential to building strong, equitable, and economically secure communities. Our health programs help New Yorkers enroll into health insurance coverage, find healthcare if they are ineligible or cannot afford coverage, and help them use their coverage or otherwise access the healthcare system. We do this through a live-answer helpline and through our partnerships with over 50 community-based organizations throughout New York State. Annually, CSS and its partners serve over 150,000 New Yorkers, saving them over \$10 million dollars in health care costs. In this testimony, CSS urges the City Council to increase funding for the NYC Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program from \$500,000 to \$700,000.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, we have seen hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers access healthcare coverage for the first time in their lives. But these gains in coverage are undercut by anti-immigrant coverage exclusions, rising healthcare prices, and a complex healthcare system, causing profound barriers to care. Many people, particularly low-income communities of color, struggle to access healthcare because of affordability barriers.¹ And now, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this healthcare affordability crisis: Over 1 million New Yorkers have lost job-based coverage, and many more cannot afford care.

¹ 2018-2019 Poll of New York Adults, Ages 18+, Altarum Healthcare Value Hub, Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey, https://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/files/9515/5182/7281/Hub-Altarum_Data_Brief_No._37_-_New_York_Healthcare_Affordability.pdf

New Yorkers need help understanding their insurance options and troubleshooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers. New York City's communities of color, immigrants, people who are LGBTQ, and people with disabilities and mental health or substance use disorders who have COVID-19 struggle to secure medically necessary care in a healthcare system that has inadequate cultural and linguistic competence and is under-resourced in low-income communities of color due to policies that are permeated with structural racism. It is these policies that have led to the extraordinary disparities in COVID-19 morbidity and mortality for New York City's communities of color.

During these dire times, MCCAP is an important community-driven tool that can help right the wrongs of the disparities in our health care system. MCCAP provides much-needed health advocacy assistance to clients whose medical needs have become increasingly unmet by an overwhelmed healthcare system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MCCAP helpline continues to answer calls from New York City residents with a 95 percent live-answer rate, and most of our 12 CBO partners have also transitioned successfully to providing services remotely.

Some examples of our health advocacy work include helping clients request prior authorization over the phone when their providers are unable to do so or getting them access to care if urgent or time-sensitive. For instance, one of our MCCAP CBOs recently assisted an undocumented client who was informed by his PCP that he urgently needed an endoscopy to confirm a cancer diagnosis. The client was unable to find any doctors or hospitals who could perform the test. But with the help from the MCCAP advocate, he finally found a hospital that would perform the endoscopy. The economic fallout of the pandemic has also generated an unprecedented need for health insurance navigation among people who have lost their job-based coverage, were previously uninsured, or cannot afford care. MCCAP is an invaluable resource for New Yorkers who need help understanding their insurance options and trouble-shooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers.

MCCAP uses a "hub-and-spokes" model to provide services. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline, while advocates at 12 CBOs serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in every borough. The program provides services to these clients in more than 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people understand their insurance, resolve health insurance problems, get medical services, and access affordable care for those who are uninsured. Launched in 1998 by the City Council, this model consumer assistance health program helped over 140,000 residents in all five boroughs through a network of 26 CBOs led by the Community Service Society (CSS). The program was dismantled in the Great Recession.

Thanks to the leadership and support from Speaker Johnson, Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, Health Committee Chair Mark Levine, and other members of New York City Council, the program was relaunched in 2019 with a generous grant of \$500,000. As soon as award letters were issued—in February 2020—MCCAP hit the ground running. In only three months, the MCCAP community-based agencies reached over 1,000 New Yorkers through direct

services, community outreach, and workshop events—overcoming logistical obstacles related to the pandemic. And we are serving the people most adversely effected by the COVID-19 pandemic: Over 80 percent of MCCAP clients are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home.

The current funding for MCCAP is insufficient to adequately serve the districts we currently cover through our network of CBOs. To ensure that New York City residents have a trusted and experienced CBO to help them understand and use their coverage and access healthcare during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, we respectfully ask for the New York City Council to enhance MCCAP funding from \$500,000 to \$700,000. A We respectfully request the City Council to fund MCCAP fully to ensure that all those who need healthcare can get it.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: 212.614.5353 or jpinzon@cssny.org.

NYC Budgeting: Arts are Essential

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Damon Owlia, and I am a on the board of the non-profit, Waterwell. Waterwell provides arts education and training at the Professional Performing Arts School (PPAS) in New York City. The mission of Waterwell is to allow entertainment and arts education to inspire students and audiences to change their lives and the world in which they live.

As a provider of arts education, Waterwell was able to quickly respond to the new reality of distance-learning and provide, uninterrupted, arts training to students at PPAS. Right now, arts education is more essential than ever as an outlet for students. It gives students the opportunity to understand and participate in their changing world as well as a meaningful tool that teaches and encourages collaboration with their peers and instructors.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. I plead that these budget cuts not fall on the young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Damon J. Owlia



Visiting Nurse Service of New York
220 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
www.vnsny.org

New York City Council Committee on Finance Public Budget Hearing
Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY)

Thursday, May 21, 2020

Good Morning Chair Dromm, Chair Chin and Members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Dan Lowenstein, Vice President of Government Affairs for VNSNY and I appreciate the opportunity to comment about the programs provided to Neighborhood/Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (N/NORCs). Thank you for your work on behalf of New York City's (NYC) elderly residents, and we must protect these vital services in the Fiscal Year 2021 City Budget – *like NORC nursing services (reallocate \$1.3 million) and NORC social service staff (new allocation of \$1.7 million).*

VNSNY is the second largest not-for-profit home and community-based health care organization in the United States, but we are rooted in our commitment to New Yorkers and those most vulnerable among us. We work to ensure these populations have access to cost-effective health care services in their communities and in the comfort of their own homes. Every day, our organization touches the lives of more than 40,000 people who are faced with a wide range of health care challenges that are managed either with short-term intervention, ongoing chronic care services or with end of life care support.

The NORC model focuses on both the health and social needs of senior residents in their housing community and is one of the most effective ways of providing support for a growing aging population. NORC programs develop “community” and promote the concept of neighbors helping neighbors to encourage healthy aging in their community.

The effects of COVID-19 will extend past June and potentially there will be a second wave in the fall, so it is important that healthcare services – especially those that protect vulnerable populations – be protected from budget cuts.

Nursing Services for NORC – Restoration of \$1.3 Million

NORC nursing focuses on client assessment, health education, health resources, health care advocacy and linkages to necessary health care services. The concept of a “team approach to care” is very significant in the NORC model. The nurse is a valued and important member of the interdisciplinary team, helping staff and clients alike better understand health-related issues and concerns and their impact on the client's ability to remain at home. NORC nurses develop important relationships with community residents and work to empower residents to manage their chronic health conditions. All these efforts are aimed at reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and avoidable hospitalizations, while increasing positive health outcomes and resident satisfaction. ***Without continued funding, these services will end - placing seniors at greater risk as we navigate through the ongoing COVID-19 health challenges.***

We urge the NYC Council to **protect the \$1.3 million in funding for NORC nursing services**. VNSNY provides nursing support to 27 NYC Department for the Aging-funded (DFTA) NORCs throughout the five boroughs and as of March 2020, our NORC nurses had already provided more than 12,600 hours of nursing services to seniors at these programs.

Making Sure Elderly Residents Stay Healthy During COVID-19 – a VNSNY NORC Nurse Perspective

NORC programs responded to the COVID-19 health emergency immediately by having nurses and social workers contact all of the community members they serve, and they have been able to continue engaging with members as the healthcare crisis has stretched on through regular telephone and video calls.

Like many of our nurses, NORC Nurse Dana Evan has been busier than ever since the pandemic started, with doctor's offices difficult to reach and clients having a lot of questions about the coronavirus and other conditions. Dana recently had a client who could not reach his doctor. Initially, he told Dana not to bother trying, but she convinced him to let her make the call. She reached the physician, and helped the client get his questions answered.

As Dana notes, the services provided by the NORC nursing program are very important during this uncertain time, as "this was someone who could have lost his connection to care, but I kept that connection by talking to him, by asking more questions. If we weren't there for them and these seniors have a health crisis, it's like going overboard with no lifeline. If no one answers the phone, that would ratchet up their anxiety a thousand-fold. We listen, engage with them, connect them to solutions that optimize their health. That's the value of what we do every single day."

NORC Social Service Staff – New Allocation of \$1.7 Million

NORC staff salaries are roughly \$15,000 lower than senior center salaries on average. NORC social workers provide critical case management and case assistance services that are a safety net for vulnerable seniors. The high-turnover and vacancies place further stress on the remaining staff, and leaves the residents without the concrete and emotional support services they need to stabilize or improve their lives. We join United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), UJA-Federation of NY and our other community partners in requesting **\$1.7 million in Council funding to address the NORC staff salary parity for DFTA-funded NORCs**.

Conclusion

In summary, we urge the City Council to protect the \$1.3 million in funding for the NORC nursing services so that elderly NYC residents don't lose a critical healthcare program during this healthcare crisis. In addition, we ask that the Council provide the necessary funding to allow salary parity for NORC workers.

Thank you for your continued investment in our City's aging population and VNSNY looks forward to working with the Council to ensure that our seniors have the appropriate nursing and social services they deserve. If you wish to learn more about the program please do not hesitate to contact me at Dan.Lowenstein@vnsny.org or (212) 609-1514.



Dance.Laugh.Learn.
PO Box 3205
Hoboken, NJ 07030
info@dancelaughlearn.org
917-727-6875
www.dancelaughlearn.org

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council May 23, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. Our names are Kerri Langan and Rylee Coppel. We are the co-creators of Dance.Laugh.Learn., a music, movement, and drama program that services New York City and the metro NY area.

Dance.Laugh.Learn. teaching artists go directly into daycares, preschools, after school programs, and summer camps to hold classes. We often see our students once a week, but that frequency depends on the facility. We are booked directly through schools and educational institutions. Our NYC clients include schools located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, and we work with many 3-K and UPK classes. In fact, we have students in both Coney Island and the South Bronx, two of the hardest hit areas in the COVID crisis.

We believe in the power of our program. Dance and movement help to develop fine and gross motor skills in young children. Connecting to imagination helps children build resilience and

creativity. Learning to sing literally helps children find their voice and grow in confidence. We believe that participating in the performing arts has an immense impact on the development of children, and the facilities that book us support this positive impact.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

We cannot wait for the day when it is safe to see our students again, when in-person schooling resumes. Yet, knowing that day could be in jeopardy due to budget cuts is devastating. Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York “where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs” a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Our youngest children need the support of the arts. Indeed, programs

that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Kerri Langan & Rylee Coppel
Owners, Dance.Laugh.Learn.LLC



Testimony to City Council Committee on Finance

Prepared by Dance/NYC

March 21, 2020

On behalf of Dance/NYC, a service organization which serves over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, and 500 nonprofit dance companies based in the New York City area, including dance workers of color, immigrants, and disabled dance workers, I join colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking the Council for your leadership during this time and in requesting:

- 1. The City include the Arts and Culture communities in their economic support and relief plans and pass legislation to protect our organizations and workers;**
- 2. The City reduces its proposed cuts to discretionary funding, which disproportionately impacts smaller organizations run by and serving communities of color, immigrant and disabled communities, among the hardest hit by COVID, most in need of the healing and community strengthening that culture provides; and**
- 3. The City reduces its proposed cuts to the Department of Education, particularly ensuring that arts workers, organizations, and services, continue to remain essential educational services provided to students and their communities.**

The need and opportunity for funding is urgent. Culture is what makes NYC the most important cultural capitals in the world, and a leading force that has led the City's economic recovery in past crises including 9/11. Dance workers and organizations are significant contributors to this cultural landscape contributing over \$300 million to the NYC economy. During this crisis, dance organizations, artists, and educators have remained active providing online dance classes; digital performances; conversations on recovery; and by developing and providing mental health support for members of and outside of the industry. Dance/NYC has undertaken comprehensive research on the impact this moment is having on the dance sector, particularly its impact on organizations and individual dance workers, all while providing nearly \$1 million in relief support to individual freelance dance workers and organizations, and providing digital content. Despite this, dance workers and organizations are facing the stark reality of possible closings due to insurmountable rent prices, inability to pay their workers, and inability to earn income from in-person gatherings or digital content. This is further exacerbated as City contracts remain unpaid at their full capacity, even for services already rendered, and with budget cuts to the DOE that represent a significant portion of organizational and individual revenue streams for the dance community.

While the needs of the dance community might be similar to other performing arts disciplines, dance is of these disciplines the least unionized and with the lowest degrees of wage standards and protections. While this has allowed us to remain adaptable to changing tides, this moment



has revealed a multi-system failure which our data shows may change the landscape of our City's cultural workforce for the long-haul. Dance/NYC's Coronavirus Impact Survey that we have been disseminating to the field since March 11, 2020, has revealed total revenue loss for dance organizations and groups exceeds \$22 M including \$16.5M in earned revenue and \$5.5M in contributed revenue. Smaller organizations, groups and projects are likely to sustain significant negative financial impact, projecting losses that amount to up to 82% of their operating budgets. Additionally, trends show that there is a flight of artists leaving the City because people don't have work and are experiencing overwhelming difficulties in accessing Unemployment benefits and aid, particularly our freelance dance workforce.

Further, with an average annual income of \$32,886, very near the poverty line, individual dance workers suggest they will lose at least 18% of their annual income due the crisis, though this figure is conservative given unknowns around the longevity of the impact, particularly on live performance. Individual dance workers report a cumulative loss of at least \$4.2M in income related to 28,705+ cancelled engagements. Moreover, survey responses reveal disproportionate needs and impacts for dance workers who identify as disabled, ALAANA, and genderqueer/nonbinary as well as older dance workers, and immigrant dance workers.

This poses a direct and pervasive threat to the survival of the Arts and Culture communities in the City. Locally, the increased funding is needed to ensure our City's arts and cultural institutions are positioned to survive and be a part of the building of the City during the aftermath of COVID-19. As the City continues to build out its recovery framework, Dance/NYC strongly advocates for a vision rooted in inclusivity, equity, and sustainability for the arts and culture industry. Culture is critical to the health and well being of NYC's neighborhoods during this crisis, and will be central to the city's recovery going forward. We are in crisis and need continued support now.

For Dance/NYC and its constituents, the most urgent three priorities are:

1. Increase funding levels, including funding for individual freelance dance workers, fiscally sponsored artists, and dance organizations who are most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recession. As underscored by Dance/NYC's Coronavirus research the public and the funding community often overvalue the individual artist's final works and prominence, leading to an inequitable funding landscape that has failed to consider the value of their process and personhood — access to healthcare, liveable wages, affordable housing, unemployment benefits, etc. Similarly, organizations are asking for the very same thing with nearly 64% of them experiencing cash flow issues and 94% of them reporting salaries and wages as the most critical need right now.
2. Include artists in your decision-making and cross-sector task forces. Survey respondents and Fund applicants are seeking platforms to share their stories and want to prevent being further anonymized. It is crucial for City officials and leaders to listen and respond more equitably to the needs of their constituent base. We need to create funding structures that value artists and art workers, too, as necessary members of our society and workforce and as key participants in the recovery of our City.



3. Ensure that legislation and structures tied to recovery and the safe opening of our City do not place overwhelming financial burden on individuals or organizations already strapped for financial support, without proper City support and guidance. It is our joint responsibility to ensure the survival of the cultural institutions that ensure NYC remains the cultural capital of the world.
4. Establish structures and best practices for funding artists and organizations rooted in equity, ensuring culturally specific groups, and smaller organizations are not left out of relief support.

Community and culture are inextricably linked. These principles are the driving force behind Dance/NYC's organizational priorities and the lens through which we view the New York City arts and culture ecosystem at large. It is in this vein that Dance/NYC advocates for the dance community, and stands in solidarity with our colleague advocates across disciplines in the City to request increased funding and integration of dance and arts workers into the decision-making that will envision our future post-pandemic.

Dance/NYC recognizes the Council is facing a crushing budget deficit, and that our entire city is facing enormous hardship. We believe that together, we can navigate this moment and ensure our united survival. We thank the City Council members and the City at large for its partnership, and for your labor of love in serving our city during these unprecedented times.



May 22, 2020

Dear Members of the City Council Subcommittee on Capital Budget and Finance:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of Lantern Organization in support of continued capital funding for the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other HPD Capital Budget Funding.

Lantern Organization is a not-for-profit developer and operator of permanent supportive housing and affordable housing in New York City. Lantern has developed over 1400 units of housing throughout Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan. Our buildings serve formerly homeless New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and youth aging out of foster care.

New York City faces a fiscal crisis and a moral crisis. City revenues are declining because of COVID-19. Homelessness continues to rise. Permanent Supportive Housing offers a unique solution addressing both of these pressing challenges. Every permanent supportive housing unit is estimated to annually save over \$16,000 by reducing the use of other services. It is cost effective and fiscally responsible.

Most importantly, permanent supportive housing supports the well-being and dignity of people facing homelessness. Lantern Organization's housing provides attractive and comfortable apartments and community spaces in every building. Tenants have their own private apartment and are not required to double up in cramped living quarters. Every tenant is supported by a team of service providers trained to deliver comprehensive, evidence-based programming to help every tenant meet their goals. As a result, our tenants achieve measurable improvements in their quality of life. Tenant hospital stays are reduced by 13%, tenant income is increased by 63%, and 96% of tenants maintain stable permanent housing.

Budget cuts threaten our ability to continue increasing permanent supportive housing opportunities for New Yorkers. We are partnering with Mega Contracting Group to develop a 135-unit project creating 81 permanent supportive housing units, 14 senior housing units, and 39 affordable housing units. This is a shovel-ready project, as a result of significant investment of time and resources. Capital budget cuts put this entire project in jeopardy.

Please preserve HPD Capital Budget Funding to ensure this project, and many others, are able to help resolve the City's challenges with budget deficits and homelessness.

Regards,

Daniel Kent, President
Lantern Organization
917-449-5912

As a parent and a NYC teacher, I do not support a budget that cuts hundreds of millions from classrooms and critical programs at a time when our young people need more help, not less.

Although the mayor has acknowledged that the next school year is going to present extraordinary challenges for teachers and students, he has still proposed budget cuts from the classroom estimated at over \$140 million. That would mean teachers, classroom aides, guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, principals, assistant principals, and others could be dismissed or displaced. At the same time, his proposed budget includes increases for School Safety Agents, who already outnumber the total number of counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.

There should be no spending cuts for the classroom and for those adults who provide direct instruction, support, and guidance to NYC public school children. In fact, the public schools and the children they serve will need an infusion of increased funding to make up for the disastrous effects of the pandemic on school communities.

In addition, This is not just a crisis response but comes against a backdrop of consistently increased spending on policing under de Blasio—from \$4.6 billion in 2014 to \$5.6 billion in 2019—even as crime has dropped to historic lows. The services the Mayor wants to cut now are services New Yorkers depend on to be healthy and safe, and are especially critical to Black, brown, and low-income New Yorkers —the very same communities the NYPD criminalizes, abuses, and locks in cages while leaving alone white and higher-income New Yorkers. There is also a real danger that the budget as currently proposed will result in the police being more integrated into social services—which we know is especially dangerous for communities of color.

Thank you

Danielle Bullock



**New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020 at 9:30 am**

Testimony of Danielle Marin-Moro
OBT Participant, Train and Earn Program

Good afternoon, City Council Members. My name is Danielle. I am 21 years old and am currently enrolled in Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's Train and Earn program to obtain my High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about why OBT's programs are so important.

Back in mid-January of 2020, I had dropped out of my transfer high school because I felt that I wasn't making much progress with both my credits and regents. Along with that, I was aging out, so I felt that I had lost the opportunity to obtain my high school diploma. But I have a friend who got his HSE from the Train and Earn program and he recommended that I try and go for it. Feeling like I had nothing else to lose, I decided to enroll.

I did have some doubts about the program, one being that I wouldn't benefit in any sort of way and that I would walk away from it empty handed. But in the short time since I've been enrolled, I've grown to look forward to completing the program with the help of the motivation that the staff and teachers constantly give us. The non-stop support that the program offers is more than any of us enrolled could ask for.

I feel that I can complete the program and actually do something with my life, a drastic difference from how I felt for the past couple of years at high school, not caring about what I did with myself anymore. With the internships and the training that OBT offers, I'm convinced that I am actually able and willing to make something of myself. After I earn my HSE, I plan on enrolling in college, and then going to the CUNY School of Law in order to start my journey into becoming a lawyer for at-risk children as I feel I can make a difference in their lives.

I truly feel that OBT is a pathway for success in life and that many can benefit from the variety of programs it offers, not to mention the skills one can obtain through these programs. The accomplished feeling we students get from knowing that we're making progress at OBT is a feeling we've greatly desired and it helps to know that the staff and teachers are also there to support us in achieving such a feeling.

With the Train and Earn program, I feel much more prepared to become self-sufficient. I'm able to work better with the communication and efficiency skills I've acquired during my short time in the program. I hope that OBT can continue to help many more students like myself well into the future with the funding it receives, so that they can receive the same amount of support, training, and opportunities that I and my fellow current classmates are receiving. Thank you for your time.

Implementation of Local Law 97

Danylo Lesko
Brooklyn Resident

I greatly value a future and economy that works for all people. The only way to plan for a future is by committing to projects that take climate justice and environmental concerns seriously. We are at a crucial junction in our history and have the opportunity to shape the landscape for years to come. I am often confronted by the difficult vision of what my future holds and what the future may hold for my family and children to come as the impacts and difficulties we face now will be exponentially compounded with each passing moment. If we fail to act now, the problems we face in the future will be even more difficult to face, will be costlier, and will be of greater urgency. As a volunteer with the Sierra Club I place these issues and matters at the forefront and look for representatives who care about the future of not only our city, but the people, country, and planet we inhabit. We all play an integral role and need to set the standard for the world we want to live in.

I am providing my testimony to urge the NYC council to prioritize the implementation of Local Law 97, continue solar installations, and continue the composting program in this year's budget in addition to stronger commitments around infrastructure projects from the NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform.

The current COVID-19 epidemic has heightened the economic inequalities within NYC and the struggles and problems that many New Yorkers face. We must invest in green infrastructure projects to our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our climate goals. We must highlight the current economic recession as well as the climate crisis. By adhering to the projects outlines by the NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform we can tackle many of the problems and look towards a sustainable future for the city.

The following short term asks include implementation of Local Law 97, creating 40K jobs by funding oversight positions, continue solar installation as well as composting program. In order to achieve these goals, we would need to increase state and federal revenue by taxing the millionaires and billionaires.

To: City Council

We are in the midst of a global health and economic crisis. The economy is collapsing, and we have already seen widespread job loss and trauma for many people that will continue to grow. We are now witnessing what our coalition has known all along, that the hardest-hit areas where most essential and low-wage workers reside are black and brown neighborhoods. Kinetic Communities Consulting is an NYCHA based Minority & Women Benefit Corporation located in District 34. We have supported over 7,000 affordable housing buildings to engage energy efficiency and renewable projects without sacrificing affordability.

Our organization stands with Climate Works for All and request city council to focus all recovery efforts in line with a just transition for communities impacted the hardest by COVID. We request each advisory committee to consider innovative climate solution inclusions to all aspects of reopening our city. Our firm stands along hundreds of others, asking for NYC to incorporate the Climate and Community Stimulus Platform visible [here](#). Our request are:

- Support businesses and cooperatives owned by women and people of the global majority
- Support the right to organize among non-organized workers in the climate economy
- Require all public infrastructure projects to be developed with Project Labor Agreements that mandate union jobs, prevailing wage, benefits, local hire mandates, and robust health and safety protections
- Restore funding for affordable housing through HPD capital budget program
- Restore funding opportunities for next-generation youth to receive job opportunities from the energy and renewable sector virtually
- Restore funding for basement pilot that will provide safe, affordable, efficient homes to struggling New Yorkers

Our organization is available to discuss in detail concrete methodologies NYC can enact to ensure a smooth and just recovery from COVID. Feel free to reach us at info@kc3.nyc with any additional questions you may have.

Regards,

Daphany Rose Sanchez

Executive Director, Kinetic Communities Consulting



My name is Darlene Jackson and I'm a member and supporter of the Close Rikers and Build Communities campaign.

As the city begins the closure of Rikers Island and shifting to safer, smaller, and humane borough based facilities to reach NYC's decarceration goals and a restorative approach.

The culture of systemic violence as of result of poverty in this city needs to begin to shift and be treated as a public health crisis and not continue as a punitive system.

We need our elected officials in city council to be bold and have the political courage to do the right thing and divest from the NYPD's 5 billion budget and invest in communities of color impacted by mass incarceration - and drastically eliminate the number of arrests through preventative services.

And we can do that by creating a just transition to union jobs that meets the needs of NYC.

Ending our city's culture of violence, begins with addressing the historic disinvestment of resources in our communities that fills our criminal justice system because of poverty, the worse form of violence.

The city for far too long has relied on our jails to warehouse people experiencing homelessness, mental illness and substance use, and untreated trauma. These issues are intensified by placing the responsibility on law enforcement, an agency that is not equipped to deal with our public health crisis and its root causes, and are simply trained to ensure safety and security. They are not properly trained in trauma informed care that can support their own wellbeing as well.

We have an opportunity now to reimagine what Public Safety means in New York City with a restorative justice lens that would allow everyone to live in dignity with their basic necessities met regardless of race, class and due process.

I urge the city council to invest in the community resources laid out by the Build Communities platform, divest in law enforcement and invest in resources that would better serve public safety and health such as in school counselors, crisis intervention teams, crisis respite centers, affordable housing and affordable healthcare.

It's time we move away from living in a punitive state and truly create a pathway for New Yorkers thrive.

Dear Committee on Finance

My name is Dave Sun and I'm here today to represent the high school student body of United Nations International School to speak about the proposed funding cut of the composting programs in New York City.

The Mayor presented the Executive Budget for Fiscal 2021 to the Council this past month. It includes \$2.6 billion in savings, including the temporary suspension of the City's organics recycling program.

Although this decision is made to tackle the impact which Coronavirus has brought to our city, it is still deeply concerning and shocking.

Composting creates a huge benefit to the environment we are living in. Many factors in New York City, including high-rise buildings in Manhattan and heavy traffic, contribute to a large amount of greenhouse gas emission, resulting in NYC to be one of the most polluted cities in the United States. Composting helps to reduce the release of methane and reduce stress on the city's environment by deducting the amount of waste going through landfills. A reduced amount of methane would potentially lead to a slow down of the global warming circumstance, which is not only beneficial to us New Yorkers but also other individuals who are sharing the planet with us.

The compost program currently generates a small amount of revenue, about \$50,000. However, if properly executed, the program could be utilized to generate millions of dollars of revenues to the city. The city's Independent Budget Office calculated that if all of the 1 million tons of organic waste generated by New Yorkers annually were to be recycled into compost, it could result in over \$12.5 million in revenue.

As our Mayor once claimed in August 2019 "Every day we wait is a day our planet gets closer to the point of no return. New York City's Green New Deal will ensure a 30% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in 2030. " The prominent Green New Deal is a bold plan to fiercely attack global warming, and the deal itself includes New York City-wide mandatory organics recycling programs. Giving up the programs now means breaking apart the Green New Deal and giving up the Mayor's promise of 30% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030!

The composting programs have been making enormous contributions to our environment the past few years while also creating major advances in our waste management and helping us to move beyond our toxic waste legacy. This is indeed a stressful time as we can all imagine. However, it is not a time where we should only fight

one front of the battle! As a representative of the United Nations International School high school student body, I believe that right now it is crucial for New York City to preserve the compost program!

Thank you!

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021
March 21, 2020
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance**

Chairman Dromm and Members of the Council Committee on Finance:

My name is David Freudenthal, and I am the Director of Government Relations at Carnegie Hall. Thanks for the opportunity to testify about our partnership with the Department of Probation through NeON Arts. I am glad to share that—in response to NYC restrictions on public assembly—NeON Arts has shifted to a fully digital programming model and continues its critical service in reaching young residents in the seven NeON neighborhoods, which are now disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

The Council's FY20 \$200,000 investment was vital for supporting these communities, and we urge continuation of the program. NeON Arts will be more essential than ever in the days ahead in serving residents who are most severely impacted by the crisis, especially given the challenges facing our city's young people this summer due to the Administration's proposed cuts to youth programs. NeON Arts supports their mental, physical, and emotional well-being by keeping youth healthy and safe indoors while creatively and constructively engaged online.

Participation numbers for the first digital spring round of NeON Arts are very high and growing weekly—a demonstration of both the need and interest of young New Yorkers across the city. This cycle, young people can elect to participate in online weekly workshops on literacy and creative writing, the culinary arts (in which participants get meal boxes shipped to their homes), industrial design, virtual reality, theatre, digital music production, and the visual arts, where participants will design virtual murals to be painted on neighborhood walls once safe to do so.

All New Yorkers have the right to high-quality artistic experiences, and NeON Arts is an expression of that vision. For Carnegie Hall, our belief is that all young people, regardless of their circumstances, should have opportunities to be creative, explore their talents, and develop skill sets that help them grow and overcome challenges. The issue of arts access is especially critical for system-involved young people, an area in which Carnegie Hall has invested deeply. Since 2013, the Hall has worked with Commissioner Bermúdez and her fantastic team at the Department of Probation to include NeON Arts within the agency's suite of solutions to forge pathways for clients and help them succeed. In our work together, we have shown the power of arts and culture to engage young people, strengthen our communities, and collaborate with community leaders and local artists and organizations to make our city a better place.

Speaker Johnson and Council Member Powers in his capacity as Chairman of the Criminal Justice Committee have recognized the value of the arts and creative experiences as key to the City's holistic efforts in the justice system, as have Council Members Gibson, Ampry-Samuel, Powers, Van Bramer, Cornegy, and Majority Leader Cumbo in supporting these efforts.



David Freudenthal

Director of Government Relations

Tel: 212-903-9660

881 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019

dfreudenthal@carnegiehall.org

NeON Arts is a prime example of a robust, public-private endeavor that is taking a new approach to addressing some of our city's most pressing issues. Based on the success we have seen in NYC it is our hope that NeON Arts can serve as a model for other agencies with justice-involved clients across the country. Young people participating in this program feel not only a great sense of pride in sharing their original work, but also a sense of responsibility to give back to their communities by sharing the opportunities and resources they have accessed through NeON Arts with their peers and neighbors.

In addition to NeON Arts, Carnegie Hall works with many city human service agencies to provide transformative musical experiences for some of our city's most vulnerable populations. These programming partnerships include the Department of Education's Living for the Young Family Through Education (LYFE) program and the Department of Homeless Services' Siena House, where new and expecting young mothers work with Carnegie Hall teaching artists to compose original lullabies, and the Administration for Children's Services, through which teaching artists guide young people in secure and non-secure detention and placement facilities through songwriting workshops and sharing their work with their peers and family members.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences like these will be the bridge to a resilient city. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Carnegie Hall endorses the Arts in Education Roundtable's request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on educational and cultural opportunities for our City's youth. The initial projections for the aforementioned agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city, and young New Yorkers will suffer the most. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Let us demonstrate that New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – is a place that values culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

We thank the Committee for their interest in these programs, and we encourage the Council to support NeON Arts and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city. To ensure that these essential services for our city's youth to continue, we respectfully request the expressed support of the Committee to the Speaker regarding Carnegie Hall's \$200,000 renewal request for NeON Arts in FY21.

Thank you for your support for and consideration of our requests, and thanks to DOP, artists and arts organizations, stakeholders, and the talented young people involved in these programs for being a part of truly transformational changes.



On behalf of Lantern Community Services, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

Lantern Community Services provides housing and social services to over 765 individuals and 155 families in 16 supportive housing sites across New York City. With financing from multiple city agencies including HPD, HDC, HRA, DOHMH, and DHS we serve the city's most vulnerable: youth who have aged out of foster care, formerly homeless individuals with mental health concerns, frail seniors, and individuals with physical disabilities or HIV.

We acknowledge that City is grappling with impending state budget cuts and uncertainty surrounding federal support. However, a 40% cut to the HPD capital budget in FY 20 back to back with a 38% cut in FY 21 will devastate affordable housing production for many years to come. **In particular, the proposed cuts put a 135-unit supportive housing site under development by Lantern and Mega Contracting in jeopardy. Eighty-one individuals with mental health concerns, 14 low-income seniors, and 39 low-income families will lose the opportunity for safe, decent, and affordable housing located in East New York- one of the communities most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.**

Pushing out closing dates for this project means more people will languish in shelters or on the streets, wasting time the city does not have in addressing the outsized demand for housing-based solutions to our city's homeless crisis. It's important to realize the cuts to HPD capital results are not a one-to-one loss to the affordable housing production. Instead every dollar the city invests in supportive housing production leverages \$3 to \$5 of federal, state, bank and tax credit equity financing that typically takes 2-3 years to assemble. Shovel ready projects such as ours at best case would be delayed several years, almost starting from scratch and at worst case could be derailed by private partnerships and the leveraged investment they bring to the table. For this reason, the City must make all effort and deploy every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for low-income and homeless New Yorkers.



The populations we serve at Lantern need safe, decent, supportive housing imminently. Our clientele overwhelming is people of color who have exited many years of life on the streets and in shelter. They are often victims of compounded trauma and are no stranger to poverty.

The vast preponderance suffers from underlying behavioral and medical and health conditions including HIV, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and other co-morbidities making them more vulnerable to poor health outcomes, even before the disparate impacts of COVID heightened their vulnerability to mortality. For Lantern--and the community of non-profits who share our mission and work--***Housing is Healthcare.***

What we provide at Lantern goes well beyond a house; we provide a platform upon which residents can rebuild their lives. Our evidence-driven programs connect residents to vital supportive services including healthcare, educational and employment assistance, fitness and wellness groups, arts & culture, and nutritious food resources. At the onset of the pandemic, our essential staff was rapidly mobilized to continue delivering services, albeit in new and creative ways. Since then, staff have undertaken innovative initiatives to introduce tele-counseling, new food security programs, and an online platform to continue providing case management, therapeutic services, and recreation. In this way, we continue to uphold our mission—even during a pandemic.

Now more than ever, our city needs continued, significant investment in the Supportive Housing Loan Program. Through its historic investments in delivering proven and successful housing-based solutions for homeless New Yorkers, the SHLP has led our city and influenced the national response to ending homelessness. Without continued commitment, the city will see its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes in COVID fatalities. With critical investments, Lantern and other supportive housing developers and services organizations, can address the growing needs of the city's most vulnerable and stand in partnership with the city in combating the most urgent housing, public health, and economic recovery crises of the century.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and am available for any questions you may have.

Diane Louard-Michel, Executive Director, Lantern Community Services, Inc.
dlouardm@lanterncommunity.org

In Support of the DCLA budget

Dear Honorable Committee members, staff, Council mebers and fellow New Yorkers,

I write in support of the City's continued funding of the Department of Cultural Affairs, without which, i most certainly would not be still working, from home as we all must during this health crisis, and perhaps not at all in my current position.

At present we work every day to find a way for the Battery Dance Festival to continue to bring some of the finest dance talent from across the globe into a forum free for New Yorkers from all walks of life. The survival of this forum owes much to the City Council's invaluable support which has been keeping at least a dozen of us off the unemployment roles as we strive to provide inspiration in August for our fellow citizens.

DJ McDonald

NYC Performances Manager

Battery Dance

Tel: +1 (212) 219-3910

+1-917-696-3889 Mobile/WhatsApp

BLOCKEDbatterydance[.]orgBLOCKED

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372, NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME

TO THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

MAY 21, 2020

Chairpersons Dromm and Gibson, and distinguished members of the City Council, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 - AFSCME. I am here today to provide testimony on the Mayor's proposed budget for education on behalf of the approximately 24,000 members we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I.

The thousands of workers Local 372 represents perform essential support services to help the 1.2 million public school children of New York City be learning-ready. Our School Crossing Guards, who remain essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure the children cross the streets safely in their morning and afternoon commutes. Our School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve food each day, including during the summer, and continue to feed both students and members of the community on an essential basis during this time of crisis. Our School Aids are with students all throughout the day: they greet the children in the morning, engaged in numerous activities to support their educational development, and help the children get to their busses at the end of the day. Our Community Titles, Parent Coordinators, School Neighborhood Workers, and Paraprofessionals work with parents to navigate the Department of Education, and work with the Department of Homeless Services to make sure the children get to school and have a place to sleep at night. Our Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists ("SAPIS") work with students in mental health, the prevention of substance abuse, gun violence, and bullying, as well as gang prevention and mediation.

Many members of Local 372 are also members of the communities in which they work; they are neighbors to students, their families, and some are parents to school children themselves. Our members understand and can relate first hand to the struggles students and families face at home that can impact relationship between students, teachers, principal, parents and others.

I first want to commend the Mayor, the Chair and members of the Education Committee, and the City Council for recognizing the importance of, and the importance of investing in, New York City's public schools and employees. The future that an education provides for a child is one of

the most important obligations we must fulfill. I also want to commend the City for its leadership in prioritizing the health and safety of the over one million students and tens of thousands of teachers and support staff throughout our 1,800 schools at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Essential Workers

It is important for all of us here today to applaud essential workers, including those represented by Local 372, who risk their own health and safety to perform vital services in these times of crisis. Though the school system is largely closed, many of the 9,000 School Lunch Workers and 2,600 School Crossing Guards remain on the job throughout the city. These workers are placed in harm's way – at risk of exposure to the ongoing pandemic – because their responsibilities play an essential role in keeping the wheels of society turning.

That is why these workers need more than just applause – these workers need access to assistance, benefits, and protections that help them continue safely working during this state of emergency. These workers need an adequate supply of personal protective equipment (“PPE”), including masks and gloves, to mitigate the risks of transmission. And the City should provide hazard pay (such as contemplated by Int. 1918) to appropriately compensate these essential workers for the sacrifices they must make.

School Crossing Guards

Local 372 represents approximately 2,600 Level-I School Crossing Guards (“SCGs”), 90% of which are women. SCGs often make the hourly minimum wage, earning approximately \$20,000 per year. These workers are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take transit to school, and have maintained this key safety role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, under current staffing levels, there still remains thousand of school children crossing main intersections without any supervision from NYPD school crossing guards, parental, or adult guidance. In order to place a SCG at every school post throughout the five boroughs, the City must hire an additional 100 full-time new crossing guard supervisors, 200 part-time crossing guards, and implement a mobile replacement squad.

Additionally, SCGs do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their pay checks dependent on the whims of the weather. On top of the immediate, tangible concern over lost wages, this also represents an issue of equity for our members as, despite working under the New York Police Department, SCGs are functionally analogous to the school support staff titles working under the Department of Education which are currently compensated for this lost time. Just as DOE school support staff

are, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. Local 372 respectfully requests that, in addition to aforementioned hazard pay during the ongoing state of emergency, pay practices be permanently reformed such that SCGs share the same privileges and pay rights as Department of Education support staff titles.

Finally, SCGs are inherently at risk, not only from cars veering too close or from risk of exposure to COVID-19, but from physical attacks from people on the street. A number of SCGs have been the victims of on-duty assaults, which is a violent felony under current law. Local 372 requests City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against SCGs.

School Lunch Employees

On a normal school day, children need food in order to concentrate and learn in the classroom. And during these times of pandemic, many schoolchildren and members of the community continue to rely on schools for access to meals. Local 372 School Lunch Employees work hard each day – both in good times and now as essential workers – to serve breakfasts and lunch, all which must fit into federal nutritional standards and guidelines. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these workers have served approximately 10 million meals to students, their families, and members of the community.

This is demanding work; while current practices meet the Department of Education’s Office of SchoolFood staffing standards, these current guidelines spread school lunch employees too thin between the “Breakfast in the Classroom” program and preparing for lunch. Local 372 is extremely supportive of the breakfast program, as well as universal lunch – every child deserves to come to class with a full stomach. However, inadequate staffing mandates by SchoolFood puts additional strain on workers, who are coming in earlier and staying later without extra compensation in order to simply make sure food is ready to feed all 1.2 million children when that bell rings. This strain could be alleviated by hiring more school lunch staff. Local 372 respectfully requests an additional 500 school lunch employees so we can reduce the strain on the current workforce while still continuing to fulfill the Mayor’s breakfast and lunch initiatives, including implementing more cooking from scratch, and continuing to fill our student’s stomachs.

Another struggle faced by our school lunch employees, which also has a direct impact on sanitation and hygiene in the school cafeterias and kitchens is inadequate air conditioning or ventilation. Council Member Brand S. Lander issued a report in March 2017, titled “Too Hot to Learn,” based on data produced by the Department of Education and the School Construction authority.

According to the data, there were 657 buildings without A/C, 1,178 schools without A/C, and 10,985 classrooms without A/C, with reports of classroom temperatures reaching over 100 degrees in some cases. This leads to discomfort, distraction, lower scores, a loss of instructional time, and increased absenteeism. According to the report, 95% of schools surveyed by the City Council also reported public areas without A/C, which includes cafeterias and kitchen. Many of these kitchens Local 372 workers are in every day have little to no cooling or ventilation and can reach over 150 degrees! Proper air conditioning would filter out heat, fumes, and airborne pestilence.

Mayor de Blasio subsequently announced a five-year plan to install A/C in over 2,000 classrooms a year until every classroom is equipped with A/C. The Mayor also suggested that the City would subsequently take further action on A/C in non-classroom spaces. While Local 372 is grateful for previous efforts to bring A/C to kitchens and cafeterias thus far, it is not enough. We thank Council Members Treyger, Kallos, and Yeger for recognizing this fact and introducing Resolution 1145-2019, calling on the Department to install air conditioning or cooling systems in kitchens in New York City public schools. Local 372 requests more funding be allocated towards installing and maintaining proper A/C and ventilation throughout our schools – both in classrooms and working areas such as kitchens – once and for all.

SAPIS

SAPIS provide essential prevention and intervention services for 1.2 million public school students. Their work is an essential, mandatory component in school programming, and provides many students as well as families a safety net of services which include: leadership classes, clubs dedicated to mental health awareness; peer mediation training; classroom presentations; counseling services (at-risk, crisis, individual, and group); drug, vaping, gambling, and gang intervention; and a host of additional mental health services for a variety of conditions. These counselors help children keep their focus on remaining learning-ready through the use of coordinated and collaborative proven methodologies to cope with the myriad of societal pressures that detract daily from healthy academic, social, and home environments. SAPIS counselors are responsible for monitoring behavior, as well as offering resources and services to support students when they find themselves struggling and/or struggling to improve.

The loss of more than 200 SAPIS counselors since 2006 in the wake of federal cuts has been devastating in this regard. The pivotal work that SAPIS perform is supported by data indicating a correlative link between these laying offs and a steep rise in drug use and violence occurring in schools. Today, there are less than 270 SAPIS spread across 1,800 schools – a distribution of more than 5,000 students per SAPIS counselor. There are simply not enough SAPIS to address the needs of all of these children and their families. In reality, each SAPIS provides direct classroom lessons

and counseling services to an average of 500 students each, with services available in only a fraction of the over 1,700 schools. However, we can do more.

Achieving a sufficient number of SAPIS counselors in the public schools system is necessary to decrease the negative health, social, and educational consequences that influence behavior in and outside the classroom. Local 372 believes the goal of one SAPIS in every school is imperative to prevent further lives from succumbing to these pressures, and we respectfully request you consider additional SAPIS funding, including maintaining the City's dollar-for-dollar funding match with the State. It is also vital to note that mental health monitoring extremely important in this once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. As families are forced to experience the burdens of life under COVID-19 (including families confined together at home, parents losing their livelihood, remote learning, and the ever-present spectre of death), children are facing a whole new host of pressures that may affect their mental health for years to come. When schools reopen, SAPIS will be needed now than ever before and it is imperative that there will be enough SAPIS to meet this demand.

Community Titles – Parent Coordinator Job Security

Local 372's 1,600 Community Titles play a key role in not only keeping parents informed, but serve as a liaison between school administration and parents. They ensure that parents know how to navigate the school system and help develop leadership and family engagement with schools. Parent Coordinators ("PCs") assist parents with language barriers, handle HRA paperwork, work with city agencies to identify and provide services directly to parents, and handle numerous ancillary duties.

In addition to requesting an increase in the number of PCs and community associates to allow us to serve more students and balance the ratio between our workers and the hundred of children they each currently serve, we also respectfully request that the Council provide and implement job security and protections for PCs. Since 2003, these titled workers have no job protection and seniority rights. They are subject to the practice of being fired at will. Some PCs are performing out-of-title work rather than risk the possibility of receiving a disciplinary write-up or termination notice for questioning the appropriateness of their assignments.

Local 372 asks that the City provides job securities to PCs, including seniority recall of a laid-off employee to an active status, identical to that of other Community Titles as well as School Business Managers that are non-instructional school-based positions. PCs take their numerous responsibilities seriously; it is only fair that, as a matter of principle, their employment is protected and that they are not treated as at-will employees by principals, supervisors, and management.

Public Employee Homeless Crisis

We all know that many of our city's communities are struggling. Just as many of our students' parents are struggling to pay for housing, food, and life's daily needs, so too are our members. As the cost of living continues to rapidly increase, wages are not rising at a comparable rate. And for many New Yorkers living paycheck to paycheck, including School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin. Homelessness and "working homelessness" (where a regular paycheck is not enough to cover the cost of living), both in the general population and of those on the city payroll, have been a citywide crisis, a crisis that affects many of our members who are forced to live day-to-day, bouncing from shelter to shelter or couch to couch; all while coming to work every morning to serve our 1.2 million school children. No one who is employed, or who serves the community as our members do, should have to sleep in a shelter because they cannot afford rent.

To address the homeless crisis amongst our working members, Local 372 respectfully requests the City Council and the Mayor raise our members' wages (in addition to hazard pay for essential workers), so they can afford to stay in their homes and put food on the table, ensure all our members have adequate job and income protections, and hasten to find a solution to the lack of affordable housing in the city. Anyone working to provide a service to the city should have the right to make a living wage and afford to live in those city communities which they serve.

Conclusion

School support staff are critical to a functioning school system. They create the space every day where teachers can teach and students can learn. Local 372 workers who provide these services are essential to the public school system (as well as to the City as a whole during this state of emergency) and, as I have testified, are in need. Our workers come in every day, many work extra hours without pay or outside of their title, all to ensure that New York City's students are given the opportunity to succeed that every child deserves.

In closing, Local 372 extends its gratitude to Speaker Corey Johnson and individual members of the City Council for your letters of support for our titles. We recognize that there are not enough resources to address every worthy issue and service throughout the city, and that tough decisions must be made over how to allocate limited funds. However, the City's children are our lives' work, and in order for this important work to succeed, we need a healthy working space and hazard pay for essential workers, more support to increase staffing, a living wage for our members, and to shelter those who provide critical services to the city yet cannot afford to shelter themselves.

On behalf of the 24,000 members of Local 372, NYC Board of Education, District Council 37 - AFSCME, I thank you for this opportunity to testify. We will answer any questions you may have.



**TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE SYSTEM
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON THE
EXECUTIVE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021
JASA/LEGAL SERVICES FOR ELDER JUSTICE
NEW YORK CITY**

May 21, 2020

My name is Donna Dougherty and I am the Senior Director for JASA/Legal Services for Elder Justice (JASA/LSEJ). I want to thank the City Council for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding our request for continuation of City funding that supports vital civil legal services for New York City's older adults. With so many seniors and their families affected by COVID-19 providing the legal help and assistance they need to maintain their housing, public benefits and health care is vital to their survival.

Since 1981, JASA's legal services program has provided free civil legal services to Queens County residents aged 60 and older who have the greatest social and economic need. We provide representation in such vital areas as preventing evictions, foreclosures, and homelessness, obtaining necessary health care through Medicaid and Medicare benefits, stopping elder abuse and predatory lending, and providing assistance with entitlements for SNAP and SSI. We are the only provider of legal services in Queens that focuses solely on the legal problems of older adults and we provide services throughout the entire borough. JASA/LSEJ represents clients in state and federal courts and at administrative hearings. JASA/LSEJ provides training and consultation to social service agencies, senior centers, and other community professionals regarding the legal rights of older adults.

JASA/LEJ is also a proud member of Leap, a coalition comprised of direct civil legal services providers across. We work collaboratively to increase the availability, breadth and depth of legal services for low-income persons in New York City. Leap's membership includes established community-based legal services providers and city-wide public interest advocacy groups that provide assistance in the areas including but

not limited to Housing Services, Consumer Rights, Workers Rights, Immigration, Health Care, Environment Justice, Social Services & Benefits Advocacy.

JASA/LSEJ provides high-quality client representation with the support of New York City Council through discretionary funding & initiatives as well as through City Administrative programs such as the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program (AHTP) and the Assigned Counsel Project (ACP). These programs, along with Universal Access, allow JASA/LSEJ and our LEAP partners to do our work; this is especially important as we face the needs of our clients and communities impacted by Covid-19.

For example, for over a decade through the Assigned Counsel Project, JASA/LSEJ has provided comprehensive legal and social services to at risk seniors through a multidisciplinary legal/social work team. Housing Court judges and their court attorneys refer clients directly to JASA/LSEJ who is available in the courthouse five days a week. This program costs only \$1700 per client and prevents defaults, stops unlawful evictions and harassment. Further, this program connects often isolated individuals with needed legal and social services. It is a safety net.

As statistics reveal, programs like ACP that target the specific needs of older adults is not only cost-effective, but needed more than ever as seniors are at high risk due to Covid-19. According to New York City's Department for the Aging September 2019 Annual Plan Summary, in 2017, 20% of the City's population was aged 60 and above, however by 2040 New York's 60 and above population will increase to a projected 1.86 million, representing 20.6% of the total population. To give that number some context, it reflects a 48.5% increase in older adults since 2000. As reported in DFTA's 2019 Profile of Older New Yorkers `over 31% of the Queens population 65 and older is living at or below 125% of the poverty line; 21.8% of the population lives alone and almost 22.6% have self-care or mobility difficulties. Further, nearly 50% of older New Yorkers speak languages other than English at home. Coordinated social and legal assistance to these older Queens residents at risk of loss of their homes is needed to ensure that this population's rights are protected.

We ask for your ongoing commitment to serving our New York City seniors by funding JASA/LSEJ's ACP and AHTP work. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to continuing to be a resource to your offices and older adults throughout New York City.

Donna Dougherty, Esq.
Senior Director
JASA/Legal Services for Elder Justice
718-286-1515
ddougherty@jasa.org

Honorable members,

I am Dorothy Woo, a member of Kissena Corridor Park Conservancy.

Kissena Corridor Park is a 1.74 square mile strip of parkland. It is located between the Queens Botanical Garden and Kissena Park. The park serves an extremely large population per square mile according to the latest data.

On a normal day, the Park is filled with people from dawn to sunset. Local residents use pathways to reach schools, hospitals and work, not to mention, it houses a large community garden with three hundred members who come to garden from March to November each year. Kissena Corridor Park has been an essential place for Queens residents, where their life, activities, and community happens.

Our park has been operated on a shoestring budget for years. The very much-needed trees we planted during the Million Trees initiative are now 8 feet tall, but they are crowded and clustered among invasive plants. At Kissena Corridor Park, we know that critical maintenance services only come if resources are available.

Based on my knowledge, maintenance expenses is included in each plan before facility is built. It should not be a subject for bargaining year after year. I wonder, how the park budget is formulated, if it is based on the population it serves and/or the size of land it uses. A subject that is worthy for study.

It is indisputable, a sufficient amount of resources for maintenance is not only essential for parks, it helps security as well. I respectfully request that you reconsider restoring the NYC Parks maintenance budget for Fiscal Year 2021, as the Play Fair Campaign has called for.

Thank you.

Dorothy Woo, Kissena Corridor Park Conservancy

140-28 Holly Avenue

Flushing, NY 11355

KCPconservancy@yahoo.com

Visiting Neighbors' TESTIMONY
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2021
Executive Budget Hearing May 21, 2020

My name is Dr. Cynthia Maurer and I am the Executive Director of **Visiting Neighbors**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit Testimony. We are grateful to the NYC Council for your support in our current fiscal year of our vital programs and we need you to continue that support in 2021 as we have not stopped working and have continued to support our seniors. **We provide life enhancing and essential services to hundreds of seniors and are on the front-lines.**

It's hard to imagine our lives before COVID-19, but there was, and for Visiting Neighbors it was robust with all of our activities and will be again once the pandemic subsides. In fact, we expect an increase in demand for our regular services once life gets back to a relatively normal state (whatever that may look like). What remains constant through it all is our mission, the population we serve and our great appreciation of all of your support along the way, enabling us to keep going to keep seniors safe, informed, connected, healthy, less lonely and fearful and in their own cherished homes to the best of our ability.

Our mission:

Visiting Neighbors, enables individuals age 60+ to remain independent and safe in their own homes and a vital part of the New York Community. Through programs of "neighbors helping neighbors," volunteers, supported by Visiting Neighbors' professional staff, help older adults alleviate loneliness and isolation, provide mental stimulation and emotional security, share information about wellness and health related concerns and encourage physical independence and quality of life at home. Visiting Neighbors champions the power of the volunteer and encourages interdependence so that mutual learning and understanding bring generations together to share life experiences and gain respect for each individual's uniqueness. The organization promotes a positive acceptance of life after sixty and the value of the elderly in society. Visiting Neighbors' main programs are Friendly Visiting, Shop & Escort, Health Advocacy, Student Nursing & Wellness Programs, Remembering Special Occasions and Information & Referral.

Description of the population we serve:

Visiting Neighbors' clients are age 60 and over. Currently our eldest client is 105 years of age. The average age is 89. Our clients tend to be frail, with one or more ailments. We serve a diverse group of individuals, most of whom live on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay for help. There are no income eligibility requirements, nor a fee for services.

Our population is among the most vulnerable in the city. The senior who comes to us usually lives alone and has little or no family nearby that they can turn to for support. Some have family that do not care. Some do have family that care, but are not in a position to help. Some have friends who are elderly themselves and not able to help. The seniors are often isolated, nervous about crossing streets and getting to and from their appointments safely. The majority of our clients have at least one significant health concern such as mobility issues, diabetes, macular degeneration, osteoporosis, COPD, CAD or peripheral neuropathy, etc. Our 650+ seniors who are receiving services regularly are proud and determined to remain independent and in their own homes.

All of our clients are able to self-direct. However, individual personalities vary, with a few who are a bit offbeat or eccentric. Our volunteers escort clients to and from medical appointments and other vital errands, accompany them outside for fresh air, provide socialization or take a walk. Like many of us, they all want to be valued, understood and respected. We let them know they matter.

Visiting Neighbors' seniors feel more confident knowing we are here to listen, offer support and guidance. We earn their trust. They understand that we do not judge them and know they will be treated with respect, empathy and kindness.

We serve seniors who reside in Manhattan, from South Ferry to 30th Street, river to river, but receive calls from all over NYC and its surrounding vicinity.

Some additional current demographics:

*75% are female and 24% are male and 1% define themselves as non-binary.

*90% live alone

*75% of our clients are over 80 and 33% are over 90

*70% are homebound but can get outside with assistance and 7% are bedbound

*99 % want to continue living in their own cherished homes and 1% seek support to transition into assisted living, nursing homes or their family's residence.

*95% of our clients can neither pay for private services, nor eligible for Medicaid. We do not collect further socio-economic data, but collect info that seniors choose to share and we help individuals regardless of their finances or their ability to contribute.

Our Core Programs:

Friendly Visiting Program

Friendly Visitor Volunteers are matched with seniors based on mutual interests, hobbies, needs, etc. to spend a couple of hours a week providing companionship. Our 346 volunteers who provided Friendly Visiting range in age from a responsible, mature and bright 15-year-old to a healthy, compassionate and attentive 90-year-old Marie. M. The 90-year-old volunteer visits a 100-year old woman each week. After March 2020, two thirds of our volunteers called their seniors regularly, as opposed to

visiting them to keep everyone safe. The remaining third continued to visit, some by bringing folding chairs and sitting outside in the hallway while keeping a safe distance of 6 feet apart. One of our younger volunteers, Esteban, now 19 years old, a brilliant Johns Hopkins College student, formerly of Xavier High School, made protective plastic face shields by hand for our volunteers who continue to visit and/or shop. Each mask took him 45 minutes to make and he has been shopping for food for seniors as well.

Shop and Escort Programs

Shop and Escort Volunteers take seniors to and from important medical appointments. Volunteers also pick up seniors after medical procedures, take them to and from physical therapy, accompany them on walks, help with errands (such as escorts to/from banks, helping read mail, shopping, hair salons, social programs, rehabs, cemetery visits and escorting to/from Access-A-Ride renewal application centers). Volunteers have also helped seniors get their pets to vets. Our staff also encourages seniors to vote, including helping seniors mail absentee ballots when they can't get to the polls. Volunteers escorted seniors who wanted to vote in person, but come this June we will be promoting seniors using absentee ballots. Seniors are requesting escorts to and from their doctors for June 2020 and we will help them as best we can.

Health Advocacy

From July 1st to March 30th 2020, our staff provided Information and Referrals to over 400 seniors and 80 caregivers. Our Health Advocate helps our existing clients better communicate with their doctors, as well as formulate key questions to ask medical professionals to ensure they understand instructions before leaving their offices. Our Health Advocate and trained cadre of volunteers also encourage seniors to visit their doctors in the first place, as well as advocate for them when they are going into the hospital. It always helps a patient to let medical personnel know someone is watching. When a senior comes home from a hospital, we are there to make sure they have what they need. We will pick up medications and go shopping, as well as provide emotional reassurance and a chance to vent about their experience.

Student Nursing and Wellness Program

Student nurses from the NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, under the guidance of their professor and Visiting Neighbors' staff, serve as additional eyes and ears for staff and offer increased support to our clients. They discuss heart health, fall prevention, nutrition, staying flexible, advanced directives and many other wellness topics, as well as do medication reconciliation, check for possible safety hazards in home assessments and blood pressure screenings. Students also go on therapeutic walks indoors and outside with our clients. The students work in conjunction with the staff to do group presentations and workshops on a variety of issues. Four full-time summer nursing students helped plan an additional event called "*Working Out My Brain*". Twenty-seven seniors and seven

volunteer escorts participated in the event, which featured lively discussions on healthy foods, common myths associated with memory and stress management, played some brainteaser games and did some chair exercises together. The last time our student nurses were with us this year was last week of Feb 2020. New York University, in an abundance of caution, had suspended all of their programs and closed their schools including The *NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing*. The last group presentation held on February 27th, was about maintaining heart health. Seniors were engaged in heart healthy exercises. Several of our former students contacted us recently, offering to help with phone assessments and emotional support calls to the seniors. The nursing students will be returning in the Fall. We recently heard from *NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing* that we will be getting nursing students for the summer.

Additional Activities – Remembering Special Occasions

We continue to remember and celebrate special occasions. No pandemic will stop us from reaching out to a senior who is having a birthday or an anniversary of a significant event. Local school children made handmade birthday, Valentines, Mother's, and Father's Day cards. A few seniors became pen pals with some of the students. We work with another organization, which prepared meals for the Thanksgiving holiday that our volunteers delivered to seniors that have no family. A few of our seniors who need extra food receive a home cooked meal on Saturdays from local charity we collaborate with. In the month of December, we had volunteers put together care packages of donated items such as stationery, magnifiers, toothbrushes with toothpaste, moisturizer, hand sanitizer, lip balm, packet tissues, pens, socks and tote bags. Volunteers later delivered these packages to clients during the holiday season which can often be a time that is especially lonely for seniors who otherwise have no one to share in the joys of the season. Our volunteer "elves" remind them that they are not alone and share holiday cheer.

Activities after MARCH 2020

Since before the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Visiting Neighbors has remained open & active full-time, continuing to provide services to our city's most vulnerable population – frail, isolated home-bound seniors age 60-105.** Staff and volunteers also have been working weekends. We have focused on doing shopping and vital errands for seniors, though we are now doing it in different ways, rather than our usual going with seniors to encourage taking a walk, getting fresh air and having companionship, we go for our clients and have been constantly updating volunteer protocols to keep everyone as safe as possible. We have also been picking up and delivering medications, going to the post office and picking up important documents and bringing pets (in carriers) to vets. We also offer emotional support and guidance to Caregivers.

We have been sending out a lot of mailings; birthday cards, cheer up and “hang in there” notes, sympathy cards, get well greetings, humorous stories and jokes and sharing information. We have been creative in our efforts including sending uplifting poems, word games & puzzles, stress relieving tips, easy recipes with limited number of ingredients that are also easy to get right now and messages of hope.

Since March we have also had a huge surge in requests for telephone reassurance. We are providing much needed accurate information to seniors, correcting false information, sharing positive messages of hope and providing emotional support. Seniors have expressed feeling very lonely and scared. We let them know they are not alone.

As the weeks pass by, the seniors are starting to cry of extreme loneliness and fear. The calls to and from seniors are lasting longer – a lot longer. We have Board Members who are well experienced and licensed social workers who have been talking with some of the seniors experiencing more difficulties now.

We have been making four types of calls to seniors by trained volunteers, staff and board members, depending on their level of experience with us and what the seniors’ needs are:

1. Check- in calls (seniors just want to receive a call to say that they are alright)
2. Friendly Visiting Calls (ranging from chatting to lengthy conversations)
3. Emotional Support Calls (reassurance calls that take that are lengthy & information sharing)
4. Calls to new seniors who are/were sick and engaging in dangerous behaviors, including not following health guidelines or proper protocols, and are seeking caring, “tough love” responses and parameters from us to know they matter and make safer choices.

We have also been working with our volunteers & neighbors to go door to door to buildings in our surrounding neighborhood to do "check-ins" to make sure as many seniors as possible have the information they need to stay safe and are ok. We are on the front lines doing what we can to keep seniors safe, informed, healthy, calm and reassured. We have also taken on new clients (assessments are done via phone and/or virtually).

From the early onset of this crisis we have been determined to do our best to keep our seniors as safe as possible, so even though we had to have cancellations of our Spring fundraising activities, we did not have a disruption in services and are continuing our vital work. We are providing essential and life-enriching services and will continue to be on the front-lines. We still need to know who new seniors and volunteers are, so we do assessments via phone and after lengthy discussions via phone, Zoom and/or FaceTime we must meet with new volunteers to make sure their ID's match who they say they are.

This pandemic has caused a lot of fear, but help people cope with their fear – both the healthy kind of fear where there is awareness of a potential threat and precautions are needed vs. an unhealthy kind of fear – where someone obsesses to the point of being so emotionally and mentally drained they become emotionally paralyzed that even doing the common tasks of daily living become difficult. We have had volunteers who became very frightened and reached out to us for support and hope. One volunteer came by our office, Nicki, age 72, and opened our door, poked her head in and let out a loud scream/cry, closed the door and walked away. Of course, we ran after her. She said she just needed “a safe space to let out her pain and frustration.” We replied, “no judgement – just warn us next time”. “We need to keep our sense of humor because if you don’t laugh you cry.” We expressed to her that we are all in this together and after sharing a couple of jokes in the hallway, having a good laugh together we tossed her chocolate bar. She called the next day to thank us for caring. This is a trying time for all of us! Never have the need for compassion, kindness, understanding, tenderness, empathy, friendship and love been more greatly highlighted than now.

We guesstimate, based on the number of calls we are receiving each day that we will be helping 100 additional people within the next 3 - 4 months.

A few stories:

1. **Russel B.** 76 years old, came home after 2 weeks of hospitalization since testing positive for the coronavirus. When he returned home, he self-quarantined for another two weeks. After that, he desperately wanted to go outside for some fresh air. The problem was the day he chose, it was raining heavily with strong winds - no umbrella. We gave him a "what for". He agreed that the tough love in the form of a gentle-but firm lecture was appropriate, and appreciated that someone expressed concern. He also came by our office to get some additional PPE supplies.
2. Providing support for the visually impaired presents additional challenges. Example: **David D.**, age 74, who is completely blind, his guide dog Ven died 2 months ago, had grocery/food delivered, but needed the items creatively marked by our volunteer in such a way as to know what each item was.
3. **Hilda A.**, age 80, was having a hard time breathing, had a fever and wouldn't go to a doctor. We encouraged her to go. It was not COVID19. but it was pneumonia which is now being treated and she is now home. She stopped by our offices first to thank us and collected some additional PPE supplies.
4. **Beatrice W.**, age 80 found love later in life. Her beloved husband recently died 3 days short of their 25th anniversary. He had fallen at home. was hospitalized. then moved to rehab where he contracted COVID-19. Staff is calling her regularly to talk and help support her through her grief and all the emotions that go with it.
5. One of our clients, age 97, **Helen M.**, suffered with COMD19 for 6 weeks. She has returned home from the hospital virus free and is thrilled to have calls from our staff and volunteers. One of her volunteer callers, Karl refers to her as a “poster child for life”.

6. **Margaret B.**, age 101, soon to be 102 this July, returned home from a care facility in Staten Island after months of rehab following 3 weeks of hospitalization for a broken leg she suffered after a fall. She called us, excited and happy to be home and made it quite clear that she will be calling upon us often. We let her know we are here for her and will be checking in on her periodically as well. We celebrated her 100th birthday at our last gala held two years ago, which she remembers very well", after all we had her wear a crown and fussed over her and 2 other centenarian birthday girls, as well as three veterans who were all in their 90s. We had to cancel the gala that would have taken place this Spring. We still will find ways to celebrate our seniors' birthdays.

After the pandemic subsides: We anticipate continuing our current programs. In fact, we expect a marked increase in interest for services. We hope to be able to increase our outreach efforts, both to reach seniors who may not have heard about, our services and to those who have been in denial about their needs. In the last 3 months we have reached out to 1400 seniors.

7. **Beth S. & Ruth K.**, VN received a call from one of our vibrant nonagenarians (age 97) Beth S., a longtime West Village resident saying she is "bored" and would like to do something. She expressed that she would prefer to chat with someone closer to her own age. It was agreed that we would find a senior who wished to have some phone reassurance. A day later another longtime West Villager, age 99, Ruth K. asked for someone to talk to occasionally. VN introduced them to each other (by phone) and it's going wonderfully!
8. **Barbara B.**, age 78, villager is very independent, a retired health care professional/educator who has some severe health conditions. With the pandemic, she has been hesitant with leaving her apt. She called VN and asked about masks. We said we were provided with some and would bring some to her. Now she can at least get out for her therapeutic walks.
9. Longtime Chelsea resident, **Sally M.**, is a very robust & independent 94 year old. While she only occasionally asks VN for assistance, she really likes to let us know, that she is "A-OK". So, each day she calls in to let us know. On weekends she daily calls and leaves that message. If in fact, we do NOT get that message we call Sally to check on her.
10. A lifelong East Villager, **Suzanne L.**, this youngish senior 75, is now wheelchair bound but still quite independent. VN regularly mails out to our seniors information for them regarding e.g. new opportunities w. various agencies, health updates, and some humor thrown in sometimes. Suzanne received the mailing, this one covering the pandemic. We got a heartwarming call from her thanking us to keep in touch and giving her detailed written info about Covid-19 which she was looking for. We now communicate regularly.

11. We have a program with a local primary school whereby each month the students create handmade personalized birthday cards for VN's seniors born in that month. The students love having something meaningful to do. A new client, **Alice M.**, age 91 was totally flabbergasted when she received a birthday card with her name, which was created by the youngsters. She was so touched she called almost in tears saying it was the first birthday card she had received in years. She also was kind enough to send, care of VN, a lovely note for the students which was passed onto the school and thrilled the class.
12. Today a senior, **Helen H**, age 82, called us asking for her help metastatic lung Cancer (Stage 4) and interested in our services. We will do an in-person visits/at - home assessments to all seniors we have been assessing via phone during these last several months, once it is deemed safe. She was thrilled to learn she would receive calls from empathetic staff and volunteers and be able to get shopping and errands done now. The challenges and needs that life presents us each with doesn't stop because of COVID-19 – nor will we.

Just as our seniors need us more than ever, we need your support more than ever! We would not be able to do what we do, nor at the level and pace we have been working without the support of our City Council, The Speaker and Chair of the Aging Committee!! We need you to be our champions so we can continue to succeed as we have for the past 48 years. The seniors need our help more than ever. As our seniors are living longer, their needs intensify and require more time and attention. And, when we can be physically social again many seniors and volunteers have been requesting long awaited get-togethers, group activities and hugs. Yes, we actually have a list of seniors (and volunteers) who have requested to be put on a “hug” waiting list.

I hope we can count on your support once again this year, as we face what may lay ahead with strength and resolve. We focus on what matters most - good health, inner-strength, peace-of-mind, finding joy and friendship! Please continue to advocate for programs like Visiting Neighbors who are determined to help our seniors survive and thrive at home and stay safe through this pandemic and always.

Sincerely,

Cynthia

Cynthia Maurer
Executive Director
Visiting Neighbors, Inc.
3 Washington Square Village, Suite 1F
New York, NY 10012
cmaurervn@aol.com
info@visitingneighbors.org
212-260-6200

**TESTIMONY OF
DR. PAMELA KOCH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LAURIE M. TISCH CENTER FOR FOOD, EDUCATION & POLICY**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

MAY 21, 2020

Re: Executive Budget Hearing

The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy conducts research on food and nutrition education practice and policy. We translate our research into resources for educators, policy makers, and advocates to give people power to demand healthy, just, sustainable food. With City Council funds, the Tisch Food Center serves as the home to the New York City Food Ed Hub and convenes the Food Ed Coalition. The Food Ed Hub fosters collaboration among New York City school-based food and nutrition education organizations to align resources, increase efficiency, avoid duplication of effort, and identify best practices. The Coalition works to ensure that all New York City students have quality food and nutrition education and sustainably-produced, culturally-responsive, healthy school food. We thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Food Ed Hub on the FY 2021 executive budget.

I. Cutting Funding for Food Education Will Exacerbate Disparities in Diet-Related Disease

Disparities in health typically map on to gaps in educational achievement, with students of color and students from economically disadvantaged homes more likely to have lower health and academic outcomes. Children learn best when they are healthy and safe, so it is critical that schools have resources to address student health and well-being. Even before COVID-19, many

schools did not have the capacity to provide health education. During the 2017-18 school year, more than two-thirds of NYC middle school students did not receive the full state-mandated Health Education course; and 44% of New York City public schools lack external food and nutrition education. With significant cuts to the Department of Education's budget proposed, we expect that even fewer schools will be able to provide food and nutrition education next year. External food and nutrition education programs are critical to ensuring students develop skills and maintain healthy relationships with food; the Food Ed Hub acts as a backbone for these organizations.

Cutting funding for public health education during a public health emergency does not make sense. The current public health crisis has highlighted the important role that schools play in students' diets and made increasingly clear how dangerous diet-related diseases can be. New Yorkers with obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are more vulnerable to coronavirus, meaning that healthy eating should be a top priority.

For the millions of low-income students no longer able to easily access school meals, healthy eating just got a lot harder. Over 90% of Coalition members who responded to our COVID-19 survey reported that their communities face losses in income, increased food insecurity, and increased anxiety and stress. Disparities in health and wealth mean that communities of color have been hit the hardest. And experts predict that school closures "may exacerbate the epidemic of childhood obesity and increase disparities in obesity risk."

II. The Food Ed Hub Is Coordinating Food and Nutrition Education Organizations' Responses During COVID-19

Food Ed Coalition members continue to support the most vulnerable communities in New York City, providing meals, delivering groceries, communicating about available food

assistance, and offering virtual education sessions. Organizations are using their limited dollars to cover the costs of additional food, pay overtime for frontline workers, purchase personal protective equipment, and invest in digital learning.

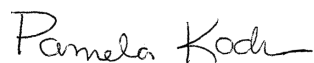
The Food Ed Hub has been a key convener during the COVID-19 crisis, hosting virtual meetings to coordinate COVID-19 responses with its 80 plus Coalition members; sharing food assistance and funding opportunities; conducting research to inform school food policies; and providing tools to support digital food education. Specifically, the Food Ed Hub is:

- **Identifying Areas of Need** — The Food Ed Hub is collecting data from Coalition members to help them overcome the challenges COVID-19 has created. Based on survey results, the Food Ed Hub will continue to prioritize timely policy updates related to school meals, Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), SNAP, CACFP, and WIC; fundraising support; and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
- **Coordinating Frontline Organizations' Responses** — The Food Ed Hub hosts recurring virtual meetings for members, has formed an ad-hoc working group focused on digital learning, and shares food assistance and funding opportunities through the weekly Food Ed Hub newsletter.
- **Using Real-Time Research to Inform Policy** — The Food Ed Hub is collecting data on how school districts across the country are providing meals during school closures; translating those data into recommendations; and advocating with national, state, and local groups for greater food assistance for New York City students and families. With partners, the Hub is promoting P-EBT to ensure students do not go hungry.
- **Supporting Digital Learning** — Coalition members need help developing and disseminating digital content, as well as effectively communicating with families. The Hub launched a digital platform to feature members' COVID-19 digital content, developed a toolkit to share virtual best practices, and continues to work with the Department of Education to ensure teachers and parents can access quality food education resources.

III. Food and Nutrition Are Key Elements of Resiliency that We Cannot Afford to Neglect

We support the New York City Council's call to prioritize prevention services, address health disparities in New York City's communities of color, and provide much needed food assistance. And, we see the current crisis as an opportunity to reject the status quo and ramp up resiliency efforts.

In FY 2020, the New York City Council invested \$250,000 to create a Food Ed Hub. In just one year, the Food Ed Hub has worked with food ed programs, schools, students, families, advocates, city agencies, and policy makers to advance students' health and academic achievement (see sign-on letter below). With an investment of \$300,000 in FY 2021, we plan to build on the Food Ed Hub's FY 2020 momentum, providing critical support to organizations that need it now more than ever. Continued funding for the Food Ed Coalition is one way the Council can ensure our communities are stronger, safer, and healthier moving forward.



Pamela Koch, EdD, RD
Executive Director, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy
Research Association Professor, Program in Nutrition
Department of Health & Behavior Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University
pak14@tc.columbia.edu
212-678-3001

May 6, 2020

Dear Speaker Johnson, and Councilmembers Dromm, Treyger, and Levine,

We, the undersigned organizations, support the New York City Council's call to prioritize prevention services, address health disparities in New York City's communities of color, and provide much needed food assistance. To ensure New Yorkers are healthier moving forward, we urge you to include funding for the Food Ed Hub in the FY 2021 budget.

In FY 2020, the Council invested \$250,000 to create a first-of-its-kind Food Ed Hub at the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy. The Council's timing could not have been more prescient. The Food Ed Hub has been a key convener during the COVID-19 crisis, hosting virtual meetings to coordinate COVID-19 responses with its 80 plus Coalition members; sharing food assistance and funding opportunities; conducting research to inform school food policies; and providing tools to support digital food education. Specifically, the Food Ed Hub is:

- **Identifying Areas of Need** —The Food Ed Hub is collecting data from Coalition members to help them overcome the challenges COVID-19 has created. Based on survey results, the Food Ed Hub will continue to prioritize timely policy updates related to school meals, Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), SNAP, CACFP, and WIC; fundraising support; and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
- **Coordinating Frontline Organizations' Responses**—The Food Ed Hub hosts recurring virtual meetings for members, has formed an ad-hoc working group focused on digital learning, and shares food assistance and funding opportunities through the weekly Food Ed Hub newsletter.
- **Using Real-Time Research to Inform Policy**— The Food Ed Hub is collecting data on how school districts across the country are providing meals during school closures; translating those data into recommendations; and advocating with national, state, and local groups for greater food assistance for New York City students and families. With partners, the Hub is promoting P-EBT to ensure students do not go hungry.
- **Supporting Digital Learning**—Coalition members need help developing and disseminating digital content, as well as effectively communicating with families. The Hub is launching a digital platform to feature members' COVID-19 digital content, developing a toolkit to share virtual best practices, and working with the Department of Education to ensure teachers and parents can access quality food education resources.

We, the organizations that the Food Ed Hub supports, continue to work with the most vulnerable communities in our City to provide meals, deliver groceries, communicate about available food assistance, and offer virtual education sessions. We are using limited dollars to cover new, COVID-related expenses such as food, overtime pay for frontline workers, personal protective equipment, and digital learning technology. In the face of increasing financial pressures, we cannot afford to lose a critical resource designed to maximize our impact, increase our efficiency, and ensure that services are equitably distributed. Now, more than ever, we cannot afford to lose the Food Ed Hub.

The current public health crisis has highlighted the important role that organizations like ours play in children's diets and made increasingly clear how dangerous diet-related diseases can be. New Yorkers with obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are more vulnerable to coronavirus,

meaning that healthy eating should be a top priority. However, for the millions of low-income students no longer able to easily access school meals, healthy eating just got a lot harder. Disparities in health and wealth mean that communities of color have been hit the hardest. And experts predict that school closures “may exacerbate the epidemic of childhood obesity and increase disparities in obesity risk.”

Food and nutrition are key elements of resiliency that New York City can’t afford to neglect. The current crisis presents an opportunity to ramp up resiliency efforts. Continued support for the Food Ed Hub is one way the Council can ensure our communities are stronger, safer, and healthier moving forward.

Sincerely,

Active Plus
Allergic to Salad
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)
The Beecher’s Foundation
Beetbox
Brighter Bites
The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
Butter Beans
Children’s Aid
City Harvest
ChopChop Family, Inc.
Coalition for Healthy School Food
Common Threads
Community Food Advocates
Coqui the Chef
Edible Schoolyard NYC
Equity Advocates
FEAST
Food Bank For New York City
Food Education Fund
FoodCorps New York
Garden Train
Green Beetz
Harlem Grown
Institute for Family Health – Bronx Health REACH
The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, and Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University
New York Common Pantry

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York Restoration Project
NY Sun Works
NYC Healthy School Food Alliance
Queens County Farm Museum
Slow Food NYC
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture
The Sylvia Center
Teens for Food Justice
Wellness in the Schools

cc: Councilmember Treyger
Councilmember Dromm
Councilmember Levine
Jan Atwell, Senior Policy Analyst
Nadia Johnson, Senior Policy Analyst
James Reyes, Principal Financial Analyst
Kate MacKenzie, Director, Mayor's Office of Food Policy

As a long time resident I've been encouraged with the strides NYC has taken toward a sustainable future. I've also been tremendously uplifted by the CUNY program. I'm a high school dropout who was able to get a second chance at Kingsborough Community College I got my GPA up and went on to pursue a 4 year degree which eventually lead to an Emmy win. As a professor at a private college I don't get to teach a lot of NYC residents, for most of whom the costs of a private education are prohibitive, but I know so many talented people who come out of programs at Brooklyn College, City College, etc. Cutting composting and education at this point will result in a bleaker future for the city, and may cost more in the long term.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 19, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Penny Swift, and I am the Chief Executive of Education Through Music.

Headquartered in Midtown Manhattan, Education Through Music is a registered DOE arts services vendor, providing music education in schools all over New York City. Many members will be familiar with our organization, perhaps having stopped by an elementary school music class, a middle school band rehearsal, or even participated in a ribbon cutting to celebrate the opening of a new music tech lab. We are humbled that so many of our representatives have been supportive of bringing arts education to the children of our city, and I write to you today to ask that you continue this support.

For those not yet acquainted, Education Through Music partners with under-resourced schools to provide music as a core subject for all children. We currently maintain 70 partnerships with elementary, middle, and K-8 schools located across all five boroughs, and our music teachers provide weekly in-school music lessons to nearly 36,000 students. Of these students, 94% are people of color; 83% qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch; 20% have special needs; 15% are English Language Learners, and 11% are experiencing homelessness.

Our program offers a low-cost means by which city schools can provide high-quality, comprehensive and sequential music education to their students. While our staff have decades of experience in designing, launching, and delivering a State standards-based music program, it is our partner school principals who know the individual student needs of their students. Together we work on a fully customized, school-specific curriculum, performance schedule, and ensemble options, and when the program is ready to go, it is implemented with the full support of the school community. Schools provide an annual contribution to ETM which is negotiated based on the level of support we provide. Not only does the contribution fee help to keep the program running (in fact, 38% of our revenue comes from partner school fees), it also ensures that Education Through Music and our partner schools remain exactly that - partners. For most schools, this money is allocated through the Fair Student Funding Formula, which, as you know, is currently facing a \$100 million cut.

While we appreciate that balancing a budget during a time of crisis is a daunting task, our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of

Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future.

Education Through Music teachers are currently delivering music lessons to students via Google Classrooms, and have been working closely with school administrators to overcome temporary accessibility issues, including developing offline resources for students who need them. For 2020-21, we had initially sought to expand our program to 75 partner schools, a growth rate which is consistent with our strategic plan. Given the current situation we now seek to maintain a total number of partners as close to 70 as possible, with a tacit understanding that there will likely be a reduction in partnerships should these cuts happen, which in turn will impact the number of students served. We know that these cuts will have a devastating impact on the budgets of our partner schools - schools who are still playing catch-up from the last recession, schools who serve students with the greatest need, students who deserve so much and yet are most likely to suffer from these cuts.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Penny Swift

New York City Council,

We need our NYC budget to reflect the needs and values of our community, not business as usual. Cut the NYPD budget to better fund and support critical social services. de Blasio has consistently increased police spending from \$4.6 billion in 2014 to \$5.6 billion in 2019— even as crime has dropped to historic lows. The services the Mayor wants to cut now are services New Yorkers depend on to be healthy and safe, and are especially critical to Black, Brown, and low-income New Yorkers- the same communities so frequently attacked, criminalized, and abused by the NYPD. We don't need more police we need more policies that uphold and protect and support social and city health and well being. Redirect this gross misuse of funds towards homeless services, the department of health, youth programs and workforce investment.

Sincerely,
effie bowen
Brooklyn, 11237



Access Health NYC Written Testimony

Testimony of Juan Carlos Grajeda, Bilingual Program Manager at
Emerald Isle Immigration Center ("EIIC")

My name is Juan Carlos Grajeda and I am the Bilingual Program Manager at Emerald Isle Immigration Center. Thank you to Health Committee Chair Mark Levine for the opportunity to submit my online Testimony for virtual public hearings.

The Emerald Isle Immigration Center ("EIIC") is a community-based, not-for-profit organization with offices located in Woodside in Queens and Woodlawn in the Bronx. Over the course of more than thirty years in operation, we have helped countless members of New York's immigrant population with some of the most important matters in their lives, aiding them in securing protection under the law, housing, employment, education, and healthcare and insurance options. Individual members of our community hail from over seventy countries and speak over twenty languages.

Access Health NYC

We at EIIC are very thankful to the Access Health NYC initiative as it has allowed us to assist many individuals with healthcare rights and options, advocacy and education (through community presentations and workshops) for health insurance enrollment and guiding those who cannot enroll in a health insurance to get free or low-cost healthcare services. EIIC has developed extensive expertise in the area of health insurance and has become a valuable resource within our underserved community. We provide one-on-one consumer assistance with enrolling into health coverage, accessing health care services, appealing health insurance denials, and negotiating medical bills.

59-26 Woodside Ave., 2nd Floor, Woodside, NY 11377
4275 Katonah Ave., Bronx NY 10470

www.eiic.org



As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, there is an urgent need for funding for immigrant groups to conduct outreach and education about health access in these communities and we must continue protecting them. Immigrants are deeply affected by fear and instability as they face particular challenges during this time because of lack of access to public benefits and services due to immigration status-based restrictions.

In addition, the implementation of the administration's "public charge" policy has created fear and confusion in our communities and is driving families away from needed health services. This is the time when our immigrant communities need to be encouraged to get the health services they need, regardless of immigration status.

Low-income people, immigrants, people of color, and other vulnerable communities are dying of COVID-19 at the highest rates in NYC. Their access to health services is more important than ever but is threatened by a lack of trustworthy information sources and the persistent fear of an anti-immigrant federal government. Access Health NYC (AHNYC) empowers trusted community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide culturally responsive and accurate information to ensure that all New Yorkers understand their rights to health care coverage and services. The initiative's value is clearer than ever as the pandemic disproportionately impacts the communities served by the 31 AHNYC awardees across the five boroughs.

Existing Council initiatives like Access Health NYC, which support community-based organizations in getting the word out about these rights and access points, are all the more important in this context. Thank you to Councilmember Levine for continuing to champion this initiative and advocating for a restoration of \$2.5 Million in funding in order to ensure that community-based organizations and community health centers reaching all New York City communities have resources and capacity to provide New Yorkers with correct information about health rights and protections in the year to come.

59-26 Woodside Ave., 2nd Floor, Woodside, NY 11377

4275 Katonah Ave., Bronx NY 10470

www.eiic.org



We at EIIC would like to thank the City Council's commitment to health equity for all New Yorkers, and ask for the continued support of the Access Health NYC initiative. Community-Based Organizations like Emerald Isle Immigration Center have helped countless members of the New York's immigrant community with some of the most important matters in their lives, especially access to healthcare. EIIC remains committed to continue serving the needs of our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony and stories.

*59-26 Woodside Ave., 2nd Floor, Woodside, NY 11377
4275 Katonah Ave., Bronx NY 10470
www.eiic.org*

T-H-E A-R-C-H-I-T-E-C-T-U-R-E L-O-B-B-Y

COVID Recovery and a Just Transition

As COVID-19 recovery plans are put into place, The Architecture Lobby, an organization of architectural workers, demands that the forthcoming legislation take into account the need for a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards a decarbonized future. This transition will profoundly affect the built environment. Our demands outlined below specify necessary aspects of a just transition as they relate to COVID recovery, climate change, and the built environment.

- 1 - Resist austerity! State and municipal support for mass transit and parks have climate benefits and provide stable jobs.
- 2 - Shift emphasis of development away from private real estate and toward public social infrastructure: schools, libraries, affordable housing. These make good cities, and have long-lasting impacts on the social and economic stability of communities.
- 3 - Support new building codes for more light and air. The coronavirus pandemic has shown the inadequacy of NYC's building stock in regards to natural light and ventilation. A reduced dependence on mechanical systems in building will also vastly reduce energy loads.
- 4 - Support equitable distribution of financial aid. Recovery must not take the form of tax breaks for developers! Money going into the built environment must remain accountable and must not exacerbate wealth inequality.
- 5 - Support building retrofit rather than new development.
- 6 - Reorient the design profession away from capital by supporting publicly funded design initiatives.
- 7 - State and city agencies must provide funding for worker-owned and collectively owned buildings. Expand grants and financing programs for community land trusts such that collective land ownership is more feasible.
- 8 - Support construction unions. Job training can redirect skills and enable more efficient delivery processes. Engage now with re-skilling union workers for a new decarbonized economy.
- 9 - Keep corporations out of it! Provide funding directly to workers, community land trusts, and front-line communities. The "trickle down" market does not work, as it prioritizes private profit over allocating jobs where they are needed most. Giving money to corporations is an abuse of public funds!

This document was submitted as testimony for the NYC Finance Committee Hearing on May 21, 2020. It was written by members of The Architecture Lobby.

Elly Nina Mor

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

05/22/2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Elly Nina Mor, and I am writing to you today in support of arts education.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Elly Nina Mor

Dear Councilmember Torres,

Thank you for your leadership to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in New York City. While we defer to public health experts on the social determinants of health and environmental drivers contributing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, we join in our city's concern and call for resources and attention to the fact that Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID, and fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second highest in the city.

One issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council discretionary funding. We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However **any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations serving communities of color.** Grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process.

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for **0.42%** of the city budget. **Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding.** Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

Thank you for your time and attention to this request.

Sincerely, Laura Colby

Laura Colby, President
Elsie Management
TEL : +1 (718) 797-4577
Cell: +1 (917) 859-9725
laurac@elsieman.org



ELSIE WEBSITE | [FACEBOOK](#) | [TWITTER](#)

My name is Emily Figueroa. I'm a teacher at Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School, and I'm working with Teachers Unite, an organization of NYC public school educators working to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

De Blasio has decided that it's more important to keep metal detectors in schools than it is to keep teachers. Education is the #1 casualty in Mayor de Blasio's budget plan while the NYPD is protected.

In fact, the one area of funding for schools Mayor de Blasio is dedicated to preserving and increasing is the subcontract from DOE to NYPD, which is slated to increase by \$4 million (totaling \$307 million).

The Mayor's plan guarantees that next year's freshmen of color, LGBTQ freshmen, and freshmen with special needs graduate in lower numbers in four years and are pushed into prisons at higher rates; they will have had fewer teachers and social workers, but more police and surveillance cameras.

If this budget passes, students are going to have brand new metal detectors in their schools but no new teachers over the next four years.

Students will be grieving family members and loved ones when they return to school. They need to be welcomed back to schools by their teachers, grief counsellors, programs, and opportunities for them to build their futures, not more police.

Most of my students live in the Bronx, the borough with the highest mortality rate from the coronavirus pandemic as well as the most poverty-stricken borough in New York City. What they need after this pandemic is not to be reminded of the perception that they are inherently criminals because of their race and where they live. They need supportive schools that understand the additional traumas they face during this time. They need opportunities to support their families and still attend school.

Instead of making these deep, devastating cuts to public education, we need to ensure that we are fully funding teaching and social work positions in order to support healing, mental health support, and trauma-informed responses to conflict. We must also restore funding for the summer youth employment program. Finally, we must reduce spending for school policing and institute a hiring freeze on the NYPD.



Greater New York

Preliminary Budget Hearing

Committees on Youth Services and Community Development

Submitted by Reach Out and Read of Greater New York

May 22, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am Emily Marchese, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York. For 20 years, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York has worked with pediatricians and medical providers across New York City to provide families with new, developmentally appropriate books and anticipatory guidance in support of early literacy. Together, we have impacted over 6 million families in New York City. In 2014, we became a founding partner of City's First Readers, a collaboration of 12 organizations each working on an aspect of early literacy. Together we are stronger and have more impact. Both Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and City's First Readers have been endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics for its effectiveness. We are truly grateful for the City Council's generous support of City's First Readers.

Through the COVID-19 crisis, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York has remained open and fully operational, providing critical educational resources to families with no other options available.

With schools and libraries closed, the best way to reach the most vulnerable New Yorkers is through the hospital and clinics that are still open and the virtual resources and relationships that we and our partners have in the community. **We work in partnership every year to support over 250,000 children and families across New York City with multiple touch points.**

[Click here to view a brief video on our current, fully operational programming for vulnerable New Yorkers.](#)

ROR GNY's model was created by pediatricians that founded our organization in 1997. Today, ROR GNY has grown to 233 program sites. We deliver services to more than 255,000 children—from newborns through 5 years old—and their families at hospitals and community health centers in some of the most underserved communities of New York City every year.

Our evidence-based program trains pediatricians and medical providers to effectively encourage the development of habits that support early literacy. Then, building on the unique relationship between families and medical providers, ROR GNY gives parents and guardians the tools they need to develop their children's early literacy skills. Our program has three components that work in tandem:

- ⇒ **Consistent engagement:** At each well-child visit, children receive a new, developmentally and culturally appropriate book from their pediatrician to take home and keep;
- ⇒ **Expert support:** Medical providers offer tips and age-appropriate advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud with their children;
- ⇒ **Parent and community engagement:** Volunteers read aloud with children in the pediatric waiting room. Every child we serve leaves our program with at least 10 books to build their home library—and parents/caregivers now have the tools to engage in participatory reading out loud with their children on a regular basis.

How We Are Adapting Our Program Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic

During this challenging time, the events happening in our community and around the world are unsettling, unprecedented, and filled with so much uncertainty. As a healthcare-based program, we have the utmost respect and support for our medical providers who are working tirelessly to care for patients affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Even with so much of the near and long-term future unknown, one thing we know for sure is that the 250,000 children we serve every year need ROR GNY now more than ever.

We believe the ROR GNY mission is even more powerful and important during these difficult times. It is in such times of anxiety when children most need to feel safe and loved – and one of the best ways to support and engage children is to read books together. Reading together promotes bonding and builds strong emotional connections. When children are cuddled in the lap of a loving caregiver, enjoying a book together, they feel secure, despite the turmoil in the outside world. Additionally, since approximately 90% of brain development occurs during the first five years of life, it is crucial that parents/caregivers of children ages 0-5 are reading aloud to their children during this time.

A very recent study conducted in April 2020 by Global Strategy Group on behalf of Raising New York shares the results of a statewide NY survey on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on parents with infants and toddlers. This study reports that 68% of those surveyed indicated they worry their child's social, emotional, and cognitive development will suffer as a result of the coronavirus crisis. The study also reports that more than 1 in 3 parents of infants and toddlers who rely on early intervention/education programs that provide coaching for new parents are no longer receiving services, and 49% said they were not given the option of online services.

We know that the under-resourced communities that we are privileged to serve are being disproportionately impacted by the shutdowns and cancellations surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. In research conducted by neuroscientists that followed children from low-income backgrounds from birth through late adolescence, “findings highlight[ed] the sensitivity of the growing brain to environmental factors and provide strong evidence that subtle variations in early life experiences can affect the brain throughout life.”¹ During this high-stress time when libraries are closed and education/literacy programs are limited or unavailable, it is more critical than ever that we provide support and resources to the high needs neighborhoods of NYC that we serve.

While other literacy resources for children are retracting (for many legitimate reasons), ROR GNY's program continues to be there for children and their parents/caregivers who will otherwise have no access to books and literacy resources. Many of our hospitals and clinics are still open for well child visits for ages 0-2 and for vaccination appointments ages 3-5. As a result, books and anticipatory guidance for caregivers is still being distributed to our families, as well as information regarding ROR GNY's virtual resources. The following details how ROR GNY is responding and adjusting to meet the needs of the communities we serve virtually. The goal is to provide joyful, educational content in many formats to help our communities easily access resources:

1. We are hosting multilingual (English, Spanish, Mandarin, Bengali, sign language, and more to follow) Facebook Live read alouds for children ages 0-5 every day. Some guests include Doreen Cronin, the author of Click Clack Moo and Cows that Type, and Susie Jaramillo, the author and illustrator of the Canticos bilingual book series. We've featured guests reading to their pet, reading along with music, and reading together with a virtual friend. We believe that through virtual story times, we can offer parents and caregivers practical support and create meaningful moments, which will help their whole families manage in this anxious time.

¹ <https://www.wired.com/2012/10/books-growing-brain/>

2. We have compiled a list of free, virtual literary resources and educational enrichment that we hope will help foster creativity and imagination and provide families with fun, high-quality learning opportunities. We are continually adding to this list and sending out new resources via social media and e-blasts. This is updated multiple times a day and freely available on our website.
3. We are hosting free bi-lingual (English and Spanish) virtual workshops for caregivers and families. The workshops invite all adults to join us via zoom to decompress and learn some fun, easy tips on how to create a literacy friendly household during these times. The sessions are recorded and offered on our website and social media for easy access. They also include a bi-lingual one-pager summarizing the recommendations presented in the workshop.
4. We are continuing to support the supply chain of books being delivered to hospital sites that can still receive them, and we are supporting each location's decision making in terms of what's best for their site. We are conducting virtual site visits to our 233 partners via Zoom during this time. We believe that through anticipatory guidance and books, our partner sites can offer parents and caregivers practical guidance about building meaningful moments and routines, which will help their whole families manage in this anxious time.

There is no telling how long New York's services and activities will be suspended; therefore, ROR GNY will continue developing more ways to virtually support and engage our program participants and partner sites, while continuing to distribute books at our fully operational program sites across New York City. We remain committed to fulfill the mission of this organization as a lifeline to literacy and healthy brain development.

By investing in our early childhood literacy intervention, your support will be able to make a direct and significant impact on the lives of the children who need it most.

Please see below for 150+ signatures from our healthcare partners in support of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and City's First Readers continuing to have discretionary funding support in FY21.



PETITION TO ELECTED OFFICIAL

To Our Public Officials:

We, the medical providers and frontline champions of New York City, respectfully submit this letter of support on behalf of early literacy programs. We, the heroes of today, urge you to support the heroes of tomorrow by continuing to invest in Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and City's First Readers as an essential part of the budget. Reach Out and Read of Greater New York's partnership with City's First Readers has allowed over 250,000 children this year alone to benefit from multiple dosages of excellent and efficient early literacy support.

READING IS ESSENTIAL

In the face of this public health crisis, where basic needs are in jeopardy and the well-being of all is threatened at every turn, it may appear that funding for early literacy is discretionary. As medical professionals who deal with children on a daily basis, we assure you that it is a critical need. Literacy levels are strong social determinants of health, civic engagement, and economic self-sufficiency - positive behaviors that help our society overall. Low levels of literacy are also correlated with incarceration and both juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Prevention beats intervention. The Return on Investment for high quality early childhood programs is cited as 13% <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/13-roi-toolbox/>

This pandemic has already revealed systemic inequities in access to healthcare and treatment. COVID19 disproportionately affects children living in poverty and consequently children of color. We express profound concerns that these most vulnerable of children will return to school having had little or no engagement with print materials for nearly six months, possibly more, with their neural wiring now more accustomed to a screen than the left-to-right eye movement of reading. Reach Out and Read of Greater New York gives out over 250,000 books every year through our hospitals and clinics. It is critical that pre- and emerging readers continue to be supported by quality early literacy programs throughout the duration of this health crisis and well beyond.

Programs like Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and City's First Readers, which have both been endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics for their effectiveness, must continue to be offered as investments which make both fiscal and social sense. We urge you to consider the long term benefits of supporting early literacy along with the long term consequences of withholding support. We advocate on behalf of our patients, the children of New York City.

The Undersigned Medical Community of New York City

Leora Mogilner, MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Icahn School of Medicine Mount Sinai
Vice President of Reach Out and Read of Greater
New York

Goldie Alfasi-Siffert, PhD
Director, Behavior Science
Institute for Family Health
Secretary of Reach Out and Read of Greater New
York

Allison Taylor MD FAAP
Attending physician, Division of Academic
General Pediatrics
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
The Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Beth Worley, MD
Jacobi Medical Center
1400 Pelham Parkway South
Bronx, NY 10461

Micah Resnick MD
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Icahn School of Medicine Mount Sinai

Donna Garey, MD MPH
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at CUMC
Medical Director of the Neonatal Follow-up
Program
Columbia University/Morgan Stanley Children's
Hospital

Nina I Huberman, MD, MPH
Obilo Pediatric Associates
4119 Barnes Avenue
Bronx, NY 10466

Michelle Jacobs, PA-C
Clinical Coordinator for Pediatric Pre-Op Care
Clinic
Center for Children
Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone
NYU Langone Orthopedic Hospital
301 East 17th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10003

Steve Caddle, MD MPH, FAAP
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at CUMC
Division of Child and Adolescent Health
Columbia University Vagelos College of
Physicians & Surgeons
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia
University Irving Medical Center
Washington Heights Family Health Center

Roya Samuels, MD FAAP
Pediatric Clerkship Director, Advanced Clinical
Experience
Assistant Professor
Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine
Steven & Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical
Center of NY
Reach Out and Read Medical Director
Division of General Pediatrics

Aimee Mankodi, MD
Director of Maternal and Infant Care
Family Medicine Residency
Mount Sinai Hospital
Institute for Family Health
Robyn Rosenblum, MD
Director, Theresa Lang Children's Center
New York Presbyterian Queens
718-670-1972

Sarmistha Mukerjee & The Entire Staff of Morris
Heights Health Center

Amy Woolever, MD
Medical Director ROR
NYCH+H Elmhurst

Viju Jacob, MD, FAAP
Urban Health Plan, Inc.
AVP Medical Regulatory
Policy and External Affairs

Marcy Stein Albert, MD
Director of Pediatrics
NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens

Judith Frank, M.D.
Medical director ROR, Metropolitan Hospital
Center
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
NY Medical College

Marguerite M Mayers MD
Pediatrics & Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Children's Hospital at Montefiore
Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Eda Chao, MD

Assistant Chief of Pediatrics
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center
125 Walker Street
New York, NY 10013

Colleen Stalter, MD
Pediatric Resident, Class of 2021
NYP Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital
Columbia University Medical Center

Maria Molina
Pediatrician
First Step Pediatricians

Leslie Plachta, MD MPH
Family Medicine Physician
Ossining Open Door

Alex Okun, MD
Pediatrician and Medical Director
New Alternatives for Children, Inc
37 W 26 St
New York, NY. 10010

Wendy Chan, MD
Attending Physician
NYU Winthrop Pediatric Center
175 Fulton Avenue, Suite 100
Hempstead, NY 11550
(516)292-1034

Linda Tewksbury, MD, MHPE
Associate Dean for Student Affairs
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
NYU Grossman School of Medicine
[550 First Ave](#), MS G 55
[New York, NY 10016](#)

Dr Jacqueline Kelderhouse
Montefiore Medical Center
Bronx, NY

Libbat-Tzion Shaham, M.D.
Family Medicine
NYU Langone Park Slope Family Health Center

Gina F. Reinoso M.D

Pediatrician
Diplomate of the American Academy of Pediatrics
135 Main Street
Hempstead,
NY 11550

Violeta A. Calibuso MD
Brookdale University hospital and Medical Center
6 Brookdale Family Care Centers

Genna Ableman, M.D.
Director of Clinical Transformation
Settlement Health
212 East 106th Street
New York, NY 10029

Kathryn Tanner FNP-BC
The Institute for Family Health
1894 Walton Ave
Bronx, NY

Dr. Tawna Winkfield-Royster
General Pediatrician
Saint Barnabas Hospital & Union Community
Health Center

Toni Aspinall-Daley MD
H+H Gotham @ Springfield Gardens

Anand V. Patel, PsyD
Staff Psychologist
Family Care Center
Montefiore Medical Center

Janice F. Bistriz, DNP, PNP
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Pediatric Clinic
Montefiore Health System

Taiye Apoeso MD, FAAP
Children of Zion Pediatrics,
3108 3rd Avenue,
Bronx, NY 10451
Shweta Antani, D.O.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Child & Adolescent Health
Columbia University Medical Center

Wendy Berkowitz
NYU Langone Medical Center

Molly Galdston, MS, CPNP

COZ Pediatrics
3108 Third Avenue
Bronx, NY 10451

Lewis Krata MD, FAAP
Director, Pediatric Residency Program
Chief, Section Pediatric Rheumatology
The Brooklyn Hospital Center
121 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Kim Bui, MD
Family & Social Medicine
Montefiore Medical Center

Dr Laura Dattner
Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics
SUNY Downstate, Brooklyn NY

Margaret Glausser, MD
Institute for Family Health

Julia Standefer FNP-BC, IBCLC
Family Nurse Practitioner
The Institute for Family Health
Cadman Family Health Center

Paulo R. Pina, MD MPH
Network Pediatric Medical Director
5800 3rd Avenue, Rm 2-097
Brooklyn, NY 11220

Teresa Hsu-Walklet, Ph.D.
Director of Clinical Operations
Interim Director, Finance & Grants Management
Supervising Psychologist
Pediatric Behavioral Health Integration Program (BHIP)
Instructor in Academic General Pediatrics
Montefiore Medical Group

Joanna Kinney, MD
NYP Morgan-Stanley Children's Hospital
PGY-1, Resident in Pediatrics

Marion A. Billings, MD, MSc
Associate Director

Department of Pediatrics
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health
Gouverneur
227 Madison St 3rd Flr
New York, NY 10002

Gregory Kenny MD, FAAP
Department of Pediatrics
Elmhurst Hospital Center, NYC
Health+Hospitals
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Kevin A. Charlotten, MD, FAAFP
Q-Care Affordable Medical Care
41-50 78th Street, Apt. 102/103
Elmhurst, New York 11373

Kelly Ann Cervone, RN, CPNP
Nurse Practitioner
Hassenfeld Children's Center for Cancer and
Blood Disorders/NYU Langone

Sandra Braganza, MD, MPH
Program Director, Social Pediatrics Program
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Assistant Professor of Family and Social Medicine
The Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Joanna Pierro, DO
Clinical Instructor of Pediatrics
Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at
NYU Langone Health
The Stephen D. Hassenfeld Children's Center for
Cancer and Blood Disorders

E. Richards, MD
Associate Director
Division of Ambulatory Care
University Hospital of Brooklyn
SUNY Downstate Health Science Center

Nora Barmawi, MD
Attending Physician
Department of Pediatrics
St. Barnabas Hospital
4487 Third Avenue
Bronx, NY 10457

Anoushka Sinha

New York Presbyterian - Columbia University
Medical Center

Mariely Fernandez, MD
Attending Pediatrician
Center for Comprehensive Health Practice
East Harlem

Julia Chang-Lin, MD
Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Department of Pediatrics
Bellevue Hospital
NYU School of Medicine
Angela Ng, MD, FAAP
Pediatrician
NYU Langone 7th Ave Family Health Center

Christina Lee, DO
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center

Dr. Tawna Winkfield-Royster
General Pediatrician
Saint Barnabas Hospital & Union Community
Health Center

Faye Kokotos, MD FAAP
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Academic General Pediatrics
Children's Hospital at Montefiore/ Albert
Einstein College of Medicine
Medical Director of Reach Out and Read Program
Family Care Center-Montefiore Medical Center
3444 Kossuth Avenue, 1st Floor
Bronx, NY 10467
Robert Clarick, MD
Site Medical Director
Montefiore Medical Group,
University Avenue Family Practice

Paola Carugno, MD
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY

Valentyna Tack, PGY 2
Department of Pediatrics
NYU Winthrop Hospital

Brittany Francisco DO
Aharon Lauterpacht MD

2019-2020 Chief Residents
Department of Pediatrics
NYU Langone Health

Grace Luk, MD
Kids Care Pediatric Associates, also affiliated
with Cohen Children's Medical Center in NY

Dodi Meyer, MD
Professor of Pediatrics at Columbia University
Medical Center
Director, Community Pediatrics

Joanna Tsopelas
Maimonides Medical Center – Pediatric Primary
Care Center

Rachel Stein Berman, MD, MPH, FAAP
Division of Academic General Pediatrics
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Albert Einstein
College of Medicine
Montefiore Medical Center
*The University Hospital for Albert Einstein College of
Medicine*
Family Care Center
3444 Kossuth Ave, Bronx, NY 10467

Julia Gomez
Education Coordinator
The Stephen D. Hassenfeld Children's Center for
Cancer and Blood Disorders
NYU Langone Health

Molly C Broder, MD
Associate Director, Pediatric Residency Program
Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
The Children's Hospital at Montefiore
*The Pediatric Hospital for Albert Einstein College of
Medicine*
3415 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467

Jillian Parekh MD, FAAP
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Academic General Pediatrics
Children's Hospital at Montefiore
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Amy Woolever, MD
NYCH&H Elmhurst

Jillian Parekh MD, FAAP
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

Division of Academic General Pediatrics
Children's Hospital at Montefiore
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Michelle Ratau MD MPH
Attending Pediatrician
St Barnabas Health System
Bronx NY

Christina Sullivan, MD
Associate Medical Director Pediatrics, ROR
Coordinator- Comprehensive Family Care Center
Montefiore Medical Center
1621 Eastchester Rd
Bronx, NY 10461

Brenda Levy, MD
Pediatrician
MMG-Comprehensive Family Care Center
1621 Eastchester Road
Bronx, NY 10461

Fernando Ginebra, MD
Ridgewood Pediatrics, PC
186 Cypress Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11237

Anika Clarke, M.D.
Attending Physician
St Barnabas Pediatric Clinic
4487 Third Ave
Bronx, NY 10457

Michelle Ratau MD MPH
Attending Pediatrician
St Barnabas Health System
Bronx NY

Dr. Eva Rynjah
Montefiore Medical Group
University Avenue Family Practice
105 West 188th street
Bronx NY 10468

Ikemesit Udo-Bellner, MD
NYU Winthrop Hospital
Pediatric Resident, PGY1

Rebecca Goldstein, MD
Pediatric Resident, PGY 2
NYU Winthrop Hospital

Jenny L. Shih, M.D.
Senior Pediatrician
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center

E. Caroline Kibakaya MD
Academic General Pediatrics Fellow

The Children's Hospital at Montefiore
The Pediatric Hospital for Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Division of Academic General Pediatrics
3411 Wayne Avenue – 8th Floor Rm 830 – Bronx,
NY 10467

Irene Cheung, DO
Pediatric Resident Physician
NYU Winthrop Hospital

Dr. Prabhakaran
Bronx Park Pediatrics
2016 Bronxdale Avenue, Suite 203
Bronx, NY 10462
Mary McCord MD MPH
Director of Pediatrics
Gouverneur Health, NYC Health and Hospitals
227 Madison St
NY NY 10002

Brian Bhatt, MD
Pediatrics Resident Physician
NYU Winthrop Hospital, Mineola NY 11501

Palak Shelat, MD
Pediatrics Resident Physician
NYU Winthrop Hospital

Rachel Sheffet, Psy.D.
Assistant Director
JE & ZB Butler Center for Children and Families
The Children's Hospital at Montefiore
The Pediatric Hospital for Albert Einstein College of Medicine
3314 Steuben Avenue
Bronx, New York 10467

Ivanya L. Alpert, MD
Attending Physician, Uptown Pediatrics

Clinical Assistant Professor, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Andrew Nastro, MD

Fellow, Academic General Pediatrics, NYU Langone/Bellevue Hospital Center

Hannah Famiglietti, MD

Comprehensive Care Clinic for Children with Special Health Care Needs
Pediatric Hospitalist

NYU Langone Medical Center/Bellevue Hospital Center

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, NYU School of Medicine

Associate Director, Pediatric Residency Program

Peter Liang, MD

Family Medicine

Northwell University Physicians Group

Staten Island University Hospital

Yineska Flores, MD

Pediatrician

Morrisania DTC

Amy Rothman, CPNP

Bellevue Hospital

Pediatric Ambulatory Care

Lorraine Von Eeden, DNP, CPNP-PC, FNP-BC
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Comprehensive Family Care Center & Montefiore School Health Program

1621 Eastchester Road

Bronx, NY 10461

Lisa Forman, MD, FAAP, CLC

Attending in Pediatrics, Elmhurst Hospital Center

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Tal Dror, MD

Pediatric Resident PGY-2

NYU Winthrop Hospital

Miguel Sanchez A, MD

Pediatric Chief Resident SBH

Tara Herlocher

Nurse Practitioner

Children's Aid Society

Jennifer Gomez, BSN, RN

LINCS Program

The Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Lisa Visentin, MD, FAAP, IBCLC

Physician

Allied Physicians Group, PLLC

Peconic Pediatrics

34 Commerce Drive, Suite 2

Riverhead, NY 11901

Alyson Smith, MD

Director, Pediatric Ambulatory Care

St. Barnabas Hospital

Bronx, NY 10457

Benjamin Aubey, MD, MPH

Harlem Hospital Center

Department of Pediatrics

506 Lenox Avenue

New York City, NY 10037

Jin Weng, RN, CPN

Assistant Head Nurse,

Charles B Wang Community Health Center

125 Walker Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10013

Carmel Angely Mondestin, M.D.

PGY1 at NYU Winthrop

Luis Rodriguez, M.D., FAAP

Chairman, Department of Pediatrics

New York City Health + Hospitals/Woodhull

Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics

New York University School of Medicine

Jennifer Yu, MD

Pediatrician

Montefiore Medical Group

Castle Hill Family Practice

Christina Monteleone DO

NYU Langone Health at Winthrop Hospital

PGY1 Pediatric Residency Program

Hyowoun Jyung MD

Attending physician

Institute for family health

Mount Sinai

David Herszenon MD MPH

Montefiore Medical Center
South Bronx Health Center for Children and Families
871 Prospect Ave.
Bronx, NY 10459

Scott Ikeda MD MPH
Medical Director
New York Children's Health Project
Montefiore Medical Center

Rafael Frias, MD AAHIVS
Montefiore Medical Center
Bronx Health Collective
South Bronx Health Center
871 Prospect Avenue

Alejandra I. Sacasa, MD
Pediatrician
Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Margaret Foster, MS, CCLS
Certified Child Life Specialist, Pediatrics
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center Rm. 8-30
374 Stockholm Street, Brooklyn, NY 11237
347-473-7919

Robert A Jackson, FNP-C
Community Pediatrics Program,
New York Children's Health Project
Montefiore Medical Center
853 Longwood Ave
Bronx, NY 10459

Andreas Cahrssen, MD
Associate Professor Icahn School of Medicine
Mount Sinai Downtown Residency Director
In Urban Family Medicine

Sylvan Ryder, DNP, CPNP
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center
374 Stockholm St.
Brooklyn, NY 11237

Eleanor Prowell, MSN, RN, CPNP, AE-C
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center

Deborah York, MSN, MPH, CPNP-PC
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Montefiore Community Pediatric Programs

Rachel M. McKenny, RN, MS, CPNP
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
Wyckoff Heights Medical Center
374 Stockholm Street, 8th Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11237

Robert A Jackson, FNP
Montefiore Hospital

Elizabeth O'Callahan, MD
Pronouns: She/Her
Institute for Family Health
Mount Sinai Hospital System
Family Medicine, PGY-3

Robin Scott, MD
Medical Director
South Bronx Health Center & Center for Child Health and Resiliency
871 Prospect Avenue, Bronx NY 10459

Rebekah Misir MD
PGY-1
NYU Winthrop Hospital

Shadman Sinha MD, PGY-3
NYU-Winthrop Hospital Pediatrics

Robert A Jackson, FNP-C
Community Pediatrics Program,
New York Children's Health Project
Montefiore Medical Center
853 Longwood Ave
Bronx, NY 10459

Jiana S. Menendez, MD, MPH
Institute for Family Health at 17th Street
Trauma-Informed Linkage to Care (TLC) Clinic
230 W 17th St, New York, NY 10011

Holly Lee, FNP
Clinical Director
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center
136-26 37th Ave
Flushing, NY 11354

Testimony for the NYC Council Committee on Finance
Thursday, May 21, 2020

Thank you to the members of the Committee on Finance for reviewing this testimony. As New York City weathers the COVID-19 crisis, our organizations and businesses, which are some of the members of the newly forming NYC Urban Forest Task Force, recognize the significant role of the natural environment in ensuring a clean, safe and healthy New York City. The people of New York City rely on the trees around them as critical living infrastructure that provides a multitude of economic, environmental, and public health benefits. Trees make our city livable, improving our quality of life and wellbeing. They clean and cool our air, reducing heat-related illness. They help us tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, protecting our shoreline and absorbing stormwater before it pollutes our waterways. In a single year, the city's 7 million trees absorb nearly 900 million gallons of stormwater and significantly reduce temperatures during dangerous summer heatwaves. By 2080, the frequency of heatwaves is expected to triple and extreme precipitation events are expected to increase by 50%. ***In short, the health and sustainability of New York City's trees matter more than ever.***

Trees serve as crucial public health and climate resiliency infrastructure and should be treated as such. Understanding the City is facing a significant budget deficit, we request that you maintain the City's budget for trees. In the current budget proposal, the Parks Department is disproportionately impacted by cost-cutting measures. We are concerned about the impacts of putting our city's parks and trees at risk, especially given our increasing reliance on them during this health crisis.

The city's trees, an asset valued at \$5.7 billion by the USDA Forest Service, and programs supporting trees are already underfunded given the many services they provide. Trees require regular care to ensure they survive and thrive in order to provide their myriad benefits to New Yorkers and to help the city become more climate resilient. Essential forestry activities include but are not limited to planting/re-planting efforts, monitoring for and management of invasive pests, pruning to ensure safety of people and property in parks and along sidewalks, occasional removal, and natural area forest management to ensure forest health and maintenance of trails to provide access to the ¼ of NYC's parkland that is forests. ***A robust and well-resourced forestry operation is an essential City service and should be funded accordingly.***

We understand that approximately \$20 million of cuts are proposed for forestry in New York City for Fiscal Year 2021. We strongly encourage you to fully restore the forestry budget for FY21 for several key reasons, in addition to the items above:

- This money includes funding for green jobs for New Yorkers. These funds support forestry activities that **can be accomplished during social distancing**. At a time when unemployment is at an all-time high, we encourage the City **to retain all viable green jobs**.
- In addition to their standing value, we need to sustain the **more than \$250 million in services provided by trees annually**.
- Healthy streets, parks, and natural areas are more important than ever. With summer fast approaching, we will face the dual challenges of social distancing and extreme heat. Healthy, well-managed trees in streets and parks enhance the quality of life in the city by providing shade, cooling, and mental and physical health benefits.

- While short-term needs are critical, disinvesting from forestry, especially invasive pest monitoring, forest management, and street tree maintenance will **cost us more in the long run.**

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss these matters. Please contact Emily Nobel Maxwell, Cities Program Director at The Nature Conservancy at emaxwell@tnc.org to arrange such a meeting. Of course, given the current health situation, we would anticipate such a meeting to occur virtually.

Thank you for considering New York City's trees and all the benefits they afford New Yorkers as you continue to work on the next city budget.

Organizations:

Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Davey Resource Group, Inc.
Design Trust for Public Space
The Evergreens Cemetery
Jackson Heights Beautification Group
The Natural Areas Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
New Yorkers for Parks
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners, PLLC
Tri-Lox
West 80s Neighborhood Association
Whitman Nurseries Inc.

Individuals:

Matthew I. Palmer, Ph.D, Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology,
Columbia University

My name is Emily Weissman, and I currently work as an Education Apprentice with New York City Children's Theater. I have seen first-hand the immense positive impact that arts education has on New York City's students. Within even just a few weeks of a theatre residency, I have seen my students gain emotional intelligence skills and make great strides in relating more positively to each other and their environment. I had a student who did not speak and often hid under a table during the beginning weeks of a residency. By the end of the residency, he was singing and dancing, and eager to share his opinions. This is just one of many life-changing stories I have heard from other teaching artists like myself. As a young person, arts education helped save my life when my mental health was really struggling. Having a space where I was encouraged to express my emotions and share my life experiences was invaluable. New York City's students deserve the very best, and should absolutely have sufficient access to arts education. This is only possible with your decision to support continued funding for arts education.

Every year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K-5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all 5 boroughs. We are dedicated to serving every New York City student, and have designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and MLL's.

Currently, I am one of 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging virtual programming. We are currently running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, and creating a database of online programming named "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online.

We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district.

We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students.

We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences.

New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on the grant programs that we receive each year from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development.

Best,
Emily (Emmy) Weissman
emmyweissman@gmail.com

Emma Mueller
Little & Fierce Theatre Company

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
Wednesday, May 20th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Emma Mueller, and I am the Founder & Artistic Director of Little & Fierce Theatre Company, as well as a Teaching Artist with New York City Children's Theater. In my work I have taught in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx in schools and homeless shelters.

The mission of Little & Fierce Theatre Company is to provide educational and accessible abridged Shakespeare productions that create opportunities for emerging female-identifying and gender non-conforming performers and educators; these performances are intended to foster creativity through public performances and touring sessions throughout New York City to schools, homeless shelters, parks, senior centers, and prisons. We believe that the arts are necessary to foster education, inclusion, acceptance, success, and personal growth.

Little & Fierce Theatre Company is currently reaching our community through collaborative projects that use Shakespeare's source material to create art in this time of chaos, as well as play readings. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through

our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Emma Mueller



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

307 W. 38TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018
T 212-367-1589
www.HSUnited.org

Homeless Services United Written Testimony submitted to the NYC Council Committee on Finance

NYC FY21 Budget Oversight Hearing on May 21st, 2020

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you Chair Miller and Members of the Finance Committee for allowing us to submit written testimony.

Thank you to the General Welfare and Finance Committees and the entire City Council for your leadership and responsiveness to the COVID-19 health crisis which has brought New York City to a standstill. In this time of tremendous uncertainty, we must work together to ensure that those in need of emergency shelter, food, and services are able to receive vital assistance, uninterrupted. Homeless service providers are on the frontlines of stopping the spread of the COVID 19 virus. We appreciate that the Council acknowledges that plans to combat the virus must include solutions for the homeless community. Many of the concerns included in this testimony were initially registered with the General Welfare Committee for its rescheduled March hearing, and remain relevant. The City must make good on its commitments to providers to ensure the fiscal health of the homeless services safety net that keeps clients safe.

FY21 DHS funding must remain whole, with comprehensive and timely funding to cover COVID-19 related expenses.

To ensure continuous provision of care, **Homeless Services United and our members and other human service providers asked the City to provide accelerated funding to contracted providers so that they are agile enough to respond to emerging needs during this crisis.**

To the City's credit, MOCS assured providers that advances on contracts will be available to help providers draw down funds, as well as granting flexibility around meeting contract goals and milestones, additional funding for COVID-19 related-expenses, and postponing upcoming audits. They are also partnering with the Comptroller to expeditiously register pending contracts and amendments. **HSU appreciates the City's commitment and underscores the paramount importance of timely registration of contracts and amendments, but we need to see these efforts come to fruition at DSS now and continue for FY21.**

Despite the work being done to address the cash crunch, **DHS and HRA are continuing to act as if it's business as usual, insisting on continuing counterproductive policies that undermine these efforts. The agencies are holding up invoices, continuing to recoup advances from providers, and using a case-by-case review to designate "priority invoices" which is completely inadequate to keep pace with the ever growing need for essential services during this crisis.**

DHS providers shared that their programs are still being asked to provide documentation for 100% their invoices and expenses, rather than a reasonable sampling required to ensure vendor integrity.

Providers need robust and immediate access to funding to procure essential emergency supplies such



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

307 W. 38TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018
T 212-367-1589
www.HSUnited.org

as cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, N-95 and surgical masks, gloves, and thermometers to ensure programs are adequately equipped to keep their clients and staff safe.

In order to receive DHS reimbursement for incentive pay for front-line staff, providers have to slog through a tedious functional assessment for individual staff on a program by program basis. While essential staff are hailed as heroes, and rightly so, it is incredibly frustrating to not be able to recognize and value their amazing work in a timely manner. Despite the City's stated commitment to residential workers, money to compensate them for their heroic efforts has yet to flow. This inaction means that providers are left to either go deeper into debt every payroll or, leave their dedicated workers with no increased wages despite the extraordinary circumstances under which they are working.

This lack of access to cash leaves non-profits in a fiscally vulnerable position as they try to meet the growing need of existing programs. Many did not receive Federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and those that did are not being given the flexibility they need by the City to use them. They have had to shoulder considerable upfront costs for COVID-19 related expenses, to the tunes of hundreds of thousands to over a million dollars. Without timely reimbursement, nonprofits have had to extend their lines of credit to keep their programs operational.

As DHS expands the use of hotels to de-densify shelters and expand stabilization bed capacity for street homeless, we are concerned that the core of experienced non-profit homeless service providers that New York City's safety net relies on will not be fiscally solvent enough to take on additional risk of those new units. **How can providers be expected to answer the call when they are concerned with making payroll for the next few weeks?**

Bolster HomeBase providers, public benefits, and housing resources to stem the on-coming tidal wave of evictions

HomeBase programs citywide are doing amazing work helping households in crisis to stabilize their housing and prevent evictions, but they are being increasingly asked by HRA to do more without additional resources. **HomeBase programs need an additional \$450,000 per site to hire additional case managers and housing specialists, provide COLAs to retain qualified staff, cover increases in fixed and operating expenses.**

HomeBase's workload has expanded over time without matching expansion in resources, including handling referrals from HRA Centers for FHEPS eligible households, mandating time-intensive Critical Time Intervention (CTI) cases, providing aftercare to households moving out of shelter, and serving more single adults following the closure of the Housing Assistance Program (HAP). **In addition to these longer standing needs, we anticipate HomeBase will be inundated with a tidal wave of evictions in the coming months due to COVID-19, and HomeBase programs must be properly staffed to be able meet the higher numbers of evictions and also assisting households in accessing public benefits and resources.**

As Commissioner Banks testified before the General Welfare Committee on May 18th, the City has processed twice as many Cash Assistance requests and three times as many SNAP benefits since the



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

307 W. 38TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018
T 212-367-1589
www.HSUnited.org

pandemic began. We commend HRA for quickly moving to expand the ACCESS HRA application to allow for households to apply for these benefits as well as emergency assistance and special grants online, as well as extending CityFHEPS vouchers and shopping letters, as well as creating virtual inspections to allow for continued move-outs into permanent housing. But given the monumental need the City is faced with, more must be done to ensure household can remain stably housed.

While we recognize that HRA staff are racing to open record numbers of new public assistance cases for households in need, **HRA must ensure that all settled housing court cases are resolved well in advance of the eviction moratorium's end in June, as the State's two-month extension only protects households unable to pay rent due to COVID-19 related job loss or hardships. Any evictions prior to March 16th as well as holdover cases would not be protected. With the anticipated surge in new eviction proceedings, any unresolved cases will only further overload the courts, clog HomeBase's caseload hindering their capacity for new cases, and needlessly destabilize households due to bureaucratic delays.**

During this eviction moratorium, **HRA must make every effort to process one-shots for arrears as expeditiously as possible.** The moratorium on evictions should not give a false sense that the clock has stopped on arrears. We are concerned that landlords, if unable to receive timely reimbursement for back rent and lacking legal recourse, may harass tenants and employ "self-help" evictions to illegally remove them, if not already preparing to file eviction cases the day the moratorium ends.

With the economic downturn and numbers of households becoming un-or-underemployed, the City must ease bureaucratic restrictions and financial limitations of housing vouchers to ensure that as many households as possible are able to move into permanent housing, avoid having to enter shelter, and not be at risk of losing housing due to loss of income.

The City needs to expand the number of FHEPS "B" vouchers for survivors of domestic violence living in the community, to lessen their need to have to enter an HRA or DHS shelter in order to qualify for a voucher. During this crisis, the DV shelter system intake has seen a drop in the number of households choosing to leave their abusers, and more resources must be provided to encourage them towards safety.

We encourage the City to consider ways to expand eviction prevention and housing resources for support for underserved populations that will also be displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as undocumented families and individuals, those currently living in informal housing arrangements, as well as households earning above 200% of the Federal Poverty Limit.

Continuing NYC's commitment to create affordable housing

Facing an economic downturn already being compared to the Great Depression as well as the 2008 housing crisis, the City must not back away from its FY20 and 21 affordable housing commitments, which Mayor de Blasio proposes cutting by \$581M in FY20 and \$457M in FY21. To do so would only further prolong the shortage of affordable housing at a time when low-income families and individuals will need it most.



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED

307 W. 38TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018
T 212-367-1589
www.HSUnited.org

With the impact of COVID-19 crisis to New York City still not yet fully realized, the Council must take this opportunity to lay the groundwork that positions the safety net and equips the City's non-profit providers with the tools and additional resources they need to help those they currently serve, and bolsters their capacity in anticipation of the surge of new households effected by this crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out via email at elee@hsunited.org or phone at (646) 515-8053.

Erica Mann

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 22, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Erica Mann, and I work at New York City Children's Theater, which has administrative offices in Turtle Bay, Manhattan.

New York City Children's Theater's mission is to cultivate children's growth in the areas of emotional intelligence, community building, and responsible decision-making. The result is empathetic, creative and independent thinkers who make a positive impact on their world. Each year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K – 5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all five boroughs. We are dedicated to serving all of New York City's children, and have designed original programming which serves special populations, including multilingual learners and children with special needs.

Even amidst the pandemic, our work continues. Currently, 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging programming. We are running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, and creating a database of online programming called "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online. We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district. We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the last effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students. We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

We respectfully request budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that defines our city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that

disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on grants from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts are imperative for healthy child development. It is our belief that programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

A passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts helps young people to build important life skills that will serve them in the future. Speaking personally, I believe that the arts saves lives. Discovering writing at a young age saved mine. I chose to work for New York City Children's Theater because I wanted to contribute to their mission to foster children's emotional and academic growth through the arts. I want to give New York City's children the same life-giving opportunity I had, to learn resilience and to manage difficult emotions through creative expression, if that's what reaches them. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city: please don't strip away this critical aspect of their education. Thank you very much for your attention and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Erica Mann
Grants Manager
New York City Children's Theater



May 21, 2020

**Collective for Community, Culture and Environment
Testimony Regarding NYC Budget**

Good afternoon, my name is Eva Hanhardt and I am the Coordinator of the Collective, for Community, Culture and the Environment. The Collective for Community, Culture and Environment, LLC (CCCE) is a women-owned consulting business and interdisciplinary professional network based in New York City - with projects throughout the NY-NJ-CT region. We work with communities, clients and partners that share our mission of developing a sustainable and equitable world.

In this testimony, we ask that the City not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. We also urge the NYC Council to prioritize the implementation of Local Law 97, continue solar installations, and to push for infrastructure projects from the NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform.

1) City Composting Programs

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills that are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and involve poorly managed transfer stations in Environmental Justice neighborhoods. The Administration's plan is to slash the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million coming from the total elimination of all funding for the recycling and composting of organic waste. This is a short sighted action that has the potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

While this program needs to be expanded to include a mandatory organics program inclusive of environmental justice communities and NYCHA residences, **today we are urging the City Council to ensure that the City continues organics recycling and composting, and not destroy the progress we have made in the past few years.**

Today, we are asking that the approximately 7million dollar cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, and expand to include funding for community outreach and education, and that there be equitable distribution of organics and e-waste drop-off sites throughout the City. We also request that in the near term the City's organics collection become a mandatory residential organics program for everyone. These programs could go a long way toward allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and prevent this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases. **The Collective believes that full funding for composting programs is necessary if NYC is to meet its Sustainability and Environmental Justice goals and be prepared to address and mitigate the impacts of Climate Change**

In the big picture this comparatively small amount of funding would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle. Such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this request to the Collective and to the communities and clients with whom we work. **We ask that the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.**

2) Climate Works for All

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted our climate and jobs at the same time, necessitating that we invest in green infrastructure projects to put our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our climate goals.

First, the City must fully fund the implementation of Local Law 97 in order to tackle the biggest source of carbon emissions in the most polluting buildings, and create 40,000 good jobs in the process. The City must also press on with its solar goals and prioritize environmental justice communities for solar jobs.

In addition, in the very near future, a citywide composting program is an essential service that would also provide good jobs for impacted communities while reducing our waste burden.

The City should tap into available resources, including those authorized via the federal CARES Act, existing FEMA funds, municipal liquidity grants, as well as State and Federal workforce development grants.

Thank you for considering these urgent budget items - we do not have any more time to waste in meeting our climate goals.



EVERGREEN

Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange

Testimony of Evergreen to NYC Council Committees on Small Business and Economic Development May 20, 2020

Evergreen Inc.: Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange is a membership organization that champions manufacturing, creative production, and industrial service businesses in North Brooklyn and beyond. We connect businesses with resources and opportunities to help create and maintain high quality jobs at all skill levels. I would like to highlight the recent work that our organization has accomplished through the Industrial Business Zone (IBZ) program, both before and during the COVID emergency, and request that additional funding be allocated for the program citywide to assist in our efforts to build small businesses back in a post-COVID recovery. If COVID taught us one lesson, it is that a vibrant local industrial sector is not just important for economic development, it is an imperative to ensuring public health and welfare. By facilitating an uninterrupted food supply for the city and demonstrating the ability to produce protective gear for essential workers on short notice, the industrial sector has proven equally crucial in good times and bad.

North Brooklyn is home to over 1200 industrial businesses with over 15,000 employees, representing approximately 14% of NYC's manufacturing base. Every single one of these small businesses are suffering; most have suspended operations and many are in great danger of going under. Nearly every business we speak with has furloughed most or all employees during the shelter in place order. Even manufacturers deemed essential by NYS have shut down because of their concern for the safety of their staff. Since so much of the manufacturing workforce lives locally, the economic health of these businesses is directly related to the economic health of the local residential community.

Evergreen has adjusted the services we have been providing to our businesses since we were last in the office on March 13. Our team of 5 is responding to an average of 14 unique requests for assistance each day or about 70 per week. Generally speaking, our COVID related business assistance includes:

- Assisting businesses in applying for direct relief from NYC grant and loan programs and Federal PPP and EIDL programs
- Daily crisis communications with small businesses
- Hosting informational webinars on human resource and other issues impacting small businesses
- One on one assistance for businesses understanding if they are essential, assistance in applying to NYS for essential designation
- Research and reporting on available relief programs, hosting informational webinars on relief programs
- Matching manufacturers with NYCEDC and DSBS teams to repurpose factories for PPE production
- Aggregating and promoting volunteer opportunities for businesses to support

Some of the businesses we serve are the ones that SBS assigned to our organization from 311 calls and other SBS channels that came in citywide, but many more are coming in from our own constituent base. In order to make sure that our businesses have the most up to date COVID information and to continually remind them we can assist with many of the issues they are facing, we have been concentrating on writing informative



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Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange

articles and assembling pertinent resources for our business and blasting it out in our daily eblast which goes out to about 1500 businesses. We get many requests for assistance in response to our newsletter articles. It has been a really effective and important way for us to be proactively serving our firms throughout this crisis.

We have just started to survey our businesses to determine our effectiveness. The preliminary results are encouraging; all of the respondents so far have applied for some sort of COVID relief and 93% were approved for an award. All respondents noted that they learned about relief programs from our eblast, and 75% received direct assistance in applying for programs from our team. Respondents rated Evergreen's assistance to be very helpful to their business. We got many comments; here are two examples:

It was not only immensely helpful but very reassuring that I wasn't missing out on opportunities simply because I wasn't in the know. It has been really helpful to have one email to look at to feel covered in terms of the latest updates and opportunities. Thank you so much.

Mostly I think getting the orderly emails with trusted info was the most helpful thing! When speaking to friends about different programs it seemed that everyone was getting a lot of different information, but I trust Evergreen to give concise and clear instructions and just found it helpful to have a trusty source of information through all of this.

In better times, Evergreen serves as the voice for businesses in industrial North Brooklyn. We represent their interests at public hearings and community meetings. We bring elected officials, like the membership of your City Council committees to meet our businesses and their employees so you can really understand the impact of the policies you develop. We advocate with City, State and Federal officials to help them understand the impact of the Superfund process on the local economy, and we educate the local businesses about how the process might affect them. We continue to serve as the connection between the business and residential community for a variety of issues such as vehicle safety and truck routes. In addition to broad based efforts, we work with individual businesses to navigate government agencies to resolve a variety of issues such as permits, tickets, graffiti removal, illegal dumping, utilities and signage. We are able to accomplish these outcomes for our local businesses as a result of our longstanding relationship within the local business community.

In 2018, Evergreen staff served more than 193 individual businesses. We obtained \$483,960 in financing for 5 local firms. We managed 22,400 square feet of affordable industrial real estate to retain 38 manufacturing jobs in our community. Staff helped 22 businesses navigate government agencies. 95 firms sent 154 attendees to our social mixers, 81 firms sent 99 attendees to informational workshops and 60 firms received one-on-one assistance from Evergreen staff.

Evergreen's programming meets the needs of North Brooklyn's underserved small industrial businesses, particularly manufacturers helmed by minorities and women. Our community needs the good-quality, industrial jobs that these firms provide. Nearly 40% of the North Brooklyn industrial workforce lives in the local area. These jobs, on average, pay residents 73% more than local retail establishments. Additionally, over



EVERGREEN

Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange

60% of manufacturing jobs offer benefits, compared with 30% of service jobs. Also, these jobs frequently do not require English proficiency or advanced education. Fifty-five percent of the local industrial workforce is foreign born and 65% is non-white. Considering 20% of our local residents do not speak English, 31% live at or below the poverty line, and nearly 37% are on some form of public assistance, these jobs offer the best path to economic security for our community residents.

Appropriate levels of funding for the IBZ program will ensure that we will be able to serve the many businesses that rely upon us for advice and support. Through the IBZ program, Evergreen is the portal for local industrial businesses to access city and state programs designed to help them. They rely on our expertise and relationships to help their firms grow in the community. We're their friend and confidant, and they feel good about us. As a 38-year old membership organization, Evergreen leverages the longstanding relationships it has with local businesses to promote and enroll firms in new public programs, ensuring their success. As an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Evergreen is able to augment city investment with donations from individuals and foundations, producing more bang for the buck. Additionally, IBZ funding for administrative overhead allows us to put other public and private funding investments (such as Deputy Mayor Thompson's Employee Ownership initiative and capital grants for real estate development) straight into program delivery. Finally, Evergreen is an integral member of the community, and can serve as a liaison between local businesses, residents and city and state agencies when issues arise. We keep close tabs on the business community, and are able to quickly produce data for city staff as it is needed.

Protecting and promoting our industrial sector is crucial to the city's overall economic development. The sector provides close to 500,000 jobs in New York City, making up nearly 15% of the city's workforce, and contributed \$1.7 billion in tax revenues. The manufacturing and industrial sector is not only a strong component of our economy but a reliable source of jobs for many of our fellow New Yorkers.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss how we are able to nurture jobs in our community through the Industrial Business Zone program, and thank you again for your support.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 19, 2020

Tony Bennett
Founder

Susan Benedetto
President & Founder

Toby E. Boshak
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Susan Benedetto
Tony Bennett
Danny Bennett
Iris Cantor
Holly Cao
John Desiderio
Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer
Joe Laurita
Hal Rosenbluth
Ted Sarandos
Cheri Walsh
Ed Welburn

Advisory Committee

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Carol Burnett
Harry Connick, Jr.
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Michael Feinstein
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Harold Holzer
Don Jenner
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k.d. lang
Annie Leibovitz
Wynton Marsalis
Al Pacino
Regis Philbin
Mark Seliger
Herb Siegel
Joel Smirnoff
Joanne Woodward

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Toby Boshak, and I am the Executive Director of Exploring the Arts.

The mission of Exploring the Arts is to transform the lives of young people through arts education. Founded by legendary singer and painter Tony Bennett and his wife, Susan Benedetto, a former public school teacher, we make multi-year commitments to public middle and high schools in all 5 boroughs to support their school-day, sustainable arts education programs. We also provide critical out-of-school opportunities in the arts to their students, including paid after-school internships and free arts-focused post-secondary readiness and training. We currently have 32 partner schools in our NYC Network, the majority of which are Title I.

We have pivoted our programming to digital learning as best we can: our current cohorts of students in our out-of-school programming are meeting via Zoom to stay creative and connected to their peers and our staff. We are supporting those Partner Schools that said they had the capacity to transition to online learning in the arts. We are connecting arts teachers to one another to share best practices for teaching and learning in the arts how best to support students' shifting needs.

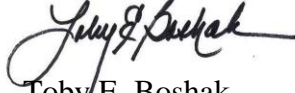
Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. We have been a grateful recipient of DCLA, which bolsters both our in-school

programs and our internship opportunities; budgetary cuts would impact the services to our schools and students, when they need this support most. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby E. Boshak', written in a cursive style.

Toby E. Boshak
Executive Director



Testimony of Hindy L. Schachter, Families for Safe Streets
New York City Council
Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020

My name is Hindy Schachter. I am a lifelong New York City resident. As a senior citizen driver, cyclist, and pedestrian I see the need for safe streets from multiple perspectives, but each vantage requires putting an end to traffic violence. At the present time that commitment means fiscally supporting Vision Zero initiatives and generously implementing the street Master Plan and the Open Streets initiative demanded by the recent COVID 19 pandemic.

I started riding a bicycle on the streets of Manhattan in the 1970s. My first cycling forays came well before the advent of bike lanes or share-the-road signs. Often as I pedaled with my husband, Irving Schachter, a driver would open his window and yell, "Get off the street. You belong on the sidewalk." As my husband could ride 25 mph, the drivers were not responding to our lack of speed; they simply refused to share the road. We became members of Transportation Alternatives because we wanted to educate motorists and change driving culture. From our first forays we both believed change was possible; I continue to believe that change can and will come today.

My husband was also a lifelong New York City resident. He was a driver, a cyclist and a pedestrian who felt comfortable in all three roles. He was a runner who won age group awards

in New York Road Runner races. In 2013, he completed his first New York City marathon at the age of 74. In summer 2014, he set aside time each week for three Central Park runs as preparation for the upcoming November race.

On Sunday August 3, 2014, he and I set out to run in the park. We ran five miles together at my pace—his warm up. At E. 69th Street and East Drive I left. While my exercise time was over, he planned to complete 13 additional miles at a faster pace. He was almost finished with an 18 mile run when a 17-year-old cyclist veered at speed into the runner's lane and collided with Irv. A moment was all it took to end a life still primed for athletic accomplishment.

One way to analyze this tragedy is to focus on the cyclist's individual flaws, particularly his lack of concern with the consequences of entering a pedestrian only lane. Such an approach has merit in that it reminds everyone that the cyclist's action was not an accident—entering the lane at speed was a deliberate (and wrongheaded) choice. But focusing on the individual alone will not solve the problem of traffic crashes. The underlying cause of our current traffic crash epidemic is faulty street/road design and a culture that minimizes the need to hold accountable people who kill and maim on the road. And let us not forget that although my husband died because of a cyclist's error, this type of crash is an extremely infrequent occurrence. Almost all traffic deaths come because of the actions of motorists and street redesign will be particularly effective at changing driver behavior.

I submit this testimony you today to honor my husband's memory because only you, the elected legislators of our city, can eliminate the problem of faulty street design. Such a campaign means providing funds to create a city in which his death and the death of so many other collision victims will be unthinkable. To this end I ask the City Council to fund all the

Vision Zero safety measures such as pedestrian islands and protected bicycle lanes. In particular I ask for enough open streets so that cyclists, runners and walkers have adequate space to enjoy the outdoors while social distancing. At a time when there are fewer cars on the streets than usual, open those boulevards so that people are comfortable being outdoors throughout the city. Create open streets near parks and in areas that lack such amenities. Create open streets in neighborhoods with high income folks and those with low income residents. Create as many open streets as you can. From the southern tip of Staten Island to the northern terminus of the Bronx we all need safe streets.

Since the mayor announced that the city would create open streets, we have not seen the fast implementation the city needs. What are we waiting for? Every delay can only enable additional tragedies. My tragedy is in one sense a result of bunching people together without adequate demarcation. A simple line separated the pedestrian's lane in Central Park and the lane used by the man whose action killed Irving. Better designed separation might well mean that I would not have to give testimony today.

The only outcome of stretching the process of opening streets is the strong probability that more people will share my horrible experiences, the likelihood that additional people will lose a beloved partner either because pedestrians and cyclists are thrust into a space shared with cars or because people cannot practice social distancing in the tiny space allocated to them.

The time to act is now. We need streets that put the brakes on excessive car speed. The only speed we want is from a City Council primed to fund a safer street environment in a speedy manner.

Felix Gomez, Essential Worker

Adult Literacy Testimony



I'm from Bogota, Colombia. In Colombia, I used to work as head of inventory security in a multinational company named Home Center and I studied business administration specializing in financial risk. But because of safety and economic reasons, I decided to leave my country and come to the U.S. I came here alone in 2018 but later my mother came here and now we live together.

I love New York. I like the atmosphere, I like the people, I like the public transportation. I like that people respect others and don't care what others do. It's an open-minded city. I feel safe, I feel relaxed. There are a lot of opportunities to grow, to study. I like the different seasons. I like it all. I love this city.

When I arrived here I couldn't work in the same field that I worked in in Colombia but I had to make money. So I started to work as a dishwasher, and after that as a busser, after that as a barback, and also as a cashier at Penn Station. But then the coronavirus came and the businesses closed.

My boyfriend is a nurse in the hospital and he told me that they needed people to work there in the housekeeping department and help in the emergency room. So I went there and had an interview in Spanish and English and I got a job as an emergency room assistant.

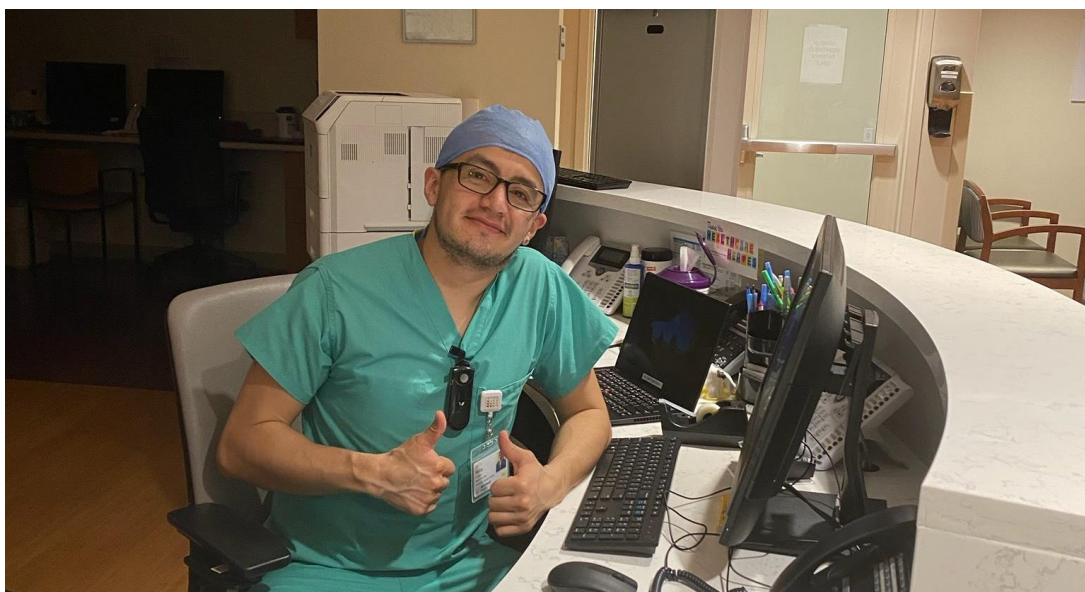
When the ambulances call the hospital they tell them what the patient needs, and when the patient arrives in critical condition, there's a list of information including the room and equipment and then we help bring them to the correct place and get them what they need.

In this hospital the doctors and nurses don't speak Spanish or only speak a little Spanish, so when they call us everything's in English. For example, they say, "Hey, Felix! I need napkins! I need cleaner! I need the respiration machine!"

I've worked there for two months, during the most critical times of the coronavirus. It was a heavy, sad atmosphere with a lot of protocols and anxiety but at the same time with the support of the city. Because every day at seven everyone applauded in support of everyone who works in the hospital. This was beautiful.

I feel very good in this job, and now I think I'd like to study to become a nurse. I believe it's a very interesting career and it's a profession in which you need a lot of love, a lot of passion and a lot of desire and dedication to work. So after getting my papers and improving my English, my next step is to study nursing.

I think that in the United States and in New York the possibilities for Latinos is very good, but it's really necessary to speak English well and it's necessary to have structured and formal classes. A friend of mine told me about the University Settlement Adult Literacy Program and that it was a good program, one that requires persistence and dedication, and I started last fall. I've learned and I've advanced and thanks to these small advances I could get a job in the hospital. I'm grateful for this because in this pandemic I could get a job that makes it possible for me to support my family.



Scale Up Enhanced Cafeterias in NYC Public Schools



We call on Mayor De Blasio to commit an additional \$30 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan

The NYC DOE Office of Food and Nutrition Services has rolled out an innovative cafeteria redesign in 34 middle and high school buildings (view a map at bit.ly/cafeeteria-redesign) serving 60,000 students across the city. In addition, the Chancellor has committed \$25 million for approximately 50 more schools. We are calling for another \$150 million towards a planned phase-in of 300 more cafeterias.

The food court style serving line includes more menu options daily, and the presentation dramatically increases the appeal of the food. The new serving lines have significantly reduced the time students spend on the line, allowing for more time to eat and decompress.

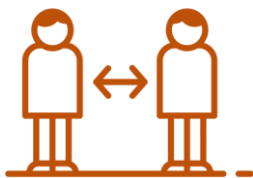
Enhanced cafeterias facilitate long-term mitigation of COVID-19

As the city prepares for reopening of school buildings in September, new considerations and measures must be taken to secure the safety and health of the school community. To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure, schools must reimagine new structures and implement new strategies to support a healthy learning environment and protect students and staff.

A trauma-informed response must:

- recognize the collective trauma of COVID-19 for all NYC students,
- address physical safety concerns, and
- promote a safe environment to decrease students' stress response.

The enhanced cafeteria facilitates long-term changes that encourage new social distancing and behavioral standards to reduce future risk.



Self-service expedites the service line and reducing overcrowding



Deli style service line reduces frequent surface contact by multiple people

Facilitate grab and go options to reduce overcrowding in the cafeteria



Smaller tables maximize space and minimize mixing students



Enhanced cafeterias have higher school lunch participation

To build on the foundation of universal free school lunch, NYC DOE should enhance the cafeterias of half of all high schools and middle schools.

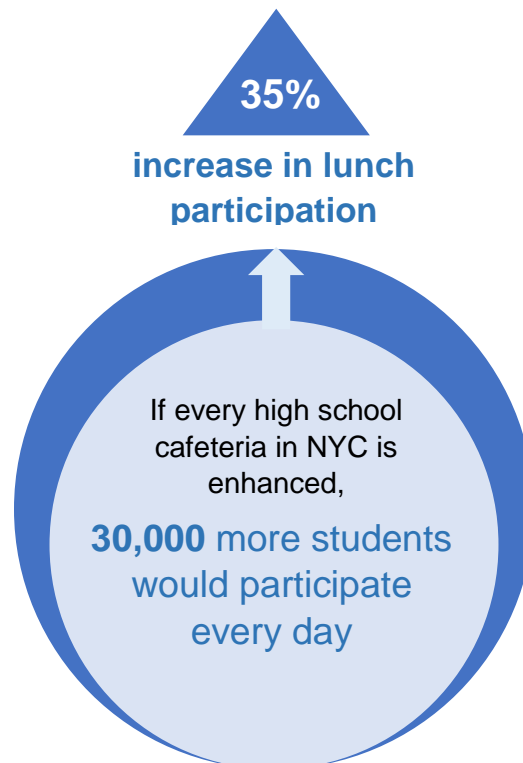


The lunchrooms are more comfortable and inviting, with diner-style booths, individual seats, and round tables replacing the institutional rectangular tables with benches.

A recent study links universal free meals to academic performance, with increases in test scores equivalent to as much as 10 weeks of learning in math and ELA.

- Syracuse University, July 2019

The first 15 high school enhanced cafeterias, serving 47 schools, experienced a 35% increase in lunch participation.



Enhanced cafeterias serve more fruits and vegetables

Compared with schools of the same type without the redesign, enhanced cafeterias served:

3.0x more
Bananas, Peppers, & Tomatoes



4.0x more
Apples, Carrots, & Spinach



30.0x more
Lettuce



4.9x more
Broccoli



11.3x more
Grapes



Prepared by



110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
communityfoodadvocatesnyc.org
646-603-3021

May 2020

Frances Condon
May 23, 2020

Testimony to the Committee on Finance regarding the FY 2021 Budget

My name is Frances Condon. I am 21 years old and I was born and raised in New York City. I am writing with horror in response to the proposed FY 2021 budget, which I can describe as nothing but despicable.

During this time when educational programs, affordable housing, and proactive health services are most vital, you are choosing instead to invest in prosecution, police, and prisons—cruel, life-stealing systems that unequivocally cause harm. Mayor DeBlasio is using language of war and scarcity to justify massive budget cuts, even though New York City does not and has never had a resource shortage. This city is "home" to more billionaires than any other city on the planet. Any strain on the city budget is one imposed by the city government each year when it decides not to tax the wealthy.

Within the artificially tightened budget, you have made choices that are contradictory to human life. How can you possibly justify cutting \$641.8 million from the DOE and only \$23.8 from the NYPD? Each year, the NYPD spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year on misconduct settlements. Instead of recognizing this as a signal that police do not keep people safe, you have proposed spending \$35 million to "reduce use of force incidents" and another \$3 million to "enhance" how city lawyers handle "frivolous lawsuits" against the NYPD. How do you justify these expenses when it costs *nothing* not to murder and harass people? Save money and lives by shrinking the NYPD, as dozens of community organizations have already asked you to. End pre-trial detention (87% of people in city jails, where the COVID-19 rates are some of the highest in the world, are awaiting trial!) and cut prosecutorial budgets rather than increasing them to promote "progressive" prosecuting (the only progressive prosecution is no prosecution, which again... is free). The city is planning to spend \$11 billion dollars on new jails over the next decade. Spend that money on schools, housing, and healthcare instead.

Teachers need support and compensation right now. We need social workers in schools who can help children cope with the chaos and grief of this pandemic. We need arts programs and creative outlets for healing. We need affordable housing that is both plentiful and safe. We need more accessible healthcare! The city needs to support community organizations who are keeping people alive right now (as they always have) through food and resource distribution, and to re-fund SYEP as other job options for young people become nearly impossible to find.

Every time I go outside, I see police officers with their masks off, failing to social distance as they approach people on the sidewalk. I see cops in and around subway stations focused on fare evasion when tens of thousands have lost their jobs. This is unconscionable and harms more people every day. Cut prisons, police, and prosecution out of your budget and invest in communities.

Regards,
Frances Condon
frannycondon99@gmail.com
(347) 634-1830

NYC Budget Justice testimony:

I'm a resident in District 49, a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it *on video*. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, *more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined* is unconscionable.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.

Friederike Windel

Do Not Pass The Executive Budget As Is!! Please!!

As the parents of 4,000 NYC school students, we urge you NOT to pass the FY 21 budget containing the extensive deceptions from the Department of Education as presented in the recent hearings.

Without Council requiring an absolute requirement that the DOE finally rectify inequities and eliminate favoritism in its Fair Student Funding and drastically cut the hundreds of millions it wastes on Central Offices, executive salaries, and outside contractors, you will be giving them free reign to continue business as is.

For over a decade, the DOE has awarded some schools amounts excessive and undue under their own formula while starving others of dollars **based on need** and based on programs offered. Meanwhile, as your Finance and Education Committees have found, hundreds of millions go to outside contractors, duplicative overhead and excessive salaries.

Dollars must go to fully fund our schools-including mine-before dollar one is spent on overhead and pet projects.

Full Is Fair

<full.is.fair@gmail.com>

For the past 19 years I have been with the Gene Frankel Theater, which I have come to have the privilege to direct. We are one of a handful of independent commercial Off Off Broadway theaters. In my theater I have carried on the traditions set down by our founder Gene Frankel.

Small and midsize theaters, like our sister theater Theatre 80 Saint Marks, need bail outs. We ask for this, as so many depend on our survival. We create work far beyond the boundaries of most other small businesses. Theater, with our constantly changing sets employs many craft people who are hired for specific performances. The performances bring work to people with unique skills from sound and light, to the new frontiers of computer effects. Restaurants and hotels are drawn to neighborhoods by the presence of theaters, and the diversity of our programs brings new groups to neighborhoods who then discover the resources of businesses there.

We also need funding in the form of a direct grant in order to open safely.

Gail Thacker
Executive Director
Artistic Director
Art & Theatre
Gene Frankel Theatre
24 Bond St, NYC 10012
917-841-7567
212-777-1767
www.genefrankeltheatre.com

Dear New York City Council:

I am a constituent in District 9. I currently live in Central Harlem, a neighborhood which I love, and have lived in New York for almost my whole life. I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I am testifying today to urge you to pass a NYC budget that prioritizes healthcare, education, social services, housing, and people's real human needs over police and prisons.

The Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails, which is nearly \$6 billion, virtually untouched. The city's continued over-investment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers, even as the NYPD continues to criminalize and harass these same communities.

What the COVID-19 pandemic should make more clear than ever is that it is actually health, housing, and economic security that make us safe - not police and incarceration.

I work professionally in global peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The comments I am making to you today mirror almost identically the ones that we are forced to make at work about military budgets - which are often so much higher than investments in human needs, to the detriment of our world. Last year, our world spent \$1.9 trillion on the military, and around \$700 billion of that was spent by the United States alone. Meanwhile, the US budget for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development was just under \$40 billion. What my colleagues and I emphasize all the time to governments is that if we actually want to build a peaceful world, we can't continue to so clearly prioritize and uphold systems of violence.

The same goes here in NYC. To be perfectly frank: You get what you pay for. If we want a society where everyone has healthcare, housing, and a quality education, those things have to be prioritized in our policies and budgets. This is more vital than ever at a time of crisis. The fact is that we can't police our way out of a pandemic, and our society needs to permanently move away from the idea that police and incarceration are what constitute "public safety".

The NYPD is tasked on a regular basis with being first responders to people experiencing emotional distress and mental health crises, and policing people who are experiencing homelessness. The police themselves regularly highlight that they are not qualified nor equipped to do this form of work. The latest iteration in this phenomenon is that when the biggest threat to public safety in decades - the COVID-19 pandemic - emerged, the NYPD was sent in to do social distancing enforcement. This approach was a failure. We have also seen striking racial divides in social distancing enforcement, which mirrors the existing patterns we know all too well. To ignore the clear evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined, is unconscionable.

City Council needs to take a hard look at the budgets that back up these failed and structurally flawed approaches. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for public services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections - including an NYPD hiring freeze and deep budget cuts. I want my city representatives to do the same. New York cannot continue to put on a "progressive" mask while deprioritizing human needs. I will only vote for representatives who share this vision of making our city a just and equitable place for everyone.

May 22, 2020

Written Testimony to NYC Council Finance Committee

As many of you know, The Doe Fund has two very important missions: First, we operate three transitional homeless shelters under contract with the New York City Department of Homeless Services, out of which we run Ready, Willing & Able, a 9-12-month residential training program centered around paid work. Second, we design, develop and manage affordable and supportive housing across Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan. In total, we operate or are developing over one million square feet of permanent and transitional housing for New Yorkers.

For more than 30 years, we have fulfilled our mission to break the cycles of homelessness, addiction and criminal recidivism by providing holistic services, housing and work opportunities. Our innovations in social services have transformed the lives of tens of thousands of people with histories of homelessness, incarceration, addiction and HIV/AIDS. We're striving to continue to help as many at-risk individuals as we can. We are privileged to be able to do this work, and we are grateful to the City and to many of you for your support through the years.

COVID has had a dramatic effect on our work. We have been taking extensive precautions to protect residents in our facilities, RWA trainees and our other employees, 81% of which are essential workers attending to the daily needs of our residents. Our cleaning crews are still fulfilling the commitments made to various neighborhoods for litter cleanup. They are functioning under a new enhanced sanitary regimen based on the guidance and recommendations of the CDC and state and city authorities. The regimen includes additional cleaning and disinfecting of vans, surfaces, furniture and other equipment, as well as enhanced personal hygiene as suggested by health experts. Additionally, our staff are monitoring all trainees for any flu-like symptoms and following the protocol set down by the City Health Department and the DHS.

And we have been working very closely with DHS in recent weeks to safely reduce population density in our transitional shelters by moving 50 percent of the residents of each shelter into a private hotel.

We anticipate further impacts. The City Comptroller's office predicts that 900,000 New Yorkers - or one out of five working residents - will have filed for unemployment by the end of June, many from lower wage sectors like hospitality, retail, restaurants and health care. As a result, housing attorneys and activists fear a tidal wave of eviction cases if a state moratorium is allowed to expire later this year. The need for our services will clearly increase if these fears are borne out.

The pandemic, furthermore, has shone a harsh light on jail and prison conditions in the US, and our country's over-incarceration problem generally. We have even seen authorities in some jurisdictions release incarcerated persons early – sometimes hundreds at a time – and reduce jail admissions to prevent the spread of the virus. Against that backdrop, and in the context of the welcome criminal justice reforms already undertaken, the need for proven programs to help prepare people for successful reintegration are of critical importance.

You all have access to our specific budget requests. We have asked for initiative and member item funding for Ready, Willing & Able to ensure that we can continue to provide the men in the program with unsurpassed service through our mix of paid work, holistic case management, educational opportunities, vocational training and housing placement assistance. Your support would also help us undertake security enhancements at our three transitional shelters, and purchase high quality work and safety gear. We have also approached several of you with capital requests.

We are under no illusion: difficult economic times mean difficult budget choices. Given the unique impact COVID has thus far had on our city, your budget choices may be among the most difficult in the country. We understand the federal government has an important role to play in supporting hard hit states and cities, and have been encouraging our networks to work to see that it does.

As you make those choices, please think foremost of those we serve – the homeless, formerly incarcerated and otherwise less economically privileged – and the intensive services they will need in these uniquely challenging times.

And then think of our long and exemplary track-record of providing those services, and consider our clear potential to make the limited funds at your disposal have the greatest impact in helping fellow New Yorkers who need it most.



Georgia Boothe, Vice President, Child Welfare & Family Services at Children's Aid

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearing on the

Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget

General Welfare Committee

Saturday, May 23, 2020

My name is Georgia Boothe, and I am the Executive Vice President for Child Welfare and Family Services at Children's Aid. I would like to thank Chair Stephen Levin, and members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget and its effect on the child welfare system citywide.

For 166 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. We have also constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood that builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Today our over 2,000 full and part time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families through our network of 42 locations including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and school-based and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx and the north shore of Staten Island.

Every day, we build well-being through our work in four areas: education, health and wellness, social and emotional supports, and family stabilization. At Children's Aid, we provide family, therapeutic, and medical foster care, and adoption services. In 2018, we served about 700 children and youth in family-based foster homes and completed 74 adoptions.

As an organization that believes in the power of advocacy, we are members of and support the legislative and policy agendas of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), Fair Futures, The Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA), and the Human Services Council of New York (HSC).

Sustainability of the Non-profit Sector: COVID-19

Non-profits face an unprecedented threat to our ability to provide crucial services to New York City's children and families. While the sector is committed to protecting our communities against COVID-19, non-profits face an immediate financial crisis during this global pandemic. Non-profits need immediate action and commitments from the city to endure the COVID-19 pandemic and looming recession.

New York City's non-profits employ 16% of the private workforce, 6% higher than the national average. In the Bronx we are 34% of the workforce, in Staten Island 25%, in Brooklyn 21%. Non-profits are critical to the infrastructure and vitality of our city. Non-profits are often called upon first to respond in times of crisis, yet much of our sector operates in a precarious financial position. 40% of organizations have no cash reserves, 10% are insolvent, and less than 30% are financially strong, despite many leaders' calls to build a stronger foundation for our sector for years. Non-profits must shift our work to respond to COVID-19, in a financial predicament partially government made. Government has outsourced its obligations to non-profits, paying us at a rate much less than the government would spend providing services directly.

Our front-line workers have borne the brunt of chronic underfunding. Child welfare staff are essential staff, and while they have to be available to serve at-risk families, they do not have access to adequate supports.

Although residential facility staff have access to hazard pay and PPE, child welfare staff do not. Child Welfare workers need hazard pay, childcare support, and more PPE in order to continue to carry out the functions of their job.

We are confident the non-profit sector can rise to the challenge. However, we cannot do so without the proper resources, without being included in recovery actions, and without guaranteed commitments from government partners. Non-profits request the following from the city:

- The Small Business Services Department must expand the employee grant retention program to include all non-profit organizations
- The Small Business Services Department must expand the COVID-19 loan program to non-profits
- The Department of Finance must place a moratorium on debt and tax payments for non-profits and small businesses losing revenue during this recession.
- The Mayor's Office of Contract Services must suspend the wet, notarized signatures on contracts requirement while our organizations practice social isolation.
- All city offices, including DCLA, DOE, HDC, EDC, DOHMH, ACS, DYCD, DSS, DFTA, Mayor's Fund, and Council Discretionary must commit to paying budgeted contract levels in full and advance through FY21, declare new guidance supersedes previous inflexible guidance, and streamline the process and templates to change scopes of work.
- Provide hazard pay, child care supports and PPE for child welfare workers.

Challenges with the Children's Center

The Children's Center was created in the early 90's to provide short term foster care environments for youth in care. As of February 2020, there are about 73 children and youth at the center each day and 27% are age 14 and older. However, we know that whenever there is a crisis in the community, such as COVID-19, there is an increase in the census at the Children's Center.

Children's Aid joins the Children's Center and ACS in our concern over the urgent challenges that COVID-19 presents our youth in care impacted by this pandemic. There is growing concern around finding and maintaining placement and having enough foster homes to meet the increased demands the Children's Center is facing as a result of COVID-19. Foster parents are requesting that youth be tested before accepting them into their home, and express growing concerns around symptomatic youth. We need more widely available testing for these youth, and a policy to be developed by ACS around testing youth before placement in foster homes. In addition, we acknowledge the risk factors many foster parents are taking on during COVID-19, and to incentivize parents to take in symptomatic youth we recommend additional compensation/hazard pay for these foster parents.

To address the concerns that we are experiencing with the Children's Center, we stand ready to partner with ACS, and child welfare agencies to address the growing demand for secure placement and to meet the needs of these youth in a supportive and structured environment. In light of COVID-19, it is extremely important that all staff working with the complex needs of these children be properly trained, supplied with personal protective equipment and appropriately compensated for this important work.

Fair Futures: Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

Our organization is proud to be a member of Fair Futures, a coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations focused on supporting young people in and aging out of foster care. Since the inception of the COVID-19

pandemic, Fair Futures coaches and tutors have been on the forefront helping our youth in foster care secure safe housing, food and medical supplies, and assisting in the transition to virtual learning. In the midst of this crisis, they continue to provide emotional and academic support to our young people and for many, are the only support system they have. More than ever, we ask for the City to fulfill its promise to foster youth. In order for our young people to survive this crisis and its long-term effects, we urge the City Council to work collaboratively with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the City's FY2021 budget.

Recommendations:

- **Maintain funding for the New York City Council Wrap-Around Support for Transitional-Aged Foster Youth program.**
- **Provide funding for summer programming to keep youth indoors, safe, and occupied during COVID-19.**
- **We urge the Mayor and City Council to advocate for additional supports so that every foster youth from 6th grade to age 26 can access the long-term coaching and robust academic supports they need.**

Closing

Children's Aid is fiercely committed to advocate, protect, and increase funding for the most under-resourced communities. We sincerely thank the New York City Council for their vigorous support of children, youth, families, and communities in New York City. It is the right and moral thing to do to ensure that our children and families have the best educational opportunities available to realize their full potential. We look forward to continuing working with the City Council and the Administration.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this most important issue.



Testimony of

Gisele Castro
Executive Director

Submitted to the
New York City Council
Committees on Finance
RE: FY21 Executive Budget

May 21, 2020

Good Morning Members of the New York City Council and Committee Chairs. I am Gisele Castro, the Executive Director of Exalt Youth (**exalt**), a NYC-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit serving youth ages 15-19 with criminal justice system involvement.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to participate in the important process of establishing the upcoming fiscal year's budget during this especially difficult and critical time. I applaud your work and thank you for your advocacy on behalf of the city's most vulnerable youth.

about exalt Youth:

exalt Youth serves young people in all five boroughs, many of whom are facing serious criminal charges and all of whom are at a critical crossroads in their lives. The **exalt Youth** model addresses three key factors: criminal justice avoidance, educational attainment, and employability. Our signature program, the "core internship program" combines a rigorous afterschool curriculum with a paid internship and post internshipship alumni support network. We are extremely proud of the results:

- 99% of exalt participants are enrolled and progressing in school 2 years post grad
- 95% of our participants do not recidivate 2 years post grad
- 76% achieve sentence reductions
- 100% are matched with paid internship placements, often their first paid work experience

In FY19 we served 200 young people and remain on track, despite the pandemic, to reach our goal of serving a total of 360 young people in FY20 including 10 fully virtual cohorts (200 young people) between May 1 and July 1 and have capacity to serve another 200 in July and August.

exalt Youth achieving during Covid-19:

In mid-march, we temporarily closed our lower Manhattan headquarters and moved our entire model to a virtual one. Our young people have continued to excel in this time, with a 90% engagement rate.

At **exalt Youth**, we strive to meet the challenges and the expectations that our ambitious young people set for us: We have responded to this unique time by providing them with the resources they need to be successful including free tablets and laptops to participate in the program virtually, coaching by Google executive on tech skills, and an increase in their stipends.

exalt Youth are now earning \$15/hr (up from \$13) during the training phase and \$17/hr for their paid internships.

exalt Youth is positioned to accept referrals for and serve young people released from Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Center, as well as provide a meaningful paid internship experience for all court-involved young people this summer.

Comment on FY 2021 executive budget

1. Cuts to Youth Programming (SYEP) Along with many of our fellow youth serving organizations, we are all deeply concerned about the curtailing of youth serving programs as a result of cuts proposed in the executive budget, especially Summer Youth Employment and afterschool and other programs traditionally run through the schools. We know first hand the transformative power of young people having access to meaningful paid work. We strongly support the restoration of these programs and encourage policymakers to look to the innovations that many of the youth serving organizations like ours have implemented, in order to provide an experience for young people this summer that will enrich and encourage them and not leave them behind.
2. Funding for Alternatives To Incarceration (ATI) Programs: We are also strongly in support of keeping MOCJ and NYC Council-funded ATI programs whole during this time of contracting budgets. **exalt Youth** is poised to implement a program this fall, supported by prior year ATI funding, that will serve new students this fall, and, based on our track record of success, keep these students out of the criminal justice system and engaged with their high school education. These ATI programs are essential to the City's continued advancement towards decarceration, the closure of Rikers Island and a fully implemented Raise the Age initiative. We believe these programs to be essential to securing this budget's priorities of public safety, health, food security and shelter.

I want to once again thank the Council and these committees for holding this hearing and for your attention to this organization and our perspectives. We applaud the work you have done and continue to do to support our most vulnerable youth and ensure access to comprehensive services to keep our communities safe and elevate our young people toward lifelong success.

Respectfully submitted,



Gisele Castro
Executive Director



Testimony to the New York City Council Finance Committee
FY 21 Budget Hearing
Submitted by Glenn Riddick

Thank you to Chair Dromm and all of the other Finance committee members for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I appreciate the Council's attention to the importance of Fair Futures.

"I think a life coach is important because some kids do not have guidance in their life. A youth coach comes in their life and provides them with motivation, guidance, love and be that person that they need and always wanted. My personal experience was very helpful and meaningful. It built up a level of confidence I didn't know I had, helped with my self-esteem at times I didn't know here I was going. My current Youth Coach made me feel comfortable, motivated and guided." –Diamond, JCCA Youth

Hello, my name is Glenn Riddick and I am a coach for Fair Futures. I came to JCCA as a coach having worked in a number of roles serving youth, some of them as SYEP internships. This has led me to want to become a therapist for youth and I will be starting a Master's program in Mental Health Counseling at the end of the month.

The role of a Youth Coach is very important, because as my youth, Diamond, stated, "A lot of young people do not have proper guidance" and often feel hopeless. Who speaks for them during those times, who understands that frustration? As a Youth Coach it's my job and responsibility to be understanding, and knowledgeable about different things our young people are facing. And never forget I once thought the same way they did, so instead of passing judgement, I can help them to the light at the end of the tunnel.

As a coach, I have a caseload of 14 youth and I have gotten to know them to determine the best way to motivate and help them reach their personal, educational and career development goals. Since the onset of the pandemic, I send out a daily motivational quote and check in with them about their day to day activities and challenges. For instance, one 19 year old I work with, is struggling with the need and desire for independence within the context of living in a large family with very limited personal space. First, I let him know that I understand and shared some of the experiences that I had and ways I dealt with a similar struggle. I make sure that I check in with him regularly to give him the personal attention he needs at this time.

As the city recovers from this pandemic, it is going to be my role as a coach to let the youth know that they are not alone and that we will get through this. I will do this by

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providing positive affirmations and individual attention. I will use my experience, knowledge, and skills to help guide them through this challenging time. I respectfully request that the New York City Council fund Fair Futures for FY 21 so that I can continue my work with the youth that need me.



New York City Council Finance Budget Hearing
Budget Hearing: May 21, 2020

Testimony of
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender
Community Center
New York, NY

**THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER**
208 W 13 ST NEW YORK, NY 10011

T. 212.620.7310
F. 212.924.2657
gaycenter.org

THE CENTER

Good afternoon. My name is Glennnda Testone and I am the Executive Director of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center). New York City's LGBT community formed The Center in 1983, in response to the AIDS epidemic, ensuring a place for LGBT people to access information, care and support they were not receiving elsewhere. Now the largest LGBT multi-service organization on the East Coast, The Center provides services to hundreds of individuals each month.

I would like to thank Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and members of the City Council Finance Committee for holding today's hearing on the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget and for the opportunity for public testimony.

Despite closing our physical location due to COVID-19, we have converted our counseling programs, including substance use recovery programs, HIV/AIDS programs, youth programs, and our families and opportunities programs to allow for virtual services. The Center provides services that are part of the City's permanent social service infrastructure and cannot afford to be cut. Our work addresses the needs of some of the City's most vulnerable and at-risk populations. Now, more than ever, the New York City Council's support is essential to our ongoing provisions of services.

Within days of closing, our Center social workers, counselors, and other programs staff had shifted their operations to an online presence. That means that the wide array of crucial services we provide, including HIV testing (via kits mailed home), youth programs, mental health counseling, and outpatient substance use treatment programs, have been able to continue. In fact, one-on-one therapy sessions have increased by 40% since they launched virtually. We are happy to be able to provide even more connection and support for community members who were previously unable to access these services and is something we are looking at continuing in the future to supplement our in-person services after we return to The Center.

All of our client records and case management files are stored in a secure but accessible manner. This means that regardless of where our clinicians are physically, they are able to see records, track interactions, and enter notes from home, while maintaining client confidentiality. This has allowed our team to continue check ins and maintain connection with clients in spite of social distancing.

This testimony will focus on the key areas where The Center is requesting funding and the areas where we are urging the City Council to negotiate an adopted budget that will continue to

**THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER**
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T. 212.620.7310

F. 212.924.2657

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THE CENTER

support the essential services that The Center provides to the LGBTQ community.

LGBTQ Community Crisis Intervention Program \$35,000):

This funding allows us to provide frontline support - such as referrals, intake for services, or service navigation - to thousands of community members each week.

We are applying for funding to support our LGBTQ Community Crisis Intervention Program (LGBTQ CCI). LGBTQ CCI provides crisis support and information to thousands of New Yorkers weekly. The LGBTQ CCI team are trained experts in the network of city agencies, organizations and services that specifically address LGBTQ community needs. The LGBTQ CCI team's expertise enables them to assist LGBTQ individuals from all five boroughs when they are experiencing a crisis. Common areas of assistance are HIV/AIDS support, family support, immigration resources, addiction recovery counseling for adults and youth, patient navigation, and housing and medical assistance.

In light of COVID-19, the LGBTQ CCI has become even more important. Although we cannot meet with our community face-to-face, our team now staffs virtual front desks from their homes and provides community members with connections to case managers, social workers, and the services that are needed within moments. We have received thousands of calls in just the last few weeks.

The Center answers calls and direct community members to the appropriate resources during our normal staffed hours, from 9 AM to 10 PM Monday to Saturday, and 9 AM to 9 PM Sundays. In response to the uptick in demand for these services, we recently introduced a chat feature on our website, so visitors looking for resources can connect with someone immediately during business hours.

LGBTQ Youth In Poverty (\$200,000):

These programs increase LGBT youth academic and employment outlooks, build self-esteem, inform their identity politics and break the cycle of substance abuse, and reduce the likelihood of being unstably housed, ultimately improving their future

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potential and reducing their reliance on government services.

Nearly 60% of LGBT youth of color (LGBTYOC) we serve report that they are barely getting by. Overall, these youth are twice as likely to use substances and struggle with low educational attainment and employability. With the thousands of youth that we have served since our doors opened in 1983, we recognize that LGBTYOC are a particularly marginalized group in an already marginalized community. With funding, we can continue to expand our LGBTYOC programming, including expanding our innovative LGBTYOC Poverty Reduction Initiative, which tackles drivers of poverty and empower LGBTYOC to become healthy, successful adults.

We recognize that substance abuse may also be a compounding barrier to success and in response, replicated our NYS OASAS licensed, LGBT specific outpatient substance abuse treatment program -- the only such program in the entire state of New York -- for youth. During the past year, the program experienced tremendous growth -- we increased our overall program reach by over 250% of high school aged youth. In addition, we recently opened a youth clubhouse, where we offer intensive community support through a drop-in space, groups and tailored activities for our LGBT youth from around the city. Our comprehensive youth leadership curriculum includes rigorous career readiness, paid internships, service learning and a mentorship program.

Following our closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have shifted our services to virtual mode. Center staff and interns have maintained communication with youth through existing social media groups and email; created virtual "Office Hours" for youth to communicate one-on-one with Center Youth staff and interns using HIPAA compliant video conferencing services; and staff and interns have increased youth outreach with text and online chat options. We are currently exploring ways to provide our LGBTQ Queer Tech Camp in a way that will teach our youth technology skills while observing social distancing precautions. These programs will increase LGBT youth's academic and employment outlooks, build self-esteem, inform their identity politics and break the cycle of substance abuse, and reduce the likelihood of being unstably housed, ultimately improving their future potential and reducing their reliance on government services.

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Archivist (\$100,000):

Renewal funding will support our efforts to formally catalogue and properly maintain our important collection of thousands of LGBT archived files, books, and media via our full time staff member, as well as continue to document the rich history of the community that we have received.

Over the years, many artists, historians, academics and scholars have graciously donated their work to The Center's National Archive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History. Founded in 1990, the National Archive works to preserve the LGBT community's vast and rich heritage – making it accessible through regular exhibits, publications and scholarly research activities. Currently, the National Archives' collection includes thousands of papers, periodicals, correspondence and photographs. The National Archive has grown to become a leader among LGBT archives across the country by virtue of the size of its collection, and advocacy efforts for LGBT history. Countless researchers, academics, historians, filmmakers, etc., pour through the files in search of information regarding queer history dating from 1920 to the present. Renewal funding will support our efforts to formally catalogue and properly maintain our important collection via our full time staff member, as well as continue to document the rich history of the community that we have received.

Despite closure of our physical space due to COVID-19, our archives are still available to the public. As the city endures the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, The Center Archive has undertaken collecting stories representing the impact of the pandemic and quarantine on the LGBT community. The LGBTQarantine Archive Project will be a collection of photos, artworks, memes, diaries, and other electronic items now. When we reopen, our archivist will collect any physical items people would like to donate when we reopen.

Trans Equity Initiative (\$250,000):

The Trans Equity Initiative funding supports The Center's Economic Justice Initiatives (EJI) programming. The Center applies intersectional lenses to the strategies implemented, which are designed to address the emerging needs of economically excluded communities by increasing access to affirming resources, encouraging mutual systems of support, and generating new opportunities that create connected community pathways for economic stability for the TGNC-NB community.

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The Center will use its portion of Trans Equity Initiative funding to expand our current programs to further support and empower the transgender and gender non-conforming community (TGNC). Currently, 18% of those we serve identify as TGNC, which includes 1,059 TGNC individuals from 2016-2018. With the funding from the Trans Equity initiative, we will be able to expand our services to support a larger number of TGNC New Yorkers.

The Center offers a robust slate of programming in an affirming setting that is designed by, and tailored to, TGNC community members, as well as their partners and families, to connect with others going through similar experiences. Starting in 1989 with The Center's Gender Identity Project, our services have evolved over time to include a range of transgender-driven support, advocacy, education, and economic stability initiatives. Current programming also provides an opportunity for members to interact with other trans-identified and allied service providers. For example, The Center offers short-term counseling and a number of support groups, such as a queer immigrant mentorship and empowerment group. In addition, through our community support programming, we offer case management services to help the community navigate various social services and ensure they have their basic needs met in order to enable them to focus on their long term, financial stability. These services include support groups, peer support workshops, workforce events, and skills building classes. Additional programs include ESL classes, mental health services, referrals to education programs, healthcare navigation, legal referrals, immigration support, and housing support. All of our counseling and resource connections have shifted to a virtual model, thereby allowing TGNC community members to access the services they need.

The Economic Justice Initiatives (EJI) support services and programming seeks to build on intersectional strategies that address the existing needs of communities impacted by multiple and intersecting systems of oppression. EJI's programs and services aim to respond to emerging needs of economically excluded communities by increasing access to affirming resources, encouraging mutual systems of support, and generating new opportunities. Our programs also connect community members to new opportunities that create pathways for economic stability.

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LGBT Outerborough Initiative (\$200,000):

This funding allows The Center to provide LGBT affirming, substance use and recovery services in the outerboroughs of New York City, with a focus on TGNC community members.

The Center has proudly served community members from throughout the five boroughs throughout its 37 year history. Many of our community members choose to come to The Center, because it provides a safe, affirming space where they can feel affirmed to be themselves without fear of being around those they may not yet feel comfortable being out to. Over half of the clients we serve live in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, or Staten Island; specifically, 30% from Brooklyn, 12% from Queens, 9% from the Bronx, and 1% from Staten Island. Through the LGBT Community Services initiative, we will increase our capacity to provide services to New Yorkers from throughout the 5 boroughs by expanding our existing substance use program, including to support a full time staff member to focus on outreach, education, and providing direct services to the transgender and gender non-conforming community (TGNC) community in the outer boroughs. With the COVID-19 outbreak, one-on-one therapy services have increased by more than 40% and our recovery program has increased provision of services by 33%

Specifically, the funding City Council has provided supports a range of services that aim to help individuals with significant co-occurring problems such as mental illness, life trauma, or chronic medical conditions. Services include a range of individual, group, and community client substance use treatment programs, such as crisis intervention, counseling, educational workshops, referrals to other affirming providers as needed, and peer-to-peer support, as well as a community health fair that is catered to the specific needs of our clients.

The Center has continued to offer recovery services to both adults and youth during the COVID-19 closure including one-on-one and group counseling via HIPAA compliant video conferencing services for both adults and youth; continued psychiatrist's sessions, nurse and nurse practitioner's appointments using telehealth; prescription delivery; increased constituent outreach; and promotion of digital/virtual resources for adult 12 step programming.

Ending the Epidemic (\$562,500):

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This program enhances The Center's work as it relates to HIV prevention, harm reduction and substance use treatment by providing clinical, counseling and support services to people who use methamphetamine with a focus on highest risk communities.

The Center has utilized its recognition as a hub for the LGBT community to engage LGBT New Yorkers who are HIV positive or considered high-risk, as well as those with co-occurring substance use disorders, with a particular focus on crystal meth users. This program, which encompasses The Crystal Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Project aims to enhance our work as it relates to HIV prevention, harm reduction and substance use treatment by providing clinical, counseling and support services to people who use methamphetamine, as well as the harms associated with use, including transmission of HIV, STIs and Hepatitis C. The Crystal Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Project aims to help people who use methamphetamine manage and reduce their methamphetamine use as well as the harms associated with use, including transmission of HIV, STIs and Hepatitis C. The program serves individuals who are currently using methamphetamine, including those recognized as highest risk: men having sex with men (MSM), especially young men having sex with men (YMSM), transgender women/men who have sex with men with an emphasis on those involved in transactional sex, and persons with HIV-positive partners. The program serves individuals living in all boroughs and neighborhoods of NYC.

The Center will engage the target population through enhanced targeted outreach, new media outreach, and through existing Center programming. The program will conduct marketing and engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The Center currently has 342,200+ followers on Facebook, 64,600+ followers on Twitter, and 43,200+ followers on Instagram. In addition, outreach will be conducted through venues including Grindr and Scruff, two popular social networking sites among men who have sex with men. The Center identifies these sites as unique opportunities to engage people who use methamphetamine in conversations about safe sex and HIV prevention, including PrEP/PEP.

The Center connects 250,000 people/year to the resources they need in times of crisis. We are positioned to help the most at risk members of the LGBT community who may not themselves be minimizing risk. Substance use screenings are integrated into all core programming at The Center to identify people who use methamphetamine and may benefit from these services. As a

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result of the screening, eligible clients are referred to clinically appropriate behavioral health and social services via assessment. Psychosocial counseling, either individual or group, from a harm reduction perspective to support the client in managing or reducing methamphetamine use will also be available. Our drop-in recovery support group "Connected in Recovery" provides a low threshold service for individuals to explore their ambivalence regarding methamphetamine. These services all work to educate clients about safer injection techniques, antiretroviral adherence, PrEP and PEP, the importance of HIV testing, and HIV treatment as prevention. As needed, clients will be offered Linkage to Services including HIV/STI/HCV screening, social support services, employment support, and services that address basic needs such as food and shelter. Clients can also utilize The Center's NY State of Health Patient Navigation Program to enroll for health insurance in the Marketplace, including identifying insurance plans that cover PEP and PrEP.

The Center is continuing to offer both individual and group counseling support for people living with and affected by HIV using HIPAA compliant video conferencing services.

Hate Crimes (\$77,500)

The Hate Crimes Initiative funding will enable The Center to provide community care to the victims of hate crimes through our Survivor Assistance Program (SAP) and through convening and educating community through our advocacy program.

The SAP provides free case management, counseling, group support, peer support and referral to a vetted network of strategic partners to help LGBTQ individuals directly confront and heal from traumas resulting from violent crimes, including hate crimes.

In addition to the direct trauma support services, RiseOut, The Center's advocacy program, offers programming that supports restorative justice. RiseOut has hosted community conversations and training that aims to reduce prejudice and increase greater communal understanding of the LGBTQ community. We also provide civic engagement tools to community members to empower them to advocate for themselves with both local electeds and law enforcement agencies. The RiseOut Action Team has 11,000 individual network members throughout the state, and works with more than 40 other organizations to advocate for

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legislation that addresses the needs of the LGBTQ community and encourage civic engagement. The RiseOut Advocacy Action Network will continue to do Get Out The Vote and Voter Registration actions via online speaker series, text banks, and phone banks. The RiseOut team has reached out to approximately 22,000 people across the state during our campaign to pass the Hate Crimes Analysis and Review Act.

For over three decades, The Center has worked to ensure that the LGBT community of New York City has access to the highest quality and most diverse range of services and resources. Though we are living in a time of unprecedented social, legal and political change, we are confident in our ability to provide connection and support for all of our community members throughout the City. With the Council's continued support, The Center can remain an essential partner in the City's continued navigation of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a willing partner in the effort to restore normalcy and improve the lives of all NYC residents.

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I'm a voting constituent in District 21, I'm a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

In my neighborhood in District 21, I've been spending a lot of time in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. The police presence I've seen there is outrageous, threatening, and a colossal waste of resources. There is no reason for there to be cops all over the park, and all over our neighborhood. There is no reason that the government employee handing out face masks should be a cop carrying a gun. This policing makes me feel actively unsafe, and it puts my neighbors who are people of color in real and immediate danger.

It is no accident that my friends in other neighborhoods—whiter neighborhoods—aren't experiencing this kind of over-policing. Lower Central Park is not crawling with cops. The north side of Prospect Park is not crawling with cops. In these neighborhoods, my friends have seen neighbors hug and play with each other's dogs, without fear or the threat of police violence. In my neighborhood, families social distance respectfully and face threat from police anyway.

We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it *on video*. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, *more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined* is unconscionable.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.

Grace Alden Patterson

Mayor de Blasio must not pass an executive budget that cuts education and health services and further enriches and emboldens the NYPD. We will not tolerate cuts to such essential services while “kicking the can down the road” by one year in building four new borough-based jails. The city must divest from the NYPD and these four new jails, as well as take the necessary and immediate steps to close all jails on Rikers Island.

We cannot endure your austerity budget as more people are being imprisoned on Rikers during a pandemic. The NYPD continues to operate with carte blanche in menacing, harassing, beating and jailing Black and brown communities. Communities that have been the hardest hit by COVID. The mayor’s handling of this pandemic has been a catastrophic disaster. His refusal to do what is best for the health and well-being of the city and its residents has been superseded only by his selfish desire to not be viewed as an abysmal failure. His unwillingness to slash the police budget proves his cowardice and general obsequiousness to both the brass and the rank-and-file of the NYPD. His tepid criticisms when officers are videotaped abusing Black and brown residents are the only “actions” he takes. Additionally, the City Council’s hearing on May 22nd demonstrated how uninterested the City Council, with the exception of Councilwoman Inez Barron, seemed to be in reining in the barbarity of the NYPD. Divestment is the only option.

In a time when decarceration is a growing necessity in the time of COVID, Rikers must be emptied and closed. The solution is not making slight alterations to the capital budget to accommodate these borough jails. The money must be reallocated elsewhere, where it is needed: homeless services and affordable housing, comprehensive mental health services and other healthcare, and education, among other areas. Divest from the NYPD and the jail plan in order to ensure a more equitable New York City.

Gregory Franklin

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 23, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Gregory Franklin, and I am on the board of directors for Waterwell.org providing theatre arts training to New York City Department of Education for The Professional Performing Arts School in Hell's Kitchen.

The core values of Waterwell's Drama Program are identified as The 3 E's:

Excellence

Excellence is a wholesome discipline applied toward a meaningful goal; it fosters perseverance in the face of obstacles, setbacks and disappointments; it embraces healthy habits of mind and the determination to achieve great things.

Engagement

Engagement is harnessing collective energy for the common good; it cultivates collaboration and an interest in the whole; it expresses a generous and public-minded sense of our responsibility to and investment in our community.

Empathy

Empathy is an orientation toward others and a recognition of our common humanity; it allows us to understand and care about the thoughts and feelings of others as much we do our own; it challenges us to offer everyone not only dutiful respect, but self-sacrificing love.

These are the foundation of the work we do.

Despite the current crisis, we've figured out a way to continue our theatrical education program online for the time being. However, beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Gregory Franklin
Board of Directors
Waterwell.org



May 21, 2020

Grislerbis C., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

Hi, my name is Grislerbis Cabrera, I grew up in Dominican Republic. Now I live in the Bronx NY. Working with coach is really helpful because I don't speak English and they are there to help me with my appointment and help me get an ESL class. Working with my coach is a great experience because I never have such nice people in my life that cares about me like they do.

The COVID-19 has not impacted me much because my coaches are there for me, advising me, and encouraging me. My Coach inspired me to read more books for self-care. Fair Futures has supported me because my coach makes herself available to talk with me and is open to listening to me. She also provides me with great advice. I am really thankful to have these services and amazing support. If Fair Futures discontinues, I would be unable to have the same support system as I do now.



May 19, 2020

Dear Finance Committee,

As members of the City Council's the **Sports Training And Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI)**, we write to ask for your continued support in ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY21 budget—particularly during this unprecedented time.

STARS was founded in 2013 as the first grassroots collective of its kind to fight for parity in funding of girls' programs—and not just any programs—those successfully run by decade-long veteran leaders in youth education.

Because of the Council's generous support, over the past 7 years, the cohort of 10 partners have collectively served nearly 30,000 girls of color and gender non-conforming youth—many immigrants and first generation college bound—across all 5 boroughs and in all 51 Council Districts. We have done so with LIFE-CHANGING OUTCOMES for one of the city's most vulnerable populations.

In this time of crisis when every nonprofit faces existential threat, we see more clearly than ever the power of a collective. At STARS, our organizations are banding together to support each other wherever it is needed, to ensure the extension and enrichment of service to the population we are all so deeply committed to.

In this spirit, our 10 organizations have joined forces to create the STARS Summer Syllabus (bit.ly/starscalendar)—capturing the depth and diversity of our programs across arts, literature, athletics, leadership, and activism—with a focus on filling the gaping hole of summer youth programming.

We will promote the calendar widely—converting the majority of our programs to be open to the public while remaining free of cost—and report bi-weekly to the Council on our metrics.

COVID-19 has negatively impacted the lives of our girls and their families in profound ways. The outbreak and accompanying economic hardship disproportionately affects the most marginalized communities. The already pervasive opportunity and access gaps are exacerbated as students face increased instability, health fears, barriers to remote learning, heightened stress and anxiety about their futures, and lost opportunities during this crucial time in their lives.

At STARS we are rising to the challenge. We would like to stress to the Council that our track record of excellent, high-impact programming will continue—and ask for the Council's good faith partnership to help make that possible.

The Council has invested in a collective that is innovative, resilient, and tenacious. We will do whatever it takes to serve our youth for many years to come.

The disparities exposed by COVID-19 reinforce the need for STARS CGI programs because we know when the virus restrictions lift, we will see an even GREATER demand for our programs and services.



Even when a global health pandemic isn't underway, **STARS persists in our fight for girls and women's causes that remain severely underfunded.** And according to Mayor De Blasio's most recent budget proposal, future funding for STARS CGI is at risk.

We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our City Council funding of \$1,450,000 in FY21.

On behalf of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color across New York City, **thank you in advance for your continued support.** We look forward to our work together ensuring the social-emotional wellbeing of our communities.

Sincerely,

Maya Nussbaum
Executive Director
Girls Write Now



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education and community programming. My name is Sarah Marcus, and I am the Director of Education at the Mark Morris Dance Group located in Fort Greene, Brooklyn (District #35). On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group and the vibrant community who rely on our programming, **I urge you to advocate for critical city funding towards NYC arts education and the cultural community.**

The mission of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) is to develop, promote, and sustain dance, music, and opera productions by Mark Morris and to serve as a cultural resource to engage and enrich the community. Propelled by core values of access, community, excellence, and creativity, **MMDG engages 37,000 New Yorkers each year** through critically acclaimed performances, artist/audience engagements, and award-winning adaptive/inclusive education and community programs. Amidst the crisis, MMDG remains committed to its mission - forging new pathways through online/digital programming - to develop, promote, and sustain dance, music, and opera productions by Mark Morris and to serve as a cultural resource to engage and enrich the community.

A cornerstone of the Brooklyn Cultural District and a vital resource for the dance community since 2001, The Mark Morris Dance Center is home to MMDG's education and engagement programs serving a **broad constituency ranging from schoolchildren, residents of public housing children with special needs, court-involved youth, individuals with Parkinson's disease, local artists using subsidized rehearsal space, and others of all ages and abilities.** Inspired by Morris' work and ethos that "dance is for anybody", The School at the Dance Center welcomes New Yorkers from every borough, **annually serving 2,500 students between the ages of 18 months and 18 years**, in addition to **5,000 adults per month.** Beyond the Dance Center, in FY20, MMDG's Community Outreach programs engaged **46 NYC community partnerships** with organizations across three boroughs, reaching **2,113 New Yorkers.** Nearly 60% of those partnerships took place in schools. All youth programming is informed by the five strands of learning in dance as stipulated by the NYCDOE Blueprint for Learning and Teaching in Dance. Additionally, MMDG's groundbreaking Dance for PD® program engaged **1,300 people living with Parkinson's and their care partners** in classes taking place in nine locations across the 5 boroughs of New York City.

Funding from **City Councilmembers Discretionary Funding** directly supports MMDG's education and community engagement programs, including Dance for PD® and dance classes in partnership with NYCHA community centers. These programs provide employment opportunities for teaching artists and musicians. In FY20, Discretionary awards from **Councilmember Rosenthal and Majority Leader Cumbo** supported programming that reached **1,350 constituents and 16 jobs** for teaching artists and musicians. Our FY21 request to **Councilmembers Cornegy, Army-Samuel, and Koslowitz** would support programming for **an additional 125 constituents and 14 jobs** for teaching artists and musicians.



From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we immediately began a dialogue with our community members to assure them that we are still a support, resource, and no matter what, we are not going away. We initiated regular communication around proactive strategies to keep participants safe and healthy while programs continued prior to the DOE and other community-based closures. We fostered reciprocal communication regarding accessible resources that allow the community to continue to participate in the services of the Mark Morris Dance Group. We began a virtual learning program immediately following the SIP orders to **keep our community engaged and moving, and to provide critical wellness for people in isolation**. Committed to our community partnerships, we have developed customized interactive virtual engagement programs with input from each community partner with an aim to continue to support the organization's core value of community. These expanded online programming has proven to be a lifeline, particularly for our constituents in the Parkinson's community, who benefit from our groundbreaking Dance for PD program.

We request that City Council Discretionary Funding continues in-full, and that any necessary city budget cuts do not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. Reduction in City Councilmember Discretionary Funding and major cuts to these city agencies and spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Without the funds that come from these city offices, the organizations that provide so many career and educational opportunities, safe spaces, and pockets of joy may cease to exist.

I urge you to advocate for NYC arts education and the cultural community. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant NYC, helping to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. As a major economic driver, **NYC's arts and culture sector provides over 400,000 jobs**. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages and rebuild our economy. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding. Indeed, programs that foster creative discovery, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that NYC communities of all ages, with and without disabilities, benefit on many levels by exploring and experience dance, music, music, visual art, writing, and media arts available through cultural programming. From youth building important life skills for the future, to older adults finding meaning and connection while aging with dignity, these people represent the cultural and economic vitality of our city. Again, on behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group and the vibrant community who rely on our programming, **I urge you to advocate for the future of NYC arts education and the cultural community**. We are grateful for your support efforts during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for our beloved city.

Sincerely,

Sarah Marcus

Director of Education, Mark Morris Dance Group



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education and community programming. Our names are David Leventhal and Eva Nichols, and we are writing on behalf of Dance for PD and the Mark Morris Dance Group, located in Fort Greene, Brooklyn (District #35). On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group and the vibrant community who rely on our programming, **we urge you to advocate for critical city funding towards NYC arts programming and the cultural community.**

The mission of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) is to develop, promote, and sustain dance, music, and opera productions by Mark Morris and to serve as a cultural resource to engage and enrich the community. Propelled by core values of access, community, excellence, and creativity, **MMDG engages 37,000 New Yorkers each year** through critically acclaimed performances, artist/audience engagements, and award-winning adaptive/inclusive education and community programs. Amidst the crisis, MMDG remains committed to its mission - forging new pathways through online/digital programming - to develop, promote, and sustain dance, music, and opera productions by Mark Morris and to serve as a cultural resource to engage and enrich the community.

In 2001, MMDG launched **Dance for PD® (DfPD)** with a mission to use dance classes with live music to help people living with Parkinson's and their care partners manage their lives through a creative, stimulating, and socially-inclusive approach to movement. This award-winning program **reaches more than 1,300 people with Parkinson's Disease (PD) in nine locations in five NYC boroughs**, and more than **7,500 people in 300 communities in 25 countries** who access the program online and by telephone, and in-person wherever MMDG tours through streamed classes and teacher certification courses, on-demand videos. DfPD programs are free and open to the public.

Funding from **City Councilmembers Discretionary Funding** directly supports MMDG's education and community engagement programs, including Dance for PD® and other MMDG education offerings. These programs provide employment opportunities for teaching artists and musicians. In FY20, Discretionary awards from **Councilmember Rosenthal and Majority Leader Cumbo** supported programming that reached **1,350 constituents and 16 jobs** for teaching artists and musicians. Our FY21 request to **Councilmembers Cornegy, Army-Samuel, and Koslowitz** would support programming for **an additional 125 constituents and 14 jobs** for teaching artists and musicians. **Attached to this letter are testimonials from program participants from District 6, represented by Councilmember Rosenthal.**

MMDG has quickly responded to the needs of our community during this unprecedented crisis, both fulfilling commitments to programming and expanding pathways for engagement and public service through online/digital programming. This effort began as soon as vulnerable populations were recommended to isolate. At that time, we suspended DfPD in-person classes and made our DfPD archive (normally a membership benefit) free and more broadly promoted to engage house-bound seniors.



Currently, **Dance for PD now offers 9 free live group classes and 3 free meditation sessions each week**, as well as continuing to provide **free on-demand access to our digital class library**. Many classes also provide optional opportunities for conversation in small groups. Our range of live group offerings features Dance for PD, Dance for PD PRO (for those wanting a more rigorous, all-standing experience), Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Chair Yoga and Meditation. For those who do not have access to high-speed internet or are less comfortable using a computer, **MMDG is now offering tele-dance and tele-meditation classes over the phone**. Each class attracts between **40-140 participants representing 32 states and 21 countries**. Reflecting MMDG's core value of access, last week, **Dance for PD had its first class taught in Spanish, reaching 100 participants from 8 countries**. A series of six Dance for PD classes will be available in Spanish over the coming months.

We request that City Council Discretionary Funding continues in-full, and that any necessary city budget cuts do not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. Reduction in City Councilmember Discretionary Funding and major cuts to these city agencies and spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Without the funds that come from these city offices, the organizations that provide so many career and educational opportunities, safe spaces, and pockets of joy may cease to exist.

We urge you to advocate for NYC arts education and the cultural community. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant NYC, helping to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. As a major economic driver, **NYC's arts and culture sector provides over 400,000 jobs**. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages and rebuild our economy. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding. Indeed, programs that foster creative discovery, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that NYC communities of all ages, with and without disabilities, benefit on many levels by exploring and experience dance, music, music, visual art, writing, and media arts available through cultural programming. From youth building important life skills for the future, to older adults finding meaning and connection while aging with dignity, these people represent the cultural and economic vitality of our city. Again, on behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group and the vibrant community who rely on our programming, **we urge you to advocate for the future of NYC arts and cultural**. We are grateful for your support efforts during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for our beloved city.

Sincerely,

David Leventhal
Program Director
Dance for PD

Eva Nichols
Outreach Director
Dance for PD



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group
May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

As a member of District 6 and participant in the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, I am writing to urge you to please allocate discretionary funding for this vital resource in the upcoming year. I have been a member of the Dance for PD community for 3 years and can attest to the invaluable impact it has had on my life and the lives of so many other New Yorkers.

Founded in 2001, Dance for PD (DfPD) serves 1,300 New Yorkers with Parkinson's and their caregivers each year. Before this crisis hit, Dance for PD provided free daily classes in 10 locations across all five NYC boroughs, including in District 6 at The Juilliard School, where I attend.

Dance for PD has moved completely online, offering nine live-streamed classes Monday-Sunday, including Dance for PD, Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Yoga for PD classes. Classes are also available over the phone, or on-demand via the DfPD archive. I take class several times a week.

This vital resource has become a true lifeline, supporting my physical and mental well-being during this time of social distancing and potential isolation. The spirit, commitment, and sense of fun that these committed dancers bring to their classes is inspiring. Their classes literally keep me afloat.

The survival of this wonderful program depends on community, city, state, and federal support. Again I urge you to please consider include the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance for PD in your discretionary funding allocation in the upcoming year.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to DfPD Program Director, David Leventhal, or DfPD Outreach Director, Eva Nichols, both copied here.

I am grateful for your advocacy and effort during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for District 6 and for the greater New York City community.

Kind Regards,

Judith Mendelsund

MARK MORRIS



DANCE GROUP

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group
May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

As a member of District 6 and participant in the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, I am writing to urge you to please allocate discretionary funding for this vital resource in the upcoming year. I have been a member of the Dance for PD community for more than 5 years, and can attest to the invaluable impact it has had on my life and the lives of so many other New Yorkers.

Founded in 2001, Dance for PD (DfPD) serves 1,300 New Yorkers with Parkinson's and their caregivers each year. Before this crisis hit, Dance for PD provided free daily classes in 10 locations across all five NYC boroughs, including in District 6 at The Juilliard School, where I attend.

Dance for PD has moved completely online, offering nine live-streamed classes Monday-Sunday, including Dance for PD, Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Yoga for PD classes. Classes are also available over the phone, or on-demand via the DfPD archive. I take class at least 4 times a week.

This vital resource has become a true lifeline, supporting my physical and mental well-being during this time of social distancing. Participating in these classes not only helps me physically but also mentally, as you are able to connect with the other members of the group.

The survival of this important and invigorating program depends on community, city, state, and federal support. Again I urge you to please consider include the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance for PD in your discretionary funding allocation in the upcoming year.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to DfPD Program Director, David Leventhal, or DfPD Outreach Director, Eva Nichols, both copied here.

I am grateful for your advocacy and effort during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for District 6 and for the greater New York City community.

Kind Regards,
Gregg Rockefeller



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group
May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

As a member of District 6 and participant in the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, I am writing to urge you to please allocate discretionary funding for this vital resource in the upcoming year. I have been a member of the Dance for PD community for 4 years, and can attest to the invaluable impact it has had on my life and the lives of so many other New Yorkers.

Founded in 2001, Dance for PD (DfPD) serves 1,300 New Yorkers with Parkinson's and their caregivers each year. Before this crisis hit, Dance for PD provided free daily classes in 10 locations across all five NYC boroughs, including in District 6 at The Juilliard School, where I attend.

Dance for PD has moved completely online, offering nine live-streamed classes Monday - Sunday including Dance for PD, Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Yoga for PD classes. Classes are also available over the phone, or on-demand via the DfPD archive. I take class almost every day of the week.

This vital resource has become a true lifeline, supporting my physical and mental well-being during this time of social distancing. My doctor has told me that the one thing I can do to slow the progression of Parkinson's disease is to exercise two hours a day. I have made a decision to do that. I find that dancing to music is a very easy and enjoyable way for me to get one hour of exercise. To add variety on the weekends there are Pilates and Yoga classes. Another condition with Parkinson's Disease is losing the strength in your voice. Singing classes help strengthen your vocal chords. Singing is a much more fun way of strengthening your vocal chords than doing boring physical therapy exercises. Without the normal human interaction during this period of self-isolation being part of a community and recognizing familiar faces has also made a big difference.

The survival of this outstanding program depends on community, city, state, and federal support. Again I urge you to please consider including the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance for PD in your discretionary funding allocation in the upcoming year.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to DfPD Program Director, David Leventhal, or DfPD Outreach Director, Eva Nichols, both copied here.

I am grateful for your advocacy and effort during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for District 6 and for the greater New York City community.

Kind Regards,

Rhoda Cahan

M A R K M O R R I S



D A N C E G R O U P

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group
May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

As a member of District 6 and participant in the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, I am writing to urge you to please allocate discretionary funding for this vital resource in the upcoming year. I have been a member of the Dance for PD community for 10 years, and can attest to the invaluable impact it has had on my life and the lives of so many other New Yorkers.

Founded in 2001, Dance for PD (DfPD) serves 1,300 New Yorkers with Parkinson's and their caregivers each year. Before this crisis hit, Dance for PD provided free daily classes in 10 locations across all five NYC boroughs, including in District 6 at The Juilliard School, where I attend.

Dance for PD has moved completely online, offering nine live-streamed classes Monday-Sunday, including Dance for PD, Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Yoga for PD classes. Classes are also available over the phone, or on-demand via the DfPD archive. I take class once a week.

This vital resource has become a true lifeline, supporting my physical and mental well-being during this time of social distancing. I was delighted when I learned that live classes would be available via Zoom.

The survival of this indispensable program depends on community, city, state, and federal support. Again I urge you to please consider include the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance for PD in your discretionary funding allocation in the upcoming year.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to DfPD Program Director, David Leventhal, or DfPD Outreach Director, Eva Nichols, both copied here.

I am grateful for your advocacy and effort during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you do for District 6 and for the greater New York City community.

Kind Regards,
Margaret Sperling



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
On behalf of the Mark Morris Dance Group
May 21, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

As a member of District 6 and participant in the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, I am writing to urge you to please allocate discretionary funding for this vital resource in the upcoming year. I have been a member of the Dance for PD community for two years, and can attest to the invaluable impact it has had on my life and the lives of so many other New Yorkers.

Founded in 2001, Dance for PD (DfPD) serves 1,300 New Yorkers with Parkinson's and their caregivers each year. Before this crisis hit, Dance for PD provided free daily classes in 10 locations across all five NYC boroughs, including in District 6 at The Juilliard School, where I attend.

Dance for PD has moved completely online, offering nine live-streamed classes Monday-Sunday, including Dance for PD, Sing for PD, Pilates for PD, Yoga for PD classes. Classes are also available over the phone, or on-demand via the DfPD archive. I take class from once to three times per week on Zoom.

This vital resource has become a true lifeline, supporting my physical and mental well-being during this time of social distancing. Even before COVID Dance for PD had become a vital part of my life attending 3 to 5 classes per week. The classes not only kept me physically active but also offered me a connection with a wonderful community of fellow students and professional dancer/instructors. Now in this COVID world of social isolation I am able to continue my PD community connection and my physical activity through dance. I would be lost without this program!

The survival of this outstanding world class program depends on community, city, state, and federal support. Again I urge you to please consider include the Mark Morris Dance Group and Dance for PD in your discretionary funding allocation in the upcoming year.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out to DfPD Program Director, David Leventhal, or DfPD Outreach Director, Eva Nichols, both copied here.

I am grateful for your advocacy and effort during this unprecedented time and have always been proud to say you represent the district I reside in. Thank you for all that you do for District 6 and for the greater New York City community.

Kind Regards,
Harold Clinton

Greetings, members of the council.

My name is Halley Bondy. I run a group called Fight for Freelancers New York. We are actually national, with groups in Illinois, New Jersey, California, which passed the similar AB5 law, and other states that are being affected by the ABC worker misclassification Test proposed by Councilmember Brad Lander. In New York we're over 1,000 musicians, filmmakers, ASL Interpreters, writers, entrepreneurs, artists and many, many more. In New York, we are largely working mothers but also people with disabilities and older workers. We are unaffiliated, we are unfunded. We are pro-worker and pro-union. We support rights for exploited workers. I am a proud member of the Freelancers Union.

I'm here today to ask that members of the council strongly consider the ramifications of Councilmember Brad Lander's ABC Test legislation. There are massive unseen consequences to this legislation, which have demonstrated plainly in California and beyond.

I'll start with me. I am a freelance journalist and the mom of a toddler. I was fired from a full-time job recently because I couldn't be in the office from 9-5, because my kid, a newborn at the time, was frequently sick. I could only afford a few days a week at a day care. I thought I was doomed to poverty because I had a child. But I found a lifeline in gigging, in writing freelance for various publications, podcasts and more. Especially now, I need complete freedom, the ability to work with many clients, and the ability to set my schedule in order to raise my kid and make a living. My marketplace insurance premiums are high, and we are in favor of universal health care, but that's another issue. And in all of this, I'm far from alone.

We are freelancers for a number of reasons. In fact, $\frac{1}{3}$ of New York City dwellers are freelancers, with $\frac{2}{3}$ of those folks doing it by choice. Those are the New York City Mayor's office numbers.

We are exhausted. We have had to say these lines so many times because unfortunately, the ABC Test keeps cropping up like a weed across the country. We fought it really hard in Albany and managed to get our voices heard. But the ABC Test has cropped up yet again in Lander's Intro 1926. As written, it threatens to swallow all freelancing and eliminate our jobs. This is not an alarmist statement. We have seen it happen.

If you haven't been paying attention to Ab5 – basically, the state of California hastily passed the ABC test and initially had to make 50 industry carveouts and the b2b exemptions under the AB5 law, which proved how messy it was. yet the law has still put journalists and artists out of business completely. Non profits and cultural institutions that depend on Independent contractors have been shuttered. The state had to revisit and revisit and revisit this problematic law even before the pandemic hit, and now, those employees are being hit by a double whammy. California has been sued repeatedly not only by journalists but by truckers whose jobs were threatened to be destroyed by this test.. We have many, many, many individual, sad stories from our California group of people who lost their jobs just because their employers didn't want to deal with this confusing, limiting law.

Before the bill even became law in January, hundreds of freelancers were laid off before the holidays according to Business Insider, because of companies that balked at the language.

Put simply, we cannot work under the ABC Test. It's all bad, but the worst part of the test is part B, which stipulates that you have to be in a different industry than your employers in order to be

considered an Independent Contractor. That means ALL freelance journalists will not be able to work, since we work in the same industry as our editors. That means MOST musicians won't be able to work, lighting designers, artists, consultants, independent film editors, interpreters, videographers, non-union actors, I can go on all day - we won't be able to work under this.

Councilman Lander will tell you that his legislation is special due to the professional services exemptions newly whipped up by his team. And we appreciate his team trying to work with us, but the truth might surprise you: Ab5 has very, very similar language. Ab5 also has a b2b exemption that *should* exempt a lot of freelancers, and yet, there has still been widespread job loss due to the optics surrounding this test. Employers look at the test and say, I don't want to work with any freelancers in that state. It doesn't matter if you're trying to re-classify us, get people sick leave, it's still a poisonous test.

We have incontrovertible proof that companies find the ABC test so restrictive that they refuse to work with states that have it. Hearst, which owns hundreds of media properties, told one of our members in writing that they cannot accept her article because her state, Indiana, implements the ABC Test, and they will also not accept submissions from California, in spite of the b2b exemption. you might say, well Hearst is the problem, but tell that to the tens of thousands of media freelancers who need the work.

Also, Uber and lyft, your primary target for this, will not abide by these laws. In California, they are not abiding by Ab5. They sued California. The only ones affected right now are genuine freelancers, misclassified workers and small business owners. *In a pandemic.*

Can you imagine, right now, when work is already so sparse, passing a test that eliminates even more jobs?

We are in favor of the much more sensible IRS Test and the governor's language from his earlier proposed budget. It's in the last two pages of his proposed 2021 New York Executive State Budget. We like it because it only confined this issue to digital marketplace app workers and left us out of the conversation entirely, which is what my group wants. We have found that most of the people making these laws don't fully understand what freelancers actually do or need, so please, just leave us out of the misclassification conversation. Our jobs are vast and nuanced, and extremely diverse, and customized to our lives. And it's so easy to kill them with the stroke of a pen. We ask that you leave us alone so that we can focus on our jobs and our families in this crisis.



Health Access
27-40 Hoyt Avenue South
Astoria, NY 11102
Tel: (718) 396-5041

May 21, 2020

By Email:

Honorable Mark Levin
Council Member
New York City Hall
City Hall Park
New York, NY 10007

**RE: HANAC Testimony Funding Support Letter/ Access Health Initiative/
FY2021**

Dear Council Member Levin:

We are providing this testimonial correspondence in support to restore the Article 6 budget cut. As you are keenly aware, the cuts to the Article 6 will have a significant impact on the City's Access Health Initiative. The budget cuts will negatively impact the outreach efforts for HIV/AIDS intervention services, infant and maternal health support, viral hepatitis campaigns, and COVID-19 healthcare resources that are desperately needed for people that have the COVID-19 Virus. While the actual numbers cannot be stated for certain, early estimates indicate that at least \$3.4 million of this funding is at risk of being lost due to these state cuts.

This devastating loss is the result of a breakdown in legislative negotiations on health spending during the State budget process, which funding to New York City programs was approximately cut from 36% to 20% match. New York City is still the only jurisdiction targeted for this cut, with no other municipality facing similar funding reductions.

Access to health initiative has enabled us to create more than 100 educational activities since 2015 and created an outreach program to more than 10,000 clients who are not eligible to receive health insurance.

While many of the Community Base Organizations ("CBO") personnel are doing whatever they can to navigate this pandemic, there are still many other residual and collateral effects from this pandemic. It is widely known that many of us are facing issues such as PTSD because they have lost a family member, friend, or colleague directly as a result of the lack of health access during this crisis. Many of us are becoming more susceptible each day to trauma due to the struggles resulting from the lack of testing, health coverage, and now the direct loss of funding that is needed to provide our essential services.

Before the onset of the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic, communities were already vulnerable to illnesses such as but not limited to depression, substance abuse, and other negative factors such as high suicide risk factors. Now the mental health experts fear that many more will be prone to trauma-related disorders due to this pandemic. For example, as we have heard on the news, the healthcare workers that are providing the frontline services are facing many difficulties, again those who have lost family members and/or their jobs due to the disease. These individuals may be at higher risk of developing long-term challenges.

Additionally, those who struggle with other mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, or who have a prior history of trauma may be at increased risk of more ongoing distress.

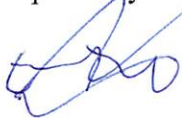
The Health Care Act ("HCA") aims to ensure all of us get access to health care regardless of the status or the income perceived per person, but more importantly, HCA was enacted to prevent deaths. The costs involved in health care in New York City is already high; it is even worse for individuals who do not qualify for health insurance.

We want to keep providing information to clients in need of essential social services that currently live around Queens and other boroughs. New Yorkers desperately need the budget to be restored, which will help to extend the great work that we provide through Access Health NYC Initiative.

It is time that essential employees get the funding they need to allow them to provide vital services to the communities. Let us continue to do our part by providing us with the funding to continue helping people, and to support their families with anything that they may need during these unprecedented times.

Thank you so much for allowing us to provide this testimony, and please do not hesitate to let me know if you need any additional information that you may need in support of this request.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Enrique Jerves', is written over the 'Respectfully submitted,' text.

Enrique Jerves,
HANAC Health Access Program Director
718-396-5041
ejerves@hanc.org

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my anger regarding Mayor De Blasio's 2021 Executive Budget. The budget proposes billions of dollars in cuts, including millions of dollars cut to the Department of Education, all while the NYPD and Department of Corrections receive an increase in funding. This is not only wrong and unjust but, it also runs counter to the Mayor's rhetoric about caring for all New Yorkers. It is evident by now that Black and Brown people in New York City are disproportionately harmed by the actions and policies of the NYPD and DOC. In April, out of the 40 people arrested on social distancing violations, 35 were black and 4 were Latino. They were then sent to jails which are disproportionately and overwhelmingly filled with Black and Latino people, jails which are extremely dangerous during this public health emergency because people can not quarantine when they are being held in cages. This is all to say that the NYPD and the DOC are NOT the departments the city needs to be prioritizing with additional funding especially as this pandemic is likely to drag on into 2021. If the Mayor and the City Council really want to make the city safer, they will prioritize the health and welfare of Black and Brown New Yorkers, NOT increase these communities' already abundant exposure to the brutality of the police and carceral states.

Sincerely,

Hannah Wilson

All of us have lost someone to this virus. Neighbors, in-laws, family members and friends. Many of us were not able to have a funeral.

We are traumatized.

Many of us have lost our jobs, some of us have had our pay cut in half and some of us, gig workers haven't received or will not receive unemployment. Some of us who were middle class suddenly got a lot poorer.

Older people relied on the East River Park for their health and many of us were passionately against the ESCR (East Side Coastal "Resiliency") plan to completely demolish East River Park and rebuild it on top of an 8 foot storm surge wall. Before this virus came to our City it didn't seem like a plan that valued people, that valued our diverse community. We asked for a panel of experts who would scientifically evaluate whether given the environment we live in, demolishing a 60 acre park and every living thing in it was the best approach to climate change. We questioned whether there wasn't a more humane, less wasteful, more resilient and innovative approach.

But now our current situation where some of us are still recovering from being sick, with relatives or friends still hospitalized and fighting for their lives, some of us are actually terrified to go out, terrified of falling sick and not surviving. yet we also don't want to wait five years to have any flood protection, which is what the ESCR plan will take, according to the DDC's Jamie Torres Springer's presentations. That's just the flood protection part. He doesn't even give us a time line for when there will be a new park. Estimates range from 7-10 years.

Destroying the park, digging up the dirt, tearing down and grinding up all the trees has both physical and mental health consequences on the people who live on the Lower East Side and in the East Village. The destruction itself could negatively affect the air we breathe. Many of us already live with asthma and COPD. Breathing air full of particulate matter will not be good for us.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this large green space in keeping us alive. This park is saving us. People wearing masks are flooding into our beloved green space and it is one of the few places we can feel safe at a distance. For our physical health and our mental health— we NEED this park.

We, as vulnerable people mourning the dead in our neighborhoods, are begging you to reconsider your priorities and spend the 1.1 billion dollars of the City funds allocated to the ESCR on helping us survive, as we struggle to be healthy, pay the rent and put food on the table. Please do not spend 1.1 billion dollars of City funds on the ESCR. Please find a cheaper way to provide flood protection to our neighborhood. You still have the HUD funding to spend on a less expensive less destructive flood protection project.

We are very grateful and very lucky to still be alive. But we are suffering, finance committee. We are also in pain. We beg you to prioritize our health over this potential boondoggle. This fall is not the right time to start digging up and destroying a public park. We are desperate to live and to breathe. Please, please hear us.

Harriet Hirshorn
20 Clinton Street, 3F
New York, NY 10002



**TESTIMONY TO THE NYC COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
FY 21 BUDGET HEARING**

Submitted by: Harriet Lessel, Director of Government Contracts and Advocacy

Thank you to Chair Dromm and all of the Finance Committee members for the opportunity to submit this testimony. JCCA is very appreciative of the Council's attention to and support of the needs of vulnerable children and families receiving preventive, foster home, mental health and educational services.

This testimony will be substantially different from the one provided last year. Due to the corona virus, I will begin by acknowledging the remarkable efforts that JCCA has made to ensure that the children and families that receive our foster home, residential, preventive, mental health and educational services are having their basic and emergency needs met. I will highlight how the agency has continued to provide core services to a population hard-hit by the COVID-19 virus based on inequities that already existed in our city. Foremost among them are employment, housing, food, and medical and mental health care. Lastly, I will address how JCCA has focused on issues to keep their staff and clients safe and will play a major role in helping our city, and its most at-risk citizens, recover.

COVID – 19 Response

As part of JCCA's agency-wide policy, staff from all of our programs reached out to EVERY child and family receiving services to assess their emergency needs. These include food, medical and household cleaning supplies, childcare items, transportation and the readiness/ability for children to participate in remote learning. JCCA's two offices in Mott Haven, the Bronx and Flatbush, Brooklyn where many of the families and staff reside, are in the center of COVID-19 hotspots. When staff discovered that families with pre-existing health conditions were unable to leave the house and did not have enough food, staff shopped for them and delivered groceries to their home.

Safety assessments are being conducted to ascertain which families require in-home visits, whether it is safe to make those visits and/or to transition to phone or on-online access. The agency has developed ways to deliver individual and group services remotely, including, but not limited to, a vocational training program to youth in foster care as part of the Foster Youth Wraparound Supports initiative, a remote internship program in the Second Chances Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health program, and/or parenting groups for families in preventive services.

The ability to provide services remotely is highly dependent upon whether those we serve have the necessary technology and services: a phone with unlimited minutes, access to Wi-Fi and an up-to-date computer for themselves and each of their children. JCCA has provided cellphones with pre-paid minutes to foster parents to ensure that they can keep in touch with staff and that the children in their care stay in touch with their birth families. JCCA is not only advocating strongly with city agencies to ensure that computer/tablets/ laptops are available to children, but that they have the wi-fi to use them.

Additionally, JCCA has implemented enhanced medical and mental health services, quarantine and isolation spaces, and elevated cleaning protocols to keep young people and staff in our residential facility safe. We are arranging remote family visits to help children stay connected with their families.

The agency has had success in providing telehealth services as part of the Children's Health Home program and children's behavioral health services. In some cases, hard-to-reach family members are responding positively to the ability to access services in this manner. As we look to the future, all programs will thoughtfully plan the delivery of a combination of in-person and remote services.

Looking ahead

In order to continue providing vital services for the long term, there are a number of issues that will need to be addressed including incentive pay for staff who maintain face-to-face contact with children and families, priority testing for children and families in foster care, the continuation of Fair Futures and City Council initiative funding and the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Incentive Pay

COVID-19 has created a sea change for the nonprofit workforce. JCCA has worked tirelessly to obtain the necessary Personal Protective Equipment that staff need in our community and residential-based programs. We have been providing incentive pay for all staff that have face-to-face contacts with clients without any commitment on the part of the city to reimburse the agency for these expenses. We are grateful that ACS has recognized that staff on residential programs deserve this incentive pay, but we also ask that any such support include our staff working in preventive, foster care and mental health services. These nonprofit staff have worked tirelessly throughout the crisis to protect and care for children and families affected by COVID-19. They are incredibly deserving of this recognition of their efforts as part of the city's COVID-19 response and future recovery efforts.

Priority Testing

We are pleased that the city and state recognized that essential workers in our residential and community-based programs should receive priority testing. However, we are concerned that

foster parents, birth parents and their children have been left out. The only way for agencies like JCCA to ensure that children in foster and residential care may return to their families is by ensuring frequent family visits. During the coronavirus pandemic, we have been facilitating family contact virtually. In conversations with parents, young people, foster parents and JCCA staff, there is understandably urgent concern about when face-to-face contact can recommence, up to and including unsupervised, weekend visits for families approaching reunification. Children and parents are particularly anxious in this regard.

Fair Futures

The remarkable promise of Fair Futures is just starting to show. The City Council has recognized the challenges faced by youth aging out of foster care including high incidence of homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse and incarceration. As NYC recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, these challenges will only intensify. The coaches and mentors provided by Fair Futures are a lifeline for youth and we urge the Council to continue Fair Futures funding so that youth have a guide to assist them in the transition to independence and a life of promise and stability.

SYEP

Since 1963, the Summer Youth Employment Program has kept young people, ages 14 – 24, constructively engaged in vocational activities that provide a foundation for entering the world of work. Youth in foster care and preventive services gain valuable experience and are able to contribute to their family's income. The SYEP providers are well-poised to provide remote or other opportunities for youth over the summer. In this challenging time, the program will provide a positive outlet and vital life skills to at-risk youth. We encourage the city to ensure that this program continues.

Discretionary Initiatives

Lastly, we want to respectfully request the Council to hold the line on discretionary funding in FY 21. JCCA has been fortunate to receive funds from the Court Involved Youth and Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, Wraparound Supports for Transitional Aged Foster Youth initiatives and City's First Readers. All of these programs have provided enhanced support to vulnerable populations before and during the pandemic. We believe the need for the programs will only increase in the next year with an increased level of post-traumatic stress disorder and the uncertainties that lay ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony and for your support in the months and year ahead.

For additional information, please contact Harriet Lessel, Director of Government Contracts and Advocacy at lesselh@jccany.org or 347-539-7271.



JCCA FY 21 City Council Initiatives Request Going Strong Before and During COVID-19

JCCA's FY 20 City Council-funded programs are going strong during the pandemic. There has been no pause, only robust efforts to continue programming to the vulnerable populations served in the initiatives in addition to ensuring that their basic and emergency needs have been met. And, as we think about recovering from the pandemic and look towards the future, we are convinced that these programs will be critical to the city's rebuilding efforts.

JCCA has been working with New York's most vulnerable children and families since 1822. Historically, the majority of our work has been within the child welfare system. Today, it is more accurate to say that we work to strengthen families, and provide them with the tools they need to live stable, healthy, independent lives.

JCCA was fortunate to receive City Council initiative funding in FY 20 that enabled us to provide crucial services to underserved populations in the Opioid Prevention and Treatment, Court Involved Youth and Mental Health, City's First Readers and Wrap Around Supports for Transitional Aged Foster Youth Initiatives.

JCCA's Kesher program received \$95,000 from the **Opioid Prevention and Treatment** initiative in FY 20 for the first time to provide culturally competent substance abuse services for the Orthodox and Bukharian communities in Queens. Kesher is an after-school program for Orthodox and Bukharian young people struggling with social and behavioral challenges including substance abuse, school failure, gang-involvement, and eating disorders. Kesher programming includes services not available to them through their schools and yeshivas, such as organized sports for young men and women, trips, activities, individual counseling, support groups, referrals, and assistance with educational and vocational goals. These activities are utilized as outreach and a gateway to access hard-to-reach youth with an array of social and mental health programming.

The program designed and delivered three general workshops/presentations for program participants to understand the community need that the program would address and how to participate in the program. It then incorporated substance abuse screenings into program intake in order to ascertain the scope of the problem. Eighty-seven (87) individuals or 68% of the entire Kesher after school program were screened. Of those, 47 scored at-risk. Twenty four

youth were identified for the 10-week group focusing on opioids and substance abuse, one for young women and one for young men that was planned to start in early March. Once social distancing was put into place, program staff designed and delivered 6 video clips on topics including healthy choices, alternatives to substance abuse while at home and dealing with stress. Continual outreach ensures that individual assistance is available. This community was hard-hit by COVID-19 with roughly 50% of participants reporting one or more family members with a positive diagnosis. Upon outreach to clients, emergency food for their large families was identified as the most significant community need. JCCA has stepped up to assist.

The **Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health** initiative provided \$175,000 to JCCA's Second Chances program in Brooklyn. Now in its sixth year, the program has become a trusted resource for a variety of community institutions and organizations including District 29 schools, local police precincts, legal services providers, and the probation department. Youth who are justice-involved or at risk of justice involvement are assessed for a variety of mental health and social issues and provided with initial services. The program includes the following components: outreach, screenings, crisis intervention (as needed), preparatory counseling, linkages or referrals to programs that meet the needs identified in the screening, and two groups, the Aim High Leadership group and the Make It Work, work readiness group.

As of 3/1/20, the program reached out to 75 youth, conducted assessments for thirty nine clients, 34 received referrals for services such as in-home behavioral health services, individual therapy, transfer high schools, vocational and substance abuse programs. The program successfully linked 10 youth to needed mental health services. The Aim High Leadership group had 8 sessions with 15 participants and the Make It Work group will have 12 sessions with 15 participants.

The program continues to function remotely during the pandemic. Youth who are serving paid internships have pivoted from working in a food pantry to providing support on a number of critical issues such as the census count and voter registration in addition to participating in vocational workshops. Central Brooklyn, where many of the participants reside, has been hard-hit by COVID-19 and our young people rely on the support provided by the program and their ability to contribute to their family's income.

Youth aging out of foster care have received intensive, individualized supports through the **Wrap Around Supports for Transitional Aged Foster Youth** initiative to help them focus on their educational and vocational goals. JCCA was awarded \$165,000 in FY 20. JCCA's Foster Home Services offices are located in high-needs districts in the South Bronx and central Brooklyn where the impact of coronavirus has already been catastrophic. As part of this program, youth receive individualized assessments that help to break down goals into easily attainable steps. Staff oversees youth as they move forward with realistic plans for their futures. These youth require a significant amount of support to keep their education and vocational goals on track. Since the pandemic, the program has reached out to the young people to ascertain if they have the technology required to work remotely and if not, to either provide or assist them in obtaining what they need. Assessments are being conducted on-line

and one-on-one sessions continue. On-line workshops on relevant topics are being delivered to keep youth engaged during this time.

JCCA's Early Literacy Program, enhanced by the **City's First Readers** initiative for \$160,000 in FY 20 focuses on instilling a love of reading and learning for young children 0-5 and their families. Improved literacy skills are strongly correlated with improved health, economic, and social outcomes. This is particularly salient in the foster care population, where challenges include disruptions in residence, school, and family contact. JCCA has utilized City's First Readers to conduct monthly Storytime events in our Brooklyn and Bronx offices for children and families in foster and preventive care. JCCA distributes the book to the children and families and they then take it home to add to their home library. Parents receive information and in-person sessions that focus on the importance of literacy, and staff are trained to elevate attention to literacy as a way to address a child's well-being. During the pandemic, the Book of the Month has continued to be distributed to families, virtual Storytime events are hosted online, and case workers will conduct a Storytime event in person when they make home visits.

As you can see, these programs provide essential services to families during this time of health concerns, social isolation, and increased stress. Our agency has quickly pivoted in the pandemic, focusing on emergency concerns in addition to delivering our front-line services in person and via tele-health. We respectfully request that the Council allow us to continue these supports throughout the FY 21 year with level initiative funding in order to serve vulnerable children and families who have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your support and consideration of our request. For additional information, please reach out to Harriet Lessel, Director of Government Contracts and Advocacy at lesselh@jccany.org or 347-539-7271.

TESTIMONY BEFORE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S FINANCE AND IMMIGRATION COMMITTEES

Presented on May 21, 2020

My name is Hasan Shafiqullah and I am Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). Throughout our more than 140-year history, LAS has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. Over 2,000 staff members operate across all five boroughs in our Civil, Criminal Defense, and Juvenile Rights Practices – guided by the fundamental principle that nobody should be denied justice because of poverty. Combining the expertise gained from representing clients across diverse areas of law with the broader public policy perspective of an advocacy group, we lift up marginalized individuals and give them the capacity to thrive and advance themselves and their families. Part direct legal services provider, part social justice defenders, we have a unique ability to go beyond individual issues to effect change at a societal level.

ILU, founded in the 1980s, provides legal representation to vulnerable New Yorkers seeking relief for themselves and their families. We assist those in detention and fighting unlawful deportations, and represent low-income individuals in gaining and maintaining lawful status. Combining this representation with affirmative litigation work, we strive to ensure that families are able to stay together and stabilize their living situations. Over the most recent year, ILU assisted in over 5,000 individual legal matters benefiting over 10,500 New Yorkers citywide.

We welcome the opportunity to present testimony on the challenges currently being experienced by New York's immigrant communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for continued funding for our vital legal services. At this time of perhaps unparalleled difficulty and turmoil, the support of the City Council is more vital than ever.

A. The Impact of COVID-19 on the Immigration Landscape

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our work to support noncitizen clients and immigrant communities across the city. Detained immigration court operations continue and we are still representing New Yorkers in detention through the New York Immigrant Family Unification Project (NYIFUP). Hearings for detained clients in removal proceedings were for a few weeks moved to video conferencing from Fort Worth, TX, though the judges have mostly been in Minneapolis, MN – leading to consistent problems with our written submissions actually reaching the judges presiding over the case in which we are representing our client. After much advocacy, we have been able to appear telephonically for detained hearings scheduled at Varick Street Immigration Court, even after hearings were moved back there from Fort Worth. However, our inability to safely and confidentially meet with our detained clients has limited our ability to prepare cases for trial and we have been forced to seek continuances as a result. While these are generally being granted, they are necessarily creating a backlog of cases that will all need to have hearings eventually.

During the crisis, we have advocated strongly to ensure the safety of our clients held in detention after the rapid spread of infection through many facilities. Following ICE's refusal to engage with our advocacy efforts, we have been forced to file litigation to secure our clients' release as the jails have proven incapable of safeguarding them from infection. In late March, together with the Bronx Defenders we filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking the immediate release of 7 clients in U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement (ICE) custody who were at imminent risk of serious illness or death in the event of a COVID-19 infection because of their underlying health conditions. We filed the emergency lawsuit following mounting reports of egregious conditions at local ICE jails that exacerbated the risk of infection and spread of the novel coronavirus within these facilities. The petitioners included individuals who are immunocomprised or who have underlying health issues like asthma, lung disease, heart conditions, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and liver disease. For instance, the Bergen and

Hudson County Facilities, where most of our clients are detained, report multiple detainees, inmates, and corrections officers testing positive or being suspected of having contracted the virus. At the same time, the precautions taken at these facilities to prevent further spread of the virus were inadequate – petitioners complained they had no access to basic medical, hygiene, or cleaning supplies and that the facilities were not subject to regular cleaning or sanitization. As a result of our litigation, the court issued a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) and we succeeded in securing the release of our clients. Working closely with partner organizations, we continue to file separate group and individual petitions for writs of habeas corpus and, through a combination of litigation and advocacy, have obtained the release of 18 vulnerable ICE detainees who are at increased risk of experiencing serious illness or death, with decisions on 5 additional clients currently pending. We continue to advocate strongly for the release of our clients during the pandemic and to ensure that all measures are taken to safeguard their health and wellbeing. Since the beginning of the crisis in mid-March, we have successfully secured the release of more than 45 individuals held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention through individual and group habeas petitions, winning bond hearings, and advocating with ICE. As I discuss in a later section, our litigation in this instance is just one example highlighting the importance of creating dedicated federal representation services for our immigrant communities. By getting medically at-risk individuals out of ICE detention we are literally saving lives.

While United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has suspended all interviews, hearings, and biometric appointments, it has not tolled filing deadlines. The agency provided limited relief for deadlines related to notices or decisions that were dated between March 1, 2020 and May 1, 2020, later extending to July 1, 2020, but it has been unrelenting regarding deadlines after July 1, 2020 for which the notice was issued before March 1, 2020, as is the case with many appeals and Requests For Evidence (RFE) to which we are currently responding. Several of our clients in this situation, as well as our own staff and their families, have

themselves become sick themselves with COVID-19 or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection however, despite requests for extensions or postponements of deadlines, USCIS has insisted on compliance with pre-existing deadlines. This has meant, for instance, that clients with RFEs for medical examinations are having to appear in doctor's offices to complete their exams, even though medical offices are necessarily risky places to be, in terms of possible COVID-19 spread and infection. Also, to the extent we need to obtain criminal court records or documentation from other agencies, those agencies' closures make it impossible for us to timely obtain the necessary documents. Non-detained immigration court hearings have been suspended through June 12, 2020, although deadlines have not been tolled, including deadlines for appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). As with USCIS, this has proven challenging, given the limitations on our ability to obtain necessary documents.

B. The Importance of Continued Funding for Immigration Services

Low-income noncitizen New Yorkers are among New York City's most vulnerable populations. The City Council's commitment to ensuring parity of justice and access to comprehensive legal services for our city's immigrant communities has been central to our work and has established New York City's approach as among the most progressive in the nation. We are grateful for the support of the New York City Council and the Human Resources Administration that has enabled us to conduct the follow immigration-related programs:

The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) has represented detained immigrants facing deportation since 2014, helping to ensure New York families are not separated simply because they cannot afford an attorney. The nation's first universal legal representation program for detained immigrants, NYIFUP provides high quality, holistic representation to New Yorkers detained and facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney. NYIFUP attorneys carry a full caseload of deportation defense cases, and provide services including master calendar, bond and individual merits hearings,

appeals, and social work services. Many of our NYIFUP clients are long-term permanent residents or other non-citizens with strong family ties and long work histories. As noted above, with the assistance of our Federal practice we have successfully secured the release of more than 45 detained individuals, through a mixture of federal court individual and group habeases, bond redetermination hearings in immigration court, and through advocacy with ICE. Given that COVID-19 is running rampant in the ICE detention centers, our NYIFUP work securing these releases is literally saving lives.

The three NYIFUP providers are requesting an enhancement from \$16.00M to \$18.26M in FY21 to ensure continued capacity to respond to surges and changes in immigration enforcement and detention, while covering increased costs including pay parity and COLA for NYIFUP staff. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an enhancement from \$5,533,334 to \$6,086,666 for NYIFUP in FY21.**

The Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families Initiative has been providing free legal assistance to Unaccompanied Children and Adults with Children fleeing endemic gang violence and domestic abuse since 2014, with the support of the New York City Council. With the NYC Bar Association's resolution supporting universal access to legal services for children in removal proceedings, LAS, along with our partners in the citywide Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE), are evaluating this initiative closely to determine how best to scale the program and realize the Bar Association's vision of universal representation. This traumatized and vulnerable population is especially in need of highly competent legal representation to advance their asylum claims, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases, and other avenues of relief. With the New York State Family Courts are closed for all but emergency hearings during the NYS on PAUSE period, we have successfully obtained SIJS special findings orders on an emergency basis for young clients who were about to age

out of eligibility. In an initial step toward universal representation, the ICARE Coalition is requesting an enhancement of \$1,418,200 for a total of \$5.4 million to continue representing 1,680 children and families while adding new cases whenever we are able to close old ones. **The Legal Aid Society is requesting an enhancement of \$252,750, for a total of \$1,107,750 to fully fund the project.**

The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) serves immigrants and new Americans who are seeking citizenship, permanent residence, or another immigration status or are seeking employment legal services after having been exploited by their employers. Legal services are provided through our Immigration Law Unit, Employment Law Unit, and Family Law and Domestic Violence Practice, with support of 23 subcontracting agencies, including legal services providers and community-based organizations with deep ties to marginalized communities. In FY18, we served over 5,000 individuals seeking assistance with an immigration, employment, or family law matter. This funding has supported a significant expansion in the provision of removal defense legal services throughout New York City. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to accept case referrals from the City's ActionNYC network, as well as direct referrals from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. These have included numerous asylum seekers who were coming up against their one-year filing deadline for whom a failure to file an asylum application immediately could have irreparable negative consequences on their ability to obtain protection from harm in this country.

These services have always been essential for the New Yorkers we represent. For our clients, accessing legal services can mean the difference between being able to regularize their status and accessing associated increased educational and professional opportunities and facing potential forced return to violent and unstable countries of origin. Our services keep New York families together, support New Yorkers in transitioning out of

poverty, and defend the most vulnerable in our city. Many of our clients – whether trafficking survivors, domestic violence survivors, or others - have significant mental health issues stemming from significant trauma histories or having to flee extremely difficult and hostile situations. Many work in unstable or low-wage employment and are often particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation or harassment. At the same time, the populations we represent have been on the receiving end of more than three years of unprecedented attacks from an overtly anti-immigrant hostile federal administration that have spread fear and anguish among our city's communities.

Added to this now, New York's immigrant communities have been disproportionately impacted by the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in the city. Community members are more likely to contract the virus and suffer serious medical complications or death, while also experiencing significant barriers to accessing medical services. They have also been more likely to experience loss of employment or reductions in income as a result of the cross-sector economic collapse following the mass-closure of many local businesses. It is highly likely that our immigrant communities will continue to be impacted by the fall-out of the pandemic in the months and years to come – long after the initial waves of the virus recedes. These threats facing immigrant New Yorkers are a direct assault on our city and what it means to live in New York, in what has always been an international city built around the diversity fostered by a thriving immigrant community. During this period, our services are more vital than ever.

C. The Importance of Federal Immigration Representation

The unprecedented difficulties now facing our immigrant communities also highlight the need to develop a robust federal practice through the new Federal Immigration Representation for New Yorkers (FIRNY) initiative – **for which we respectfully request \$710,000**. ILU has housed a federal litigation project for over a decade and we have been a first responder in defending immigrants' rights in federal court long before the draconian measures of the current Administration. This litigation is a natural outgrowth of our representation of non-citizens

before the immigration court, the BIA, and USCIS. The current immigration and political climate together with several additional developments mean that federal immigration representation is increasingly central to our efforts to defend effectively our immigrant communities.

1. Individual Representation

As described above, since just March 16, 2020, our Federal practice assisted our NYIFUP practice in securing the release of more than 45 detained individuals from ICE detention centers, in large part through group and individual habeas petitions.

In FY19, we had filed over a dozen habeas petitions in federal court, either seeking to end prolonged detention by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or to ensure that the bond hearings that do take place in immigration court are procedurally fair. In response, ICE has appealed several of our district court victories, and we are defending the right to constitutionally adequate bond hearings in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. For example, under BIA caselaw, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can detain anyone it alleges to be a removable noncitizen without making any showing that detention is necessary – instead, the burden is on the noncitizen (who is now detained) to prove that he or she merits release. We believe that this cannot be reconciled with basic due process principles, and last week, we argued our challenge to this practice in the Second Circuit, in a case that has the potential to fundamentally reform how immigration bond proceedings work in New York State. Moreover, there is trending surge of adverse decisions from immigration judges and BIA, which then requires the filing of Petitions for Review (PFR) in the 2nd and 3rd Circuit Courts of Appeal.

In addition to this habeas and PFR work, we also secured, with pro bono counsel, a significant settlement for our client on a Federal Tort Claims Act claim based on his unlawful deportation to a country where he was subsequently attacked. Through this type of damages litigation, we intend to hold the immigration agencies accountable and to pay for their unconstitutional actions.

2. Impact Litigation

Individual representation is only one component of effective federal representation for our clients and we combine this work with class action litigation to ensure that the needs of our clients in New York remain at the center of national decisions.

In response to DHS' final publication of damaging changes to public charge regulations, LAS filed a lawsuit in federal district court, together with the Center for Constitution Rights (CCR) and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP (Paul Weiss), on August 27, 2019 - *Make the Road New York v. Cuccinelli*, 19 Civ. 7993 (S.D.N.Y.) - seeking to have this regulation set aside as arbitrary, capricious, unlawful, and unconstitutional. The new rule drastically expands public charge grounds of inadmissibility and results in denials of a much higher number of applicants for lawful permanent residence through a family member. We filed a motion for a preliminary injunction to block the regulation from becoming effective on October 15, 2019. On October 11, 2019, we succeeded in gaining a nationwide preliminary injunction. Unfortunately, the injunction was stayed by the U.S. Supreme Court on January 27, 2020. We have also provided factual support to the NY Attorney General's motion to the Supreme Court of the United States to temporarily lift or modify its stay of the injunction to halt implementation of the changes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of preventing noncitizens from seeking vital healthcare services that could ultimately contribute to the virus's spread. We continue to litigate our DHS public charge case before the district court and the Second Circuit. In December 2019, we filed *Doe et al. v. Pompeo et al* challenging new public charge rules introduced in the Department of State's (DOS) processing of immigration applications. Filed with CCR, Paul Weiss, and the National Immigration Law Center, this suit challenges the incorporation of new public charge rules into the adjudication of applications for visas or other immigration benefits from outside the country by the Department of State (DOS). Our litigation challenges changes to the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) codifying new public charge rules and a new Presidential

proclamation requiring specific private medical insurance coverage or access to significant financial resources for applicants for immigrant visas outside the U.S. Our suit seeks to maintain the previous standards relating to public charge as set forth in the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Field Guidance from 1999, both for applicants within the U.S. and for those undergoing consular processing. We continue to litigate the case before the district court.

Additionally, following a 1,700% increase in ICE enforcement activities at courts across New York between 2016 and 2018, in September 2019 we filed a lawsuit in federal district court, *Doe v. ICE*, 19 Civ. 8892 (S.D.N.Y), in which we argued that ICE's policy and practice of surveilling and making civil immigration arrests of people without a judicial warrant while engaging in court processes is unconstitutional. The argument was held on the government's motion to dismiss in February and the decision is pending. This suit was filed on behalf of an individual plaintiff and five organizational plaintiffs: The Door, Make the Road New York, New York Immigration Coalition, Sanctuary for Families, and the Urban Justice Center. Through this litigation, we seek to protect an already marginalized and underserved population from attempts to weaponize what are vital, independent public institutions against them. Litigation continues in the district court.

In addition, we continue seeking enforcement of our favorable decision in our class action, *R.F.M. v. Nielsen* (18-CV-5068), successfully challenging UCSIS's unlawful denials of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status to young people 18-20 years of age. We have co-counseled or advised Second Circuit challenges to adverse BIA decisions, with opening briefs filed in April in challenges to *Matter of Castro Tum* and *Matter of Mendoza-Hernandez*. In May, we argued a constitutional challenge to the BIA's practice of requiring immigration detainees to justify their release in the Second Circuit. We have initiated a Second Circuit challenge to the BIA's overly broad reading of "crime of violence" as applied to second degree assault, and are litigating a handful of remand prolonged detention habeases in the district courts after the Supreme Court's decision in *Nielsen v. Preap*. We

briefed and argued a case challenging racist policing practices and collaboration between local police and ICE in upstate New York. Finally, we have continued facilitating dialogue as co-leaders of the long-running Second Circuit Working Group for immigration litigators, and in April we hosted our first Zoom-based Working Group meeting, which remotely convened over 50 appellate practitioners to discuss issues percolating in the circuit.

This is all extremely time-sensitive and resource-intensive work under taken by existing staff, who are already overburdened and this work is not sustainable in the long-term - particularly in light of ever-increasing detentions and removals - without additional resources and dedicated staff through a more robust federal practice.

D. Conclusion

We are conscious of the incredibly difficult decisions that the City will have to make as it deals with the fall-out of the current crisis. However, it is vital that the rights of noncitizen New Yorkers continue to be protected and do not become an additional casualty of the pandemic. Together with the City, we have made significant strides in recent years in expanding access to vital legal services for our immigrant communities and keeping New York families together: it is essential that we maintain this momentum. As our clients and city undergo this unparalleled crisis, we remain guided by our fundamental commitment to advocating for those New Yorkers least able to advocate for themselves. We look forward to continue to working closely with the City in pursuit of this goal.

Respectfully submitted,

Hasan Shafiqullah
Attorney-in-Charge
Immigration Law Unit
The Legal Aid Society

**Testimony of Heather Lubov
Executive Director, City Parks Foundation
On behalf of the Parks and Open Space Partners NYC
FY21 Budget Hearing - Thursday, May 21, 2020**

I'm Heather Lubov, Executive Director of City Parks Foundation (CPF), a non-profit that leads free sports, arts, environmental education, and community building programs to encourage New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces.

COVID-19 has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities. When the crisis hit, we at CPF reached out to our colleagues, ultimately bringing together 20+ open space nonprofit groups to form the 'Parks and Open Space Partners- NYC' coalition. I'm here today to testify on their behalf.

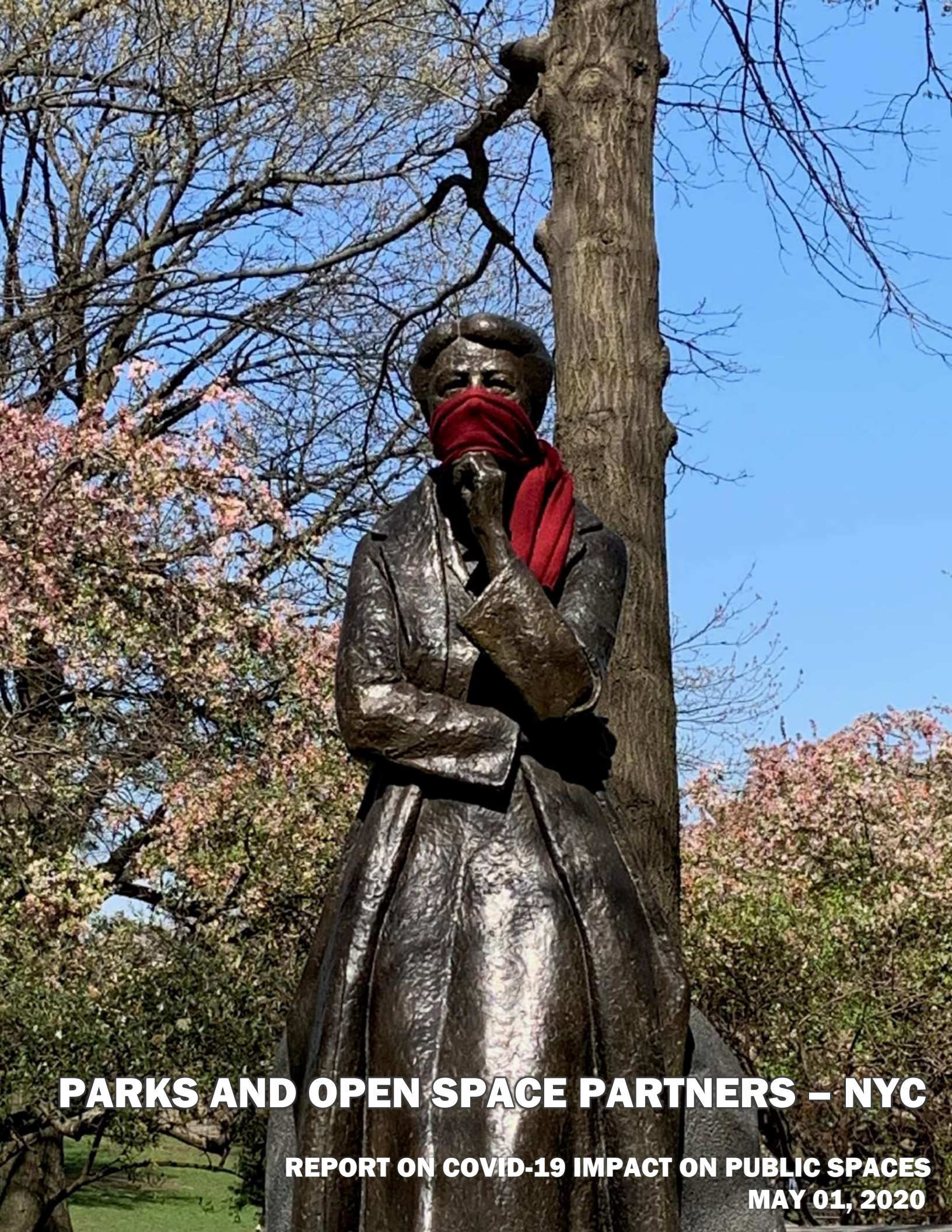
Many members of this coalition operate, maintain, and program city-owned land to supplement public dollars. These organizations raise more than 85% of their budgets through private donations and earned revenue, yet now face up to 60% in revenue losses due to COVID-19 - totaling \$37 million fewer dollars for park care. A group of private foundations has launched the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund to help keep those parks open and safe, but this fund simply cannot replace public support for the parks system.

Parks will see an unprecedented number of visitors this summer, which, combined with reduced funding for maintenance, will put even more stress on already overwhelmed park workers. This is why we urge you not to cut the budget, but rather to support the Play Fair Coalition's request for an additional \$47 million for NYC Parks to protect jobs and ensure that our parks are green and clean. We also urge the Council to renew its own Parks Equity Initiative, which truly addresses fairness across the city by supporting public programs run by more than 80 parks nonprofits as well as training, resources, and intensive outreach for the Partnerships for Parks network of nearly 600 volunteer parks groups.

Without adequate support, the Parks Department and many nonprofits will be forced into widespread furloughs and maintenance and volunteer reductions at a time when New Yorkers need green space more than ever. We ask the city to recognize parks as the essential infrastructure they are - and provide funding to ensure that our parks are safe, well maintained, and can provide health and environmental benefits to communities across the City.

Parks and Open Space Partners - NYC includes but is not limited to:

Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Broadway Mall Association
Bronx River Alliance
City Parks Foundation
Fort Greene Park Conservancy
Freshkills Park Alliance
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Green Guerillas
Hudson River Park Friends
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy
Madison Square Park Conservancy
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Areas Conservancy
Newtown Creek Alliance
New Yorkers for Parks
New York Restoration Project
North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
Prospect Park Alliance
Randall's Island Park Alliance
Riverside Park Conservancy
The Bronx is Blooming
The Trust for Public Land
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
Washington Square Park Conservancy



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PARTNERS – NYC

**REPORT ON COVID-19 IMPACT ON PUBLIC SPACES
MAY 01, 2020**

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PARTNERS – NYC

REPORT ON COVID-19 IMPACTS ON PUBLIC SPACES

MAY 01, 2020

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the physical and mental health of our communities. In New York City, over 25 nonprofits have official agreements with the government to provide maintenance, operations, programs and community services for city-owned land. These organizations, which support 50% of public parks and open spaces in the city, rely primarily on private support.¹

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, these organizations – which raise more than 85 percent of their annual operating budgets through private donations and earned revenue – have reported an anticipated decrease in revenue of up to 60 percent for 2020, which will translate into at least **\$37 million fewer dollars invested** into New York City’s public spaces. This includes approximately **40,000 lost hours of maintenance** and **110,000 lost hours of horticultural care city wide**, threatening core program service delivery to parks and open spaces at a time when New Yorkers need green space more than ever before. Groups expect an unprecedented number of people spending time in parks in the summer of 2020 which – along with deferred seasonal maintenance as a result of this crisis – will put even more stress on the already overwhelmed park workers.

This perfect storm of decreased staff capacity and increased use of public space will ultimately harm the overall condition of parks. A coalition of parks advocacy groups came together in April 2020, referring to itself as “Parks and Open Space Partners - NYC,” to help address the impacts of this crisis. This report shares the results of a survey of 20 of those organizations to examine the loss of operating revenue on staff positions, maintenance, programming – and the overall condition and usability of New York City’s parks. It is clear that, while public funds are critical, support from private philanthropy to sustain core operations will also be essential.

¹ New Yorkers for Parks Analysis of New York City Parks Data, April 3, 2020.

Overview

Often overlooked as core infrastructure, public parks play a vital role in physical and mental health. In the midst of COVID-19's devastating impact on our city, public parks – fundamentally democratic and accessible public resources – have remained available to New Yorkers. Access to parks and open spaces is an important public health and equity issue – city parks are the primary interaction with nature for roughly half of all New Yorkers.

New York City relies on the support of more than 25 not-for-profit organizations that operate independently from the City and raise more than 85% of their annual operating budgets through private donations and earned revenue. The survey of these organizations, whose results are detailed in this report, reveals that there are dark clouds on the horizon. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, these groups anticipate dramatic decreases in revenue, both in private philanthropy and in revenue-generating events. The lost revenues will directly result in a decrease in care and public programming in parks across the city – impacts which will be directly felt by park users, further exacerbate existing park equity issues, and threaten long-term consequences on the city's resilience to climate change in the future.

In 2019, more than 250 organizations organized by New Yorkers for Parks came together under the “Play Fair Coalition,” and delivered a critical increase of \$43 million in the city budget for parks workers. Yet, parks are not categorized as an essential service when the city plans its budgets, and is therefore in danger each year of cuts, which are particularly concerning given the economic toll of the pandemic. There is a proposed reduction of \$61.3 million to the Parks Department's budget in Fiscal Year 2021 – which represents 3% of PEG across all city agencies. These cuts, paired with the dramatic decrease in funds available for private not-for-profit organizations, will have a profound impact on the care and visitor experience of our city's parks.

Public investment in the proper care of our parks has been insufficient even prior to the current grim financial forecast. Nonprofit groups have emerged to sustain our essential park infrastructure over the past three decades, increasing financial resources available for park management and the creation of new open spaces. The proposed cuts to NYC Parks through the Mayor's PEG program and FY21 Executive Budget would leave the agency with staffing levels below those of 1977-78, which was the height of NYC's fiscal crisis – and the time when NYC Parks were at their most vulnerable, unkempt, and dangerous.



The fiscal crisis of the 1970s left parks in severely deteriorated conditions.

Photos: Riverside Park, left; Highbridge Park, right.

Groups Surveyed

The following organizations were surveyed for this report:

1. Alliance for Flushing Meadows Parks Corona Park
2. Bronx River Alliance
3. City Parks Foundation
4. Freshkills Park Alliance
5. The Friends of Governors Island
6. Friends of the High Line
7. Gowanus Canal Conservancy
8. Hudson River Park Friends
9. Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
10. Madison Square Park Conservancy
11. Natural Areas Conservancy
12. New Yorkers for Parks
13. New York Restoration Project
14. North Brooklyn Parks Alliance
15. Prospect Park Alliance
16. Randall's Island Park Alliance
17. Riverside Park Conservancy
18. The Trust for Public Land
19. Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
20. Washington Square Park Conservancy

The Role and Impact of Parks and Open Space Partner Groups in New York City

Originally formed from a grassroots response to the fiscal crisis in the 1970s, today there are over 25 nonprofit organizations which work to bridge gaps in capacity to care for parks, gardens, and other open spaces. These groups provide crucial support for 15,000 acres of parkland and green space, accounting for 50 percent of the city’s total public green space; they employ over 500 full-time staff and hundreds of seasonal workers; invest private funds of over \$150 million annually in public land; and engage more than 100,000 volunteers annually to help care for parks and gardens.² There are also nearly 600 other formal and informal collectives with modest (or no) budgets, many in under-resourced communities, that rely on thousands more volunteer hours to support and program local parks, gardens, playgrounds, and open spaces. Working in conjunction with these organizations are advocacy groups, which have a broader focus on the city’s entire network of parks and open space, and advocate for more public support of these spaces.



New York City’s patchwork of parks and community gardens

² New Yorkers for Parks Analysis of New York City Parks Data, April 3, 2020.

Not-for-profit organizations have invested immense private resources to improve New York City’s parks and open spaces. The results have been significant; only a few examples highlighted below.

Before



After



The Prospect Park Parade Ground is one of the city's most active recreational sports hubs with 40 acres of courts and playing fields. It suffered years of severe neglect and deterioration, and was restored by Prospect Park Alliance in 2004. This is an essential recreational resource for the Brooklyn community, particularly the Flatbush community, which has a high prevalence of diabetes and other health issues.

Before



After



The Alliance for Flushing Meadows Corona Park has successfully restored lawns and continuously performs regular maintenance to sustain the improvements.

Before



Sherman Creek was essentially a dumping ground until the 1990s, when New York Restoration Project revitalized the area into a waterfront habitat on the Harlem River.

After



Before



After



Riverside Park Conservancy transformed a vacant space along the Henry Hudson Parkway into a pollinator meadow.

Before



After



The Gowanus Canal has seen vast improvements as the Gowanus Canal Conservancy creates gardens in formerly unutilized space.

Survey Results

In April 2020, we surveyed these groups to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on these organizations. We asked them to project layoffs, maintenance and programming shortcomings, and other critical gaps in operations in the second two quarters of 2020, March 15 to September 15.

Survey results indicate:

Direct Impact on Parks and Open Spaces

- ❖ A combination of staff cuts and social distancing measures will result in 39,668 lost hours of maintenance and 109,384 lost hours of horticultural care citywide.
- ❖ Loss of thousands of volunteers who would have contributed an estimated 259,000 additional hours working on various projects;
- ❖ Approximately 541,700 trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals will not be planted in 2020 as a result of this diminished capacity;
 - 3,400 trees (often called the “lungs of the city”) will not be pruned;
 - over 150 acres of lawns will not be mowed, seeded, or given regular maintenance at the time of year when these spaces experience high traffic from park visitors on a daily basis.

Outlook on City Budget

- ❖ 90% of the organizations believe that parks, gardens, and open spaces will severely deteriorate as a result of this funding crisis.
- ❖ 79% believe that past physical improvements in their park, garden, or open space will be lost completely if adequate maintenance funding – from city or private sources – is not delivered.
- ❖ 85% of the groups surveyed were **not** confident that the City will provide adequate funding for parks, gardens, and open spaces in the FY2021.

Revenue Losses

- ❖ The organizations are preparing for an average of 32% revenue loss just this year; the hardest-hit organization in the study is bracing to lose 68% of its income in 2020.
- ❖ As a result, parks and public spaces in New York City will see a reduction of more than \$37 million in direct, privately-sourced investment from these organizations, which is instrumental to their everyday functionality.

Public Programming and Challenges as Summer Approaches

Open space groups anticipate a surge in the number of park visitors in the summer months as social distancing protocols are relaxed. This is especially true among young people who have lost summer camps, volunteer programs, and internship opportunities cut from the city's budget. These groups are doubly challenged: they must brace for the maintenance demand of increased park use while also preparing for the usual increase in summer upkeep, all with fewer financial resources.

Additionally, open space groups will be unable to hire most of the temporary positions necessary to cover critical seasonal needs. The decision to eliminate the city's Summer Youth Employment Program leaves 247 paid positions for local youth unfilled, a disservice to the city's youth and the maintenance and operational support of our public spaces. Some conservancies have already seen an uptick in garbage buildup with the first reductions in staff capacity. And aside from accumulation of garbage, a lack of regular maintenance creates risks to public safety as unsafe conditions like trip hazards, broken pathways and staircases, fallen tree limbs, and other immediate problems are not quickly addressed.

Further, social distancing protocol has necessitated the cancellation of 3,826 public events in our parks and open spaces as of April 2020, leaving an estimated 1,643,000 individuals without the programming they rely on to stay engaged with their communities.

Impact on Natural Areas and Climate Resilience

One third of New York City parkland – 10,000 acres – are natural areas including forests, wetlands, and grasslands. These areas provide invaluable benefits to New York City, such as coastal storm protection, reduction of extreme summer temperatures, and improvements to both air and water quality. New York City's natural areas also provide habitat for thousands of species of plants and animals, with more than 350 species of birds calling the city home. There are over 300 miles of trails available for people to explore the city's natural areas. In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, there has been unprecedented use of these spaces because they offer ideal conditions for social distancing. However, groups surveyed indicated that the lack of staff to patrol and manage these areas means that the additional volume of people will be damaging to natural areas, and can increase safety concerns for park visitors.

Furthermore, New York City forests cover 7,300 acres, and are already approaching a "tipping point," as the health and diversity of the tree species experience rapid decline which requires immediate restoration and management.

In the absence of funding to continue ongoing restoration initiatives, groups surveyed anticipate severe (possibly irreversible) impact to these systems. Natural areas are of crucial importance, but without adequate resources, the condition of these spaces will severely decline. The consequence of inaction may unravel years of diligent restoration work and climate change mitigation measures and reverse these group's investment and diligent management of these 10,000 natural acres of safe recreation space.

Impact on Individual Parks, Gardens, and Open Spaces

Each organization was asked to provide the top three concerns for the particular space(s) in their purview for the coming year. Nearly all participants expressed concerns regarding ability to deliver basic care to park facilities and plantings in the immediate future, with several groups commenting on specific projects, improvements, and initiatives that will be delayed as a result of COVID-19. Organizations expressed concern that impending capacity cuts due to COVID-19 will further exacerbate existing park equity issues and inhibit their ongoing work on park equity initiatives.

Some of the most significant impacts identified by groups include:

- ❖ **Seasonal maintenance** (Alliance for Flushing Meadows Parks Corona Park, Bronx River Alliance, Friends of Governors Island, New York Restoration Project)
- ❖ **Horticultural care** (Alliance for Flushing Meadows Parks Corona Park, Bronx River Alliance, Friends of Governors Island, Friends of the High Line, Hudson River Park Friends, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, Prospect Park Alliance, Randall’s Island Park Alliance, Riverside Park Conservancy, Washington Square Park Conservancy)
- ❖ **Free public programs and education** (Alliance for Flushing Meadows Parks Corona Park, Bronx River Alliance, City Parks Foundation, Friends of the High Line, Hudson River Park Friends, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, Prospect Park Alliance, Randall’s Island Park Alliance, Riverside Park Conservancy, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, Washington Square Park Conservancy)
- ❖ **Thousands of lost volunteer hours to improve public spaces** (Bronx River Alliance, City Parks Foundation, Friends of Governors Island, Hudson River Park Friends, Madison Square Park Conservancy, New Yorkers for Parks, Riverside Park Conservancy, Washington Square Park Conservancy)
- ❖ **Cleanups of public spaces and on shoreline** (Bronx River Alliance, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance)
- ❖ **Mowing** (Bronx River Alliance, Madison Square Park Conservancy)
- ❖ **Public safety measures** (Bronx River Alliance, Prospect Park Alliance)
- ❖ **Standard park maintenance and new improvement projects** (Friends of the High Line, Hunters Point Parks Conservancy, Madison Square Park Conservancy, Natural Areas Conservancy, North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, Prospect Park Alliance, Randall’s Island Park Alliance, Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, Trust for Public Land)
- ❖ **Training and support for small parks and open space conservancies and friends groups around the city** (City Parks Foundation, Natural Areas Conservancy, New York Restoration Project)
- ❖ **Advocacy for additional funds for parks and open spaces** (City Parks Foundation, New Yorkers For Parks, Trust for Public Land)

Comments from Parks and Open Space Organizations

“Once an abandoned dumping ground, the Bronx River has seen a tremendous revitalization thanks to a unique partnership between government and communities. \$200M+ has been invested in park and ecological restoration projects over the past 20 years. Together, we can weather the storm of COVID, but we cannot turn our backs on the progress we have made.”

Maggie Greenfield, Executive Director, Bronx River Alliance

"Many of the neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by COVID are those with the least amount of green space, and which rely on volunteer support to build community around those public spaces. Privately funded conservancies help ease the burden on NYC Parks so that the agency can focus its resources in areas without the benefit of such organizations. At the same time, those volunteers – many of whom are elderly and vulnerable – will need extra support, training, and PPE from our Partnerships for Parks program to ensure that they are able to work safely in their communities."

Heather Lubov, Executive Director, City Parks Foundation

“Freshkills is a park that is only just becoming: the site is closed to the public for now, except for the public programming that we offer. The project is big and complicated, and needs every bit of momentum that comes from public enthusiasm – but if we can't sustain that support, I worry for the future of this icon of resilience and reclamation.”

Eloise Hirsh, Park Administrator, Freshkills Park

“The Friends' financial support and volunteer programs provide critical care for Governors Island's park and open spaces. While we do not know what the months ahead hold, we know that our existence is part of the lifeblood of our City and that our parks must continue to survive – and thrive – for the future.”

Merritt Birnbaum, Executive Director, Friends of Governors Island

“This crisis has illuminated the importance of parks and public spaces in our communities. This is about large parks but also about the interstitial green spaces outside our front doors: the street trees, gardens, and waterfronts that create a habitable city. It is more important than ever to fund the stewardship of these spaces and plan for neighborhood-scale resiliency that can protect each and every one of us.”

Andrea Parker, Executive Director, Gowanus Canal Conservancy

“Our parks are providing what New Yorkers desperately need right now: nature, fresh air, physical and mental wellness resources and some semblance of normalcy in these completely abnormal times. We must continue to support them to guarantee these benefits during this crisis.”

Connie Fishman, Executive Director, Hudson River Park Friends

“New Yorkers need access to parks now more than ever. This includes safe access to our forests and wetlands, which offer opportunities for stress reduction, and space for social distancing.”

Sarah Charlop-Powers, Executive Director, Natural Areas Conservancy

“The COVID-19 epidemic has made our advocacy work more urgent than ever. Even as New Yorkers flock to parks in search of refuge, potential budget cuts threaten the ability of parks partner organizations and nonprofits to keep doing the essential work of maintaining open spaces and keeping them safe. These groups have a deep understanding of what the communities they serve need now and going into the future. With COVID-19 racking the City, we can’t afford to lose them.”

Paul Gottsegen, Board Chair and Acting Executive Director, New Yorkers for Parks

“Parks workers are essential and their bravery should be praised. Our staff are keeping NYC’s open spaces maintained and safe but it is getting harder with increased use, fewer staff and decreased financial support. NYC needs parks now more than ever, but it’s unrealistic to think we can keep up this pace without help.”

Lynn Kelly, Executive Director, New York Restoration Project

“At a time when New Yorkers rely on their parks as essential to their mental and physical health, it is imperative that those spaces are maintained to the quality standard that our city deserves.”

Katie Denny Horowitz, Executive Director, North Brooklyn Parks Alliance

“In these unprecedented times, our parks are one of the few places open to our community. Prospect Park Alliance needs to do its part to help keep up with increased usage in the face of significant challenges. It is critical for all New Yorkers to have access to safe, clean parks, today and in the challenging times ahead.”

Sue Donoghue, President, Prospect Park Alliance

“As Park stewards during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Randall’s Island Park Alliance is taking measures to protect the health of park patrons. We understand that green open space is more important than ever and are working to ensure the Park stays open for all to enjoy.”

Aimee Boden, President, Randall’s Island Park Alliance

“Parks are more important than ever, and we need to make sure that the groups that support them are able to survive this crisis.”

Dan Garodnick, President, Riverside Park Conservancy

“COVID-19’s closure of community playgrounds at schools has exposed the unfair and uneven access to quality parks across the city. We’re concerned that families in disadvantaged neighborhoods don’t have access to open space.”

Carter Strickland, New York State Director, The Trust for Public Land

Conclusion

Parks, gardens, and open space provide innumerable health benefits to individuals and communities, and will play a critical role in our city's collective recovery – bringing fresh air, recreation, creativity, and solace to so many New Yorkers.

The NYC Parks Department is already facing budget cuts in FY21 (with the non-baselined Parks Equity Initiative being particularly vulnerable). All parks and public spaces – in particular those in under-resourced communities without the benefit of privately-funded conservancies – will be especially vulnerable to these cuts. Those with private conservancies and friends groups will be called upon to do more to fill in the gaps, at a moment when their revenues are sharply declining.

New York City's parks, gardens, and open spaces will need a combination of public and private support to ensure that they remain accessible, safe, and healthy spaces for all New Yorkers – both during the COVID-19 crisis, and into the future. The coalition of organizations surveyed for this study hope to convey the need to prioritize parks as essential infrastructure that deserve support from public and private sources, both for the resilience of the city and for the health of all of its inhabitants. When we take care of our parks and open spaces, they take care of us.

METRO MONEY

New York City Park Funding Cuts Will Have a ‘Devastating Effect’

As finances take a hit, officials are looking to residents to help tend such urban oases as Prospect and Central parks



By [Anne Kadet](#) / Photographs by Anna Watts for *The Wall Street Journal*

May 12, 2020 10:00 am ET

Like many New Yorkers living in the coronavirus lockdown, I’ve spent a lot of time this spring wandering local parks, and it always produces a little lift. But last week’s visit to Brooklyn’s Prospect Park? Not so much.

I got a mini-tour with Sue Donoghue, president of the Prospect Park Alliance, one of 25 private nonprofits that officially partner with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to support city green spaces. The Alliance plays a big role in maintaining Prospect Park. It raises \$12 million a year—roughly two-thirds of the park’s total operating budget—and supports all 585 acres with its staff of 100-plus workers and 4,000 volunteers.

We started at the historic brick Picnic House, which is typically booked solid for weddings and parties this time of year—at rates topping \$5,000 a day. But this spring, it is closed. Due to the lockdown, the Alliance has so far lost out on more than \$3 million it would have earned from sources ranging from its memorial tree-planting program to its annual Party for the Park fundraiser.

And that means big service cuts, including spring planting. The Alliance typically plants thousands of trees, shrubs, and ground covers ranging from Red Maples to Blue-stem Goldenrod, said Ms. Donoghue, as we strolled through the central forest. This year, it hasn’t planted so much as a tulip.



Jesse Brody, an eco-zone gardener with the Prospect Park Alliance, weeds an overgrown area near the LeFrak Center in the Brooklyn park.

And that is just the start. Every summer, the Alliance hires a crew of five or six people to clean up after busy weekends, when the park gets totally trashed. This summer? No weekend garbage crew, Ms. Donoghue said.

Just when we need them most, the city's parks are facing disaster. Not only has the city cut \$84 million from its \$593 million parks budget, the lockdown has trashed the financials of the private conservancies that supplement city operations.

In a new report, Parks and Open Space Partners-NYC, a group of 20 nonprofits that support public green spaces, said they are anticipating, on average, a 32% decline in revenue from private donations, events and concession sales this year.



People in Manhattan's Central Park maintain social-distancing rules.

PHOTO: EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS

That means 150,000 fewer hours of maintenance and horticultural care by their staff and 259,000 lost hours from their collective army of 100,000-plus volunteers.

That is roughly 150 acres of lawn untended, 3,400 trees not pruned and 541,000 trees, shrubs, flowers gone unplanted citywide, the nonprofits say.

By the end of the summer, Ms. Donoghue expects Prospect Park to look “somewhere between raggedy and a disaster, to be honest. It is going to be hard to keep up with basic maintenance and cleanup.”

Before private conservancies emerged in the 1980s, many parks were unkempt and dangerous, said Daniel Garodnick, president and CEO of the Riverside Park Conservancy, which supports 400 acres along the Hudson. Many started as volunteer groups, with residents gathering to collect trash and reclaim small park sections to make them safe.

Now, many have formal agreements with the city that go far beyond garbage pickup. The privately funded Riverside Park Conservancy, for example, employs a large staff and 5,000 volunteers to perform work ranging from fence painting to erosion control. It created the new Butterfly Meadow planted with asters and lupines, restored the park’s historic field house and funded a herd of goats to munch poison ivy and mugwort.

The Central Park Conservancy, launched by a citizen group in 1980, now boasts a staff of 300 and 3,400 volunteers. It is responsible for raising most of Central Park’s \$80 million operating budget (the city chipped in \$10 million last year), and furnishes most of the park’s maintenance and operations. When you enjoy Central Park, It’s not so much your tax dollars at work as your neighbor’s donation.

The five-year-old Flushing Meadows Corona Park Alliance in Queens, meanwhile, raises just \$500,000 a year. But it has been planting new gardens, buying equipment and funding 11 seasonal workers to provide maintenance. It even supplies the restroom trailer parked near the Unisphere.

It is now facing big challenges, however. Several major donors recently indicated they are in no position to give this year. “It is going to have a devastating effect,” Executive Director Janice Melnick said.



Brawley Cuello, a groundskeeper and technician with the Prospect Park Alliance, trims the grass in the Brooklyn park.

The Parks Department says it is pleased by the way its nonprofit partners have stepped up to the challenge of keeping city parks safe, clean and accessible this spring. It expects them to “not only emerge from this crisis, but come out stronger,” a spokeswoman said.

It is ironic, of course, that this financial fiasco arrives at a time when parks may see record-breaking traffic due to the closing of most other recreation options during lockdown. “The two do not work together well,” Ms. Donoghue said.

The good news? The people responsible for ensuring our parks don’t go down the tubes, it turns out, are us. It is individual city dwellers, by and large, who support the conservancies. Anyone can help by volunteering, making a donation or simply carrying their own trash out of the park, Ms. Donoghue said.

And she’s hopeful that residents will come through. Many, after all, have been supporting the conservancies since the 1980s, when our parks were real urban jungles. “They remember what it was like,” Ms. Donoghue said. “And don’t want to see it backslide.”

Write to Anne Kadet at anne.kadet@wsj.com

POLITICO

City parks funding takes a hit amid coronavirus budget cuts

By Danielle Muoio

05/12/2020 01:12 PM EDT

The parks that cooped up New Yorkers are flocking to for exercise and respite during the coronavirus pandemic are poised to see major funding cuts.

The city has proposed slashing \$61.3 million from the parks department budget, one of several cuts to make up for billions in lost revenue due to the public health crisis. And more than a dozen conservancies and nonprofits that help maintain the city's green spaces are projecting millions in lost revenue, according to a new report by a coalition of park organizations.

The report warns that the critical loss in revenue to parks organizations as the city moves forward with massive budget cuts will ultimately decrease staff capacity and harm the overall condition of the city's sprawling park system.

"Parks are more important than ever, and we need to make sure that the groups that support them are able to survive this crisis," said Dan Garodnick, president of the Riverside Park Conservancy, in a statement.

There are more than 25 nonprofits that collectively care for 15,000 acres of parkland and green space, or half the city's open space. They employ more than 500 full-time staff and hundreds of seasonal workers. Most of their revenue is derived from private funding streams or events that have been indefinitely postponed as residents socially distance.

The 20 organizations surveyed predict a loss of \$37 million in revenue that goes toward maintaining park infrastructure. The diminished funding will significantly reduce staffing, resulting in 40,000 lost hours of park maintenance and 110,000 lost hours of horticulture care, according to the report.

The groups warn of a range of repercussions from the staffing constraints. It could limit the organizations' abilities to prune trees, mow lawns and plant shrubs — key functions that maintain the overall quality of the city's park system. It could also pose larger safety concerns by slowing down the response time to hazardous conditions like fallen tree branches and broken pathways — a risk that comes when more children are expected to escape to parks in the absence of summer youth programs.

The hit comes at a time when the de Blasio administration is pushing for major cuts to the parks budget that would “leave the agency with staffing levels below those of 1977-78, which was the height of NYC’s fiscal crisis — and the time when NYC Parks were at their most vulnerable, unkempt, and dangerous,” the report warned.

The report calls for public and private support to help maintain city parks, emphasizing the role organizations can play in filling in the gaps as the city faces a fiscal crisis.

“Parks, gardens, and open space provide innumerable health benefits to individuals and communities, and will play a critical role in our city’s collective recovery — bringing fresh air, recreation, creativity, and solace to so many New Yorkers,” the report reads. “When we take care of our parks and open spaces, they take care of us.”

I am fortunate to be a Board member of Classical Charter Schools and a professor at Fordham University. While Classical Charter Schools have helped children achieve outstanding academic gains, 40 percent of the families in the South Bronx live below the federal poverty line. The devastating effects of COVID-19 have burdened the City's Food Bank and forced families to live in a state of desperation. Many small Emergency Food programs (churches/community centers) have closed, forcing parents to commute miles from their communities just to have food for their families. Funding to provide direct services to areas in the South Bronx that are overwhelmed with a high demand for food resources is needed. South Bronx has the highest food insecurity, which is 37 percent, and one out of four residents is unable to afford sufficient food at www.hungerfreeamerica.org. In New York, 2,261,250 people are struggling with hunger - and of them, 732,300 are children <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/new-york>. As the inevitability of extreme poverty pushes our families even further into hopelessness and despair, we must find a viable solution to end the cycle of hunger for our families and community. Thank you for proposing funding to address hunger and poverty in the South Bronx.

Kathryn Moore Heleniak
Board Member, Classical Charter Schools
Professor, Fordham University

Council Member Vanessa Gibson:

I am a Board Member of the Classical Charter Schools, high performing elementary schools in the South Bronx. I am also a Professor at Fordham University. As you know ,there is a high level of homelessness in the Bronx. Sadly many of our young scholars experience homelessness first hand. Families with young children should always be placed in healthy homes as soon as possible, but at the time of this pandemic, it is even more urgent. Children in crowded shelters cannot engage in remote learning. They are doubly penalized: lacking school and home. It is crucial that families be moved out of shelters into housing as soon as possible. Please push for **increased funding** to make this possible.

Kathryn Moore Heleniak,
Board Member, Classical Charter Schools (Bronx)
Professor, Fordham University

On behalf of HELP USA we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

HELP USA operates family and adult transitional housing and shelter programs, supportive service programs and builds, operates and provides supportive services at permanent housing sites in New York City. HELP also develops permanent supportive housing in 6 other states and the District of Columbia. We have almost 2,000 full time employees, over 1,300 in New York City and 80 that are directly related to permanent supportive housing. My name is David Cleghorn and I am the Chief Housing Officer for HELP USA. My role is to oversee the development and operations of our permanent supportive housing.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow.

HELP has several important projects that were set to close in FY20 and FY21.

- Home Simpson: a 72-unit supportive housing project in the Bronx that has a 15/15 contract, 9% LIHTC from HCR, SHLP funds from HPD and was scheduled to close in May 2020. Additionally, our development partner is a church whose sanctuary space has been demolished. They will need to continue to find other space for the foreseeable future and at great expense to them.
- The Cluster Project: As part of the Mayor's initiative to close Cluster shelter sites and retain control of properties held by predatory landlords HELP USA has been operating 5 buildings in the Bronx since April 2019. These buildings are in very poor shape and cost a tremendous amount of money to manage the almost constant emergencies. The project has been scheduled to close on financing for renovation in the fall of 2020 but that is now unknown. There are 90 units in five buildings, most of them formerly homeless and require significant supportive services.
- HELP ONE: This is a project that was approved in ULURP in December 2019. The first phase, 184-unit supportive housing building is scheduled to close as a Volume Cap deal in December 2020 along with a second phase which includes a 71 unit 9% LIHTC supportive housing building. We now know that the 9% project will not close in FY21 and the status of the bond closing are up unknown.

Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. Beyond the mission reasons of housing homeless families and those with special needs not being able to close the projects has a huge financial impact on our organization. HELP has more than \$3.5 million spent on these projects in predevelopment costs, most of it from our

own reserve funds. These costs would be recouped at the financial closings and recycled into predevelopment on future projects.

Housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities.

Supportive housing development creates jobs: HELP currently employs 80 people who work in the development, operations and supportive service provision in our NYC supportive housing projects. Further, the projects I mentioned above have the potential for more than 50 new jobs created in property management, maintenance and supportive services.

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. At HELP USA we early on instituted a policy of cleaning all public areas three times per shift, staggered staffing patterns, remote work and equipped our staff and residents with PPE's, both purchased and donated from the city. Our social service workers are continuing to provide services in person. In the event a resident has tested positive for COVID-19 we have third party's complete a deep cleaning of the common areas.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have.

Testimony of Henry Garrido
Executive Director, District Council 37
Before the Finance Committee and Subcommittee on Capital
May 21, 2020

Good morning. My name is Henry Garrido. I'm the Executive Director of District Council 37, New York City's largest municipal employee union, with over 150,000 members. I appear (virtually) before you today to testify regarding the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget.

Through no fault of the City, the Executive Budget represents tremendous challenges for all New Yorkers. The City has to make very difficult funding decisions in an Executive Budget that cuts spending by \$6 billion compared to the Preliminary Budget that was released in January.

District Council 37 provides essential services to every New Yorker every single day. Our school lunch workers, to cite just one example, perform essential services of preparing and distributing healthy and nutritious meals for our school children and their families. Our paramedics and EMTs are in the very front lines of this crisis – enduring exposure and terrible risk of infection.

As an example of where we take issue with the Executive Budget, we note that City funding for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is cut by nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in the FY 2021 Executive Budget – a cut of 25 percent

or 1 in every 4 dollars. The agency is losing 60 positions at a time when more people such as epidemiologists, public health nurses and biostatisticians, to name but a few, are so desperately needed.

Defeating the coronavirus requires more investment in these public health professionals. The cost of filling 60 currently vacant or eliminated positions is well worth the public health benefits these highly trained workers would provide.

We also mention the City's contracting budget and believe there are many millions of dollars which the City can save if it reduces the use of outside contracts. These savings would save City jobs and improve the delivery of City services. I have argued for years that the Contract budget is too large, lacks clarity and results in jobs being done by expensive contractors that should be done by City workers.

For example, at ACS, in FY 2021 the agency will spend nearly \$10 million on the purchase of computer equipment in just one budget area, including \$2.5 million in professional services, itself an increase of a half-million dollars over the current year.

The number of OTPS contracts at ACS remains the same this year and next at 89. We have to ask, can't the number of contracts be reduced and the savings

generated be used to hire more City employees that would provide more services to New Yorkers?

At the Department of Homeless Services, the 2021 budget cuts 165 positions in the Shelter Intake category, at a time of a terrible homeless crisis in the City. In the agency's Administrative OTPS budget, spending remains exactly the same, \$17.6 million in 2020 and 2021, including \$386,000 each year for Accounting and Auditing services. District Council 37 represents many Accountants and Auditors and we have to ask why does the Agency need to spend almost \$800 thousand on auditing services when there are City employees fully qualified and able to do this work?

In yet another example of short-staffing and how it costs the City, we strongly believe the City, despite a terrible fiscal climate, must increase staffing of its Paramedics and EMTs. To augment our hard-pressed EMS workers, the Federal government has sent FEMA EMS personnel to the City, some earning an annualized salary of up to \$250,000. The City will have to repay a portion of the FEMA assistance it has received. Adequate staffing at EMS would have left the City better prepared to deal with this crisis and would save the City money.

We push for increased staffing and less use of outside contractors because City workers can do the job better and more economical. We also offer suggestions that might free up additional budgetary resources. For example, the City should negotiate aggressively for more favorable, extended payment terms from its thousands of contractors and consultants for which the City pays billions of dollars annually. Lengthening payment terms, and more closely scrutinizing work performance before payment approval, could save the City many millions of dollars per year.

We also would urge the City to access the municipal bond markets for short term emergency financing. While we understand the City would have to pay more for financing at this time, undoubtedly the City will emerge from this crisis and resume a growth trajectory once again. Bonds could be refinanced when rates fall, as the crisis lessens and the City's finances improve.

Finally, we suggest the City explore a pension re-start, which is a technical actuarial exercise which 're-sets' or 're-starts' the timeline required to reach full or near full funding levels of the municipal pension funds. There is precedent for this. A pension re-start was commenced in 2011 in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008-09 and can be likened to the refinancing of a bond or

mortgage. Almost a decade later, the City's financial crisis is acute and a re-start could save the City significant sums annually in pension payments without risking the funding of those systems.

Let me conclude my remarks by acknowledging once again the grave situation we are all in. District Council 37 is always ready to offer constructive suggestions on how the City budget can be made a better utilization of available funds to serve all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer your questions.

Testimony: Amy Barasch, Executive Director

Hearing: City Council Budget Hearing

Host: Committee on Finance

Date: May 21, 2020

Thank you Chair Drumm, the Committee on Finance, and other members of the Council. I am Amy Barasch, the Executive Director of Her Justice, a nonprofit organization that stands with women living in poverty in New York City. For 27 years, justice for women living in poverty has been the core of why Her Justice exists. In 2019 alone, Her Justice provided a range of legal help to more than 4,000 women and 5,000 children living in poverty in New York City in the areas of family, matrimonial and immigration law. Our service delivery model makes us unique: our small legal department of 21 (who speak 10 languages other than English) recruits, trains and then serves as virtual mentors to volunteer attorneys from the best firms across the City. These volunteer lawyers then stand side-by-side with women who would otherwise have to navigate the complex legal system on their own. We use a 21-person legal unit to mobilize hundreds of lawyers who deliver more than \$41 million worth of legal services every year.

Our clients are the working poor, with very limited resources. They live in all five boroughs of the City. More than half of our clients are foreign-born, a quarter of them need interpreters in court, and most are mothers who are, or become, the heads of their households. More than 75% of our clients are victims of domestic violence.

In this crisis, our unique model has positioned us to be able to pivot quickly and smoothly to provide services remotely, leveraging private volunteerism to prepare clients to engage with the courts when they open. Our civil legal services are essential services, preventing greater crises for people living in poverty down the road. We recognize the severe shortage of lawyers available for low-income New Yorkers. In the civil courts, that burden falls with disproportionate weight on women who represent the bulk of the unrepresented in family and divorce matters. Her Justice offers information, advice, brief services and full representation in support, custody and visitation, and order of protection matters in Family Court; divorces in Supreme Court; and immigration matters under the Violence Against Women Act in Federal proceedings. We offer representation for many of the cases other legal services organizations do not have the bandwidth to take on – child and spousal support matters, and litigated divorces, for example. Our staff responds to half of the women who contact us with a broad array of legal advice, review of papers, and tools to ensure they get the best outcomes they can on their own. The other half of the women who contact us receive free full representation on their case for as long as it takes. The majority of these cases - 80% - are handled by volunteer attorneys from the City's premiere law firms, with rich assessment, triage, mentoring, training and support from our staff. The remaining 20% of the cases are handled in-house to ensure that we retain the necessary flexibility to respond to emergency situations, navigate particularly complex or lengthy legal issues, and stay fully engaged in the legal issues on which we train and provide support.

Legal Services are Essential Services

Support from the City Council helps Her Justice to provide direct representation and skilled advocacy in an arena that often fails to adequately serve the legal needs of the poor— our civil court system. In this crisis, as in ordinary times, legal services are essential services. The current public health crisis has exposed the access-to-justice gap in new ways. While our offices are physically closed, The Her Justice team continues to serve our clients and support our pro bono attorneys. Every day, our staff attorneys provide women with information about the legal remedies available to them and advise and strategize with clients to help them weigh their options and decide the course that is right for them and their children.

The Her Justice Legal Help Line remains open during its normal hours and calls are answered by trained staff and volunteers via a remote app and information is transcribed into a web-based database system. We connect with clients via phone and video conference. Clients email or send photos of their documents to their attorneys and sign documents virtually/ electronically. While court closures mean that clients do not have the ability at this time to affirmatively pursue some legal relief, Her Justice continues to provide essential information and advice to our clients through our telephone intake and to prepare them for eventual court openings. We continue to mentor our pro bono attorneys virtually and send regular communications about updates to court closures and other relevant legal information. We have also reached out to our community-based partner organizations to both share information as well as offer support in the form of webinars for their staff and clients. While our services to clients may look different in some ways during this time of court closures, the need for legal support for domestic violence victims is as real and urgent as ever.

Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. Many of our clients must engage with the New York City Family Courts to get legal relief that is critical to their safety and well-being; for example, orders of protection, financial support from partners, or clear schedules for access to children. All of these remedies are particularly essential for victims of partner violence – orders of protection are important, but only part of the legal response to violence in families. As you may know, the New York Family Courts have been operating with limited capacity during this public health crisis. We know that it is safest for all – court personnel, attorneys, and litigants alike – to remain at home at this time, and we appreciate the substantial challenge of providing broad access to the courts for all New Yorkers in need. The New York Family Courts are currently providing virtual access for certain types of matters that have been deemed “essential,” including applications for temporary orders of protection, motions for urgent issues that arise in pending cases, and more recently modification of child support orders. While we understand the challenges facing the courts, prohibitions on the filing of new family and matrimonial matters does mean that certain critical court relief is unavailable to domestic violence victims at this time

Like all those living in poverty, victims of domestic violence find themselves in an even more precarious economic situation at this time. Her Justice runs a consumer debt advocacy program to enhance the services we offer our clients. For victims of domestic violence, we provide safety planning around issues stemming from financial abuse – the control by one intimate partner of the other’s access to economic resources, which diminishes the victim’s capacity to support themselves and forces them to depend financially on the abuser. In general, consumer debt and low credit scores trap women in poverty. These financial barriers may impose particular challenges if the debt arose from partner abuse, such as the withholding of assets, identity theft, and coercive debt. Debt and damaged credit as a result of financial abuse make it even more difficult for victims to leave the relationship – with a low credit score, women cannot rent an apartment, get a job or buy a house or car. We advise clients on how to obtain, review, and request security freezes on credit reports; how to report fraudulent activity to the FTC and other appropriate agencies and to write dispute letters to the reporting agencies, and advocacy letters to creditors; and to change PIN numbers on financial accounts and remove abusers as authorized users. As a complement to our work with individual clients, Her Justice has advocated for protections against enforcement of money judgments and debt collection in this fragile financial time.

Family and Matrimonial Issues

Although current access to the courts are limited at this time, it is essential that we continue to provide critical information and advice to clients about choices available to them, and to prepare their legal cases for the time when the court reopens. Support from the Council, in particular through the SAVE and DoVE initiatives, allows us to deliver services that are especially needed at this time.

Child support. For single mothers living in poverty, child support can mean the difference between providing a stable life for children and resorting to public assistance. Victims of domestic violence may have been estranged from abusive partners in order to remain safe and, therefore, have been shouldering the

burden of supporting children. For these women, fair and consistent child support could mean the difference between remaining safe and independent or returning to a dangerous situation. In ordinary times, there are more than 70,000 filings for child support in the New York City Family Courts each year. But during this crisis, court closure means that many families have no access to this needed support. We are urging the Family Courts to consider allowing filing of initial child support petitions by email (they recently expanded to accept modification petitions), even if the courts cannot adjudicate the matters at this time, so that parents can preserve filing dates to which final support orders or modifications of orders would be retroactive.

Divorce. Going through a formal legal process in divorce (rather than just separating) is especially important for women who are typically the lesser-earning spouse; the legal process should ensure a fair child or spousal support award which gives single mothers a critical safety net. Unfortunately, the barriers to and risks from divorce increase exponentially for women who are victims of domestic violence. We know that City Council has been attuned to the particular benefits of a fair divorce process for victims of domestic violence, and the particular challenges as well. At this time, New York Supreme Courts do not have a policy to accept new divorce filings. Nevertheless, our clients continue to need legal assistance around divorce issues. These cases represent two-thirds of our practice, and we continue to meet the need for information and advice about these issues through our legal helpline each week. For the 477 clients we have with ongoing matrimonial cases, Her Justice lawyers and the pro bono attorneys that provide representation continue to stabilize the cases and work with clients to prepare for litigation – including organizing financial documentation related to marital assets and debt – to be ready for the eventual opening of the courts.

Immigration Issues

Our immigrant clients – all of whom are survivors of gender-based violence – are met with particular challenges during this time. For Her Justice, immigration practice in this crisis when our clients need us most means meeting unrelenting deadlines for documents that are no longer immediately available. Other challenges for our clients are not wholly new, with constantly changing immigration rules and practices and priorities, but are now impacting more deeply vulnerable New Yorkers.

Barriers to needed legal relief. In fiscal year 2019, with the support of Speaker's funding, Her Justice provided information, advice and representation to 1,189 women living in poverty in immigration matters under the Violence Against Women Act. We continue to provide information and advice about immigration relief through our legal helpline each week. For the 856 clients we have with ongoing immigration matters, Her Justice lawyers and the pro bono attorneys that provide representation continue to stabilize the cases and work with clients to prepare applications. Yet even in the current public health crisis, when many immigrants are facing great financial harm and working on the frontlines, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services continues to raise barriers to our clients' ability to work legally in this country. USCIS is still requiring people to renew work permits through regular mail using paper forms that need to be signed – and sometimes requiring applicants to submit passport photos; this is difficult if not impossible for many to do without legal counsel or even a computer and printer. Her Justice staff attorneys are working with clients using the technology which is available to them. Sometimes this means exchanging documents through U.S. mail or using photography apps on phones to exchange documents and take photos. Sometimes there is no possible way to provide the documentation that is required by USCIS and attorneys are describing these challenges to USCIS as best they can. And Her Justice continues to advocate for changes to these policies, for example urging USCIS to automatically extend work authorization status until the crisis is over so that survivors' livelihood and eligibility for benefits (including unemployment insurance benefits) are protected at a time they need this most.

Our immigrant clients are in a precarious financial situation and need services and support now more than ever. Our undocumented clients whose immigration applications are pending for years and who do not yet have employment authorization, are ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Immigrants who have lost their jobs are reluctant to access benefits and healthcare due to policies like the "public charge" rule change penalizing some immigrants who have used public assistance including Medicaid. While this rule does

not apply to our clients, survivors of gender-based violence who obtain status under the Violence Against Women Act, it created a “chilling effect” on public benefits and healthcare utilization. This puts their lives and their families’ lives at risk. The unpredictable and threatening climate of the last several years has endangered the immigrant community, making them less likely to seek help. While we reach many immigrants in need, we know that there are many others who are trapped in abusive situations and afraid to reach out for help, or lack the needed technology or literacy skills to do so.

Unfair immigration enforcement. During the last several years, we have dedicated significant time and effort to advocating against undue and unfair immigration enforcement actions, including preventing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from making arrests in the courts, which have had a chilling effect on our clients’ willingness to seek help. Even in this time of great crisis, ICE continues its harmful practice of wearing clothing and equipment that bear the word “police” and identifying themselves verbally as police officers while conducting immigration enforcement activities in New York City. As survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault or human trafficking, our clients already face many barriers erected by trauma and lack of immigration status. Allowing ICE officers to wear clothing that identifies them as “police” is a tactic meant to deceive immigrants into opening their doors or submitting to questions by ICE officers. Posing as police officers gives ICE officers the ability to confuse people into believing they are investigating a crime, when in fact they are looking to detain and remove someone. Once the trick has worked and ICE enters a home, they often demand identification from everyone present. Many of our clients live in multifamily homes – where they are required to be during this quarantine – and ICE’s presence can result in collateral arrests of other residents determined to be without immigration status. All of these activities have a deleterious mental and emotional, and possibly even physical, effect on our clients. Support from the Council would enable us to strengthen our services for immigrant women living in New York City who are more vulnerable now more than ever.

We thank the Council for their support for the essential legal services that we provide to women living in poverty in New York City, especially during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic when the most vulnerable in our City need assistance more than ever. We know we can count on your to appreciate the importance of civil legal services to the recovery of the most vulnerable residents of our City.

Respectfully,

Amy Barasch, Esq.
Executive Director, Her Justice
abarasch@herjustice.org

Daniella Herrera Budget Hearing Testimony
Shortage of Preschool Special Education Classes

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Daniella Herrera, and I am a New York City parent. My daughter, Samantha, is one of many young NYC children awaiting a preschool special education class placement because the DOE does not have enough seats.

Samantha is three years-old, has no more than 20 words, and has not yet begun to form sentences. Samantha cries most of the time because she can't express herself. Back in October 2019, the speech therapist who performed Samantha's evaluation suggested that Samantha may have apraxia, a serious neurological condition that may be affecting her motor control and her ability to speak.

Although the Department of Education has been aware of Samantha's serious learning needs since October, Samantha is still waiting to join a classroom that can provide her with appropriate services. At a March IEP meeting, I was told that Samantha would not receive a preschool special education class placement until September 2020, due to a shortage of seats in these classrooms across the City. In other words, because of the seat shortage, my daughter is scheduled to enter the classroom almost a full year after the evaluation that identified her serious learning needs. This wait is unacceptable.

Over the past few months, NYC parents have faced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic—watching our children miss out on educational services is one of them. However, unlike other parents, I have watched my child miss out on education since long before the public health crisis. I'm asking the City Council to act so that when NYC's students return to their classrooms next fall, all preschoolers with disabilities who require special class seats can finally go along with them.

I urge the City Council to ensure that this year's education budget provides sufficient funding to provide preschool special education class placements to all young children whose IEPs require them. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Holly Smeltzer and I am the Fair Futures Program Director at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services.

Our organization is proud to be a member of Fair Futures, a coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations focused on supporting young people in and aging out of foster care.

Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fair Futures coaches and tutors have been on the forefront helping our youth in foster care secure safe housing, food and medical supplies, and assisting in the transition to virtual learning.

In the midst of this crisis, they continue to provide emotional and academic support to our young people and for many, are the only support system they have.

More than ever, we ask for the City to fulfill its promise to foster youth. In order for our young people to survive this crisis and its long-term effects, we urge the City Council to work collaboratively with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the City's FY2021 budget.

Martha Bowers, Executive Director
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
[May 19, 2020]

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Martha Bowers, and I work as the Executive Director of Hook Arts Media located in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

Founded in 1994, the mission of Hook Arts Media is to unite artists and community members to co-create cultural activities, using the arts as a vehicle for critical investigations that lead to personal and social transformation, towards the goal of establishing a more just and equitable society. Hook Arts Media's annual programs serve approximately 6,000 individuals each year. Hook Arts serves 750 young people through arts and media education programs, targeted to predominantly African American and Latino teens and young adults aged 16-25 from high-poverty communities (Red Hook, Queensbridge, Brownsville, Bushwick, East New York). Hook Arts Media's free arts productions and festivals typically attract 5,000 people: 50% African American, 30% Latino and 20% White or other, with over 80% coming from Red Hook.

According to the NYC DOE, there are approximately 138,000 young adults in NYC who drop out or are at least 2 years off-track for graduation, as a result of the effects of systemic poverty and racism. Hook Arts Media's programs provide support to these young people, by providing them with culturally relevant arts programming, job training, and high-level skills they need to succeed. Hook Arts Media's focus on digital media responds to a serious digital divide in NYC's low-income communities, and a need for programs that provide technology access and training.

Hook Arts Media has completely reconfigured our school-based, afterschool and festival programming in light of COVID-19. We have worked quickly with our teaching artists to develop new online teaching modalities, deliver equipment to students, and partner with schools to structure our programs within their new virtual school days. Our community-based Digital Media program continued online as of March 21st and plans are in progress for online summer filmmaking classes. Both of our afterschool film programs pay participants minimum wage stipends, which are especially important at this time especially since the NYC SYEP has been cancelled. We are currently working on plans to offer our free Red Hook Fest this June on a virtual platform, bringing the Red Hook community together online when the community cannot connect in person. Lastly, we are providing live music performances to Red Hook residents waiting on food distribution lines and donating supplies to distribution sites.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, to engage students in learning and prepare them for college or the workforce. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to



Where creative learning
meets community change

take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

On behalf of Hook Arts Media's staff and Board, I request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. These cuts will have devastating impact on our organization, forcing us to lay off staff and curtail vital arts programming to under-served communities. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through the work of many extraordinary cultural organizations. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martha Bowers", with a stylized, flowing script.

Martha Bowers

Testimony for Committee on Finance (May 21st, 2020)

My name is Hope Dworkin and I am a New York City resident as well as a public school student. As a member of the debate team and jazz band as well as being a student athlete, I know the value of being able to participate in school-funded extracurricular activities. The debate team, for example, requires funding to enable team members to participate in tournaments across the city, forming connections between students and schools in every borough, but these budget cuts students will likely be forced to pay their own way. Debate is already an activity fractured by socio-economic, gender, and racial disparities. We should be pushing to make activities like debate more equitable in our city, instead of taking away funding.

The proposed budget cuts are not only unfair to disadvantaged students but detrimental to the fate of all of our schools. Mayor DeBlasio wants to cut \$827 million dollars from the Department of Education's Budget for the next year in addition to a five-year hiring freeze and major cutbacks for Fair Student Funding. This means that positions left behind by teachers who retire or leave our schools cannot be filled. These budget cuts are coming at a time of crisis for our city, our nation, and the world, and so in these trying times budget cuts may seem sensible and even necessary to many. However, in these times it is even more essential that we ensure the quality of education for the next generation. So, for these reasons, please vote against the proposed budget and save our schools.

Calvin Huber testimony to New York City Council, Committee on Finance
Thursday, 21 May 2020

My name is Calvin Huber. I'm a middle school student at Manhattan Country School in District 10. (<https://www.manhattancountryschool.org/>)

The Mayor wants to cut \$641 million from our schools next year while giving the New York Police Department \$5 million more. The only part of funding for schools that is increasing is \$4 million for policing in schools.

For students like me, this means vacant positions for teachers or social workers who retire will not be filled. Instead, we will have brand new metal detectors in schools but no new teachers over the next four years.

One thing is clear, this needs to change because this proposed budget will damage our learning, our schools and our communities. Our schools don't need more police or metal detectors, we need more teachers and access to help for mental health, like school counselors. These are things that provide the conditions for schools to be locations for healing so that they can be locations for learning and not locations for criminalizing students, especially those of color.

We demand that you do not cut the school funding.
We demand that you get rid of police in schools,
We demand that you put more teachers in schools,
We demand that you put more counselors in schools,
We demand that you end the Zero Tolerance Policy.

Which is why we demand that you support the Ending Pushout Act to reduce the injustices of the policies and laws currently in place in our schools.

Our schools are safer when they have counselors, not cops.

Our communities are safer when people's children aren't in danger of arrest every day

Our country is safer when we feel that we are safe when going to school.

Which is why funding schools and supporting the End Pushout Act is what we need right now.
We need to make schools safe for those who don't feel safe.
We need schools to be the safe spaces for learning that is their purpose.



New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation & Committee on Finance Preliminary Budget Hearing

Thursday, May 22, 2020

Tony Simone, Director of External Affairs, Hudson River Park Friends

Good afternoon. My name is Tony Simone and I am the Director of External Affairs for Hudson River Park Friends. HRPK Friends is an independent, not for profit, the main fundraising and advocacy partner for Hudson River Park and the Hudson River Park Trust. As you probably know, Hudson River Park is the 5-mile long beautiful, waterfront Park starting at Chambers Streets and ending at 59 Street.

Our organization is part of the Parks and Open Space-NY coalition.

We join with our partners with us today to testify about the importance of adequately funding our parks, and we thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting us to speak about the fiscal year 2021 Preliminary Budget.

Last year, the City Council and Mayor made a historic investment of \$44M to increase the expense budget for NYC Parks. New York City also generously matched the State's \$50 million in capital funds to complete the Park after 20 years.

Hudson River Park, as you may know, depends on private donations for its maintenance, operations and free public events, environmental education and sustainability programs. We are grateful to the City Council for providing discretionary funds to Hudson River Park for these programs. We hope the City Council continues to fund these vital initiatives this year and in the years ahead.

Parks are essential. We are now recognizing just how essential. Before the current public health crisis, parks and open green spaces were already essential, but we often took them for granted. Now, our parks and outdoor spaces are even more important than ever, vital to our mental health and physical well-being.

During this difficult time, with New Yorkers fighting this awful pandemic, our communities have sought much needed refuge in our parks. Parks are have become a place of solace and hope for many of our neighbors who have been in isolation or with family members at home in order to

stop the spread of Covid-19. We hope the majority of park users continue to socially distance themselves and wear masks to help keep everyone safe.

The pandemic has caused a significant drop in donations to the nonprofit partners that help maintain our parks. While the Hudson River Park receives capital funding from the city and state, it relies on private funds from tenants and from Friends to raise donations for Parks operations, maintenance, and programs. The Park's free public programming, environmental education, and sustainability initiatives serve students from all five boroughs, more than half from outside of Manhattan.

25+ park and open space nonprofits have operating agreements with New York City. These organizations help manage 22,000+ acres-70% of our public green space. These nonprofits employ 500+ full time staff and hundreds of seasonal workers; contribute millions for park renovations and \$150+ annually in private operating dollars for open green spaces.

Hudson River Park Friends and these organizations engage 100,000+ volunteers annually to help care for parks.

There are also smaller conservancies and nearly 600 "friends of" groups, some of which have modest budgets, and most of which rely on volunteers to support and program local parks and playgrounds, contributing thousands of volunteer hours.

We hope you can continue to support us to ensure that these nonprofit organizations will be able to continue to care for and program our parks. We recommend:

1. Accelerate reimbursements for expenses already incurred on City contracts.
2. Advance access to remaining FY20 discretionary funding and relax restrictions to enable organizations to use this support for general operations.
3. Work with the Council to maintain FY20 Council funding amounts in FY21, including the Parks Equity Initiative.
4. Provide relief funding up to 50% for lost revenue through fundraisers, memberships, corporate volunteer opportunities, space rentals, educational programs, etc.
5. Limit PEG cuts to NYC Parks to ensure continued maintenance of our critical public spaces.
6. Preserve and roll-over unspent capital commitments.

Last year's additional funding was just a start toward addressing decades of chronic disinvestment in our city's park system. Today we urge you to not just preserve last year's hard-fought funding, but to continue to fight for additional resources for NYC Parks.

Hudson River Park Friends also supports the NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition's request for increasing the budget for parks.

Today, we ask the City to commit an additional \$200M to the preliminary budget for parks: a \$100M increase in the expense budget, like we asked for last year, and a \$100M increase in the capital budget. Hudson River Park Friends, NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition firmly believe that now is the time for the City to invest in both the infrastructure of our parks and the people that keep them clean, safe, and beautiful. Now is the time to Play Fair for Parks; they are more essential than ever

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. We look forward to working with the City to create the best budget achievable for parks to benefit all New Yorkers. I'm happy to answer any questions the Council might have.



**New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing - Finance Committee
May 21, 2020**

Testimony By: Hunter Armstrong, Natural Areas Conservancy, Deputy Director

My name is Hunter Armstrong and I am the Deputy Director of the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY21 budget. The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 2012 with the goal of increasing the capacity of NYC Parks and its partners to restore and manage the 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands under the agency's jurisdiction. A signature project of our organization was the development of the "Forest Management Framework for New York City", which we released in partnership with NYC Parks in Spring 2018. This plan takes a comprehensive look at the condition of our city's natural forests and outlines the investment needed to manage them over the next 25 years.

I want to commend the leadership of Speaker Johnson, NYC Council and Mayor De Blasio in 2019 resulting in the addition of \$43 million of expense funding for NYC Parks, including \$4 million to support the management of 7,300 acres of forested natural areas. This funding has been used to implement the first year of recommendations from the Forest Management Framework. Already in fiscal year 2020, these funds have supported the planting of more than 20,000 new trees and shrubs, the engagement of over 2,000 volunteers, improvements to nearly 40 miles of trails, and restoration efforts that have impacted over 900 acres of parkland.

I am testifying today to express the Natural Areas Conservancy's strong support for the second year of Play Fair. We are asking the Mayor and the City Council to add \$47 million to the NYC Parks Expense Budget to focus on keeping open spaces safe, healthy, and well maintained, and on protecting jobs within NYC Parks. As part of this request, we call for special attention to be paid to our city's forests and wetlands and to protect our city's precious and essential natural resources by supporting the following:

- \$7.4M to baseline 15 Green Thumb and 47 Natural Resources Group staff added in the FY20 budget added in the FY21 budget.
- \$9M to baseline and preserve the 50 new Urban Park Ranger and 80 new Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created in the FY20 budget.
- \$520,000 to hire four full-time crews to conduct lake and pond maintenance.

These funds represent a crucial investment in one of New York City's most important pieces of public infrastructure.

It is imperative that support for managing New York City's 7,000 acres of natural forests made in FY20 be repeated in FY21. This continued investment in New York City's natural forests is an investment in our city's future. Caring for our forests makes NYC more resilient, including cooling our city during extreme heat events and buffering our coastal areas. These funds support improvements to trails in parks across the city, making nature more accessible to New



Yorkers. And, this funding is needed to extend the employment of the 47 new Natural Resources Group staff who were hired to care for forests in FY20.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express our support for sustained investment in NYC Parks.



May 20, 2020

Dear Chair Gjonaj and members of the Small Business Committee,

As Industrial Business Service Providers, we are currently witnessing firsthand the importance of New York City's industrial sector. **Collectively, we serve over 40,000 industrial businesses in the city's 21 Industrial Business Zones.** We help the city to advance its policy goals, provide real-time feedback to city agencies, and ensure the success of our member businesses, which in turn supports the city's economy as a whole and contributes to job creation.

All of this was true before COVID-19; now it is even more so. Many industrial businesses, from machinists to distilleries, have realigned production to produce much-needed face masks, hand sanitizer, and ventilator components for frontline workers. Others are providing food and keeping supply chains in motion. All of them are doing their best to keep workers employed and navigate the changing landscape of grant and loan opportunities, employment rules, tax regulations, supply chain, labor, etc.

Their efforts mean that we as service providers are working beyond capacity to offer technical and legal assistance, process emergency loan applications, and help businesses navigate the changing landscape under the direction of the Department of Small Business Services. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, we have been working overtime to process applications for the city's loan and grant programs, provide guidance on and package loans for the federal PPP and EIDL programs, host small group webinars, address individual questions in one-on-one consultations and continue to provide our baseline services. **To date, we have processed over 285 loans on behalf of the City since the crisis began.**

We realize that disasters of this magnitude create challenges for New York City's budget; however, we feel that it is incredibly important for the city to maintain its financial support for industrial businesses and IBSPs. IBSPs not only support businesses with SBS funding, we leverage additional funding to provide financing, training and technical assistance, workforce services, and other opportunities. The volume and complexity of information is simply too much for businesses to navigate without our help. After Hurricane Sandy, IBSPs received a substantial funding cut that negatively impacted our ability to serve our businesses and create jobs. If that happened this year, it would be devastating. We urge you to provide increased support to IBSPs in the FY 2021 budget.

The COVID-19 outbreak is causing massive job losses in New York City and around the country, and the economic repercussions will be felt for years to come. **Our services will be crucial in helping businesses navigate the recovery period that follows, and identifying potential for new initiatives to fill the gaps left by state and federal efforts.** NYC's industrial businesses continue to be an important source of jobs for the city, particularly in low-income and minority communities. Nearly two-thirds of NYC's industrial jobs are available to those without a college degree, and over 80% are held by people of color.



EVERGREEN
Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange



Greater Jamaica
Development
Corporation



Long Island City
Partnership



Industrial businesses form an ecosystem that is critical to the production of necessary equipment and the maintenance of New York City's economy. IBSPs, because of our ongoing relationships with those businesses and knowledge of conditions on the ground, will be a key resource to the city as it plans for recovery, and we look forward to contributing to that effort. Without sustained funding, however, our ability to support that ecosystem will be diminished. The continued success of our industrial economy, and continued support from the city, will be critical to an economic recovery.

Sincerely,

Business Outreach Center Network
Evergreen: Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange
Greater Jamaica Development Corporation
Long Island City Partnership
Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC)
Staten Island Economic Development Corporation



EVERGREEN
Your North Brooklyn Business Exchange



Greater Jamaica
Development
Corporation



Long Island City
Partnership





TESTIMONY OF:
The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project
Presented before
The New York City Council
Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on the Capital Budget
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings
May 21, 2020

The legal service providers for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) - The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Legal Aid Society - jointly submit this written testimony in support of our budget request for FY2021 and to update the New York City Council on our urgent work during the current COVID-19 pandemic. We thank the Council for its consistent and generous support of immigration legal services, specifically Immigration Chair Menchaca and Finance Chair Dromm.

Funded by the City Council and staffed by over one hundred advocates -- attorneys, paralegals, and social workers -- from The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and The Legal Aid Society, NYIFUP is the first-in-nation public defender program for immigrants facing deportation while in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Our city's program has been hugely successful and has served as a model that dozens of other jurisdictions across the United States have sought to replicate.

At last year's budget hearing, we came before you to recount the remarkable success of our programs. We explained how New York's commitment to being a sanctuary city had made the City a target for the Trump administration, particularly in terms of ICE enforcement. In order to keep our City's legacy alive and maintain our commitment to protecting immigrants, we urged the Council to increase its investment in the programs that allow us to fight back and protect our immigrant communities. The Council heard us, rose to the moment, and delivered generously. We were and continue to be very grateful for your support.

The War on Immigrants and the COVID-19 Crisis

Today, we are saddened to report that despite heroic efforts by our advocates, detained immigrants are in a worse place than a year ago. We have seen unprecedented and still-escalating levels of injustice, terror and harm inflicted on immigrant communities by the federal government, and our city remains a particular target due to our commitment to protecting New Yorkers. ICE operates aggressively and indiscriminately, arresting New Yorkers in broad-sweeping raids, including in April and May 2020, during the height of the pandemic. These raids are increasingly violent, including the shooting of an unarmed man in the face on the street in Brooklyn this past February. As documented by the press, ICE's constant home and community raids during the first part of January

2020, through “Operation Palladium,” a campaign designated to frighten and punish “sanctuary cities” like New York, was directly responsible for packing local ICE detention centers to capacity as the COVID-19 crisis began.¹

The federal administration’s immigration policy agenda, designed by xenophobic advisors like Stephen Miller, focuses on deporting as many people as possible and restricting future immigration to the fullest degree, with complete disregard for civil or human rights, or for the integrity of families or communities. The unabashed cruelty of the system is precisely the point of our national immigration policy.

There are previously unimaginable obstacles that now make our work increasingly difficult: new case law published by the Board of Immigration Appeals (which answers directly to Attorney General Barr), overturning decades of settled precedent that had previously offered protections to immigrants; newly appointed federal judges who rubber-stamp those agency decisions; unrelenting courthouse arrests in which New Yorkers are abducted by federal agents on their way to and from court; and ICE’s obstinate refusal to release detained immigrants even in the midst of a global pandemic in which New York is the epicenter. Even before the recent social distancing restrictions necessitated by COVID, ICE has stubbornly refused to bring our clients from jails to immigration courts to have their day in court, instead limiting them to appearing only by video screen to face the most important legal proceeding of their lives; we expect that to continue after the pandemic has abated. We anxiously await the moment when applicants whose green cards are rejected due to the new public charge rules are put into deportation proceedings and expect the Department of Justice to issue its own public charge deportability rule soon. And we fear what might happen to the hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients later this Spring when the Supreme Court issues its ruling on the fate of the DACA program.

The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on New York’s immigrant community members, including threatening the lives of immigrants locked up in ICE detention. The harrowing physical and mental health consequences, economic devastation, and social disruption have fallen disproportionately on low-income and immigrant communities, causing unique harm to many of the clients we represent and their families. We began advocating with ICE for COVID-related release of our clients from early March, 2020, as conditions deteriorated so markedly that hunger strikes² broke out in protest in ICE detention centers holding NYC residents.³

¹ Ryan Devereaux, *How ICE Operations in New York Set the Stage for a Coronavirus Nightmare in Local Jails*, The Intercept, Mar. 27, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/03/27/immigrants-coronavirus-ice-detention-new-york/>

² Dara Lind, *ICE Detainee Says Migrants Are Going on a Hunger Strike for Soap*, ProPublica, Mar. 23, 2020, available at <https://www.propublica.org/article/ice-detainee-says-migrants-are-going-on-a-hunger-strike-for-soap>

³ NYIFUP Demands Answers from ICE on How Detention Centers will Respond to Coronavirus Crisis, March 9, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-09-20-NYIFUP-DEMANDS-ANSWERS-FROM-ICE-ON-HOW-DETENTION-CENTERS-WILL-RESPOND-TO-CORONAVIRUS-CRISIS.pdf>; Joint Defender Statement Calling for Immediate Release of Vulnerable Incarcerated New Yorkers in Response to Coronavirus, March 12, 2020, available at

NYIFUP's Emergency Response

Our powerful City-funded programs have allowed us to push back against this unrelenting federal machine and to mitigate against the harm caused by COVID-19 by protecting the rights of our individual clients, one person at a time. We do so by providing high-quality deportation defense to anyone who is in ICE custody, has their immigration court case venued in New York City, and cannot afford a lawyer. The data we regularly report to the City confirms what we already know: these programs are tremendously successful. Indeed, they often represent the sole protection standing between New Yorkers and permanent banishment from their communities to countries where their health, safety, and very lives may be in jeopardy.

During the COVID-19 crisis, NYIFUP providers jumped into action to demand the release of our clients from dangerous detention conditions and to sue ICE in federal court for its abject failure to protect the health and lives of the people we represent. We have brought class action lawsuits to vindicate our clients' statutory and constitutional rights that are regularly violated by the immigration legal system.⁴ Given the tinderbox scenario inherent in any jail setting, we have fought for the release

<https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-12-20-Joint-Defender-Statement-Calling-for-Immediate-Release-of-Vulnerable-Incarcerated-New-Yorkers-in-Response-to-Coronavirus.pdf>; NYIFUP Demands ICE Release Immigrants In Local Jails And Halt All Arrests Due To Their Failure To Respond To COVID-19 Crisis, March 13, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-13-20-NYIFUP-Demands-ICE-Release-Immigrants-In-Local-Jails-And-Halt-All-Arrests-Due-To-Their-Failure-To-Respond-To-COVID-19-Crisis.pdf>; Immigrants in NJ Detention Center Organize Hunger Strike; NYIFUP Condemns Egregious Conditions in Local ICE Jails Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, March 18, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-18-20-Immigrants-in-NJ-Detention-Center-Organize-Hunger-Strike-NYIFUP-Condemns-Egregious-Conditions-in-Local-ICE-Jails-Amid-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>; NYIFUP Statement on Bergen County Corrections Officer Testing Positive for COVID-19 and Continued ICE Enforcement During Pandemic, March 19, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-19-20-NYIFUP-Statement-on-Bergen-County-Corrections-Officer-Testing-Positive-for-COVID-19-and-Continued-ICE-Enforcement-During-Pandemic.pdf>; NYIFUP Reports Immigrants Organize Second Hunger Strike in NJ Detention Center In Protest of Egregious Conditions Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, March 20, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-20-20-NYIFUP-Reports-Immigrants-Organize-Second-Hunger-Strike-in-NJ-Detention-Center-In-Protest-of-Egregious-Conditions-Amid-COVID-19-Pandemic-.pdf>;

⁴ Legal Aid and Bronx Defenders Sue for Immediate Release of Clients at High Risk of COVID-19 from Immigrant Detention, March 20, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-20-20-Legal-Aid-and-Bronx-Defenders-Sue-for-Immediate-Release-of-Clients-at-High-Risk-of-COVID-19-from-Immigrant-Detention.pdf>; Legal Aid and Bronx Defenders Win Immediate Release of 4 Immigrants in ICE Detention, Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, March 27, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03-27-20-LAS-and-Bronx-Defenders-Win-Immediate-Release-of-4-Immigrants-in-ICE-Detention-Amid-COVID-19-Pandemic-.pdf>; Legal Aid, Bronx Defenders, ACLU Win Immediate Release of Five Medically-Vulnerable Immigrants in ICE Detention, Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, April 13, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/04-13-20-Legal-Aid-Bronx-Defenders-ACLU-Win-Immediate-Release-of-Five-Medically-Vulnerable-Immigrants-in-ICE-Detention->

of as many clients from ICE custody as possible. We have spoken out in national and local press about unsafe conditions in local jails holding ICE detainees, including the lack of basic cleaning supplies, adequate medical care, and COVID-19 testing. The people NYIFUP represents have also courageously spoken out both from inside detention and after being released about their fears, their own health, and the people they do not want to leave behind.⁵

In late March, the NYIFUP providers won two precedential federal court victories in two days that freed 17 people from dangerous ICE conditions and started a wave of court orders across the country. The decisions in *Basank v. Decker*⁶ and *Coronel v. Decker* were two of the first decisions in the country finding that ICE has shown deliberate indifference to the safety of our clients, violating their constitutional rights.⁷ We shared our arguments across the country and dozens of other judges have cited those decisions to order people released from ICE custody.⁸ To date, NYIFUP has secured freedom for over 150 people via individual and group habeas petitions, class action litigation, requests for humanitarian parole to ICE and bond hearings. We continue to fight today for the release of clients who are in danger in detention.

The Varick Street Immigration Court, which hears our detained clients' removal proceedings, has remained open in the midst of the pandemic, so our removal defense litigation has continued via telephonic appearances, which has proven challenging because we are unable to meet safely in person with our clients to prepare them for hearings and cannot see them by video during court proceedings. We have also been forced to file and defend appeals at the Board of Immigration Appeals, which strains the resources of our staff whose trial-level representation responsibilities continue unabated and all-consuming, made even more challenging with remote working and our inability to meet in person with our clients.

After the PAUSE

[Amid-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf](#); Seven Medically Vulnerable Immigrants in ICE Detention Seek Release Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, Represented By Legal Aid, Bronx Defenders, Paul Weiss, ACLU-NJ, April 28, 2020, available at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/04-28-20-Seven-Medically-Vulnerable-Immigrants-in-ICE-Detention-Seek-Release-Amid-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

⁵ Tessa Stuart, *ICE in the Age of COVID*, Rolling Stone, May 12, 2020, available at <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/ice-in-the-age-of-covid-19-997331/>; Hamed Aleaziz, *An ICE Detainee Who Was Released After Getting the Coronavirus Fears What's Next*, BuzzFeed, Mar. 27, 2020, available at <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/ice-detainee-coronavirus-released-fears>;

⁶ Brooklyn Defender Services Wins Release of Eleven Immigrants from ICE Detention; Renews Call for Release for All Detained Among COVID Crisis; available at <http://bds.org/brooklyn-defender-services-wins-release-of-11-immigrants-from-ice-detention-including-man-whose-audio-recording-revealed-account-of-hunger-strike-from-inside-hudson-county-jail/>

⁷ Monsey Alvarado, *ICE detainees at 3 NJ county jail ordered released after saying they feared coronavirus*, North Jersey, USA Today, March 27, 2020, available at <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/27/nj-coronavirus-ice-detainees-bergen-essex-hudson-county-jails-nj-ordered-released/2923848001/>

⁸ Felipe De La Hoz, *Amid coronavirus pandemic, ICE has life-or-death power to release detainees*, *The Intercept*, April 13, 2020, Available at <https://theintercept.com/2020/04/13/ice-coronavirus-immigrant-detainees/>

Looking forward, ICE's reckless and indiscriminate home and community raids may escalate as parts of New York reopen, sending people into detention centers that were dangerously unsanitary even before COVID-19. ICE may re-detain clients whose release we just won once New York City has returned to some degree of normalcy. Hundreds of deportation cases of released NYIFUP clients are likely to be "re-activated" as the immigration court's non-detained docket reopens and trials are scheduled in rapid succession. NYIFUP must have the flexibility and resources to represent and advocate for our clients even as we adapt to new phases of a global pandemic that continues to wreak havoc in immigrant communities.

NYIFUP stands as a bulwark against a virulent federal government and its callous disregard of our clients' health and safety in the face of a pandemic. Given this essential role and a crisis with no end in sight, the Council and City's ongoing support of our immigration programs is more important than ever before. **We have asked the Council for \$ 18.26M for the NYIFUP collaborative. This represents a 10% increase factoring in a "pay parity" supplement for our attorneys on FY20's award. Last year when the City recognized the need to ensure parity of salaries between the City's lawyers and the City defenders and legal services lawyers, the City made a contribution to the economic stability of the impacted providers. While COVID-19 interfered with our ability to resolve the second phase of our parity discussion, when the PAUSE is lifted and the City reopens for business we expect to renew our discussion about the expansion of the parity dollars for our more senior attorneys and supervisors, as these critical dollars were promised by the City and our staff deserve wages on par with the City lawyers.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Saenz, Brooklyn Defender Services
Sarah Deri-Oshiro, The Bronx Defenders
Hasan Shafiqullah, The Legal Aid Society

East New York Community Land Trust

Good Evening Council Members,

My name is Izoria Fields and I am a member of the East New York Community Land Trust Initiative Steering Committee. I also live and work in the community.

The housing crisis we are facing has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, making our efforts to create a CLT in East New York even more urgent.

We know that financial crises have had a devastating impact on East New York residents in the past and even as I write this letter to you. Currently in ENY, real estate shell companies are buying up properties from distressed homeowners and selling them for millions of dollars. As a long time resident of East New York and a local realtor, it pains me to see my neighbors being displaced due to the drastic surge in property values and the lack of affordability.

The East New York Community Land trust is designed to protect homeowners from economic downturns through the creation of affordable housing, to encourage ownership and prevent displacement of community members. Statistics show that homeowners in CLTs are **nine** times less likely to be in foreclosure proceedings than those with traditional mortgage arrangements.

City Council Funding is critical for the development of our CLT in East New York so we are asking the City Council to please fully fund the CLT Initiative.

Thank you all for your support!

Izoria Fields

Please reject de Blasio's 2021 budget. He is not cutting police funding at all (after having increased it in forever) and cutting youth jobs, good things like compost and the Green Wave (and other Vision Zero proposals) that literally save people's lives. We'll need more bike commuting and pedestrian safety as the city returns to normalcy because so many people will be in their cars.

Moreover, the NYPD is already so bloated, and uses its powers without any oversight; beating down people for social distancing or throwing pregnant women in Rikers for sitting on the floor. They charge millions in overtime and have cost the city almost \$100 MILLION a year

(<https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-nyc-pays-69-million-to-settle-nypd-lawsuits-20200201-awcoekbg2rh2bdmbx72k26kopu-story.html>). Why should these people get more money to be awful to New Yorkers?

Cut the NYPD budget by half, increase the DOE, the DOT and other departments budget. De Blasio is on his way out, he clearly doesn't care about New Yorkers anymore as we saw with his failure of a presidential campaign, as well as how he wanted to go to the Y every day instead of deal with Coronavirus early on, and we lost so many more people because of it. Super sad.

Jack Benson
Brooklyn, NY



PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

PRESENTED BY:

Jackie Del Valle
Stabilizing NYC Coordinator, TAKEROOT JUSTICE

Good afternoon and thank you for hearing my testimony and for all that you are doing to keep our City safe and on track.

My name is Jackie Del Valle, and I am the Stabilizing NYC Coordinator of TakeRoot Justice, a social justice, legal services organization that serves over 2000 clients and dozens of partners across New York City each year. TakeRoot Justice has a long history of partnering with grassroots and community-based organizations that build leadership and power within New York City's low-income communities, particularly communities of color and immigrant communities.

TakeRoot Justice coordinates the Stabilizing NYC Initiative, which comprises 20 organizations, who provide direct action organizing, advocacy and legal services for tenants grappling with predatory and speculative landlords.

Tenant Rights & Organizing are part of a just recovery

Our organization and our grassroots partners have long been a vital first responder to community needs in New York City. We are deep rooted in communities and in this moment have shifted our work to make sure some of the most vulnerable New Yorker's needs are met, while continuing to make sure that these New Yorkers are empowered to advocate for their own needs and support each other. Now more than ever, it is vital that we support work to grow the collective capacity of communities to solve problems.

During this unprecedented crisis and shelter-in-place order, SNYC Coalition groups have been a life-line for thousands of NYC families. Over the last 5 years, we have created & strengthened vast networks of tenant associations across the city. These families now turn to us as trusted, multilingual community groups uniquely positioned to let them know about their rights and connect them with resources they may not otherwise know about, or be unable to access.

Our coalition has pivoted to meet tenants' needs, including but not limited to the following work: wellness checks, surveys to assess what our communities need, delivering food, connecting parents to educational resources, advocating

for emergency repairs, assessing peoples' ability to pay rent, understanding the CARES Act, helping people apply for unemployment, translating and explaining information from the City on how to prevent Covid-19 and what to do if you are sick, doing census outreach, listening, learning and grieving.

We have also been working with tenant associations facing illegal construction and other unsafe conditions and getting emergency repairs from the City. Mass homelessness, lack of access to health care, childcare, and other consequences of a loss of income have already emerged as some of the longer term threats and challenges we expect our community will face in the coming year. SNYC is uniquely positioned to drive the fight to protect NYC families from mass eviction and compel landlords to make repairs so homes are safe for our families to live in.

We know the city is in a challenging financial position. But the communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for a small percentage of the city budget.

Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Legal services providers and our grassroots partners are relying on the City Council to ensure that funding cuts do not result in a continuing disproportionate impact on Black and Brown New Yorkers. Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we join others in calling on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities.

Our groups continue to fight to make sure NYC families can stay in their homes and be safe. Organizers and attorneys are speaking with hundreds of tenants about their rights and resources they can access. Organizing is essential to keep communities safe and to address the unjust impacts on the communities we organize.

Attachments:

- MEMO to FY21 BNT on Stabilizing NYC work during CoVid 19 crisis



May 1, 2020

MEMO to the FY21 Budget Negotiating Team of the NYC Council
RE: Stabilizing NYC work during CoVid 19 crisis

During this unprecedented crisis and shelter-in-place order, SNYC Coalition groups have been a life-line for thousands of NYC families. Over the last 5 years, we have created & strengthened vast networks of tenant associations across the city. These families now turn to us as trusted, multilingual community groups uniquely positioned to let them know about their rights and connect them with resources they may not otherwise know about, or be unable to access.

And now more than ever, our groups continue to fight to make sure NYC families can stay in their homes and be safe. Organizers and attorneys are speaking with hundreds of tenants about their rights and resources they can access. **Organizing is essential to keep communities safe and to address the unjust impacts on the communities we organize.**

Our coalition has pivoted to meet tenants' needs, including but not limited to the following work: wellness checks, surveys to assess what our communities need, delivering food, connecting parents to educational resources, advocating for emergency repairs, assessing peoples' ability to pay rent, understanding the CARES Act, helping people apply for unemployment, translating and explaining information from the City on how to prevent Covid-19 and what to do if you are sick, doing census outreach, listening, learning and grieving.

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Below are some of the activities and outcomes undertaken these past six weeks:

TakeRoot Justice, City-wide: Attorneys and paralegals have made dozens of calls to our clients and in response to inquiries coming in through the hotline. Many tenants report having lost their jobs and are unable to pay rent. We provided guidance on applying for unemployment, rental assistance programs, various tenant rights issues and explain the Eviction Moratorium. Takeroot Justice lawyers have recently appeared on the record at court hearings via Skype and are working with two buildings in serious disrepair.

Housing Conservation Coordinators, Manhattan: Along with doing check-in calls to our members and providing assistance with housing and other types of issues, HCC has been working to transition our tenant meetings online. For example, at 126 West 83rd Street, they have had two tenant association conference calls. The tenant association distributed a survey to assess tenants' ability to pay rent and sent a letter to management to ask them to work with them to find a solution for those who lost income and are unable to pay. They are also working to address the cleanliness of the building and lack of heat and hot water, which are ongoing problems that have only become more urgent due to COVID-19.

Flatbush Tenant Coalition (FTC): Flatbush, East Flatbush, and South Crown Heights have amongst the highest rates of COVID-19 cases in the city. In an informal survey of FTC families, approximately 70% have lost more than half of their household income and approximately 50% were not able to pay April 2020 rent. Food insecurity; lack of access to

technology and not having the tech-savvy needed to access basic resources/benefits are now the main immediate challenges. In just a few short weeks, FTC has already:

- Checked-in by phone with over 100 at-risk seniors and families, and connected more than 60 families to emergency grocery delivery and income support
- Remotely prepared 10 families at 180 E 18th St Brooklyn 11226 to file an emergency contempt motion in housing court against their landlord who has still failed to make repairs after a fire made them homeless more than year ago. The motion will be filed remotely by Brooklyn Legal Services in the coming week so tenants have a home to shelter in.
- Organized a Facebook Live Tenant Town Hall with the Right to Counsel Coalition to spread the word about tenant's rights during this crisis, including the eviction moratorium and the closing of housing court. The event has now been viewed more than 5,000 times. Our staff has reached hundreds more community members by calls and through social media to spread the word.
- Encouraged more than 3,000 community residents to complete the census, with approximately 900 families confirming that they have submitted their response. (We used phone calls, Hustle texts, and our e-newsletter.)
- Remotely trained over a dozen tenant leaders to use Zoom so they can continue to spearhead our fight to cancel rent and obtain rent relief and then held a Zoom training on Rent Impairing Violations.

Impacct Brooklyn: Utilizing an on-line intake form on Impacct's website, tenants are able to set up appointments with organizers for help. Recently, Impacct assisted a constituent who was being defrauded of his security deposit, first month's rent and being charged additional fees while trying to lease an apartment. They obtained half of his money to date and are confident in the negotiations that they will get the rest of the money returned.

Cooper Square Committee (CSC), Manhattan: Growing economic uncertainty among our constituents, coupled with existing shelter-in-place orders, has highlighted the current importance of safe, secure housing. To address these needs, CSC has expanded their tenant counseling, with a focus on supporting tenants facing rent arrears. They perform frequent wellness checks, particularly with vulnerable populations. CSC also used tenant meetings to discuss & develop personal support structures within buildings and across landlord coalitions; two of these large multi-building coalitions, ICU (ICON Realty) and TTC (Madison Realty Capital), were initially developed through SNYC. Their organizing remains crucial as we continue to organize around our SNYC targets and have several active building campaigns they are running remotely including 120 E 4th St. (Westminster City Living, Jared Kushner). There, CSC is helping tenants fight back against illegal construction and ongoing harassment by one of the East Village's largest and most notorious landlords.

Organizers from **Chhaya**, **Catholic Migration Services** and **Woodside on the Move** in **Queens** have shifted to remote organizing with the ZARA Tenants Coalition, one of the largest TAs in the City, built through SNYC resources. They have outreached to over 200 tenants, finding many people unemployed and unable to navigate the assistance programs they could qualify for. The organizers are connecting those tenants with services and providing on-line support. Though remotely organizing, tenants are active in the campaign to cancel rent and are preparing for the legal action to win rent forgiveness, combat harassment, illegal fees, repairs and fraudulent rent increases.

CASA, New Settlement, **Bronx**: Since the closure of the CASA office on Friday March 13th, SNYC organizer Em has been actively organizing with tenants that live in buildings owned by Abdul Khan, the 4th worst landlord in NYC, and Yechiel Weinberger. Here is one story for the 6 buildings Em is active in via remote means.

At 1515 Selwyn Avenue, there has been inconsistent heat and hot water since March 31st. This is especially concerning because tenants are unable to take the necessary precautions such as washing their hands with warm water or showering to ensure they are not contracting the covid-19 virus. Tenant Leaders have engaged their elected officials and HPD to notify them of the problem. City Council Member Gibson and Public Advocate Jumaane Williams have reached out to HPD on behalf of the tenants. They also created this **video** and filed an emergency motion in housing court with Bronx Legal Services. Heat and hot water have not been entirely restored in the building, so tenants are continuing to fight and are considering a May 1st rent strike.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Brooklyn: Working with Council Member Menchaca Office, organizers created a survey assessing community members' needs and resources during the crisis and translated it into Spanish. They have reached more than 80 tenants from the SNYC tenant associations they are working with. A steady stream of tenants are calling NHN for help. On these calls, they are provided with information on different services including internet services,

guiding tenants to get medical service due to COVID 19 and advocating for the maintenance of tenants' essential services such as heat, and electricity and gas. They are working on creating virtual workshops for facebook live and youtube and are aiming to reach 300-400 tenants for the surveys. A [copy of the survey](#) can be found in the google folder of materials for the Budget Hearings.

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), Manhattan: GOLES has been counseling tenants by phone and using social media to inform local residents about organizers' continued availability and to share important resources. GOLES has also been making thousands of wellness calls to local residents, most of them low-income seniors, to ensure they understand their rights (e.g. the eviction moratorium) and make any necessary referrals for benefits, and mental health. They connected hundreds of residents to either local school meals, nearby pantries and soup kitchens, or to enroll them in the city's home meal delivery program. GOLES has also been delivering food directly to vulnerable local residents, in partnership with the Manhattan Borough President, CM Rivera and AM Epstein, and launched a weekly webinar on critical housing issues.

Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), Brooklyn: UHAB's organizing work is centered in East Brooklyn (Brownsville, East New York, East Flatbush). During this time, the UHAB organizing team has made over 100 check-in calls with members, connecting many with legal support and other resources. Our SNYC organizer JohnAugust is also working with three tenant associations: 1616 President Street which is organizing towards a rent strike if they do not get rent relief from their landlord, 575 Herkimer Street which is working towards filing a 7A, and 1805 Pitkin which had organized to file an HP action and tenants are now deciding the best strategy for getting crucial repairs made during this crisis. Additionally, through UHAB's member-led group HOPE (Housing Organizers for People Empowerment), they are holding bi-weekly video calls with 8-12 tenant leaders and organized a housing justice virtual town hall on April 23rd that was attended by over 50 East Brooklyn tenant members.

Check out these SNYC groups for more! [St Nick's Alliance](#); [Banana Kelly Improvement Corporation](#); [Fifth Avenue Committee](#); [AAFE](#); [Flatbush Development Corp](#); [CAAAY](#); [Met Council](#); [NWBCC](#)

Mothers on the Move/ Mary Mitchell Center, Bronx: Using their now empty storefront office to safely pack groceries, they have been delivering 150 bags a week of uncooked food to seniors every week. SNYC tenant leader Barbara Brown from 2103 Honeywell Ave receives 25 bags to distribute to the seniors in her building. They have been delivering between 500-800 prepared meals to tenants in the Bronx, that covers Council Member Salamanca Torres Gibson, Levin and Ayala Districts. Organizers are also calling members daily asking what resources they need and connecting them to those resources. *Below see a picture of the grocery bags ready for delivery, shot from Director Wanda Salamon's phone*

Jacob Ryan Ready

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jacob Ready, and I work as a Teaching Artist and Producer for the Story Pirates, providing creative writing instruction in public schools in all five boroughs of New York City.

Story Pirates empowers young writers through engaging creative writing instruction and student written performances. Our work impacts New York City's most vulnerable learners through our partnerships with Title I schools, community organizations, and shelters. In the 2018-19 school year, our in-school performances reached 31,241 low income students, 10,569 English language learners, and 13,978 students with special needs.

In the past two months, we have reorganized to provide remote learning resources and engaging educational online content to students isolated by social distancing. We hope to continue our meaningful work with marginalized students this fall through continued partnerships with New York City agencies which require sustained, robust funding.

I request that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. These organizations cannot continue to provide students the cultural resources essential to their education under the highly constrained budgets projected for next year. Arts education is especially relevant to students in our vibrant, culturally fueled city, where over 400,000 residents work in the arts. Removing funding for arts education from these city agencies would do a great disservice to a generation of New Yorkers.

In my four years teaching in DOE schools with Story Pirates, I have frequently witnessed the power of arts education to engage and empower vulnerable students. To quote a faculty member at PS 160 in Jamaica, Queens, "we have less absences when the Story Pirates are around." We hope to continue reaching students facing poverty, disability, and other challenges to build a better future for our city and our world. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Jacob Ready
Executive Producer/Teaching Artist/Director for Story Pirates

Good Day my name is Jaiden Joseph.

I am from St. John's Residence for Boys. I have been working with Kepriecce Lindsay for 3 months now through the Fair Futures program. She has been able to provide emotional and academic support. She has help me to develop a goals framework that I serves as a guide and a reminder that I have things to accomplish. Then the COVID-19 pandemic happened and I really lost hope, I was distant and did not believe in the goals that I've set or the bond that me and my coach has made. Kepriecce was persistent and called every day, checked-in and offered help with virtual learning. Honesty I did not need help with virtual learning but I needed to know that someone cared and she did. She in consistent and present for me. So now I are looking forward to beating this pandemic because I have goals to accomplish and COVID can't stop them. By restoring funding to the Fair Futures program in these unsure times it will allow youths a sense of stability and support that can lead them in the right direction.

Append the message with the disclaimer 'This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. It may contain confidential, proprietary or legally privileged information. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by email and delete the original message from your computer. We reserve the right to monitor all email communications. Although this email has been scanned for viruses, we do not guarantee that it is virus-free, and we accept no liability for any loss or damage arising from its use.'. If the disclaimer can't be applied, take no action.



Testimony
of
The Coalition for Homeless Youth
and
The Legal Aid Society

Public Testimony for the
Youth Services and Finance Committees'
Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by
Jamie Powlovich: Executive Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth
Beth Hofmeister: Attorney in the Homeless Rights Project, The Legal Aid Society

May 21, 2020

Introduction

Both Jamie Powlovich of the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) and Beth Hofmeister of The Legal Aid Society (Legal Aid) welcome the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Youth Services and Finance Committees' Executive Budget Hearing. While we appreciate why the City Council focused on funding cuts to SYEP, SONYC, COMPASS, and other employment and summer programs during the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) testimony yesterday, we want to amplify the needs of another population funded by DYCD: that of runaway and homeless youth (RHY).

Who Are Runaway and Homeless Youth?

RHY are generally defined as unaccompanied young people who have run away or been forced to leave home and now reside in temporary situations, places not otherwise intended for habitation, or emergency shelters. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines the population as being 12-24 years of age. As of April 2017, New York State redefined RHY to be anyone under the age of 25 years. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that between 1.3 to 1.7 million youth experience one night of homelessness within a year, with over half a million experiencing homelessness for a week or longer. Looking at this another way, one in ten young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 experience some form of homelessness in the course of a year.

Like all other segments of NYC's homeless population, RHY experience harm that disproportionately impacts their health and creates roadblocks to long-term wellness. The National Network for Youth's report on "Consequences of Youth Homelessness" details the myriad harms that confront all RHY, including increased mental health problems and trauma, substance use, exposure to victimization and criminal activity, and unsafe sex practices.¹ As is the case with so many other marginalized and system-involved populations we at CHY and Legal Aid work with, youth of color and LGBTQ/TGNC youth are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the inequities homeless youth face every day and has brought those challenges into sharper contrast. It is imperative that the City continue to support our most marginalized neighbors who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the fallout from the pandemic both in the short and long-term.

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

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has been designated the county youth bureau for NYC and is responsible for serving RHY under the NYRHYA.² While many RHY also seek services within the DHS and HRA continuum of shelters, homeless youth,

¹ https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf

² New York State FY 2018-19 budget included amendments to the NYRHYA that expand the age range for RHY services and youth-centered beds to 25 years old. The amendments took effect January 1, 2018. (SFY 2018-19 Budget, Part M S2006-c/30060c; *see* https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/press/2017/pressRelease17_enactedPassage.html). Under the changes to the NYRHYA, municipalities are not mandated but can opt in to providing RHY services to youth up to age 25, but this change does reflect what youth, advocates, and providers have been saying here in NYC for years: there is an urgent need for youth specific shelters and services available to youth up to their 25th birthday.

advocates, and RHY providers agree that the outcomes for many homeless youth improve with increased access to youth-specific shelters and services. This was proved in a groundbreaking white paper released by the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing in collaboration with the Coalition for Homeless Youth. One of the most significant findings of the study is that high quality RHY programs not only meet basic requirements, but “address higher order relational, psychological, and motivational needs... fostering a sense of resilience among RHY” and providing long-term benefits to a youth’s functioning.³ ***In short, well-funded, high quality RHY programs make a positive impact on a youth’s ability to stabilize and successfully transition from crisis to independence.*** While more research is needed to evaluate the long-term benefits of RHY services, understanding that these programs make a proven difference to the youth they serve gives further support to why we have continued pushing for more shelter beds and services for youth experiencing homelessness.

Funding Recommendations

The City has put forth more resources over the last few years to increase the number of beds that are available to youth experiencing homelessness, including a system-changing package of bills passed by the City Council almost three years ago, but overall there is still room for improvement. Both CHY and Legal Aid understand the difficulties of this budget cycle and are grateful that funding for RHY programs are largely being kept whole.⁴ However, there have already been decisions made to cut promised funding and we remain concerned this could continue. As such, we present the following recommendations for additional funding and related consideration:

➤ **Add 25 RHY Housing Specialists: \$1.75M**

DYCD data shows that homeless youth rarely transition from DYCD shelters into their own independent housing. However, unlike in DSS shelters or in the foster care system, DYCD does not provide funding for housing specialists or staff specifically focusing on permanency planning. To ensure RHY successfully transition to their own apartments with DYCD/DSS issued vouchers, or other permanent housing resources, DYCD needs to award new funding to providers to hire Housing Specialists. This position would support residents in successfully obtaining safe, long-term housing.

➤ **Create a RHY Peer Navigator Program: \$200K**

The City should pilot a two-year RHY peer navigator program to help RHY access resources and navigate a path to permanent housing. In addition, this program will provide job experience and facilitate the navigators’ skill development by having them participate in a tailored training program with the goal that they will be hired at an RHY program after they complete the program.

³ Gwadz, M., Freeman, R., Cleland, C.M., Ritchie, A.S., Leonard, N.R., Hughes, C., Powlovich, J., & Schoenberg, J. (2017). Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth. New York: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. *See page 16.*

⁴ On February 14, 2020, DYCD and The Legal Aid Society filed a proposed settlement in the class action lawsuit *C.W. v. The City of New York*. The parties await the scheduling of a Fairness Hearing and anticipate finalizing the settlement before the Court once the federal court system opens. This settlement includes provisions that protect current funding levels of DYCD-funded shelter and services for New York City’s RHY.

- **Fund two mental health focused Transitional Independent Living Support Program (TIL) Pilots: \$2.6M**
Youth often share that they wish to have better access to meaningful mental health supports. Providers continue to express that they often do not have the staff capacity or appropriate structure to support RHY who have significant mental health needs. The City should issue an RFP for programs to serve RHY with mental and behavioral health needs that would include on-site clinical services and intensive case management to provide these youth with the services they need.
- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Provider Contracts: \$3.01M**
DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. In addition to the annual 3% COLA contract increase, we are requesting an additional 7% general contract increase for all current DYCD-funded RHY contracts. In order to adequately meet the needs of any youth who enters a program, providers must ensure that all of their staff are being paid livable wages and that they can cover the cost of critical support services without having to rely on outside funding streams.
- **Create 40 additional DYCD RHY beds for youth aged 21-24 years: \$2.02M**
CHY is grateful for the addition of 60 new beds that were funded in the FY19 budget for youth experiencing homelessness ages 21-24 years old; however, our providers continue to report that even once all 60 beds become available to youth, they will be inadequate to meet the overwhelming need. In order to ensure that older youth can benefit from the safety and security of youth specific shelter supports, we ask that funding be made available for an additional 40 beds to serve homeless young adults ages 21 through 24.
- **Fund an additional 24-hr RHY Drop-in Center in Brooklyn: \$850K**
The recent implementation of borough-based 24-hour Youth Drop-in Centers has proven successful, but these sites are operating at capacity. We recommend funding an additional site in North/Central Brooklyn, where there is significant unmet need.
- **Invest in a comprehensive Youth Count: \$250K**
The DYCD Youth Count continues to produce results that advocates, service providers, and youth themselves believe do not accurately represent the number of youth experiencing homelessness in New York City. To ensure that we have a system that can meet the needs of all RHY, the City must invest in a comprehensive youth count similar to the count funded by City Council in 2007.
- **Ensure that homeless youth have access to any and all housing vouchers to assist their successful transition from shelter to the community**
Over three years ago, RHY in the DYCD system were promised access to city-sponsored housing vouchers. To date, the City has failed to make the vouchers available to RHY. The best way to stop homeless youth from becoming homeless adults is to give RHY access to vouchers immediately. Moreover, the qualifying criteria for life saving supports such as vouchers should be based on a young person’s lived experience of homelessness rather than how many arbitrary contacts that young person has with specific City systems.

- **Immediately award the contract for the NYC Unity Works program that was to be administered by DYCD and scheduled to begin on July 1, 2020**

Given the widespread uncertainty and funding losses related to COVID-19 and the impact the disease has had on City systems, we understand that a number of programs are being suspended, unfunded, or otherwise terminated. However, RHY youth and particularly LGBTQI youth are disproportionately experiencing the impact of COVID-19 when compared to their sheltered peers. By suspending or delaying the start of this vital program the City will miss one more opportunity to lift RHY up during this difficult time.

For questions please contact:

Jamie Powlovich

Coalition for Homeless Youth, jamie@nychy.org, cell: (347) 848-9075

Beth Hofmeister

Homeless Rights Project, bhofmeister@legal-aid.org, work cell: (646) 988-0529

The Coalition for Homeless Youth

Founded in 1978 as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) is a consortium of 60+ agencies working to improve the housing and mental healthcare continuum for the ~50,000 runaway, homeless and street-involved youth throughout New York State. The Coalition's mission, as a membership organization, is to use its collective voice to promote the safety, health and future of runaway, homeless and street-involved youth.

CHY is primarily an advocacy organization, leveraging the expertise and experience of its members to shape the policy landscape for runaway and homeless youth in New York State. This is achieved through increasing public awareness, coalition meetings and public advocacy campaigns for pertinent legislation and funding. Notably, in 2015, CHY was instrumental in the advocacy efforts that resulted in the doubling of the State budget for runaway and homeless youth services. CHY's advocacy also contributed to the development of NYS statutory and regulatory changes that became effective in 2018, permitting localities across the State to extend length of stay and increase age of youth served by RHY programs in their communities.

An additional area of focus for CHY is the strengthening of service delivery for runaway and homeless youth, primarily through the provision of specialized training and technical support. Annually, CHY provides training and technical assistance for over 750 professionals working with homeless and runaway youth; the subject matter varies, but includes: mental health services, emergency housing, street outreach, crisis services, harm reduction, transitional independent living programming, immigration, and case management.

At present, the Coalition consists of 46 organizational members, and 20 affiliate members; its continuum is represented in almost every county of New York State. Program operations are

concentrated downstate, but the program's reach extends throughout the State; CHY takes the broadest possible approach, engaging both traditional social service institutions and organizations that provide programming for niche populations that interact with homelessness (LGBTQI youth, trafficked youth, etc.). CHY brings together providers and clients to work together at every possible level to effect change, and this multi-tiered approach has fostered significant results: over the last several years, the advocacy efforts of CHY have fundamentally changed the socio-political landscape for runaway and homeless youth.

In 2017 and 2018, the New York City Council passed five pieces of legislation that will have a groundbreaking impact on the supports that the city provides youth experiencing homelessness. This includes: extending the age limit for runaway and homeless youth services from 21 to 25 years old, extending the length of stay at Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) shelter programs, mandating that DYCD track youth that are not able to obtain a shelter bed due to lack of capacity, streamlining the process for youth in the DYCD system to access shelter in the adult shelter system, and mandating DYCD to create a plan to address the needs of all homeless young people in NYC. The Coalition for Homeless Youth was instrumental in the passing of this legislation. The efforts of CHY in recognizing and upholding the plight of homelessness among young people across ethnicities, genders and orientations is at the forefront of all its initiatives

The Legal Aid Society

Since 1876, The Legal Aid Society has provided direct legal services to low-income New Yorkers. Over the years, our organization has expanded to become the nation's largest and oldest legal services provider for low-income individuals and families. We specialize in three distinct practice areas: Criminal Defense, Civil Litigation, and Juvenile Rights, where we passionately advocate for our clients in their individual cases, for their communities in our policy work, and for institutional change in our law reform litigation. Each year our staff handles over 300,000 cases throughout New York City; the 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 Society's law reform/social justice litigation also benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City, and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a national impact. The Legal Aid Society provides comprehensive representation to many of the most marginalized communities in New York. We are a valuable piece of the New York City tapestry, and our work is deeply interwoven with the fabric of many low-income New Yorkers' lives.

Our Criminal Defense Practice is the city-wide public defender, practicing in each of the five boroughs and annually representing over 200,000 low-income New Yorkers accused of unlawful or criminal conduct on trial, appellate, and post-conviction matters.

The Society's Civil Practice provides comprehensive legal assistance in legal matters involving housing, foreclosure and homelessness; family law and domestic violence; income and economic security assistance (such as unemployment insurance benefits, federal disability benefits, food stamps, and public assistance); health law; immigration; HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases; elder law for senior citizens; low-wage worker problems; tax law; consumer law; education law; community development opportunities to help clients move out of poverty; prisoners' rights, and

reentry and reintegration matters for clients returning to the community from correctional facilities.

The Legal Aid Society'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. Last year, our staff represented some 34,000 children, including approximately 4,000 who were arrested by the NYPD and charged in Family Court with juvenile delinquency.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. Legal Aid, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. The City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in New York City. The Society, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled – NY, settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

Jan Emerson

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

May 25, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jan Emerson and I work as a substitute teacher in English, German, and Art NYCDOE Districts 4, 5, and 6 in Manhattan. I also work as a teaching assistant with Arts Connection.org.

The mission of NYCDOE to teach students social and intellectual skills they will need to be successful is well known to you. The mission of Arts Connection as I have experienced it is to teach students in the public schools practical and intellectual and social skills through stories, storytelling, theater, art, and animation. Arts Connection programs also work closely with ELL students to help them improve their English skills.

I usually work with Arts Connection in summer school programs with ELL students. Until the shutdown due to COVID-19, Arts Connection served students in after school programs to enrich curriculum. Because schools are closed, some programs are continuing virtually. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Every school I substitute teach for lets me know how much they appreciate that I show up whenever they need me so that students can continue their classroom work when their regular teacher must be absent. Whether it is as a substitute teacher, or as an assistant with Arts Connection programs, I have been greeted with applause by students who are happy to see me because they know they get to use their creative energies and learn new creative and practical skills. Indeed, all educational programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Jan Emerson



The Next Generation Center

May 21, 2020

Lonely and scared...

Dear City Council,

I'm not sure what CORVID 19 is and how long it's going to be around, but it has really messed up my life. I can't go to my GED program and I can look for a job. I don't know how it's going to be around, but I do know that I have my former foster care parent, Coach at the Next Generation help me. I'm 23 years old, my sister is 22 years old and we both live in supportive housing. Our mother is not bad, she just couldn't cope and ACS got involved. I've had so many social workers, therapist and people in my life, that I've stopped counting. I love my mother and she loves me, but "shit happens" I did go to GED to better myself, I've had a fulltime job as a home attendant and I live in a supportive housing apartment. Everyone is nice, but the person that I remember and will always remember is My coach. She never judges me and when I mess up or don't do what's right, she still calls and checks up on me. She has called me twice a week since this "thing" happened. She says "are you safe, are you ok and how are you feeling?" I love my family and even my sister but my coach, at NGC is FIYA! One day I'm really going to do all the things I know I can do.

Jaquelle W.



May 21, 2020

Jasmine V., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

My name is Jasmine Valencia and I entered Foster care when I was 16 years old, I grow up in El Salvador I am really grateful for the help since then I have been in the Bronx with a Puerto Rican family. Working with my fair future couch is a huge help because she is advising me all the time, when I have to take hard decision and when I have a problem, she makes my life easier. COVID-19 has affected me because I was living in the school dormitory, and we were told that we had to leave in two days. It was very overwhelming because I didn't know where I was going to be living.

I was very stressed because I was going to be locked in with people that I did not know and be distracted with school. Since being assigned a coach, she has made my life easier, she was available for me to talk to and get guidance through this stressful time. I am truly grateful for the support and wish that I could continue to get the support with fair futures.

Jason Jacobs

New York, NY 10019

646-339-2043 / Jason@RoundaboutTheatre.org

Jason-Jacobs.com

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is JASON JACOBS and I work for Education@Roundabout Theatre Company in Manhattan.

The mission of Education@Roundabout is to use theatre to promote social equity, through longstanding partnerships with students and educators at schools throughout the five boroughs of New York City. We use theatre to deepen student learning and enhance teacher practice. Our work supports students' social emotional learning and a positive school climate. Each year, Roundabout invests over \$4 million in Education programs, serving over 36,000 students, educators, community members, and patrons across New York City and beyond.

Our department swiftly moved our programs online to support our work with DOE teachers, using theatrical teaching to engage students through remote learning. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



May 22, 2020

Members of the Committee:

I'm quite sure this committee has seen its share of fill-in-the-template letters about allocations, coming from multiple sources. Arts entities trying to survive. Local businesses seeking support in a critical time of need. Advocates for stricter policing, even.

Today, I speak not from a template, and not for a specific institution, but for the institution that feeds all others—education.

I have been a New York City public school teacher for the past 14 years. I've been an educator in Pennsylvania or New York for 23. I've seen policies shift, budgets adjusted and readjusted, public sentiment flow. But what we stand upon now is a dangerous precipice. And current policy is telling us to just jump.

The Covid-19 crisis has hurt us all. But daily, I see and hear it crushing our youth, our future. Yes, there are a select few of my high school seniors who are thriving in remote learning. But the overwhelming majority are slipping into academic malaise, stress, and depression.

The city's current plan for summer school will further exacerbate the situation, robbing students of their one lifeline...their own teachers. Teachers who know them, who know the curriculum, who know how to adapt the one to best serve the other.

If that plan, and the influence of private, profit-driven entities such as Pearson establish a foothold in NYC schools now, that foothold can fast become a stranglehold, choking all actual education and learning out of our already vulnerable students.

Education without teachers. Without social contact. Without any sense of real learning beyond clicking buttons online. The School Chancellor has talked about the necessity of live and regular one-on-one contact. But I ask you to imagine that you're a teenager, or worse yet, a six-year-old, who has already struggled with school in general and online learning specifically. You now have to "meet" a strange adult several times a week on Google Meets to make sure you're on track?

This is insane.

There's no other word for it. At the high school level, it's infuriating. At the elementary, it's downright dangerous.

In an episode of the West Wing, one of the advisers to the president says, "Education is the silver bullet. Education is everything. We don't need little changes, we need gigantic, monumental changes..... Schools should be incredibly expensive for government and absolutely free of charge

to its citizens, just like national defense. That's my position. I just haven't figured out how to do it yet.”

This isn't how to do it. This is how to destroy it.

It is so easy to get caught up in the immediate, to put out the fire in front of us, to throw our limited funding into dealing with the here and now. But what we as a city need to do is look past that immediate and look towards the future. Education is that future. I ask you to consider this when creating this budget.

Thank you for your time,

Jason Zanitsch



KCS
WWW.KCSNY.ORG

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**Testimony for the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Remote Hearing on the FY2021 Executive Budget Hearings
May 21, 2020**

**Testimony of Jennifer Ha, Project Coordinator
The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

My name is Jennifer Ha, and I am a Project Coordinator at the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). I would like to first thank the Committee on Finance for giving us the opportunity to share this testimony.

KCS is a 47-year-old nonprofit; the first social services organization in New York serving the Korean American population, as well as the wider immigrant community. KCS continues to operate under the mission of helping immigrants fully integrate into society and overcome any economic, health and social barriers so that they become independent and thriving members of the community. Today, KCS serves an average of 1,300 individuals every day through its six programs, covering areas of immigration, aging, senior job training, mental health, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and public health.

KCS is the only Korean American CBO in NYC offering the “Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program” (MCCAP) which offers our clients the ability to resolve hospital bill issues, assist healthcare appeal processes, and provide comprehensive health care case management services for community members. KCS launched MCCAP to provide culturally and linguistically competent healthcare and public benefit navigation services. Specifically, discretionary funding was utilized for two major components: service/unit costs, outreach, and case management.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this healthcare crisis with many New Yorkers and they are confused by the government’s daily and ever-changing updates. As a result, we have seen a sharp increase in the need for access to healthcare, as well as financial support for their food needs and assistance with unemployment benefits from KCS’ MCCAP. These needs have doubled after the COVID-19 outbreak and we are helping address these needs by providing translated COVID-19 updates, health advocacy, health insurance navigation, and referrals to proper services and agencies.

We have conducted seven outreach events/workshops to reach approximately 146 people before the COVID-19 outbreak and have managed 211 cases since September 2019. We have served vulnerable individuals such as seniors with limited English and computer proficiency, disabled and low-income families with enrollment, renewals, and education regarding Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP benefits. In addition, we helped uninsured individuals to find sources of free or low-cost care such as Emergency Medicaid and HHC options. Clients who struggled with medical billing disputes from hospitals,

KCS Main Office
Adult Daycare | Afterschool
| Immigration | ESOL |
203-05 32nd Avenue
Bayside, NY 11361
Tel: (718) 939-6137
Fax: (718) 886-6126

Corona Senior Center
Korean Mutual
Aid Society
37-06 111th Street
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: (718) 651-9220
Fax: (718) 478-6055

Flushing Senior Center
42-15 166th Street
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 886-8203
Fax: (718) 886-8205

Public Health and Research Center | Workforce Development
325 W 38th Street, Ste. 1210
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212) 463-9685
Fax: (212) 463-8347

Brooklyn Project
8710 5th Ave. 1FL
Bay Ridge,
NY 11209
Tel: (718) 630-0001
Fax: (718) 630-0002

Mental Health Clinic
42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 534-4149



government agencies, or insurance companies have also reached out to us. Given that we continue to see a growing number of clients who need assistance with their healthcare, it is clear that the support for these services will be even more important from now on, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an advocate working directly with the Korean community, I have experienced the sense of isolation that the members of the community face since the COVID-19 outbreak. To highlight the need for high quality, culturally competent services, I would like to share my client's story with you.

Mr. Kim is an undocumented client and was informed by his PCP he may have colorectal cancer; requiring a follow-up endoscopy. In light of the on-going COVID-19 crisis, he could not find any doctors, clinics, or hospitals which could provide this test because all specialists were responding to the outbreak. As a result, I helped him to find a screening provider through the Korean community network and he was finally able to undergo a gastroscopy. We are also looking for other services that he may need after he receives his results. Because of KCS' MCCAP dedication to its clients in difficult situations, clients like Mr. Kim, were able to receive critical health care services despite the current health crisis. Stories like these are just one example of the many cases we are managing. As a result, support for New York City's MCCAP is an absolute necessity for vulnerable New Yorkers with health issues during this time, and after society begins to normalize.

We would like to thank the City Council's commitment to health equity for all New Yorkers, and ask for the continued support in reducing various health disparities impacting NYC's immigrant communities. Community-Based organizations such as KCS have longstanding ties with the community, the trust of community members, and an acute knowledge of their needs. Therefore, CBOs like KCS are well positioned to deliver these lifesaving and critical services with the council's continued support.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our story.

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Good afternoon, Council Members.

Thank you for holding this hearing. Showing Up for Racial Justice New York City (SURJ NYC) is a grassroots organization, part of a national network of white people working to be antiracist, with members in every borough and most neighborhoods and districts, and we are writing today to say that the use of police to handle everything in the city is not only not smart but an outrage.

Mayor de Blasio seems to think the answer to every problem is to send in the NYPD. Even the PBA is against this idea!

We believe that is always the wrong place to begin. Especially in a health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The solution to social distancing has been here all along: work with people, not against them. Coronavirus and social distancing is new. It will take some time to adjust. The way to educate and encourage distancing and mask-wearing is for community groups and neighbors to encourage each other.

Data show the calls to 311 are more often in white neighborhoods. Yet enforcement with summons and arrests is overwhelmingly in Black and Brown neighborhoods. This is not making our city any safer. It certainly does nothing to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Police cannot use enforcement of social distancing as an excuse to stop and frisk.

We do not need more officers. We need neighbors to talk with each other

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. We are committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. We want our city representatives to do the same, and will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for everyone.

To whom it may concern,

Hello, my name is Jennifer V. I live in Far Rockaway queens and I have my Fair Futures life coach through MercyFirst. In the short amount of time that this program has been in effect I have benefited greatly from it. Not only because I previously had a close relationship with my life coach but also because of the services she can help me with. I can call her any time night and day and she always helps me to her best ability and honestly, I would have a lot of hardships without her. I am currently in the transition out of high school into college and there have been many times when I have gotten emails or requests from schools and have been confused on what to do, it could be the middle of the night or early in the morning I can always call my life coach and she helps me immediately especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and having lots of confusion of different situations she has always been here for me to clear things up. She has also been a huge support if I just need to talk. Since this pandemic has started, I do not have anyone else that is as big of a support as my life coach and she has made the situation much better for me then it would have been without her. I feel that life coaches are EXTREMELY important because this is not a benefit you get out of caseworkers at all and I've been in care for 5 years now and this program is honestly the most helpful initiative they have provided for us. I feel that if we lost this program it would be a huge loss and downfall for me as well as other children. If you have any concern for the children in care I highly recommend working with the mayor to restore funding for fair futures in the fiscal year 2021 budget I know this may be difficult due to the pandemic but as long as I have been in care I have seen that there is not much support for children in the system and this program has helped me and other kids tremendously.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Jennifer V.



May 21, 2020

Jeremy S., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

Hi, my name is Jeremy Soto. I am 16 years old and I grew up in the Bronx most of my life. Fair futures has helped me be able to organize different things in life like time management, goal management, and daily routines. This has also helped me complete simple life goals such as getting my state ID and advocating for myself. I am now able to advocate to my teachers and I am getting better at advocating my feelings in a proper way to people. During this COVID-19 pandemic, this program has given me hope that I will still be able to continue with different life goals I have set. Such as getting my driver permit and being employed. After this pandemic, we already have goals set in place to complete. If fair futures is cut, I would not be able to continue getting assistance with my goal, and I will not get the continuous support. During this pandemic, I am getting the support I need, and I am still able to work on my goals.



The Bonnie Boys Club

developing youth since 1949

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NYC Council Committee Public Testimony on the FY21 Budget

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Daniel Dromm

From: Jerry Katzke – Treasurer, Bonnie Boys Club

Date: May 21, 2020

Dear Councilman Torres:

Thank you for your leadership to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in New York City. While we defer to public health experts on the social determinants of health and environmental drivers contributing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, we join in our city's concern and call for resources and attention to the fact that Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID, and fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second highest in the City.

One issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council Discretionary Funding. We know the City is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York City Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However, any cuts to City Council Discretionary Funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations serving communities of color. Grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process.

The Bonnie Boys Club of Brooklyn, New York is a 501c(3) non profit organization that has been providing an academic, athletic and recreational program for the youth of our community for the last 70 years. Our primary activities are a year round nationally renowned baseball program for 350 youth between the ages of 5 and 21 and a mentoring and guidance program for our elementary, middle school, high school and college student athletes called "Support, Service and Success". While our primary activity is baseball, we view our mission as using baseball and sports to produce solid citizens of the community. Our approach is to bring youth into our program at a young age and over a period of years not only develop their baseball skills but their sense of sportsmanship and fair play, help them with high school and college both academically and athletically, and see them graduate from college and become successful in the world at large. We have graduated over 150 players from college over the last 15 years and seen them become doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, policemen, and firemen as well as professional baseball players. Alumni of our youth program include Mark Tatum, Deputy

Commissioner of the NBA; Jared Banner, Farm Director of the NY Mets; CB Bucknor, Major League Baseball Umpire; as well as State Assemblyman Erik Dilan.

For the last 10 years we have been receiving Discretionary Funding from the New York City Council through council members Mathieu Eugene, Rafael Espinal and Farah Louis as well as the Brooklyn Delegation. We submitted our Fiscal Year 2021 Discretionary Funding Request by February 18th as required. and have been in contact with Councilman Eugene and the staff of Councilwoman Louis and Mark Treyger on behalf of District 40 whose council position is currently vacant due to Rafael Espinal's resignation . They are all supportive of [continuing to support our organization](#) through our 2021 request. This funding is critical to our youth program since we use it to purchase equipment for our 15 baseball teams with an average annual cost of approximately \$35,000. In our preparation for the upcoming season, we have already committed to many of these equipment expenses, and we rely on this discretionary funding for reimbursement purposes.

Communities such as ours have been most impacted by COVID-19 as we are heavily reliant on Discretionary Funding, which only accounts for .042% of the city budget. Discretionary Funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding. Instead of cutting Discretionary Funding, we call on the City to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

Jessi Colon

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 22, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Jessi Colon and I work National Dance Institute in Harlem.

The mission of National Dance Institute is to engage children and teach them a love of the arts through dance and music. Each year we are in over 40 schools, impacting over 6,000 children. No child pays a penny for our in school programming or the Saturday program for exemplary dancers. 25 years ago I was one of these children, and NDI changed my life forever, for the better.

We are currently creating video content and live classes for our students to keep moving vigorously and joyfully. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Jessi Colon



We Stay / Nos Quedamos Committee, Inc.
754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451-4446
Phone: (718) 585-2323 / Fax: (718) 585-8628
E-mail: info@nosquedamos.org
Website: www.nosquedamos.org

A Coalition of Homeowners, Tenants, Property Owners, Institutions, and Business Persons Who are Resolved to remain a Part of The Melrose Community and Become Equal Partners With the City of New York in Our Community's Redevelopment.

NYC Council Finance Committee Testimony
Thursday, May 21, 2020

Good Morning Chairman Dromm,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jessica Clemente, Chief Executive Officer of We Stay/Nos Quedamos a NYC based non-profit 501 (c) (3) community development corporation comprised of residents, homeowners, and business owners from the South Bronx who are committed to promoting, supporting, and advancing ideas of healthy and sustainable growth, both for local communities and the larger society. Our goal is to develop an economically productive, sustainable, and healthy community. This vision is one that respects, supports and involves the existing community in the formulation of plans and policies that address the issues of housing, open space, community renewal and its sustainability. We are active members of the New York City Community Land Trust Initiative and of the New York City Community Land Trust Learning Exchange.

We Stay/Nos Quedamos urges the City Council to renew FY2021 discretionary funding support for the Community Land Trust (CLT) initiative, which provides crucial support to emerging CLTs in all five NYC boroughs. More than ever, NYC must invest in community-led solutions like CLTs to stabilize housing, strengthen neighborhoods, and ensure a just recovery post-COVID-19.

CLTs are taking root in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem, Jackson Heights, East New York, and beyond -- to address the city's affordability crisis and combat displacement. CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own land and ensure that it is used to provide permanently-affordable housing and other community needs. Emerging CLTs are working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable mutual and multifamily housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, for example, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, and other infrastructure.

As you will see, the CLT initiative has made huge strides. To date, the CLT being spearheaded by Nos Quedamos, the **"South Bronx Community Resource and Land Trust"**-South Bronx Land and Community Resource Trust is intended to not only preserve and create deeper affordability in housing but will also address protecting accessibility to community open space as an equal part of the balance in creating viable, long-term sustainable communities.



We Stay / Nos Quedamos Committee, Inc.

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Phone: (718) 585-2323 / Fax: (718) 585-8628

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Further, the model considers some broad approaches to land use management and local economic development opportunity that would be uniquely available to a community land trust entity and will be utilized to develop effective strategies to confront issues relating to environmental resilience, with the ability to address concerns of supplemental municipal infrastructure, public safety, and cultural preservation and development.

We are grateful for the City Council's discretionary funding support in FY2020, which enabled the CLT Initiative to make major strides over the past year -- engaging thousands of community members in education and organizing; developing CLT steering committees and founding boards; incorporating new CLTs and expanding existing ones; and deepening partnerships with nonprofit developers and community stakeholders.

With this City Council support it has enabled us **14** technical engagements, **5** community-wide engagement events, and have participated in **25** Education and Organizing Sessions for Tenants and/or Homeowners in Melrose.

Nos Quedamos has taken a leadership role in coordinating "Bronx Borough/Upper Manhattan CLT collective discussion group co facilitated with NWBCC. This group includes--all of the Bronx-based CLTs (NWBCC, Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land Stewards, Banana Kelly, Mary Mitchell Center for Family and Youth and the East Harlem - El Barrio Community Land Trust (EHEBCLT). We have joined to discuss coordination and collaboration efforts, impacts of COVID and how Community Land Trusts are community driven tools for just recovery and transformative justice.

Citywide, groups have engaged thousands of community members in education and organizing; developed CLT steering committees and founding boards; formally incorporated new CLTs and expanded existing ones; identified properties for acquisition; and deepened partnerships with nonprofit developers and community stakeholders.

Renewed FY2021 discretionary funding will support CLTs like ours as we acquire property, launch operations, and engage community members in ongoing organizing and stewardship. Since COVID-19 hit our city, local CLTs and partners have conducted wellness checks with tenants, called for rent suspension, connected tenants with legal assistance, and distributed food and supplies to elderly and homebound community residents, for example.



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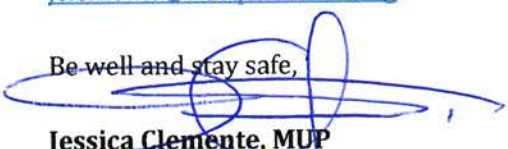
Our COVID-19 efforts include continuing to address the issue of food insecurity in our community. Since March 30th, we have joined forces with Assemblyman Michael Blake and WorldKitchen (in partnership with Bronx community restaurants) to provide hot/cold meals to 11 out of 19 of our buildings--a collective total of 607 families. With two meals per person, that's a total of 1,214 meals a day at three days per week for a weekly total of 3,642 meals distributed and continuing. Furthermore, the need to continue outreach, organize and advocate for our community will be needed now and after COVID more than ever.

CLTs have been critical to past recovery efforts -- for example, preventing foreclosures following the 2008 financial crash¹, and rebuilding after Hurricanes Maria and Irma in Puerto Rico² -- and will be similarly crucial to recovery efforts in black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by COVID-19.

More than ever, we need NYC to invest in community-led solutions like CLTs to stabilize housing, strengthen neighborhoods, and ensure a just recovery. We hope you will prioritize this critical initiative in FY2021 upcoming budget negotiations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to contact me at jclemente@nosquedamos.org.

Be well and stay safe,


Jessica Clemente, MUP
Chief Executive Officer

¹ See Thaden, E. (2011). Stable Home Ownership in a Turbulent Economy: Delinquencies and Foreclosures Remain Low in Community Land Trusts. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper.

² See Algoed, L. & Hernández Torrales, M. (2019). The Land is Ours. Vulnerabilization and resistance in informal settlements in Puerto Rico: Lessons from the Caño Martín Peña Community Land Trust. Radical Housing Journal 1(1): 29-47

Dear City Council friends,

I write as a mother, educator, and neighbor who absolutely sees the parks as a vital part of our New York City life. Especially during these uncertain times, the clean air in a local park is what NYC livable. Without such options for relaxation and a break from the concrete jungle, NYC life would not be sustainable for us, the New Yorkers. We know you have difficult fiscal decisions to make, but please maintain funding for the parks that make NYC so great. The parks are important for all New Yorkers, a place for us to come together, be healthy, share ideas, and we can properly distance while staying connected.

Humbly,

Jill Schimmel

3235 Cambridge Ave 6H

Bronx, NY 10463

May 21, 2020

Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance – Thursday, May 21, 2020

Submitted by Jody Kuh, Brooklyn, NY 11238

Dear Council Member Dromm and Committee Members,

I see NYC as being in the midst of not one, but three crises: coronavirus, climate change, and the ongoing immense crisis of vast economic inequality, primarily disadvantaging black and brown people. The Mayor's budget seems to address none of them and makes all of these crises worse. The destruction of the social safety net harms so many in the midst of a pandemic where they need more support in the form of social services, not less, while empowering law enforcement in a way that can only be harmful. At the same time, there are cuts to many environmental programs that will help us fight the pandemic of climate change in the long term.

Our children need SYEP and teachers and social workers, their schools need to be funded and supported. We need affordable housing and mental health services, especially following the coronavirus crisis - all of these things are in the immediate best interest of this city's most vulnerable residents and in the long-term interest of this entire city.

The gutting of the compost program also strikes me as completely short-sighted. All of that waste which had been diverted and now will go to landfill will also be added to regular garbage pickup - being put in plastic bags on the street instead of being put in rat-proof bins, attracting rodents and creating other issues. We don't need brown bin collection restored if that's an unmanageable cost, but we do need drop off points restored at a lower cost - it will save money in sanitation and in rat control. E-waste and hazardous material recycling should also be restored for the sake of our city and our planet in the long term.

The cuts to the environmental programs and the cuts to social services are not necessary. With appropriate cuts to the law enforcement budget, an NYPD hiring freeze, and a reduction in the Department of Corrections workforce, money can be reallocated to support the people of this city, not to police them, punish them and jail them.

Thank you for your time and all of your hard work on behalf of the people of New York City.

Sincerely,
Jody Kuh



New York City Council Committee on Finance Budget Testimony

Good afternoon Speaker Johnson and Chairman Dromm and members of the New York City Council's committee on Finance. My name is Joe Turner, I am the President and Chief Executive Officer at Exponents.

Exponents is a leader in peer-driven services in the areas of drug addiction, chronic disease management and support, and jail/recovery services.

Our person-centered, strengths-based operating philosophy greatly improves engagement and retention efforts. Exponents was founded in 1990 on the principle that all people deserve compassion. Since that time, we have dedicated ourselves to serve those impacted by HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, incarceration and behavioral health challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many of our country's flaws, from our high health care costs, low medical capacity, housing and food insecurity and income inequality have contributed toward making this pandemic a humanitarian crisis for millions of Americans. To put it into perspective, prior to the pandemic 27.5 million Americans lacked health insurance, 553,000 homeless people wandered on our streets and more than 40 percent of Americans that lacked \$400 for an emergency. These numbers have undoubtedly gone up. Unfortunately, as these numbers go up so does the number of people that suffer substance abuse and overdoses.

As we start the process of reopening our economy, it is critical that we examine our institutional flaws to improve access to healthcare; provide housing and food security and improve wages. The City Council sits in a unique position to help support public policy that addresses many of America's flaws and has a record of success in that capacity.

Local governments are the laboratories of democracy. We nonprofits serve as the centrifuge for local governments. Nonprofits use governmental grants to provide critical services to New Yorkers that help our government partners meet important public policy goals. Our government partners also use the data that we nonprofits provide to further improve upon important public policy goals.

COVID-19 presented challenges but we worked with our brethren nonprofits to devise new innovative ways to provide services to our participants remotely. The wealth of knowledge that we have by providing our services remotely can be utilized by our government partners and healthcare community to revolutionize tele-medicine.

The public and private partnership that nonprofits such as Exponents has with local government also serves to protect the interests of the taxpayers. As an example, for every participant that we

can successfully navigate from substance abuse to recovery saves the taxpayer money. When we help a formally incarcerated participant successfully complete our professional training and help them prepare for the G.E.D., we help reduce recidivism which saves taxpayers money.

This pandemic has shined a bright light on the economic uncertainties and hopefully everyone's eyes to the critical importance of government support we need to meet our mandate and survive.

With City Council funding, Exponents can provide all of our participants that reside in shelters, residential treatment programs or single-room-occupancy dwellings with a pre-packaged meal through our **FEEDING OUR FAMILIES** initiative. We can expand upon our **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES** program where we assist opioid users with navigation of treatment which helps with retention of services and make Narcan training and kits available to participants which helps save lives. Also, with City Council funding we can assist young transgender individuals and gay men of Black/Latinx descent to prevent problematic substance use and HIV/Hepatitis C (re)infection through our **PROJECT INFORM** program.

In conclusion, we ask that the City Council continue to serve as a good partner with the City's nonprofit community. We ask that the City Council consider increasing the amount of funds it provides nonprofits. The economic uncertainty that has now become a reality means that it will be harder for nonprofits to fundraise. The economic conditions will cause a rise for the vital services that we provide. If Exponents is able to secure City Council funding, we can be part of the solution toward improving our City in the post-COVID era.



**Cultural Institutions Group
Testimony to the New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

**John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs – Wildlife Conservation Society
Chair, Cultural Institutions Group**

Good afternoon, Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, Chairman Dromm and members of the City Council. I am John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President for Public Affairs at the Wildlife Conservation Society, Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) and Co-Founder of New Yorkers For Culture and Arts. I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIGs – a coalition of 34 cultural organizations who share a public-private partnership with the City of New York and are located in all five boroughs of the City. Let me begin by stating how grateful we are for the Council’s vital support for culture and the arts in New York City throughout the years. Your support yields a monumental return on investment for all New Yorkers regardless of age, background, or status. Museums, zoos, theaters, and other cultural organizations are not only beneficial to the city, New Yorkers, and countless visitors but also play an important economic role in the financial well-being of New York. We are proud to say that our organizations collectively employ more than 480,000 New Yorkers, provide world-class educational services and generate over \$120 billion in economic activity.

Normally at this time of year, the CIG looks forward to updating the Council and Administration on the work that’s taken place in FY20, and what’s in store for FY21. This is not a typical year. We are grateful to the City and its support in these difficult times and look forward with



renewed optimism as we begin taking the next steps toward recovery and reopening. At this moment in time, we would like to share how CIGs have been stepping up during the COVID-19 crisis. Over the past few months, CIGs have worked more closely than ever before to hold up the cultural and arts community both in New York and across the nation.

When COVID-19 came to our City, cultural leaders acted swiftly, responsibly, and cooperatively. Under leadership of the CIG, a daily 3pm call was established that has served (and continues to serve) as a lifeline to New York City cultural organizations of all sizes and fields (["The Daily Call that 200 Arts Groups Hope Will Help Them Survive,"](#) New York Times, 5/12/2020). The CIGs have pooled their resources proactively to rally support across sectors in order to build influential coalitions lobbying Congress to increase federal relief to reduce the economic impacts of COVID-19 on nonprofits, small businesses, and state and local governments. Our organizations are intrinsically intertwined with the local economy, through tourism, hospitality, and small businesses that rely on foot-traffic. By joining forces, we have demonstrated the importance of supporting public policy that leaves no one out. We continued to provide for our communities by moving programs online, promoting a plethora of free cultural offerings available virtually. We were also able to ensure that populations hit hardest by the State's shelter in place mandate - school children and our senior citizens - were made aware of what was available to them.



We would like to take the opportunity to showcase just a portion of the valuable public service the CIGs have continued to deliver.

- New York Hall of Science has developed a series of four engineering activities that utilize simple materials and the free Google Science Journal app. Activities are primarily geared towards students in grades 6 – 8 and include a virtual Earthquake Simulation.
- The Museum of the City of New York has developed programs and resources for teachers adapting to the virtual classroom aligned with Common Core Standards. The Museum has created ‘Saturday Academy,’ a free SAT prep program, and spearheaded New York’s #CovidStoriesNYC collecting over 4,000 submissions to date.
- Museum of the Moving Image has been serving as a meal distribution service Monday – Friday, staffed by their own personnel.
- Brooklyn Botanic Garden has launched BBG At Home, with online content, educational resources, and Gardner Help Line.
- The Bronx Zoo has been serving as an ambulance staging hub in conjunction with the Montefiore drive-through testing site.

We have always held sacred our role as partners with the City and never has that role been more visible than it is right now through our advocacy, leadership, and dedication to supporting our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Our communities have relied on their local CIGs for educational programs for seniors and students; moments of zen from their collections and performances; COVID testing; or a place to pick up a meal.



Additionally, while partnering with the City by sharing resources to help in relief efforts, we have witnessed the impact that this crisis has had on communities of color. These are the communities our organizations serve and employ. By being in, of and for our communities, the CIGs were able to pivot quickly to deliver during this crisis to help address needs in each neighborhood we serve. The CIGs have demonstrated in new ways these past weeks and months their continued mission of delivering meaningful services to their communities.

Looking ahead, FY21 brings with it many new challenges beyond the growing financial impacts of the last few months and the months ahead. While we look forward to re-opening our doors and welcoming back the public, we are preparing to do so in a safe and responsible manner that protects both our staff and guests and allows us to serve as the community hubs we have always been. We will continue our long-standing partnerships with cultural program groups, serving as safe physical spaces for New Yorkers to enjoy cultural programming as our City reopens. Stabilizing our diverse workforce will have a profound impact on New York City's economy - our educators, artists, curators, security guards and groundkeepers are the lifeblood of the communities that house our institutions.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We look forward to our continued partnership with this great city and value your leadership through this crisis. In so far as culture can be held harmless in FY21, we will continue to serve as places of respite and rejuvenation for our communities;



stewards of the City's assets; and protectors of our global cultural heritage. The CIGs are part of what defines New York's history and resiliency.

**Testimony of Sanctuary for Families
Submitted to the New York City Council, Committee on Finance
Chair, Daniel Dromm
(Hearing on May 21, 2020)**

This testimony is being submitted to the Finance Committee's Executive Budget Hearing, on behalf of Sanctuary for Families, New York City's largest provider of comprehensive services and preventive outreach exclusively on behalf of survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence. This supplements the powerful testimony delivered by Sarah Hayes, the Deputy Director of the agency's Economic Empowerment Program, at the hearing on Thursday, which outlined the urgent need for funding for workforce training for abuse survivors. More broadly, Sanctuary is grateful to the City Council for its attentiveness to the concerns of City's human services providers, who continue to provide essential services to our City's most vulnerable residents in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, Sanctuary delivered its wrap-around crisis intervention, shelter, mental health, legal advice and representation, and economic empowerment services to 10,500 adults and children—the vast majority of them poor women of color with dependent children, over 70% immigrants, many of them living in the shelter system. Working out of five offices and five shelters located throughout the City, our best-in-class social workers, attorneys, case managers, career specialists and shelter workers delivered these trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically sensitive services in more than 30 languages spoken by direct-service staff alone. Our newest site—a holistic service center for victims of commercial sexual exploitation and those who identify as sex workers—opened in January 2020, providing medical, mental health, social, legal, and employment services at a state-of-the-art public hospital in lower Manhattan, in a partnership with NYC Health+Hospitals.

Long before the City's first COVID-19 case, we were battling another public health crisis: high rates of domestic violence, sex trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence that disproportionately ravage already marginalized communities including women of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community. The COVID-19 crisis has cast a harsh light on what we already knew: for many New Yorkers, home is not a safe place. The grave dangers faced by victims quarantined with abusers have been highlighted extensively in the media and by policymakers from Council Speaker Johnson to Governor Cuomo.

While some statistics do not yet reflect it, there is wide recognition that there will be a spike in domestic violence rates in the weeks and months ahead. Lower hotline numbers may actually be troubling evidence that victims have fewer safe moments to place calls; or that they believe their situation is not serious enough to warrant help right now; or that the assistance they need is no longer accessible—beliefs that are often weaponized by abusers. One Sanctuary client's abuser recently told her she "better watch her back...

because the courts are closed, so you can't do anything." We are also seeing evidence that abuse is escalating in frequency and severity in quarantine. One of our clients called 911 after enduring multiple sexual assaults by her husband over the past few weeks; with Sanctuary's help, she was able to obtain a full stay-away order of protection. For those not living with abusers, we are observing increased instances of harassment and cyber-abuse via text, email and social media.

On the service delivery side, Sanctuary pivoted rapidly to continue providing virtually all the essential services we have offered for years. Our five shelters remain open and near capacity, with several units left vacant in case any family should be infected and need to be isolated; and residential aides still providing 24/7 staffing. Our Legal Center has reached out to clients with needs surveys in 11 languages, and is continuing to pursue legal cases wherever possible. Multiple Sanctuary attorneys staff our Legal Helpline, so callers always receive a "live" answer—vital in the stay-at-home era when abuse victims may have limited opportunities to safely place calls. The Center has been a leader in efforts to ensure that orders of protection remain available and accessible, with an army of *pro bono* attorneys assisting petitioners remotely, and informational flyers in many languages on social media, web ads, and screens in hospital and CBO waiting rooms and on taxis. Our Clinical Department is providing mental health counseling and case management to adults, children, and families via a secure telehealth platform. And our Economic Empowerment Program purchased and configured laptops with wifi hotspots and hand-delivered them to 40 trainees in its intensive career training program, which restarted remotely several weeks ago, after only a few weeks' interruption.

Sanctuary's extraordinary survivor leaders also quickly responded to the crisis by creating safety planning guides for victims quarantined with abusers: these have been translated into Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and other languages and shared online locally and nationally—with more than 100,000 shares on social media to date.

Sanctuary is pleased that our services have been officially designated as essential by the City Council, in recognition that we are continuing to provide vital, life-saving services even amidst the current public health crisis. The reality is that our services are more vital now than perhaps ever before, with our clients confronting more acute crises—from heightened trauma, to food insecurity, to grave safety concerns, to serious health issues. And, as noted above, Sanctuary and our many colleagues in the field are all preparing for a surge of new cases in the months to come, after quarantine orders are lifted.

We recognize that the City has the profoundly challenging task of drafting a viable budget in the current economic downturn—but we strongly urge you to leave essential domestic violence service providers like Sanctuary for Families whole. Now is not the time for the providers who serve our most vulnerable neighbors—undocumented immigrants, women of color, LGBTQ survivors, and children—to be downsizing and losing critical capacity. It is only a matter of time before service providers begin to see a wave of new domestic violence cases—and the level of need among existing clients in this crisis will

only deepen in the difficult months ahead. Service providers like Sanctuary and our community partners must be prepared to respond.

We need clear reassurance from the City that our contracts will be renewed at least at the same levels for FY21 to ensure the stability of our essential services for abuse survivors. Reassurance about the continuity of services is vital: it is always challenging to find out only at the end of June whether funding will be renewed at comparable levels in July—this year it is all but untenable.

Our thanks to the City Council for making these issues a priority, and for giving us the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Thank you for giving me this chance to speak today about the new budget negotiation and proposed cuts to the Dept of Youth and Family Services.

I am now a Social Worker with about 30 years experience working in schools, community settings, clinics and my own office. with children, adults with various mental health conditions, addictions histories of incarceration, levels of education, homelessness and those clients have ranged from absolutely destitute to those with tens of millions of dollars in wealth.

I know a few things to be true in my field. The earlier you solve a problem the better the solution, cheaper it is and the greater the cascade of benefits. The problem you prevent is the cheapest, most effective. The longer you wait the bigger and more complex the problem, greater the cascade of related problems you'll have to deal with.

If the NYPD can trade 1% of its budget to the Dept of Youth and Family Services they will close the disparity and literally prevent crime and the cascade of issues that follow. That money would fund safe places for kids today and the mentoring that will prevent crimes of the future.

For \$20-\$40 an hour youth workers will save us money and solve crimes by preventing them long in advance. It is simple and true.

To arrest, convict and incarcerate someone who's committed a crime is a fine solution. The person victimized may heal and see justice. The offender pays a price. Society feels safe. However, this is all at huge expense in personal losses, trauma, and money.

Alternately if some teenaged future robber found some comfort, purpose, adult guidance, positive self expression and skills they might find at a program Funded by The Dept of Youth and Family services then probably they never did the crime they were arrested for. Instead they've worked a job, paid taxes and supported a family, possibly much more.

Money invested in youth is the early prevented problem with a cascade of benefits. Money spent prosecuting crime is the necessary very late response that our failures to meet the needs of children and families of all types leads to. It comes with a cascade of expenses and human pain.

Please restore funding to the Youth and Family Services. please show us you have hope for the future of those children.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

Jonathan Blaufarb, LCSW
917-304-1413
Brooklyn, NY 11231

The proposed budget cut to education, estimated at over \$140 million will increase educational inequality and therefore social and economic inequality in our great city. To face the education crisis looming, and provide required counseling services after this trauma the city MUST NOT CUT the education budget. Leaving the ever expanding policing budget untouched, and increasing spending on school security agents the mayor's budget is displaying callous, racist priorities to control, contain and cage New Yorkers rather than actually serve them. Our communities will face a summer without Youth Employment opportunities, a summer where many parents will not have work, a summer where police will be able harass with more impunity under the guise of "social distancing".

As the COVID crisis has shown, inequality of public services over generations has created a vulnerable class of New Yorkers who are deemed "essential" in crises to provide nursing services or deliver food or staff pharmacies and grocery stores, but return home after their work to overpoliced neighborhoods and send children to schools who have had budget cuts year after year. I have seen first hand as both a DOE educator and parent of a DOE student how underfunding schools narrows curriculum, eliminates extracurricular essentials like music and art and leads to testing factories where a school's survival is dependent upon the backs of overworked, stressed students (and teachers and administrators). Such schools eliminate what is essential about educating WHOLE PEOPLE.

Please, do not cut the education budget. Find your cuts in other places.



**Testimony of Judi Kende
Vice President & New York Market Leader
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.**

**To the New York City Council
Subcommittee on Capital Budget**

**Hearing on the FY Executive 2021 Budget
May 21st, 2020**

My name is Judi Kende, and I lead the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national affordable housing nonprofit whose mission is to create opportunity for low- and moderate- income people through affordable housing in diverse, thriving communities. We invest capital to create and preserve quality affordable homes, reinvest revenues to develop programmatic solutions, and scale these solutions through policy change. Since the New York office opened in 1987, we have helped build or preserve more than 63,000 affordable homes for over 167,000 New Yorkers through capital investments, programmatic initiatives, and policy advocacy. We have committed more than \$3.6 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community development in the State.

On behalf of Enterprise I'd like to thank Chair Gibson and the City Council for the opportunity to testify today on the City's FY 2021 Executive Budget, and for its leadership in the face of this extraordinary public health and economic crisis. The economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in significant cuts to the Mayor's executive budget, which is \$8 billion less than this year's budget scheduled to end in June. We urge the City to resist cuts to affordable and supportive housing programs. Data indicate that low-income New Yorkers who are already vulnerable to housing instability are also being hit hardest by Covid-19. In these difficult times, the city should support, not pull back from housing programs that are critical to keeping New Yorkers in stable housing.

The most sizable cut to affordable housing programs in the proposed budget is the capital housing budget, which risks a reduction of over \$1 billion from the FY20 budget and FY21 budget together. These cuts will sharply reduce the number of new housing units produced, translating to roughly 4,500 fewer affordable and supportive units each year for the next two years. Deeply affordable projects in the pipeline will be delayed, severely reducing housing placements out of shelter and exacerbating the affordable housing and homelessness crisis, which predate the Covid-19 pandemic. From an economic development perspective, the city should increase its production



of affordable housing for its counter-cyclical effects, stabilizing the housing market and creating new construction and service jobs. This is also an opportunity for the city to take advantage of a drop in real estate acquisition costs to transform hotel and commercial properties into affordable housing. We strongly urge the City to resist cuts to the capital housing budget.

In addition to the capital housing budget, other programs that support vulnerable New Yorkers are also at risk of being defunded. This includes the Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program (BACPP), which would be cut so severely that it would no longer be viable. The BACPP, which creates safe and legal basement apartments, brings financial relief to homeowners by ensuring reliable rental income, and also reduces in-unit crowding, making it easier for tenants to social distance. We join members of the Coalition for Affordable Homes in asking you to preserve this promising pilot. We also ask you to preserve the Landlord Ambassador Program, a pilot program co-designed by Enterprise, Riseboro Community Partnership and HPD that supports landlords of small and mid-sized properties in Brooklyn access city resources to keep their properties safe, healthy and affordable for residents.

Enterprise is a co-convenor of the Family Homelessness Coalition, a broad group of advocates, shelter and service providers and affordable housing owners working to combat family homelessness in New York City since before the current crisis. Our priorities of preventing homelessness, improving conditions in shelters, and expanding access to affordable housing are even more relevant and critical today as we move towards a citywide recovery plan. In addition to rejecting cuts that would limit the supply of deeply affordable housing, we urge the City Council to prioritize homeless and housing insecure New Yorkers by investing in upstream homelessness prevention, shelter improvements and supporting nonprofits and their frontline staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at an unprecedented time in our city's history and for your leadership prioritizing the housing needs of vulnerable New Yorkers and preventing a surge of homelessness on the road to recovery. We look forward to our continued work together to provide safe, healthy homes to all New Yorkers.



City Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Priorities:
Responding to, and Recovering from, the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Family Homelessness Coalition, comprised of a diverse group of advocates, shelter and service providers, and affordable housing developers, has worked to combat family homelessness since before the current public health and economic crisis hit our city. Our priorities of preventing homelessness, improving conditions in shelters, and expanding access to affordable housing are even more relevant and critical today as we move towards a citywide recovery plan. Available data already point to the alarming and disproportionate impact that Covid-19 has on communities that were already grappling with high risks associated with housing instability: poverty, unemployment, overcrowded housing, severe rent-burden, and high numbers of families entering shelter. We stand ready to partner with and support the New York City Council and the City administration's efforts to harness existing city and state resources and additional resources at the federal level to tackle the Covid-19 related needs of vulnerable New Yorkers and to prevent a surge in homelessness as an aftermath of the pandemic.

As the City Council prepares to negotiate the FY 21 budget, the Family Homelessness Coalition strongly encourages the City Council to prioritize the critical needs of New Yorkers to keep children and families stably housed. Our priorities include:

- Investing in Upstream Homelessness Prevention
- Improving Family Shelter Conditions
- Expediting Exits to Permanent Housing
- Support for Nonprofits including Frontline Staff

The above priorities are summarized and detailed as follows:

Investing in Upstream Prevention

As the conditions leading to housing instability are being exacerbated by the economic fallout resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, attention must be paid, and resources committed to keep families housed after the eviction moratorium ends. The magnitude of need cannot be underestimated as 25% of all New Yorkers were severely rent burdened prior to the pandemic and the situation has been exacerbated now by job losses. Between March 24 and April 25, over 733,000 people in New York City filed unemployment claims, representing just a portion of the New Yorkers who have lost income and will likely have difficulty paying rent.

- **Rental Subsidies:** Short- and long-term rent assistance is needed to cover rent arrears and support ongoing rent payments, including coverage of undocumented immigrants, who are not able to receive assistance through many existing programs. Addressing the

housing insecurity of low-income families farther upstream is both less costly to the City at a time of strained resources as well as less disruptive to families and especially children.

- **Prevention Services:** Expanded preventive services are desperately needed to respond to families' needs before they reach a housing crisis. Preventive services should include case management, eviction prevention and rental assistance counseling, and service referrals for childcare, education, training and workforce development. This will require increased funding for community-based organizations that provide these services as demand will increase in the wake of this pandemic. Consideration should also be given to expanded awareness campaigns to connect people to resources, particularly those that are experiencing housing instability for the first time.
- **Rapid Rehousing:** Rapid rehousing, a HUD best practice, should be institutionalized by HPD and HDC. City-funded re-rental units can be used to provide safe, affordable housing for families at risk of homelessness, including those experiencing domestic violence, or already using shelter.

Improving Family Shelter Conditions

Nearly 24,000 children and youth continue to reside in family shelter and the experience of homelessness is traumatic and can impact their health, behavioral health, educational progress, and their long-term economic stability. To address child and family needs and reduce trauma and poor outcomes experienced due to homelessness, the FHC continues to advocate for improvements in shelter conditions to protect and promote the well-being of children and their families.

- **Access to Education Supports:** Children and youth in shelter should be prioritized for any in-person and remote programming offered this summer. Students who experience homelessness must have uninterrupted access to technology and internet to participate in remote learning and because housing instability presents challenges to distance learning, students in temporary housing should be prioritized in DOE's Regional Enrichment Centers. Students in temporary housing fare worse than their permanently housed peers when examining attendance, proficiency, and graduation rates; learning loss and poor education outcomes are exacerbated now due to distance learning.
- **Improve Access to Services for families in Commercial Hotels:** Teleservices models should be leveraged to meet the needs of children and families living in hotels. Teleservices can facilitate access to social work services, recreation and tutoring, as well promote connectedness to family members and friends. Nearly 2,800 families reside in commercial hotels with minimal access to basic services and supports such as kitchens and laundry, social work services, or recreational activities for children. The isolation of these families is now exacerbated by social distancing.

Expediting Exits to Permanent Housing

The process by which families in shelters are placed in permanent housing, either through a government-subsidized unit or by using a rental subsidy voucher, is far too complex and lengthy.

- **Rental Subsidies:** Long- and short-term rental assistance should be leveraged to facilitate more rapid exits from shelter.
- **Streamline Permanent Housing Process:** The process of placing homeless families in permanent housing must be streamlined so that they can move to safe, permanent homes quickly. Recent efforts by DHS, HPD and HDC to streamline voucher protocols and expand accessibility, such as online processing and the use of virtual inspections when appropriate, should be expanded and continued post-PAUSE.
- **Expand Supply of Housing for Families that are Homeless and Very and Extremely Low Income:**
 - The City should prioritize capital funding for development of new permanent affordable housing for homeless families and expand its efforts to facilitate the acquisition of distressed properties by nonprofits in order to take advantage of anticipated lower costs to expand affordable housing longer term.
 - An increased number of City-funded and mandatory inclusionary housing units should be made available to homeless families and to very and extremely low-income families and those households should have access to support services, either on-site or through a connection to community-based services, to ensure that they can retain their housing.
 - The City must continue and expand its commitment to housing the most vulnerable homeless families in supportive and service-enriched housing.

Supporting Nonprofits Including Frontline Staff

Nonprofit organizations need additional support to expand their work – including operational support, incentive pay, access to testing, personal protective equipment, access to technology and equipment that enables virtual work, and cleaning supplies. Vital to the city's capacity to respond in this crisis is the continued viability of its social service sector, including the brave and critical frontline staff who support families in shelter, in permanent affordable housing, and at risk of homelessness every day, despite the risks to their health.

FHC Steering Committee:

Advocates for Children
Barrier Free Living
CAMBA
Citizens' Committee for Children
Coalition for the Homeless
Enterprise Community Partners
Gateway Housing
Henry Street Settlement
Homeless Services United
Monadnock Development
New Destiny Housing
Riseboro
Safe Horizon
Settle Housing Fund
The Floating Hospital
Win



**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020**

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Dromm and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Julia Duranti-Martinez, and I am the Community Land Trust Campaign Coordinator at New Economy Project. New Economy Project is an economic justice organization that works with community groups throughout New York City to build an economy that works for all, rooted in racial and gender justice, neighborhood equity, and ecological sustainability. Our organization has worked for more than 25 years to promote fair housing, combat discriminatory lending and debt collection, and support cooperative economic development. New Economy Project co-founded and co-convenes the NYC Community Land Initiative, a coalition of housing and social justice organizations working to advance community land trusts (CLTs) to preserve and create deeply-affordable housing and ensure neighborhood-led development.

New Economy Project and 14 partner organizations are part of a citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative that seeks \$1.5 million in FY2021 City Council discretionary funding. More than ever, NYC needs CLTs to address critical community needs, combat displacement, and ensure a just recovery for all New Yorkers, and we urge the Committee to recommend funding for the CLT Initiative in NYC's FY2021 budget.

The CLT initiative directly addresses NYC's affordability crisis, by developing community-led CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial space, and other community needs. With FY2020 support, the CLT initiative has made major progress toward the formation and expansion of CLTs in all five boroughs -- including in Jackson Heights, the South Bronx, East Harlem, Brownsville, East New York, and other low-income neighborhoods of color hardest-hit by COVID-19. By addressing unaffordable and substandard housing, environmental degradation, and displacement of longtime residents and small businesses, CLTs work to address root causes of health and economic disparities, and will be critical to a just recovery. (See attached one-pager and progress report.)

CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own and steward land in a community's interest, and lease use of the land for permanently-affordable housing and other local needs. By removing land and housing from the speculative market, CLTs combat displacement and protect public subsidy. The longstanding Cooper Square CLT, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, for example, stewards nearly 400 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 28% AMI, and storefronts for over 20 local small businesses. More than a dozen CLTs across the city are working to develop mutual and multifamily housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and foreclosure prevention strategies for owners of 1-4 family homes -- as well as retail, community, and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, and other infrastructure -- reflecting the flexibility of the CLT model.

CLTs are especially critical in times of crisis. When COVID-19 hit, CLTs and their CBO partners quickly mobilized to meet rapid-response needs. For example, the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association (MHA) and CLT have coordinated to ensure that residents struggling to pay maintenance fees or rent during the COVID-19 crisis can remain in their homes; this approach is embedded in their partnership model and shared mission. MHA staff and neighbors additionally are making on-going calls and wellness checks to ensure that vulnerable residents are safe, and to connect residents to essential resources. Other emerging CLTs are similarly engaged in mobilization efforts -- from calling for rent suspension and



connecting tenants to legal assistance to distributing food and supplies to elderly and homebound community residents.

CLTs have been critical in past recovery efforts -- for example, preventing foreclosures following the 2008 financial crash¹, and rebuilding after Hurricanes Maria and Irma in Puerto Rico² -- and will be crucial to recovery efforts in black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by COVID-19. By leveraging relationships and trust built through organizing activities that are essential in establishing CLTs, CLTs are able to connect with residents in crises in ways that transcend the typical landlord-tenant relationship. In this way, CLTs provide community networks and cohesion, which are critical lifelines for many residents during times of crisis.

We urge the City Council to sustain and expand its support for CLTs and other cooperative models, through discretionary funding and in policymaking that, for example, strengthens property pipelines to CLTs for critical preservation and development. A just recovery will require strong municipal support for neighborhood institutions that can stem evictions, foreclosures, and speculation and facilitate accountable rebuilding in the wake of COVID-19. CLTs, worker and financial co-ops, and other shared-ownership models must be part of NYC's recovery, to ensure racial and neighborhood equity and self-determination.

With Council support, CLTs have made major strides in NYC and have the potential to redefine communities' relationship to land and housing. **We urge the Committee and Council to continue building on this progress through renewed discretionary funding support, and we thank you again for the opportunity to testify.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me at julia@neweconomynyc.org or 212-680-5100 for further information.

¹ See Thaden, E. (2011). Stable Home Ownership in a Turbulent Economy: Delinquencies and Foreclosures Remain Low in Community Land Trusts. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper.

² See Algoed, L. & Hernández Torrales, M. (2019). The Land is Ours. Vulnerabilization and resistance in informal settlements in Puerto Rico: Lessons from the Caño Martín Peña Community Land Trust. Radical Housing Journal 1(1): 29-47



Community Land Trust Initiative

FY2021 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **\$1.5 million** in FY2021 City Council discretionary funding to support development of CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. The initiative combines comprehensive community outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support to incubate and equip CLTs to effectively steward land and housing, and combat displacement.

In FY2021, the citywide CLT Initiative will:

- Provide 100 CLT education and organizing sessions, in multiple languages
- Engage more than 5,000 tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders
- Produce a start-up guide and tailored educational material for CLTs
- Provide 30 technical assistance engagements related to CLT incorporation, bylaws, property acquisition, and development
- Develop and train 10 CLT steering committees and founding boards
- Complete feasibility studies and acquire first CLT properties

Long-term goals include creating and preserving thousands of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing units; providing affordable commercial space for hundreds of small and cooperatively-owned businesses; and ensuring accountable, community-led development.





In FY2020, the CLT Initiative received its first discretionary funding award of \$855,000, to seed CLT organizing in 11 NYC neighborhoods. (See attached Mid-Year Report.)

In FY2021, we seek an increase to build on and engage additional groups in this work, reaching more neighborhoods in need of CLTs and truly affordable housing. We will deepen community organizing and community-led planning, develop grassroots CLT leadership, formalize partnerships with nonprofit developers and stakeholders, and support CLTs to incorporate, develop board and membership structures, and acquire property.

What are CLTs?



CLTs are a proven model to combat speculation and displacement, protect public subsidy, and facilitate community-led development.

CLTs are flexible and can support rental, limited-equity, and mutual housing, as well as commercial and mixed-use development and other community needs. Cooper Square CLT on the Lower East Side, for example, stewards almost 400 permanently-affordable homes for families earning as low as 30% AMI, as well as storefronts for 20 local small businesses. CLTs ensure permanent affordability of housing through ground leases that establish income, resale, and other restrictions.

For more information, please contact New Economy Project at 212-680-5100 or by email: Deyanira Del Rio (dey@neweconomynyc.org) or Julia Duranti-Martinez (julia@neweconomynyc.org).



Community Land Trust Initiative FY2020 Mid-Year Progress Report

New York City is at the forefront of advancing Community Land Trusts (CLTs) to address our city's housing affordability crisis and ensure accountable, community-led development. The citywide Community Land Trust Initiative supports 15 organizations working to create and preserve permanently-affordable housing, as well as commercial space and other community needs, through incubation and expansion of CLTs. In FY2020, City Council discretionary funding provided crucial support for grassroots CLT education, organizing, leadership development, and technical assistance. Achievements to date include:

12+	CLTS IN FORMATION, IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHS
73	WORKSHOPS & INFORMATION SESSIONS PROVIDED
2,100	COMMUNITY MEMBERS & STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED
30	CLT LEADERS RECRUITED & TRAINED
40	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED
48	LEGAL & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ENGAGEMENTS PROVIDED

FY2020 highlights to date include:

CHHAYA CDC has conducted one-on-one outreach to immigrant small business owners in Jackson Heights, to educate them about CLTs as a tool to preserve affordable retail space. Chhaya staff participated in a Boston site visit to learn more about mixed-use CLTs, and in coming months will engage stakeholders in CLT planning and a Queens CLT Study Group.

CITY COLLEGE has developed community outreach and education material about CLTs and nonspeculative housing, and provided one-on-one support to emerging CLTs.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, INC.

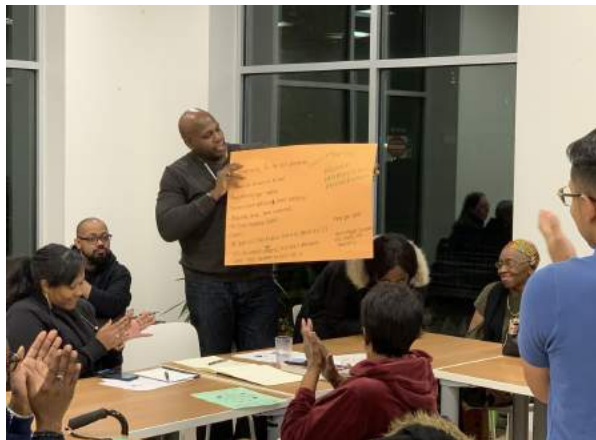
DBA TAKEROOT JUSTICE has provided 24 technical assistance engagements so far, on transactional legal matters related to CLT and HDLC incorporation and bylaws, and next steps for CLT formation and acquisitions. The Takeroot team also supported Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition in finalizing its incorporation of the Bronx CLT.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS is finalizing a governance structure for the **BROWNSVILLE CLT**. Eleven local residents have been recruited to serve on a Brownsville Neighborhood Empowerment



Network (BNEN), which has held 12 CLT planning meetings and two community workshops, so far, and helped enroll 70 Brownsville residents in Housing Connect.

COOPER SQUARE CLT, which stewards 21 buildings with 380 deeply-affordable housing units, has finalized its acquisition of two rent-stabilized buildings in the Lower East Side. The CLT has hired a new Project Director and is conducting one-on-one outreach and phone banking to tenants, planning community workshops, recruiting new board members, and drafting renovation plans in connection with its new acquisitions.



CYPRESS HILLS LDC has hired a full-time CLT coordinator and is recruiting leaders to serve on a CLT steering committee. Staff have presented to local community boards and led four community-wide information sessions about the CLT, which will focus on preventing displacement and home foreclosures in East New York. Staff traveled to Boston to learn from CLT governance models and community engagement at Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.

EAST HARLEM EL BARRIO CLT is finalizing its acquisition of four HPD-owned multifamily buildings, with closing projected for summer 2020. The CLT has partnered with **Banana Kelly CIA** to renovate the properties and form a resident-governed Mutual Housing Association, and is hiring a full-time organizer to support community engagement and leadership development. The CLT also led 11 community workshops and visioning sessions with current CLT residents, added three new members to its board, and traveled to Boston to learn from youth organizing and creative place making at Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.

MARY MITCHELL CENTER FOR FAMILY AND YOUTH completed an analysis of CLT property acquisition opportunities, and met with community partners and local officials to explore potential partnerships. In the coming months, Mary Mitchell plans to launch CLT education sessions with board members and youth leaders, as well as outreach to tenants, homeowners, and small business owners.

MOTT HAVEN PORT MORRIS COMMUNITY LAND STEWARDS has partnered with **Hester Street Collaborative** to develop a project





Community Land Trust Initiative

summary and financial feasibility study for the CLT's proposed Health, Education and Arts (H.E.ARTS) Center, at the vacant Lincoln Hospital Detox Building. The CLT hosted its third annual H.E.ARTS festival to celebrate and mobilize community members and unveil a community mural in September 2019, held a public launch for its H.E.ARTS project summary in January 2020, and has been meeting with city agencies and other stakeholders to work toward the release of an RFP for the site.

NEW ECONOMY PROJECT – which coordinates the CLT Initiative – has provided programmatic, legal and administrative support to emerging and expanding CLTs. Staff have conducted 15 CLT presentations and workshops for more than 500 CBO staff and community members, local tenants, homeowners, and public officials. Staff also organized a CLT site visits to Boston for 10 local groups; and co-organized the *Affordable for Whom* housing justice convening, focused on strategies to advance CLTs and deeply, permanently-affordable housing.



NORTHFIELD LDC is working to convene a CLT Steering Committee of key stakeholders in Port Richmond and Mariners Harbor. The Steering Committee will draw on an intensive community planning process that Northfield led as part of its Brownfield Opportunity Area Study. The study resulted in a formal revitalization plan, with affordable housing identified as a primary focus for revitalization efforts.



NORTHWEST BRONX COMMUNITY AND CLERGY COALITION hired a CLT organizer; recruited 12 neighborhood leaders to a CLT steering committee; and finalized incorporation of the Bronx CLT with support from TakeRoot Justice attorneys. The Bronx CLT's founding board is identifying potential developer partners and exploring acquisition opportunities. NWBCCC has also engaged nearly 300 community members in CLT workshops, visioning sessions, and youth-led participatory property research, and traveled to Boston for peer-learning and site visits.

WE STAY/NOS QUEDAMOS held a CLT training for its staff, traveled to Boston for CLT peer-learning and site visits, and is working with City College to develop a community survey to



Community Land Trust Initiative

identify CLT priorities and property acquisition and partnership opportunities. Nos Quedamos will focus on community and tenant outreach to develop CLT leaders in Melrose, and on facilitating collaboration and coordination between Bronx CLTs, in the coming months.



CLT Initiative groups join Dudley Neighbors Inc. and the Greater Boston CLT Network to learn from each others' efforts to expand permanently affordable housing and mixed-use CLTs in high-cost cities.



Center for Family Life in Sunset Park

SCO Family of Services

443 39th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232

T: 718.438.9500
F: 718.438.4354

www.cflsp.org

Testimony of SCO Family of Services - Center for Family Life To the New York City Council for the FY21 Executive Budget

May 22, 2020

On behalf of Center for Family Life, a multi-service family support organization in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, we are presenting this written testimony to the New York City Council for the FY21 Executive Budget. We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns and offer input to the New York City Council as the City faces the challenge of building a budget that fully supports ALL New Yorkers in the wake of the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Never has it been so important for NYC to invest in partnerships between community-based organizations and public schools. We urge you to recognize the crucial role of neighborhood-based organizations, like Center for Family Life, in the City's strategy to rebuild in the post-COVID world. Failure to do so would be overlooking our youngest, most vulnerable city residents -- our students -- particularly in communities that are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic and the shelter-in-place mandates.

We believe that CBOs with deep roots in the communities in which they partner are crucial in supporting schools and students as they regain their footing following such a disruptive, traumatic, and extended period of isolation. At Center for Family Life, we have over forty years of experience partnering with Sunset Park schools, both during the school day and in the out of school hours. Currently based in five elementary schools, two middle schools and the only high school in the neighborhood, we are ready to deepen our partnership with each of these schools in order to support our youth and their families as we work together to recover and rebuild from COVID-19. Our diverse staff of experienced social workers, teaching artists and youth workers, most of whom grew up in Sunset Park attending neighborhood schools and CFL programs, bring expertise in community building, social emotional learning, and family engagement. Our years of partnership with each school's administration, staff and teachers allow us to tailor our program designs to meet the unique, emerging needs at each school.

Now more than ever, social-emotional and trauma-informed approaches to schools and learning must be prioritized to support students, and this can be achieved through strengthening partnerships between community-based organizations and schools. We must ensure that school reopening and recovery strategies are comprehensive and support the overall wellbeing of students and their families.

We urge you to recognize the unique expertise of community-based organizations and to implement community-school partnerships as a citywide strategy for recovery. The infrastructure is already there, thanks to both City and State investments in Community Schools that have made New York City the largest community schools initiative in the country. As an intentional school transformation strategy that actively seeks and leverages participation from school and community leaders, Community Schools are an efficient way to leverage multiple funding streams to get services directly to the children and families that need them. We recommend that the City work with existing CBO-school partnerships and Community Schools to expand the strategy and help our schools reopen safely and in the most supportive way possible.

Center for Family Life's partnership with the Sunset Park community spans generations; our decades of work in our neighborhood schools allow us to authentically partner with the neighborhood, ensuring our young people are not left behind. The vibrant, diverse, immigrant neighborhood of Sunset Park, brimming with students, who are eager to learn, and their hard-working parents and family members, deserves an investment in a community-school partnership strategy so that our schools emerge as places where our children heal, reconnect, and continue to learn.

We thank you for your consideration of our concerns and recommendations. Center for Family Life is eager to be part of the City's ongoing efforts to recover from COVID-19 as we work to improve the quality of life for ALL youth and families of New York City.

Julie Stein Brockway, LCSW
Co-Director, Center for Family Life

Julia Jean-Francois, LCSW, PhD.
Co-Director, Center for Family Life



May 20, 2020

**Testimony to the City Council Executive Budget Hearing
Submitted by Sarita Daftary, Senior Community Organizer, JustLeadershipUSA**

Dear Chair Dromm and Council Members,

Thank you for your leadership in fighting for resources for our communities. Today I want to highlight the opportunities New York City has, but is not currently taking, to immediately invest in the types of community resources that can create safety by strengthening and stabilizing communities. We can do this, even in the face of the financial challenges that have followed the COVID19 outbreak, by beginning the long-overdue work of divesting from overfunded systems of law enforcement. In fact, the unequal impacts of coronavirus have shown us that we **MUST** make this shift. We can not afford another year of relying on law enforcement to respond to public health challenges and social challenges. That approach has not delivered health or safety.

New York City has prided itself on uplifting the values of equality, fairness and respect for its 8 million residents. The great reduction of the number of people in New York City jails has been a testament to these values, and to the power of grassroots advocacy. But the city's misalignment of its budget priorities still flies in the face of those values, and needs to change. Last month, the City Council held an important hearing on the disparate impacts of COVID19 in communities of color. The testimony offered by a range of experts, including community leaders, spoke to the cumulative effects of decades of short-sighted cuts to social services that have left Black and Brown New Yorkers more vulnerable during this crisis. What has created even more devastating effects is the historical pattern of allowing law enforcement to fill the gaps left by an insufficient social safety net. That is a pattern this administration has promised to continue in this budget. **This Council simply cannot allow that status quo to continue.**

When including expenses, fringes, pension contributions, and debt service, this year's budget proposal allocates \$14B to law enforcement agencies. The Police Department and Department of Corrections represent the majority of that - \$10B for the NYPD and \$2.5B for DOC.

Regarding the NYPD - communities, advocates, and an increasing number of Council members have pointed out the excesses and abuses of law enforcement, which have become even more apparent as they have been deployed to enforce social distancing and clear homeless

New Yorkers from trains. Some other examples include the NYPD's presence in schools, their harmful role in mental health crisis response, their harassment of homeless New Yorkers, their occupation of NYCHA developments, their targeting of sex workers through vice squads, their inappropriate role as Youth Coordination officers, and their coordinated entrapment of people who use drugs. We have much more effective ways of responding to all of those situations. Our [#buildCOMMUNITIES platform](#), developed in partnership with communities most impacted by mass criminalization, outlines in great detail what we can and should be doing instead. There has never been a stronger argument for reducing the NYPD headcount. By merely implementing an NYPD hiring freeze, we could save at least \$200M in the next year. That money is badly needed for the social services that actually foster safety.

Divesting from aggressive policing will also be necessary to reduce the harms of the State's failures in the areas of criminal justice reform. Last year, the state failed to pass Less is More NY legislation to overhaul parole supervision, and as a result, thousands of people continue to be sent to City jails. But this is not the fault of the state alone. When a person is on parole, they are automatically remanded to jail for any police contact. This applies to all charges, no matter how minor, even if those charges are later dropped, as well as to summonses. We need New York State to pass Less Is More, but the City can also make immediate gains in this area by shrinking the NYPD headcount and ending broken windows policing.

We were also deeply disappointed by the rollbacks to bail reform that were implemented by the State legislature as part of this year's budget negotiations - rollbacks that the Mayor and NYPD Commissioner shamefully supported. The Center for Court Innovation estimated these rollbacks could result in up to 430 more people in jail in an average day, or 3,000 more people over the course of a year. The rollbacks to bail reform added some new charges back into the category that are now eligible for detention pre-trial, and added some new considerations like if someone has been arrested multiple times. We must look at these rollbacks through the lens of addiction, for example, or mental health needs. The rollbacks made it possible to jail someone charged with drug possession, when it would be far cheaper to provide them with quality treatment. The rollbacks also made it easier to jail someone if they've "caused harm to property," which could include a person who has stolen to finance their addiction. As another example, if someone with a mental health need has been repeatedly arrested for a low-level offense, but never been offered quality treatment, why would yet another trip to jail make any difference? It costs more than \$700 per night to keep a person in City jail, in addition to the salaries of the officers arresting them. By further investing in supportive services instead - like housing, mental health treatment, and harm reduction - New York City can save money and can make us all much safer by making sure people's needs are met.

New York City has made plans for some cost savings through the hiring freeze implemented for the New York City Department of Correction, to address the excess of correction officers resulting from a declining number of people in city jails. This transition must be addressed more quickly. While the hiring freeze and attrition should result in about \$150 million in cost savings this year, the current budget still reflects an excess of more than 5,800 correction officers, at a

cost of \$1.4 billion.¹ Rather than maintaining employees in positions that are no longer needed, the city should develop a plan to proactively transition those employees out of law enforcement agencies and into meaningful work that advances the values of equality, fairness, and respect, and provide the training and counseling necessary to support that transition. The City should also offer early retirement to officers who are within 5 years of retirement.

We need you, the Council members who understand the importance of resourcing other priorities, to urge the Mayor to make the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fairer, and more progressive City.

Sincerely,

Sarita Daftary
JustLeadershipUSA
sarita@jlusa.org

¹ 8,949 uniformed officers are included in the FY 2021 budget, while a ratio of .73 officers per person in custody for the current jail population of approximately 4,200 would require only 3,066 officers. Annual costs of \$239,000 per officer (salary, fringe and pension contribution)

May 21, 2020

Testimony to the City Council Committee on the Budget Hearing

Submitted by Marco Barrios, Member/Leader, JLUSA

Dear Council members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this written testimony today. I'm a member/leader with JustLeadershipUSA, advocating on the #buildCOMMUNITIES campaign. Today I want to emphasize the importance of certain resources that should be addressed, especially during this unprecedented moment in our City (Covid-19 pandemic). Even as we face economic challenges, I truly believe we can immediately invest in the types of community resources that can create safety by strengthening and stabilizing communities.

As witnessed during this health crisis there are disparities in New York City. Our residents have faced challenges in public health, poverty, and inequality due to the city's misalignment of its budget priorities that still flies in the face of those values such as equality, fairness, and respect. New Yorkers during each budget cycle passionately make the case for desperately needed funding for housing, education, libraries, healthcare, youth programs and more. But, in each budget cycle, they walk away with only a fraction of what is needed. Those past choices led to the preventable deaths we are seeing now among people who are homeless, and the disproportionate impact of COVID19 on New Yorkers of color.

While we are aware that we unfortunately cannot necessarily rely on the Federal government ~~is more likely to not assist economically the City~~ during these times, the truth is that New York City has the resources to address many of the needs that currently go unmet. With vision and political courage, we can move those resources to where they are truly needed. We can do this, even in the face of cuts from the state, by beginning divest from the long-overfunded systems of law enforcement.

This year's budget allocates over \$14 billion dollar annually into the New York City Police Department, the Department of Corrections, the New York City Department of Probation, and District Attorneys. Most of the money is spent on the NYPD and the Department of Correction. The enormous size of the NYPD means that police officers are inserted in situations where they are at best not effective, and at worst cause serious harm. The city should implement an NYPD hiring freeze this year which could, at minimum, balance out this unnecessary addition of law enforcement officers, and allow New York City to save our resources for things like housing, education, and healthcare that the Governor routinely denies us. In terms of the Department of Corrections, New York City recently implemented a hiring freeze for DOC, to address the extreme excess of correction officers. The administration has planned to further reduce this workforce only by attrition. But this transition must be addressed more quickly, and more intentionally. The hiring freeze combined with attrition should result in about \$150 million in cost savings this year, but the budget still reflects an excess of 5,000 correction officers, at a cost of nearly \$1.2 billion this year alone.

For many decades mass criminalization has extracted vast resources from Black, Brown, and poor communities. We all certainly want to live in strong, safe, healthy neighborhoods, and our communities have long had the solutions, but not the support. The #buildCOMMUNITIES platform, launched in January 2019 and updated this March, draws on the collective wisdom of over 40 organizations and more than 200 residents of communities most impacted by mass incarceration. The platform highlights areas of need, as well as many programs that are already working, but in dire need of greater investment. I'm pleased to share a copy of that platform with you today.

Over 600 people currently held in City jails have a diagnosed serious mental illness, and over 50% of people in the jails have some diagnosed mental health need. I have been detained on Rikers Island, and I can tell you with certainty that is not an effective treatment environment. Investments in mental health resources are one of the most important parts of the #buildCOMMUNITIES platform. Specifically, our platform asks that the City:

- Expand site-based treatment, which includes creating more of the things that are working, like Crisis respite centers, and creating resources that do not yet exist, like public mental health urgent care centers
- Expand field-based treatment, including further investing in programs similar to ACT, FACT, and IMT that already exist and are working well, but where lack of funding has created long waiting lists. This also includes expanding investment in MOBILE CRISIS TEAMS (especially during this pandemic) to a level sufficient to enable them to replace police as first responders to a mental health crisis calls.
- Expand supportive housing by adjusting funding and eligibility requirements of the 15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative.

These needs are further detailed from page 8–10 of the platform.

We need you, the Council members who understand the importance of resourcing other priorities, to urge the Mayor to make the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fairer, and more progressive City.

Sincerely,

Marco Barrios

**New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance**

May 21, 2020

**Testimony of The Bronx Defenders
By Justine Olderman, Executive Director**

From the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a narrative that this virus is the great equalizer. But at The Bronx Defenders (BxD), where we represent more than 20,000 people a year in criminal, civil, child welfare, and immigration cases, and are constantly assessing the needs of the people and communities that we serve, we know better. Our clients, Bronx residents from predominantly low-income communities of color who are already subject to high levels of system involvement, have been disproportionately devastated by this pandemic.

Before COVID-19, the Bronx was already the most systematically under-resourced borough in New York City and home to the poorest urban congressional district in the United States. Poverty, lack of quality health care, substandard education, and minimal access to economic opportunities have plagued The Bronx for decades. While the city continues to encourage people to stay home and rally around “New York Tough” from their balconies and bedroom windows, Bronx residents, 1 in 5 of whom are part of NYC’s essential workforce,¹ are gearing up and braving the subways, buses, and streets to keep the city’s transit, sanitation, and health-care systems running.

They are also struggling to survive. The challenges our clients face under normal circumstances related to food and housing insecurity, access to quality health care, and economic mobility are only exacerbated by the pandemic and are putting individuals, families, and entire communities at risk. The city-wide shutdown has severely curtailed our clients’ ability to obtain critical access to food, mental and physical health services, medication, economic support, and educational resources that they and their families need.

It is no surprise then that Bronx residents have been significantly affected by the pandemic and its residents are now finding themselves at the epicenter of a global health crisis². Indeed, recent data shows that The Bronx not only has the highest virus infection rate per capita throughout New York City, but Black and Brown communities, which make up nearly 90% of the borough’s

¹ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates.

² Richard Morgan, “The Bronx, long a symbol of American poverty, is now New York City’s coronavirus capital”, *The Washington Post*, April 20 2020

population,³ face the highest rate of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.⁴ Recent data shows that Bronx residents account for 1 in 4 coronavirus hospitalizations citywide and die at twice the rate of other NYC residents.⁵

While the people we serve are being devastated by the pandemic, they continue to be driven into the criminal, family, immigration, and civil legal systems. In recent days, we have seen the disproportionate targeting of Black and Brown communities in the name of public safety, the number of family separations by ACS rise to pre-COVID days, the continued enforcement by ICE of the Trump administration's aggressive anti-immigrant policies, and the unraveling of the economic and social fabric that promotes health, stability, and economic mobility.

While the targeting and selective enforcement against low-income communities of color continues, our clients are being deprived of their due process rights as access to the courts has been significantly curtailed. New cases continue to be filed, while those with pending cases, including parents whose children are languishing in foster care and people who are caged in our jails and detention facilities, are denied the hearings and trials necessary to protect their rights and advance their interests. As the Governor keeps New York on "pause," our clients continue to be marginalized and their rights ignored in this crisis.

Given the impact on our clients, the continued targeting and enforcement against them, and the lack of access to the systems that are supposed to protect them, the representation, resources and support of BxD's holistic defense model is more important than ever. Our model is premised on the recognition that our clients legal and non-legal needs are inextricably intertwined. The primary goal of our holistic defense model is to address the underlying issues that drive people into the various legal systems and to mitigate the devastating impact of that involvement, such as deportation, eviction, job loss, and family separation. Our model works.

At The Bronx Defenders we have:

- Saved our clients 1.1 millions days behind bars⁶
- Reduced incarceration rates by 16%⁷
- Cut sentence length by 24%⁸

³ US Census Bureau, "Bronx County, New York: Population estimates, July 1 2019", www.census.gov/quickfacts/bronxcountybronxboroughnewyork

⁴ NYS Dept. of Health, "Covid-19 Data: Rates by Borough", April 30 2020, www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page

⁵ Ese Olumhense and Ann Choi, "Bronx Residents Twice as Likely to Die from COVID-19 in NYC", *The City*, April 3 2020

⁶ See study at <https://harvardlawreview.org/2019/01/the-effects-of-holistic-defense-on-criminal-justice-outcomes/>

⁷ See study at <https://harvardlawreview.org/2019/01/the-effects-of-holistic-defense-on-criminal-justice-outcomes/>

⁸ See study at <https://harvardlawreview.org/2019/01/the-effects-of-holistic-defense-on-criminal-justice-outcomes/>

- Increased the chances of detained immigrants winning their deportation case by 1,100%⁹
- Prevented eviction in 80% of housing cases
- Retrieved more than \$72,000 worth of property taken by the police
- Enrolled more than 1,000 families in public benefits
- Avoided court filings for 59% of clients facing ACS investigations
- Prevented family separation and foster care placement for 85% of early defense clients who had a case filed

Our model is perfectly designed to respond to the current crisis. It is built to be flexible and adapt to the evolving needs of our clients, their families, and their communities. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have shifted resources and services to focus on where the need is greatest - securing the release of incarcerated and detained clients who are medically vulnerable, fighting for greater access to the courts for those who need it, protecting the rights of the accused, immigrants, parents, tenants, and employees, and ensuring that our clients have access to life's necessities - food, shelter, health care, medication, and PPE. We are also committed to assessing the community impact of COVID-19, providing direct resources and legal services, and working to ensure long-lasting change for our clients through policy reform, organizing, and advocacy.

Reductions in our Funding Would be Catastrophic for Bronx Residents

Any cuts in funding would be catastrophic not just for our organization and the over 400 people we employ but for the people who are hurting the most as a result of this crisis - the people of the Bronx. Since the overwhelming majority of our funding pays the salaries of the people who serve our clients, cuts to our funding would mean fewer people to respond to the legal and social service needs of Bronx residents, fewer Bronxites getting critical representation and support, and fewer services to address the root causes and consequences of legal system entanglement.

While intake may be down, representing low-income Bronxites during COVID-19 is more resource-intensive than ever

Fewer people may be entering our legal system for the moment, but the reduction in new clients has not resulted in a correlative reduction in our workload and should not be used to justify cuts to funding. In all of our practice areas, we are spending significant time, energy, and resources filing emergency applications to get our clients out of jail and detention, to reunite families, and to preserve housing, employment, and benefits. In our Criminal Defense Practice, we have seen a slowdown in the number of new low-level, non-violent criminal cases filed, but we are seeing a steady stream of serious new cases, which require the most time and effort. In our Civil Action

⁹ See study at <https://www.vera.org/publications/new-york-immigrant-family-unity-project-evaluation>

Practice, we are seeing very few new housing court cases because of the eviction moratorium but our public benefits, employment, and requests for shelter assistance have increased. In our Immigration Practice, fewer cases are being filed but defending those cases has become much more time consuming and resource intensive as access to our clients as well as the information and documentation that is so critical to our cases is exceedingly difficult. And in our Family Defense Practice, after a period of low intake, we are witnessing family separation at pre-covid rates and have only limited virtual opportunities to challenge them.

Providing quality holistic defense is also more resource intensive right now because we have had to invest a significant amount of resources in order to transition to remote representation. We have had to purchase new laptops, printers, hotspots and software licenses; invest more in cleaning supplies and services; spend more in hazard pay and overtime; and purchase PPE for our staff. Based on current and projected spending, we anticipate \$1,302,959 in additional annual expenses as a result of COVID-19.

Our backlog of pending matters is growing

The continuation of enforcement efforts and the curtailment of access to the courts means that the number of unresolved cases gathering dust in the vacant courtrooms of this city is growing. Under normal circumstances, the rate of new clients mirrors the number of clients whose cases resolve and who no longer need our representation -- that is, the case “clearance rate” hits equilibrium. With no courts to preside over hearings, trials, pleas, and settlements, our clients cannot resolve their cases and so their cases stagnate while we continue to intake new ones. Because of the shutdown, by the time the courts reopen their doors, the backlog of pending matters will be so great that it threatens to delay justice for years to come, particularly if resources for public defenders are reduced. Since pending caseload is the only reliable indicator of workload, we anticipate that, rather than decreasing as a result of the pandemic, our workload will increase.

Intake is expected to increase with the easing of restrictions

Further exacerbating this looming crisis is the inevitable increase in new cases filed once restrictions are lifted. The decimation of economic and social support systems caused by the pandemic, the insufficient effort to restore and strengthen those systems, and the continued enforcement against low-income communities of color like the ones we serve, will lead to more people being driven in to our criminal, family, and immigration systems once the virus recedes. Moreover, without rent cancellation, we expect the number of new eviction filings to skyrocket as many people newly unemployed will be unable to make rental payments. To ensure that these needs continue to be served, the city must continue to fund high quality public defense.

Reductions in funding would exacerbate ongoing budget and finance issues

Any cuts in funding would have an outsized impact because of the budget and finance issues that we have struggled with for years, such as underfunded programs, delays in contracting, and cash flow problems. Today, we are still awaiting a FY19 amendment as well as a FY20 amendment to our criminal defense contract for additional resources provided by the Office of Indigent Legal Services and for discovery implementation respectively. These two contracts alone total approximately 1.5 million dollars. In addition, the City still has not provided the funding promised for Phase 1 of Pay Parity in the amount of \$1,248,864 even though we have committed to giving out those increases to staff by the end of the fiscal year.

Investing in our model saves money

Maintaining current funding levels for public defense is a smart investment. The Bronx Defenders' model of defense has saved the city and state millions of dollars. A study by the RAND Corporation and the University of Pennsylvania showed that our model reduced incarceration rates and lengths, saving the city and state \$165 million dollars over 10 years¹⁰ while an NYU and Casey Foundation study showed that our model resulted in children returning home four months faster from foster care than court appointed attorneys, with a savings of \$40 million dollars.¹¹ As partners in the groundbreaking universal access to housing program, we have also helped save the city millions of dollars associated with eviction and homelessness by ensuring that 84% of households represented in court were able to remain in their homes and preserve their tenancies.¹²

While The Bronx Defenders joins our colleagues across the City in calling for the City to preserve public defense funding, the below testimony lays out the unique ways that we, at The Bronx Defenders, are assessing evolving needs of our client community, adapting to meet those needs virtually, and looking ahead to ways that we, as a community, can take advantage of the new opportunities that this moment provides to build a more just legal system for our clients and our City.

Bronx Defenders' Ambitious Client Needs Assessment Shows COVID-19 Devastating Impact

BxD recognizes that in order to continue to provide high-quality holistic defense and advocacy for our clients in the time of coronavirus, we need to ensure we are adapting to their rapidly

¹⁰ See study at <https://harvardlawreview.org/2019/01/the-effects-of-holistic-defense-on-criminal-justice-outcomes/>

¹¹ See study at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X>; see also *Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children's Time in Foster Care*, by Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, June 4, 2019.

¹² See OCJ Report https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2019.pdf

changing needs. Over a five week period in April and May, we undertook an assessment of over 900 clients to determine their most pressing needs. We reached out to clients, asked about how Covid has affected their lives, provided direct relief, and connected them with further resources. The project consists of outreach to current clients by phone, outreach to current clients by text, providing in-house resources and referrals to external resources, and analyzing findings to determine pressing needs and inform our response and adaptation of our model.

We asked clients about the major ways in which the pandemic was affecting their lives in the following areas:

- Food security
- PPE
- Transportation for essential work and critical appointments
- Housing
- Income instability and access to public benefits
- Access to education
- Access to technology
- Mental health and wellness
- Other

The nine areas of need were drafted into survey questions and our outreach phase kicked off with over 100 staff members calling over 900 clients to conduct surveys. If clients indicated that their basic needs were being met the calls were quick, but for many clients who shared the devastating ways that COVID has impacted their lives and the lives of their loved ones, the conversations were involved. In phase two of the project, we sent text messages to several thousand current clients with links to [our COVID-19 resources webpage](#).

It was important for the project to not only assess needs but provide help. Conducting outreach to ask clients how they are coping, feeding their families, or meeting basic needs allowed us to connect them with help. We sent hundreds of clients protective masks, mailed MetroCards to meet emergency transportation needs, and our Civil Action Practice fielded hundreds of referrals for assistance with housing access or public benefits. For the other areas of need, we developed lists of external resources and provided support, whether it was directions to the nearest food pantry or help tracking down a tablet for a student's remote learning.

While the project is ongoing and continues to evolve, our anticipation that clients' struggles would be exacerbated was accurate - over 85% answered 'Yes' when asked if they wanted to discuss COVID-related resources and assistance. Clients most frequently identified having

immediate needs for PPE (48%) and assistance with accessing unemployment and pandemic benefits closely followed by needing help finding food at 29% and 27%, respectively. This is in line with the current state of life as a low-income New Yorker during coronavirus - masks are now required in public spaces which many of our clients require access to for essential work and basic needs, and there is mass unemployment and an interruption of city services, leading to further financial struggle and lack of food. The following areas of identified need fell in the order of access to transportation (16%), technology (14%), housing (14%), mental health resources (8%), and education resources (7%).

We are just beginning to understand all the ways that COVID-19 has impacted our clients. Our responsibility now is to take the information that we have gathered and identify the areas we need to develop expertise to serve our clients' legal needs in this time.

BxD's Adapts to Meet the Pre-Existing and Evolving Needs of Clients

Weeks before the Governor put New York on "pause", we at The Bronx Defenders had assembled an interdisciplinary team to develop a blueprint for a virtual public defender office. The team ordered laptops and printers, tested remote reception and community intake protocols and technology, and ensured the security of our remote server. The team members designed new systems to ensure the seamless transition to remote operation of our finance, human resources, and administrative teams and they oversaw a phased transition of staff to remote work. By the time the courts closed their doors, all of our staff was equipped with the necessary software, hardware, and training to meet the needs of our clients virtually.

Today, our reception, community intake, and benefits team is answering our phones remotely and connecting clients to their advocates, screening community members for legal and non-legal needs, making referrals for services, and helping clients access public benefits. Our social workers, parent advocates, and legal advocates are reaching out to clients to help connect them to online drug, mental health, and parenting programs and addressing their needs related to housing, PPE, food, health care, transportation, and other necessities. Attorneys are representing new clients using Skype and telephonic appearances in the criminal, family, immigration, and civil courts, fighting for the release of their incarcerated and detained clients through emergency motions, writs, and lawsuits, advocating for children languishing in foster care waiting to be reunited with their parents, and protecting employment licenses of workers in administrative hearings. Collectively, our staff is making sure that the most vulnerable among us are not forgotten. Below is a closer look at each of our core practice areas and how they have evolved to meet the current needs of our clients as well as the funding needed to serve system-involved Bronx residents.

Early Defense Team

While most public defenders are not assigned to work with a client until a case is filed in criminal, family, immigration, or housing court, BxD has pioneered an early defense team to identify and address legal issues before they become legal cases. We leverage the experience, expertise, and holistic defense model of BxD to build a proactive advocacy program that acts as an off-ramp for those at risk of system involvement. Over a 12 month period, our Early Defense Team helped 5,367 people connect to critical legal and social services.

Remote Intake: Since the onset of COVID-19, we have expanded our Early Defense Team to meet the growing need for pre-court advocacy. Our team of criminal, family, immigration, and civil advocates answer hotline calls on a 24/7 basis. Our criminal defense advocates arrange voluntary surrenders for people under NYPD investigation, conduct early investigation, and help families understand the new remote arraignment system. Our family defense advocates intervene when a parent is at risk of having their child taken by ACS, counseling the parent, connecting them to services and resources, and representing their interests at virtual child safety conferences. Our civil advocates are working to sign people up for life-sustaining benefits remotely and advocating for them with employers and landlords to avoid job loss and eviction. Our immigration advocates are helping immigrant Bronx residents understand their rights and file immigration applications online to secure their status in this country.

Our Early Defense Team receives critical funding from the City Council for early defense of parents facing child welfare investigations in the amount of \$325,000. We do not receive any other funding dedicated to the crucial work of our Early Defense Team.

We are asking that the City Council, at a minimum, provide funding for FY21 at the same level as FY20.

Criminal Defense Practice

Criminal defense attorneys at The Bronx Defenders work side-by-side with the other advocates on their holistic teams to identify the causes of our clients' criminal justice involvement and to protect them from the enmeshed penalties associated with their cases. We spend time getting to know our clients and gaining a deeper understanding of their lives and needs. Armed with this understanding, we pursue justice for our clients by thoroughly investigating their cases, raising novel legal arguments, and using creative tools of persuasion to succeed at trial.

Because each client is unique, we advocate for individualized and comprehensive alternatives to incarceration rather than relying on a "one size fits all" solution to complex problems. Moreover,

our support and advocacy are not confined to the courtroom and do not begin or end with the criminal case. Providing seamless services that address all of our clients' needs, not just their legal ones, is at the core of holistic defense and redefines what it means to be an effective public defender.

Remote Intake: We are representing new clients through our regularly scheduled arraignment shifts using Skype for Business. For every arraignment shift, we have a criminal defense social worker on call to provide remote support and advocacy for clients who need it. While the number of arrests in the Bronx dropped significantly in the last two weeks of March, the number of arrests -- and therefore our intake numbers -- have risen steadily since that time. On many days, the number of individuals awaiting arraignment is higher than in pre-COVID times.

Pending Cases: Attorneys and other advocates are connecting electronically -- through phone or video calls -- with clients, colleagues, program staff, and providers to discuss and conference pending cases. We continue to negotiate with prosecutors, who are also working remotely. Advocates across roles -- attorneys, investigators, social workers -- are working on longer-term projects, including drafting motions, preparing pre-pleading memoranda, and reviewing and digesting discovery. Investigators are conducting witness interviews over the phone and going out into the field when necessary to preserve critical evidence. Investigators also have been working on reviewing discovery for possible witness leads, watching video surveillance, converting video, and doing social media and background searches. We are holding video conferences with our clients in DOC custody using Skype for Business.

Emergency Litigation: Both Criminal Court and Supreme Court have virtual "special application" parts for essential matters. Our attorneys have been calendaring cases in these parts on a daily basis to ensure that clients' most urgent needs are addressed. These essential proceedings include new bail applications, pleas where resolution of an open case is critical, sentencings that result in an individual's release from custody, writs of habeas corpus, and modifications of orders of protection. We continue to push back on local court procedures that require the prosecution's consent before some of these matters, e.g., modifications of orders of protection, can be calendared and we are advocating that OCA continue to expand the scope of "essential matters" so that we can begin litigating, and resolving, more matters on behalf of our clients.

Our Legal Department, together with staff attorneys and other advocates, filed over 65 writs of habeas corpus as part of an ongoing effort to secure the release of as many people as possible during this health crisis. We placed particular emphasis on those individuals who are most medically vulnerable to COVID-19. In addition, we filed writs of habeas corpus for individuals

who were held in custody as a result of the Governor's earlier orders suspending C.P.L. §180.80 and other statutory time periods. We also joined with defenders from across New York State to submit a letter to Judge Marks on May 5, 2020, urging OCA to immediately rescind its policy of suspending required time limits for pre-trial detention mandated under C.P.L. §§ 180.80, 170.70, and 30.30(2).

Since the issuance of Executive Order 202.28 on May 7, 2020, which lifted the suspension of C.P.L. §180.80, we have filed nearly 20 more writs of habeas corpus on behalf of our clients who continue to be held in custody beyond C.P.L. §180.80 time periods. In addition, for those cases in which preliminary hearings are being held, we are advocating that the court system afford our clients meaningful due process in these hearings and challenging whether the prosecution can meet its burden of establishing reasonable cause.

Through our combined release efforts -- renewed bail applications, negotiations with the DA's office resulting in consent releases or pleas and sentencing resulting in release, and writs -- we have obtained the release of more than 60 individuals as of May 18, 2020. Our social workers have played an integral role in collaborating with their attorney colleagues to inform bail applications and connecting clients with community-based resources to support their successful return home.

Looking Ahead: While we continue to advocate for increased access to virtual courts for our clients and for an increased ability to resolve cases wherever possible, the current reality is that most of our clients' cases remain in legal limbo. Work is being done on cases in anticipation of courts reopening but there is much that cannot be resolved while timelines for discovery, motion practice, and speedy trial time remain suspended. Without a meaningful ability to resolve cases, our pending caseloads continue to rise. The numbers tell a dramatic story. While our intake numbers for April 2020 were just over half of what they had been in February 2020, our pending caseload went up by nearly 300 cases during that time. Of equal, if not greater concern, the number of misdemeanor cases pending for over a year is rising at significant rates, jeopardizing the tremendous success of our concerted efforts to curb court delay in the Bronx. There is every reason to believe that these trends will continue. Each case that lingers without resolution represents a client whose liberty interests remain in jeopardy, whose livelihood, housing, and family life may be upended. There are very real individual and societal costs to a system suspended. The Bronx Defenders has demonstrated its ability not only to pinpoint systemic issues ripe for reform but also to effect widespread change, such as the efforts to reduce court delay, through ongoing and collaborative work.

Funding: We are still awaiting registration of our FY20 amendment for \$919,234 to cover the cost of criminal justice reform implementation. We also have not received the allocated \$497,300 in Phase 1 Pay Parity funding. Our current revenue is \$17,919,151.

We are asking the City Council to ensure that we receive the promised funding for criminal justice reform implementation and the allocated funding for Phase 1 Pay Parity Funding in this fiscal year.

We are also asking the City Council to ensure, at a minimum, the same baseline funding, criminal justice reform implementation funding, and pay parity funding for FY21 as allocated in this fiscal year.

Family Defense Practice

The dedicated attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates in our office's Family Defense Practice zealously defend parents against the painful and unnecessary removal of their children and the potential dissolution of their families. Despite the myriad studies showing that children are better off with their own parents, parents are often targeted in child neglect and abuse investigations and lose custody of their children because they have marginal resources, are unemployed, have unstable housing, suffer from mental illness or addiction, or are victims of abuse themselves. Each year, these issues drive thousands of children into the child protection system. Once in the system, children often languish in foster homes as their parents and caretakers attempt to meet the court's often lengthy and onerous requirements to secure their return. Without a strong legal defense and the resources and support to address and resolve the problems that brought them there, many families will continue to cycle in and out of family court for years on end, sometimes generation after generation, destabilizing their lives, families, and communities in the process.

Remote Intake: The Family Defense Practice has continued to represent new clients charged with abuse or neglect under Article 10 of the New York Family Court Act. Unlike arraignments in criminal cases where the NYPD and DOC facilitate a client's appearance, we are responsible for facilitating the appearance of parents in the remote court. We designed a flier in 16 different languages for ACS to provide to parents so they can contact our office for representation. We have a social worker and parent advocate who work with our attorneys representing clients on intake. At intake, we litigate hearings so that children are not separated from their parents and placed needlessly in the foster system.

Pending Cases: Our lawyers and advocates continue to work on pending cases remotely. Attorneys have reached out to their current clients to provide support and identify how the case can move forward during reduced remote operations. The remote family court continues to receive orders to show cause on issues deemed “essential” by the court, as well as stipulations. Essential matters included new cases where children were removed and/or a parent was excluded from the family home, 1028 hearings, and orders to show cause for emergency relief. All other cases were administratively adjourned if they could not be resolved. Attorneys can request that those cases be heard to resolve fact findings through negotiation, motions for summary judgment or to dismiss, resolve dispositions, custody and termination cases, advocate for visitation, and reunite families.

Social workers and parent advocates continue to work with ACS and foster care agency caseworkers to arrange for visitation, access social services (many of which are offering on-line classes and supports), and find solutions to the challenges of family separation during this time. Social workers and parent advocates continue to participate in ACS and agency conferences remotely, via video or telephone, with clients.

Emergency Litigation: We have engaged in collective action with the advocates for parents and children in the child welfare system, with court leadership, and with ACS to ensure that the constitutional rights, health, and well-being of parents and children are protected. When the court reduced its operations, the court refused to include 1028 hearings as essential matters. We organized with the advocates for parents and children and wrote a joint letter to Judge Marks, prepared a model Order To Show Cause for a 1028 hearing, and prepared appellate papers and a complaint to file in NY State Supreme Court should a lawsuit become necessary. As a result of these efforts, we were assured by Judge Ruiz on March 30 that the court would accommodate 1028 emergency hearings.

Our efforts have also focused on addressing the challenges of family visitation, family-team conferencing, and caseworkers’ interaction with families during the COVID-19 emergency. We have communicated with ACS and the foster care agencies in a letter dated March 17, 2020, and in several follow up meetings, to ensure that court practice, visitation, investigation, services, and information sharing is conducted in a way that balances the need for consistency and contact for families and the health challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis.

We have also worked with the other advocates for parents and the advocates for children to develop a protocol by which the city reunites as many families as safely possible. A large number of families, many of whom are already having unsupervised weekend visitation and who

have addressed whatever risk might have existed at the time they were separated, can be safely reunited. Many of these families have had their time together curtailed due to the COVID-19 crisis and, with the courts closed to all matters except those deemed essential, it is critical that ACS identify and reunite these families as quickly as possible. On April 1, we sent a letter to the Commissioner of ACS and the head of Family Court Legal Services proposing criteria to determine which families could be reunited, as well as a proposal for how to operationalize this effort.

Looking Ahead: While initial filings in the early stages of COVID-19 were somewhat lower, as ACS and court actors adjusted to the physical shut down of the court and offices, intake in the Bronx is rising. In addition, hundreds of cases are being adjourned several months in the future. With hearings severely restricted, we have less ability to reunify families and keep cases moving. These limitations and delays make it more likely that supplemental proceedings to terminate parental rights will be filed, and that the Court will have significant backlogs when it reopens. As well, the overwhelming majority of our cases are directly related to poverty. Lost wages, the inability to access services, and food and housing insecurity that are hitting the Bronx community hard as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a corresponding increase in State Central Registry reports and ACS filings. When the courts reopen, the work required to reduce the backlog is likely to be confusing and complicated. It is essential that we are fully staffed and prepared for that eventuality.

Funding: Our current baseline revenue for FY20 is \$10,011,533 however, we still have not received the allocated funding for FY20 Article 10 Phase 1 Pay Parity. The current baseline allocation for FY21 is only \$7,372,657. Given the rate of new client intake, the growing backlog of cases, and the anticipated increase in new filings once restrictions are lifted, the current allocation is woefully insufficient to meet the needs of low-income parents in the Bronx.

We are asking the City Council to ensure that we receive the funding allocated for FY20 Phase 1 Pay Parity.

We are also asking the City Council to ensure, at a minimum, the same baseline funding and pay parity funding for FY21 as allocated in this fiscal year.

Immigration Practice

Our Immigration Practice has three critical areas of focus. The first is detained immigrants facing deportation. As one of three NYIFUP providers, our clients' chances of successfully fighting their case and staying in the United States are dramatically increased. A Vera Institute of Justice study showed that there is a 1,100% increase in successful outcomes when immigrants,

especially those with long-standing ties in this country, are represented by counsel in removal proceedings.

Our second area of focus is on immigrants facing criminal and family court charges. Our “*Padilla*” attorneys provide in-depth screening, advisals, and representation to all non-citizen clients facing criminal and family court charges. This work requires accurately advising clients on how to avoid adverse immigration consequences in criminal or family court cases that might render them removable or ineligible for defenses from removal or bond from immigration detention.

Our third area of focus is on immigrants who are seeking to adjust their status. For many New Yorkers, representation in affirmative applications to USCIS, the immigration agency that adjudicates affirmative applications for benefits like some visas, is the key preventative measure to avoid deportation. The ability to provide such assistance requires high-quality, deep screening of immigrant clients for different kinds of applications or pathways to lawful status as well as the needed representation that follows. Our clients who have had contact with the criminal legal system require some of the most complex and time intensive affirmative relief applications and are turned away from most other non-profits for these services. Moreover, under the current administration, USCIS has delayed processing times and is frequently denying applications in discretion that were previously approved. We are forced to appeal agency determinations or bring lawsuits in federal courts to compel agency action.

Remote Intake: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) continues to arrest people and the detained immigration court remains open, although by phone only, for all matters. Therefore, NYIFUP continues to operate and accept new clients. Due to the pandemic, our staff are not able to observe the initial hearings in-person to identify who is unrepresented and in need of NYIFUP counsel despite multiple efforts by the program directors to request that the Immigration Court (EOIR) or ICE Chief Counsel (OCC) advise us of who is unrepresented after the initial hearing. Both agencies refuse to cooperate by sharing that information. Instead, our program staff now must contact each person listed on the daily court calendar by VTC or pre-arranged phone call after the first court hearing to see if they need NYIFUP counsel. This additional step creates significant additional work for our staff.

Pending Cases: The non-detained immigration court, before which we represent hundreds of clients, has postponed hearings until June 12. However, all evidentiary filings and applications are still due on the pre-established deadlines. Therefore, work on non-detained removal cases has not paused.

The detained immigration court is open, although operating by video and phone, for all matters. Detained clients are supposed to be produced via video conferencing from jail in NJ; ICE and NYIFUP attorneys are supposed to appear from home, via telephone, and the judge appears via VTC from anywhere in the United States. Unsurprisingly, this new system has been largely unsuccessful. Our attorneys report multiple instances of the court never calling them. In cases where they are called, the judges report not having received the paper filings necessary to proceed with whatever hearing was scheduled before them. Some days, there are no ICE officers present in the jails to escort detained people into the room with the video conference equipment to call court.

Notwithstanding these logistical challenges, our attorneys are required to be prepared to proceed with many hearings that do not, in fact, go forward. With the detained court “open” for all matters, the work on those cases, including all trial preparation, has not ceased. In addition to the regular work that is always required on detained clients’ cases, there are the additional new challenges of making sure that motions and filings reach the correct judges and administrators filing emergency requests for release.

Our staff are working on their open cases in ways similar to pre-pandemic: client interviews (phone or VC, factoring in the challenges noted above for detained clients); drafting and reviewing of client and witness affidavits; witness preparation (phone); legal research and writing; country conditions research (handled by attorneys and paralegals); organization of evidence (handled by attorneys and administrators); filing of motions and evidence on the court (printing and mailing)/serving on DHS (electronic).

USCIS has not closed, although any public-facing functions such as appointments and interviews have been postponed. Thus, our staff continues to work on applications, and are collecting necessary information and supporting documentation from clients.

Staff is staying engaged with non-detained clients by phone calls and text messages. Staying in touch with clients who are in ICE custody is much more challenging. The video conference systems at Hudson and Orange County Jails only work intermittently. We have made significant efforts trying to arrange for systems whereby our clients at Bergen and Essex County Jails are granted access to free legal calls, but have had limited success.

Emergency Litigation and Advocacy: Given that the majority of our clients in immigration detention are at grave risk of contracting the virus due to the woefully inadequate care available to people in jail, our staff has engaged in a high volume of emergency litigation since the start of

the pandemic. There is no end in sight for this emergency litigation, and indeed, we may need more attorneys with federal experience to support our team.

Below are examples of our immigration practice's efforts since our office moved to remote operations :

- Secured release from ICE detention for over 45 clients;
- Filed approximately 50 requests for release on humanitarian parole (“HP”) to ICE/ERO. Each HP request contains hundreds of pages of supporting documentation, , necessary to set the stage for the federal litigation;
- Filed three group habeas actions, with Temporary Restraining Orders (TRO)s in each case; nearly a dozen oral arguments in federal court. Two TROs in group habeas cases have been granted and one is pending;
- Filed eight individual habeas petitions;
- Filed expedited motions in five existing habeas petitions;
- Four bail motions on pending Petitions for Review at the Second Circuit;
- Emergency motion and two rounds of oral arguments in *Velesaca v. Decker*, which resulted in securing a preliminary injunction.

Looking ahead: Because our immigration work has not paused, re-opening the immigration practice will likely look different than other court systems. However, we will be in a position to proceed with the backlog of trials that have been delayed, so there will be a surge in trials. There will also likely be a surge in ICE enforcement, which means many new deportation cases will be filed with the immigration court, and our new intake numbers will spike.

Funding: The City Council provided funding to The Bronx Defenders totalling \$5,530,000 in FY20.

We are seeking to maintain our FY20 funding for FY21 with a 10% increase to cover the cost of providing Phase 1 pay parity funding to those on the NYIFUP contract.

Civil Action Practice

A sweeping array of civil punishments are triggered the moment someone faces arrest, deportation, or the removal of their children. Our clients risk losing their jobs, homes, income, property, and basic civil rights — hardships that can be more devastating and long-lasting than the charges themselves. This civil fallout, sometimes referred to as “collateral consequences,”

effectively traps individuals in a cycle of poverty and system involvement. We know it does not have to be this way.

At The Bronx Defenders, we have the unique opportunity to intervene early and break this cycle by integrating transformative civil action within our criminal, family, and immigration defense work. Our experts work collaboratively on teams to represent our clients in civil courts and tribunals throughout the City and to help clients meet basic civil needs. In addition, we work to facilitate the reentry of our clients into the community and to restore their rights.

Remote Intake: Our Civil Action Practice continues to support clients through referrals received from our Criminal Defense, Family Defense, and Immigration Practices and continues to address the civil issues that arise as a result of court system involvement. Currently, we receive referrals and support clients related to housing problems, including emergency lockouts, emergency repairs as well as access to shelters for clients experiencing homelessness, property seizure including retrieving money, vehicles, and other vital property, job and employment license preservation, including aid to essential workers like taxi drivers and health care workers, and benefits applications, specifically for pandemic related relief for those who need food assistance and unemployment insurance.

In addition to referrals, we hold a weekly Housing Clinic via telephone for community members to call our with housing questions; a Benefits Hotline for community members to call with their benefits access questions and needs; and a monthly Housing Court intake at which we represent clients through the Right to Counsel/“Universal Access” intake process and through our anti-harassment tenant protection work. We are also as well as staffing a new city-wide housing hotline launched in April in the wake of COVID-19.

Pending Cases: Our staff continue their work on current cases remotely. Our civil staff are conducting check-ins with current clients to update them on their cases and assess what their ongoing and unmet needs are during this pandemic as well as checking in with their teammates in the criminal, family and immigration practices. For emergency matters in court and administrative proceedings, we represent our clients via remote means - by video appearances and by telephone. Additionally, staff are working on client matters that have ongoing deadlines, including motions and other litigation. We are also affirmatively assessing client needs and learning new civil areas where there are emerging client needs, including access to Unemployment Insurance and stimulus payments under the CARES Act.

Emergency Litigation: The Civil Courts and administrative proceedings have virtual “emergency” application parts or other processes for filing and appearing remotely. Our

attorneys and advocates have been appearing in cases to ensure that clients' most urgent needs are addressed. Examples of emergency applications include illegal lockout proceedings in Housing Court, administrative proceedings to advocate for the return of seized cars or to advocate for the reversal of job license suspension at the Office of Administrative Hearings and Trials (OATH), and telephonic hearings at the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

Looking Ahead: Our embedded civil legal services have never been more critical. What we know is that the community we serve, pre-COVID 19, had significant civil legal and social service needs; this current crisis has magnified these needs and created new ones, as we confirmed through our client needs assessment, with respect to access to jobs, benefits, and housing. As New York phases in its reopening and courts similarly begin to open up its functions, we will both be defending clients against the civil cases that have been on pause and also aid new clients and the community with pandemic related needs. These funding streams are crucial for our work to continue and grow, especially as we face the needs of our communities impacted by COVID-19.

Funding: We currently receive \$961,921.63 for Homeless Prevention Law Project/Universal Access to Representation funding and \$100,523.00 as part of the Leap¹³ coalition for anti-harassment tenant protection (AHTP) funding from OCJ for our Civil Action Practice. We are still awaiting Phase 1 Pay Parity funding from OCJ.

We are asking the City Council to ensure that we receive our allocated Phase 1 Pay Parity funding for FY 20.

We are also asking the City Council to ensure that, at a minimum, we receive funding in FY21 from OCJ for our Civil Action Practice commensurate with FY20 levels and that we also receive Phase 1 Pay Parity funding in FY21.

¹³ The Bronx Defenders is a proud member of the Leap, a coalition of 17 direct civil legal services providers. We work collaboratively to increase the availability, breadth and depth of legal services for low-income persons in New York City. Leap's membership includes established community-based legal services providers and city-wide public interest advocacy groups that provide assistance in the areas including but not limited to Consumer Rights, Housing Services, Workers Rights Immigration, Health Care, Environment Justice, Social Services & Benefits Advocacy.

Leap members are able to provide high-quality client representation with the support of New York City Council through discretionary funds & initiatives as well as through City Administrative programs such as the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program, the Universal Access to Counsel program and the Assigned Counsel Project.

My name is Stephanie Kadison, and I am an educator at Bard High School Early College Queens. I have been a teacher for 10 years. I wanted to submit a testimony at this time for many reasons. The system is broken. The fact that our system is set up to fund metal detectors versus books and teachers; and the fact that police are nearly fully funded while the DOE is in a hiring freeze and cutting the budget by \$827 million reflects a capitalist, police state mentality, which promotes the school-to-prison pipeline and disproportionately hurts our black, brown, undocumented, and low-income students. Our education system is failing our students, and by cutting the budget, the message that is heard loud and clear is the following: you do not care about the future of our children. We are very far behind in nearly every other country, in terms of our reading and math literacy, and this is why. We prioritize the military and police and cut funding from health care, education, and government programs meant to lift up poor and marginalized populations. This needs to stop. We need to support and protect our students' education, which does not mean more metal detectors or security guards. This means giving our students the tools they need to survive and improve the system that is already broken.



**New York City Council
Committee on Finance
FY 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
Thursday, May 21st, 2020**

My name is Jeehae Fischer and I am the Executive Director at the Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC). Thank you, Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance for giving us the opportunity to submit testimony.

The mission of KAFSC is to support and empower adults, youth, and children to lead safe and healthy lives based on dignity, compassion, and mutual respect. We are committed to preventing and ending domestic violence, sexual assault, and relationship abuse, and creating a violence-free society. KAFSC is the only organization serving Korean immigrant families who are affected by domestic violence (DV), sexual assault (SA), trafficking, and child abuse in the Tri-State area with an emphasis on the highest Korean populated areas in the borough of Queens and Manhattan, New York City. 90% of our DV/SA clients are Asian immigrants, 95% are women, and 98% have limited English proficiency. 98% of our clients live under the poverty line. Our population is disproportionately at-risk and left without a safety net in the wake of this global pandemic. Our Mayor and City Council must proactively address the challenges facing the Korean community as well as the diverse Asian Pacific American community. KAFSC presents the following recommendations as a platform for the next administration to address our community's concerns.

KAFSC is also a part of the 15% and Growing Campaign, **a group of almost 50 Asian led and serving organizations that work together to ensure that New York City's budget protects the most vulnerable Asian Pacific American New Yorkers.** Campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Currently, the Asian Pacific American community is by percentage the fastest growing group in New York City, nearly doubling every decade since 1970 and making up 15% of the population.¹ Unfortunately, current levels of public funding for the Asian Pacific American community remain disproportionate to our community's needs.

- Nearly a quarter of APAs live in poverty, the highest of all racial groups in NYC.²
- Asian Americans have the highest rate of linguistic isolation of any group in the City at 42%, meaning that no one over the age of 14 in the household speaks English well.³
- 40% of NYC APA youth are not college-ready upon graduation from high school.⁴

¹ Ibid.

² 2019 NYC Poverty Measure Annual Report, Office of the Mayor.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey.

⁴ Data Retrieved from 2010-2014 New York State Regents Scores on InfoHub. As of April 2020, only current data (2015-2019) can be retrieved from <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/test-results>. Older test results data can be found on New York City Open Data.



Consider that Asian led and serving organizations receive only 1.5% of the City's social service contract dollars. Yet, while many 15% and Growing Campaign members have long relied on City Council discretionary dollars to provide vital services in Asian Pacific American ethnic enclaves in Council districts throughout the City, our analysis of publicly available budget documents from the CFY2020 Adopted Budget revealed that Asian led and serving organizations received only 4.37% of City Council discretionary dollars.⁵ The City needs to invest more in key initiatives and programs that could potentially provide services and resources that our community would otherwise be unable to access.

Impact of COVID-19

As a direct service organization serving the vulnerable immigrant community, **we are an essential human service provider that can not cease operating**. KAFSC continues to still be fully open to the Korean community, and we have stepped into the role of providing a myriad of services that have not normally been our target area. KAFSC continues to provide crisis intervention and COVID-19 related services to our community for small business loans, emergency fund applications, public benefits, health insurance enrollment, and more through both in-person and virtual appointments.

Our survivors are faced with inconceivable challenges during this unprecedented time — many are undocumented and work hourly at local restaurants, nail salons, and supermarkets, living paycheck to paycheck. Enforcement of social distancing and other safety measures such as shutting down schools and businesses mean that our survivors and their children are trapped at home and face additional violence and challenges. Financial difficulties compounded with social isolation exacerbates existing abusive relationships. **In fact, we are experiencing a 300% increase in calls at our bilingual 24-hr hotline in the last five weeks with 80% related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.**

Furthermore, we received the recent guidance of FY 2020 Discretionary contracts. As you are aware, the City will be reimbursing discretionary contract expenses from on or before March 22nd (the date the Governor put a pause on "New York"). Expenses after the 22nd will only be reimbursed if they are "essential work". KAFSC needs immediate support to ensure our work will be fully and accurately reimbursed as an essential services provider during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the resulting New York State on PAUSE.

The essential direct services we provide to an already marginalized and vulnerable community are critical for the survival of Korean American New Yorkers and will be even more so in the aftermath.

⁵ Data Retrieved from CACF FY 2020 Analysis of City Council Expense Discretionary Funding (Schedule C).



Budget Recommendations

Now more than ever, it is critical that the City Council invests in supporting community-based organizations in New York City doing the work to support New Yorkers in immigrant communities and communities of color. Not only should our government be responsive to the immediate impacts of COVID-19, but it should also be proactive in providing safety nets for our communities who are especially vulnerable to long term repercussions of this public health crisis. **Yet we are facing the threats of cuts in New York State funding to Medicaid, New York City public health programs, and to our public schools. We hope New York City can step up, once again, to support our communities where the State may fail us. Please consider the following:**

- ❖ **Key Recommendation:** Due to the current political environment, APA immigrant communities need access to language accessible legal services, mental health services, and job training. To especially serve the more vulnerable groups within the APA community such as seniors, women, and youth, **NYC Council must expand funding for the following Citywide Initiatives to ensure that more APA-led and serving groups are adequately funded to support those with the highest need:**

- o Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative
- o College and Career Readiness
- o Legal Services for Low-income New Yorkers
- o Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations
- o Support Our Seniors
- o Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative

- ❖ **Citywide Investment in the Economic Security and Legal Protection of Immigrant Communities**

- o **Continue to call on the Administration to fully invest \$70 Million in annual Bridge Program Funding.** In order to be inclusive and increasingly impactful, the City MUST not ignore the barriers to immigrant participation in the workforce. We advocate that a significant portion of any Bridge Program expansion should be used to fund an innovative pilot Immigrant Workforce Development Initiative with a focus on integrating pre-literacy and basic ESOL classes (Levels 0-3) with vocational ESOL, digital literacy, skills training, and student support services (counseling and case management). Coordination of ESOL and skills-building training is critical in providing LEP immigrant job seekers a foundational knowledge of English that will qualify them for the prerequisites of vocational and skills-building training, and expand their access to living-wage jobs.
- o **Enhance the \$6 Million to Adult Literacy Initiative that creates basic literacy and English** for Speakers of Other Languages and Graduate Equivalency Degree classes for adults who cannot read, write or speak English.
- o **Restore \$2.6 million to the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI):** Asian Americans are heavily immigrant with 78% foreign-born. The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative funds programs that help New York immigrant families



obtain citizenship and language skills necessary for decent jobs, and to protect their legal rights. Considering the anti-immigrant climate, initiatives like IOI are crucial for immigrant communities.

- ❖ **Restore \$2 Million to Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations** that provides operational support to culturally competent and linguistically accessible non-DFTA senior centers and programmatic support for DFTA senior centers that predominantly serve immigrant seniors.
- ❖ **Restore \$6.375 Million to Cultural Immigrant Initiative:** This funding supports APA-led organizations or APA-serving organizations to provide programming focused on the cultural history of the diverse APA organizations within the many immigrant communities in NYC.
- ❖ **Citywide Investment in the Health and Wellbeing of Communities of Color and Immigrant Communities**
 - **Enhance Medicaid Redesign Transition to \$1 Million** to assist community-based organizations as they move from a fee-for-service system to a managed-care model under New York State's Medicaid Redesign.
 - **Enhance Maternal and Child Health Services to \$2.7 Million** for maternal and child health services.
 - **Enhance Developmental, Psychological & Behavioral Health Services to \$2.5 Million** for developmental, psychological and behavioral health initiatives.
 - **Restore Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations to \$3.2 Million** for mental health services for vulnerable populations.
- ❖ **Citywide Investment in Social and Emotional Learning in our Schools:** Many of our youth face challenges in their lives and need critical social and emotional support as well as academic support in order to thrive. Growing research has shown social and emotional learning not only improves academic achievement but it also decreases depression and stress among students.⁶ More specifically, we need more investment in more guidance counselors and social workers who have the cultural competence to meet the needs of our students.
 - **Baseline \$15 Million to launch and sustain a Mental Health Continuum pilot**
 - **\$1.87 Million for Citywide Investment in Social and Emotional Learning In Our Schools.**
 - **Enhance Children Under 5 Mental Health Initiative (CU5) to \$2 million to support services to children who have experienced trauma at a young age.**
 - **\$1.78 Million for College and Career Readiness**
- ❖ **Citywide Investment in Culturally Competent and Language Accessible Children and Youth Services:** Without youth services, many immigrant youths can find themselves

⁶ JA Durlak, Child Dev. 2011 Jan-Feb;82(1):405-32.



isolated and marginalized, and without the support to navigate systems and access critical services that would put them on the path to become competent and responsible adults.

- **Invest \$1.6 Million in FY 2021 and \$2.2 Million in FY 2022 and 2023 in pilot programs for recently arrived multi-language learners, ages 16-21, at existing transfer schools**
- **Enhance the Discretionary Child Care to \$9.8 Million which supports child care programs that do not have an EarlyLearn contract, and add additional child care slots to certain programs.**
- **Baseline \$20.35 million in funding for SONYC to add seats for 34,000 middle school students.**
- **Baseline \$20 million in the Summer Youth Employment Program to support the minimum wage increase.**
- **Restore and baseline \$19.7 million in funding for Work, Learn & Grow to make it a truly year-round work experience for youth in high school.**
- **Restore \$1.7 million in funding for the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Efforts (ICARE).**
- **\$1.0 million for a Halal and Kosher School Lunch Pilot (DCAS)**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and we look forward to working with the City Council to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the services and support they need to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives.

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/21/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Katherine Colon, and I work at LEAP / servicing underserved schools in all five New York City boroughs (roughly 200 schools).

LEAP's mission is to provide educational arts programs that promote access and equity for New York City students underserved in the arts. We inspire diverse school communities to love learning and build their creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills.. Over 70% of business leaders say that creative thinking is the top skill they look for when hiring. But the arts—one of the best ways to teach creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills—aren't always prioritized in schools. Even more so, traditional teaching methods can't access all types of learners, often resulting in low student engagement. As we face the COVID-19 crisis, LEAP's mission is more important than ever. When NYC's schools closed in March 2020, LEAP acted immediately by developing virtual art room that bring joy, creativity, and mindfulness to the homes of NYC children. LEAP's programs support social and emotional development and guide students through song, dance, visual arts, and movement activities.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences.

Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Katherine Colon

My name is Katherine McMillan. I am proud to have grown up and been educated in New York City public schools and, now, to have been teaching in them for 13 years. This pandemic has shown not only New York City, but the nation, how valuable teachers and education are. In fact, Mayor DeBlasio himself acknowledged this at the very beginning of the Coronavirus outbreak in New York City, wanting to keep public schools open as long as possible because he recognized the integral role they play in keeping communities strong and healthy and in families' lives. Let us not backtrack and now ignore that fact. We need to keep our young people healthy--both mentally and physically--and engaged academically as we move forward in unprecedented times. We cannot do that with significant cuts to education which will result in the loss of the people who are the life force of the educational system of this city and who we desperately need to help navigate the coming critical months.

This pandemic has also shown us how vital social services are in New York City. In addition to EMTs, nurses and doctors and police protection, it has become clear that care for the homeless, comprehensive healthcare for all residents, and community outreach have been key to keeping this city alive during this time. Investing in these social services is the only way we can ensure that we will be able to rebuild a stronger New York City and one which can not only survive a situation like this in the future, but be ready for and overcome it.

We cannot afford budget cuts to education and social services. And when I say "we" I don't just mean the majority of New York City residents, I mean everyone.



**NORTH
BROOKLYN
PARKS
ALLIANCE**

**TESTIMONY OF KATIE DENNY HOROWITZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH BROOKLYN PARKS ALLIANCE
FY21 BUDGET HEARING - THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020**

I'm Katie Denny Horowitz, Executive Director of North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, a non-profit that is dedicated to creating an equitable, accessible, and vibrant parks system in the Greenpoint / Williamsburg neighborhoods. Founded more than 15 years ago, we are the only district-wide parks conservancy in New York City, serving all of Brooklyn's Community Board 1.

We at North Brooklyn Parks Alliance echo the strong sentiment of our parks partners to reinstate the essential NYC Parks funding that will keep our parks and open spaces up to a standard that New Yorkers deserve. The current pandemic has brought to the forefront the essential role of our parks, which offer critical and unparalleled opportunities for physical and mental health.

We stand with New Yorkers for Parks to request the inclusion of an additional \$47 million dollars for NYC Parks in the upcoming City FY21 expense budget, as detailed in the Play Fair campaign.

Here in North Brooklyn, our community is historically underserved in the amount of parkland available to our residents, and we are grateful to the efforts of this Administration - and of our Council Member Stephen Levin - to acquire additional land for the purpose of open space, including the 27-acre Bushwick Inlet Park.

Despite acquiring the final park parcel in 2016, however, there is currently no funding to develop that parcel, or to remove the 258,400-square-foot storage facility, formerly known as CitiStorage, that sits on top of the future park and acts as a massive barrier between our community and the East River.

At a time when demand for open space is at an all-time high, we request that funding for the future phases of Bushwick Inlet Park, including the removal of the CitiStorage building, be allocated in the FY21 Budget. In addition to providing the rapidly growing North Brooklyn community a waterfront park that was promised as part of the 2005 Greenpoint/Williamsburg rezoning, the removal of the abandoned building will be a symbol of New York City's resilience, evolution, and commitment to environmental justice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Katie Palmer and I work with five arts education companies. I travel each week to Inwood in Manhattan, Park Slope in Brooklyn, Pomonak in Queens and Bay Terrace in Staten Island to teach Music, Dance and Musical Theater in public elementary schools.

I have been a Teaching Artist working in countless NYC neighborhoods for six years. I love my job and the opportunities it provides the students with whom I work. When I start my residency at PS 200Q, some Pre-K students are hesitant while others jump fully into the dance class. But each week they all are growing - some will present their first solo and some will learn to take turns and follow others. Each child is becoming uniquely and creatively themselves through the performing arts and it is deep joy and responsibly to create the space for them to shine.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Katie Palmer



Renewal Funding for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative *Support low-wage & undocumented workers during COVID-19*

Catholic Migration Services (CMS), Make the Road New York (MRNY), and TakeRoot Justice (TakeRoot) jointly request that the City Council fully **renew funding for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative in FY21**. These funds will enable us to maintain critical legal services to protect low-wage and undocumented workers from wage theft, employment discrimination, and other workplace violations, especially during COVID-19. As members of the **Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC)**, a consortium of 6 legal services providers (LSPs) and 7 community-based organizations (CBOs), we advance the rights of New York City's low-income and immigrant communities by combining community organizing with community lawyering. CILEC's work is funded by The Office of Civil Justice's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI), and by dedicated funding under the IOI Low-Wage Worker Initiative. CILEC member organizations also receive Low Wage Worker Support funding to support outreach efforts to connect low-wage workers in need of employment related civil legal services.

BACKGROUND:

The Council's FY19 budget allocated **two million dollars** to civil legal services for low-wage and undocumented workers. It also provided an additional **\$500,000** for comprehensive outreach and education for low-wage workers and referrals to LSPs. Renewed in FY20, the **two million dollars** was distributed by the Office of Civil Justice (OCJ), which allocated **\$671,486 to CILEC**. OCJ also distributed Low-Wage Worker Initiative funding to the Legal Aid Society, New York Legal Assistance Group, and Legal Services NYC. Without future funding, many low-wage and undocumented New Yorkers will no longer have the resources needed to advocate for their legal and human rights under the law.

THE NEED:

Workers' rights violations in New York City's low-wage industries remain rampant, yet many workers struggle to assert their rights and afford legal assistance. Roughly 70% of the City's low-wage workers are foreign-born and more than 300,000 workers experience one or more wage-based violations every week¹. Low-Wage Worker Initiative is the only dedicated city funding available to provide legal services to protect low-wage and undocumented workers against workplace violations.

Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, especially those who are low income or who are undocumented immigrants. Many of them work in jobs deemed essential, yet they lack protections and resources available to other groups. The pandemic has amplified financial insecurity among vulnerable populations and increased the likelihood for worker exploitation, as well as the need for assistance accessing unemployment insurance benefits. During this global health crisis, it is critical that we empower low-wage and immigrant communities and ensure they are financially stable and safe.

Renewal funding for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative will ensure these services continue uninterrupted. It is the City's responsibility to low-wage and undocumented workers, whose services are essential to the City's functioning, to authorize renewal of Low-Wage Worker Initiative in FY21.

¹ See Annette Bernhardt, Diana Polson, and James DeFilippis. Working without Laws: A Survey of Employment and Labor Law Violations in New York City. (2009). National Employment Law Project.

CILEC'S PERFORMANCE in FY20 (July 1, 2019 - March 30, 2020):

So far in FY20, CILEC organizations have provided holistic, culturally sensitive, and client-centric legal assistance to approximately 280 low-wage and undocumented NYC workers in over 300 cases. We also won settlements and judgments totaling over **\$963,700** in unpaid wages and to remedy discrimination for workers, both in and out of court. Examples of our work include:

1. 19 Workers Sue Restaurant for Unpaid Wages and Minimum Wage Violations. In September 2019, CMS obtained a final judgment in the amount of \$950,000 from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York for 19 former employees of Joy Luck Palace, a large Chinatown restaurant. These workers were referred to CMS by CILEC CBO, Chinese Staff and Workers Association. The restaurant failed to pay minimum wage and the correct overtime rate, and most of their workers were not paid any wages for the final eight weeks of their employment.
2. Protecting Vulnerable Workers from Discrimination. MRNY represented a client who worked in food production and in addition to a work environment rife with nasty and discriminatory comments by her coworkers about her gender identity, her manager prohibited her from using the women's room, the restroom that matched her gender identity. She filed a complaint pro se with the NYC Commission on Human Rights and then sought assistance at MRNY for help. MRNY quickly amended the complaint to strengthen the claims, and then persistently pushed the agency to move the case forward. The case was selected for mediation and MRNY worked tirelessly to negotiate a favorable settlement agreement for the client, which included terms such as updated signage in the bathrooms in NY locations; training regarding gender identity for the employer's HR staff; and \$13K for the client in emotional stress damages.
3. Representing Day Laborers in their Claims for Unpaid Wages & Liquidated Damages. TakeRoot represented seven day laborers who performed construction work for about a year (and in some occasions sleeping onsite to carry out the day's long work hours) but the employer—a major real estate developer in Manhattan, which is also one of the largest development projects in the United States—failed to pay them any overtime wages. These workers were referred to TakeRoot by CILEC CBO, New Immigrant Community Empowerment. Each worker had worked for approximately one year for 70 to 80 hours per week. TakeRoot Workers' Rights attorneys met with the workers from October 2019 through December 2019, analyzed their work histories to calculate the unpaid overtime and other damages owed, and presented the facts and damages calculations through a demand letter sent to the employer at the end of February 2020. The employer responded and after negotiating throughout March and April 2020, TakeRoot successfully obtained approximately over \$20,000 for each worker, which covered their full unpaid wages plus an additional amount for liquidated damages.

About the CILEC organizations receiving Low-Wage Worker Initiative funding:

- **Catholic Migration Services.** CMS is an affiliated agency of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens with offices in Sunnyside and downtown Brooklyn. CMS provides employment, immigration, and housing legal services to all income-eligible residents of Brooklyn and Queens.
- **Make the Road New York.** MRNY builds the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice. This model integrates community organizing, legal and survival services, policy innovation and transformative education to achieve concrete change for the NY communities it serves.
- **TakeRoot Justice (formerly known as the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center).** TakeRoot provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic, and social oppression. This capacity-building and collaborative focus upends the traditional power dynamics between communities and service providers, resulting in a more meaningful impact in its organizing, power-building and leadership development programs.

For more information, please contact Katisha Andrew, CILEC Coordinator, at 646.459.3014 or kandrew@TakeRootJustice.org

Thank you for your time. My name is Kelsey Kramer and I am a constituent of Council District 38, represented by Carlos Menchaca. I'm writing because I'm concerned about the proposed NYC Budget cuts to DYCD.

These cuts will be devastating to our young people that benefit greatly from their programs. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the city's most socio-economically challenged and vulnerable youth. And more than ever, we need these programs to keep them safe, and provide positive avenues that allow them to reach their potential.

As a previous employee of Cora Dance, a non-profit dance school and company in Red Hook, Brooklyn. I've seen the benefits and positive effect of programs supported by the DYCD. These cuts to the DYCD budget will be devastating to programs like Cora Dance, and I urge you to please reconsider the cuts to these essential programs.

I would like to suggest supporting the proposed 1% cut to the NYPD's superfluous budget to help provide the necessary funds to avoid such cuts to crucial support programs without affecting public safety.

Please consider preserving the DYCD programs with a 1% cut to the NYPD budget.

With gratitude,
Kelsey Kramer



May 21, 2020

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE/SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

Good afternoon Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and members of the City Council. My name is Kenrick Ross and I am the Program Manager of the Commercial Lease Assistance Program. The CLA Program provides free legal representation to lower-income small business owners across New York City. It is funded by the Department of Small Business Services and is led by Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A in partnership with Volunteers of Legal Service and TakeRoot Justice.

Since our launch in February 2018, the CLA Program has been a life-saver for hundreds of lower-income small businesses and has quickly become a front-line COVID-response program. 90% of our work since March is COVID-related. However, per the City's preliminary budget, the CLA program is being eliminated. Many Councilmembers already know our work. Chair Dromm we had a webinar in your district this week; Chair Gibson, you shouted out our work yesterday. SBS Commissioner Doris pointed to us as a vital resource for small businesses.

Our program is unique. We do actual negotiation and representation, working with clients for weeks, months, even years. We negotiate fairer leases, secure renewals, fight and end landlord harassment, and building long-term relationships. Since mid-March, we have seen a 10-fold demand for services. It is inconceivable that as under-served small businesses face utter devastation, that this program would not be renewed.

Our clients are 99% lower-income, 75% minority, 2/3 immigrant, and nearly 60% women. A third do not speak English, and most employ fewer than 5 people. They have received little if any support, from anywhere, during this pandemic. They also serve the communities hardest hit, where they are an essential source of commercial activity, employment, cultural life, goods, and sources. If the CLA program is not renewed, they will have no access to legal help when they need it most. This is unconscionable. And an outrage.

Yet, this is exactly what is happening. On behalf of the Commercial Lease Assistance Program's three legal service providers- Brooklyn Legal Services Corp A, Volunteers for Legal Service, and TakeRoot Justice- and our clients, we implore you to ensure that the CLA Program is fully funded next year.

building communities, ensuring opportunity, achieving justice



The Next Generation Center

May 20, 2020

Dear City Council

I have a mother and a father but I don't know them, I've been in the hospital a lot I even went to a mental place for kids upstate. I had a foster care mom who is now my adoptive mother. I go to the Next Generation Center and they love me there. I have a pass with a lot of stuff but I have people who care for me. During this pandemic, I was bored in the house but my coach told me about the lunch program at my center, the Next Generation Center. I go there every day, they give me a mask, lunch and snacks for me, my brother and my Mom, she adopted me. I love my coach and the Next Generation Center. I don't really understand the virus thing, but when I do go to the NGC they give me a mask and stuff to clean my hands they care about me.....when is the virus gonna end? It messed everything up.

My name is Kevin R. I'm 19

Good afternoon,

My name is Kim Chaloner and I am a teacher and parent living in Queens. In this testimony, I ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for composting. Our community has just gotten in the habit of reducing waste, and to go backwards could seriously damage our city's future.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this city has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling education and outreach and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has the potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today I urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. My school community has partnered with the Lower East Side Ecology Center for years, and we rely on their composting program to help educate our community.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source-separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- At least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;

- At least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this

potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;

At least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and

The City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

I cannot understate the urgency of this ask for families and schools, and I hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you,

Kim Chaloner

73-18 Forest Avenue, NYC, 11385

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 27, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Kimberly Scher and I work at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (PS 167) in Forest Hills, Queens.

At MELS we believe that the arts is a crucial part of a student's education. Some children come to school for no other reason than to participate in their arts class. To have to cut any part of these vital classes would be a detriment in an already challenging time for kids.

As a public school, we will be at the front lines of serving students in the fall and we must have art classes to support the work we do with students. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Scher



capital for healthy
families & communities

May 22, 2020

Chair Daniel Dromm
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007

Chair Vanessa L. Gibson
250 Broadway, Suite 1872
New York, NY 10007

Chair Dromm, Chair Gibson, and Members of the Finance Committee and Capital Budget Subcommittee:

The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) is pleased to offer testimony about Mayor Bill de Blasio's fiscal year (FY) 2021 Executive Budget. LIIF is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that invests capital to support healthy families and communities. Since 1984, LIIF has provided \$2.7 billion in financing and technical assistance in 31 states, leveraging over \$13.6 billion in additional private capital and serving more than 2.2 million people. LIIF's investments have created and preserved 82,000 units of affordable housing; 273,000 childcare spaces; 98,000 spaces in schools; and 37 million square feet of community facilities and commercial space. LIIF estimates that our work has created or maintained 182,000 jobs, and generated \$70 billion in family income and societal benefits. LIIF is a national organization with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta.

Mayor de Blasio's executive budget proposes to cut the current year and next year's HPD capital budget by 40 percent – \$581 million in 2020 and \$457 million in 2021, dramatically reducing the city's affordable housing plan. We are aware that the current public health and economic crises necessitate tough budget decisions but **cutting public funding for affordable housing is short-sighted and ill-conceived**, especially when investments in affordable housing promise benefits for both public health and our city's economic recovery.

Consider the role that affordable housing plays in achieving three critical policy goals: public health, economic recovery, and equity.

I. Affordable housing as public health.

Never has it been clearer that housing is healthcare. Orders to “stay home” and “shelter in place” are only effective for individuals and for the broader community insofar as everyone has access to a safe, stable place to live. We have already seen the deadly toll the virus can have when it spreads through homeless communities or shelters. Any movement to scale back the city's investment in affordable housing only threatens to undermine the city's efforts to combat this public health crisis.

Low Income Investment Fund
50 California Street
Suite 2900
San Francisco, CA 94111

415.772.9094 tel
415.772.9095 fax
www.liifund.org

San Francisco
Los Angeles
New York
Washington, D.C.

II. Affordable housing as economic recovery.

The economic benefits of affordable housing development are well-known. Each dollar of city capital leverages four additional dollars, a smart investment at a time when the cost of government borrowing is so low.¹ Investments in affordable housing also creates jobs, which the city will desperately need in the coming months as the 900,000 unemployed New Yorkers look to go back to work and contribute to our local economic recovery.

III. Affordable housing as equity.

Affordable housing is a pillar of mobility and opportunity. Mayor de Blasio committed to fighting inequality through his housing plan, and that commitment is more important than ever as we see the virus disproportionately impact low-income people and communities of color. Investing in affordable housing is a common-sense approach to ensuring greater equity and access to opportunity for New York's vulnerable communities – including the many immigrant communities and minority working class neighborhoods that have unduly experienced the consequences of this public health and economic crisis.

Finally, it is worth noting the immediate consequences that would result if the proposed budget cuts are enacted. Thousands of affordable units that are already in the pipeline – supported by both non-profit and for-profit developers – are at risk of costly delays and other avoidable burdens if public financing stalls.

The city simply cannot afford to make these cuts. Investing in affordable housing development offers a valuable counter-cyclical tool that has outsized benefits for families and local economies in need of recovery support. **LIIF opposes the proposed cuts to HPD's capital budget in Mayor de Blasio's FY 2021 Executive Budget. We strongly urge City Council to help reverse those cuts.**

Sincerely,



Kirsten Shaw
Director, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions
Low Income Investment Fund

¹ The City of New York, "Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan," <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/housing-new-york.pdf>

Wednesday May 20th

Date points to guide your testimony (Your Testimony does not have to be longer than 3-4 sentences long include your name and the program you represent)

Current Cost for NYPD School Safety Division \$451,000,000	The Department of Education 2019-2020 school year budget is \$34 billion.
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Kobie's Testimonial: Hello, my name is Kobie and I am a youth leader with Future of Tomorrow. I am also a senior in high school here to talk about the city's Executive budget and the city councils ability to influence education policy and funding to improve conditions within our schools. I firmly believe I would not have made it this far without the mental health supports provided to me by my school. Before remote learning, I attended a high school campus that was highly surrviold with metal detectors, cameras, school safety agents, but not enough mental health support staff. There are 5,000 School Safety Agents across New York City's schools, and only 1200 social workers, 2800 guidance counselors, and 1,448 school nurses available for one million students. We need considerable divestment from the NYPD's budget, and an investment in support staff for our schools. More money should be spent on the wellbeing of the students as opposed to policing them.

Current Cost for NYPD School Safety Division \$451,000,000

Current estimate cost of Guidance Counselors ~\$291,935,356

Current estimate cost of Social Workers: ~\$153,016,411

Current Estimate Cost of Nurses \$99,997,893

Staffing Levels for 1800 schools and 1 million students

NYPD School Safety Division - 5500+

Guidance Counselors - 2800

Social Workers - 1200

Nurses - 1,448

That support however wasn't enough at times and was non existent for a lot of my classmates because of the lack of access students had to more trained professionals. When I graduate, I want to know that the same supports are being provided to all the grades after me and I don't believe that can happen when the department of education's ratio of school safety agents to social workers, guidance counselors and school nurses is

The scanning of students is racially disproportionate: 48% of Black high school students have to pass through a scanner and 38% of Latino HS students must do the same, compared to 14% of Asian students and 14% of white students. (YA-YA Network)

My name is Eva Kornacka and I am the Executive Director at Polonians Organized to Minister to Our Community, Inc. (POMOC), a 501 (C) (3) non-profit with a mission is to improve the quality of life for those in need, particularly immigrant families and seniors.

For forty years our organization has been a direct service provider in areas of public benefit entitlements, managed healthcare assistance, immigration assistance, senior services and employment assistance. POMOC serves approximately 3,500 clients annually, our target population are low-income immigrants predominately from Poland and other Eastern European countries. Many of them have very limited or no English language skills, making them severely disadvantaged due to lack of information and communication barriers. POMOC is the only ethnic non-profit organization in Queens that welcomes all, regardless of age, residence and immigration status.

Our MCCAP program assists clients seeking all types of health coverage: government programs, coverage through the New York State Marketplace and individual plans. Because of limited resources, lack of information on how to access the healthcare system and get the care they need, as well as a language barrier, our clients face difficulties in navigating the healthcare system. Our bilingual staff, including two Certified Application Counselors, helps them find options for medical care, including access to free or low-cost coverage.

POMOC provides enrollment, access to care, coverage navigation and social support. We conduct health literacy presentations and workshops in the community, prescreen our clients for eligibility, help them manage their care by arranging appointments and translating correspondence from their plans and assisting with bills and negotiating medical payments.

The one-on-one assistance they receive at our agency, in their own native language and culturally sensitive environment, enables them to understand and navigate the complexity of health insurance regulations.

As of this date POMOC's MCCAP services assisted over 50 one-on-one clients and conducted 7 outreach events, during which our staff informed clients about current regulations and addressed their concerns, including the new Public Charge rule.

During this challenging crisis, our focus is to keep our population informed regularly via social media and phone contacts. Our Facebook page is updated daily with current information regarding COVID-19 developments, as well as important community related resources for healthcare, safety and food security.

We cannot allow for the hardworking immigrant families to be uninsured and uninformed about access to care. The recent developments at Elmhurst Hospital show the magnitude of this problem. The biggest safety-net provider in Queens suffered the largest Corona Virus mortality overnight. This is the aftermath of a system that is not open and accessible to all. Immigrant families need continuous support and assistance in accessing vital healthcare services.

The New York City Council MCCAP Initiative is crucial in supporting such services and provides our communities with knowledge and tools to access healthcare and stay healthy. This funding provides critical resources which increase the capacity of trusted community based organizations in educating and assisting the diverse communities they serve about health access, coverage and available programs.

On behalf of our vulnerable populations, we urge the New York City Council to continue supporting our non-profits through this important initiative. It is extremely important that this program continues and hopefully expands in the difficult times ahead, which will require us all to assist a growing number of New York City residents in need of healthcare assistance.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our testimony.



**Testimony of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
The New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearings – Finance
May 21, 2020**

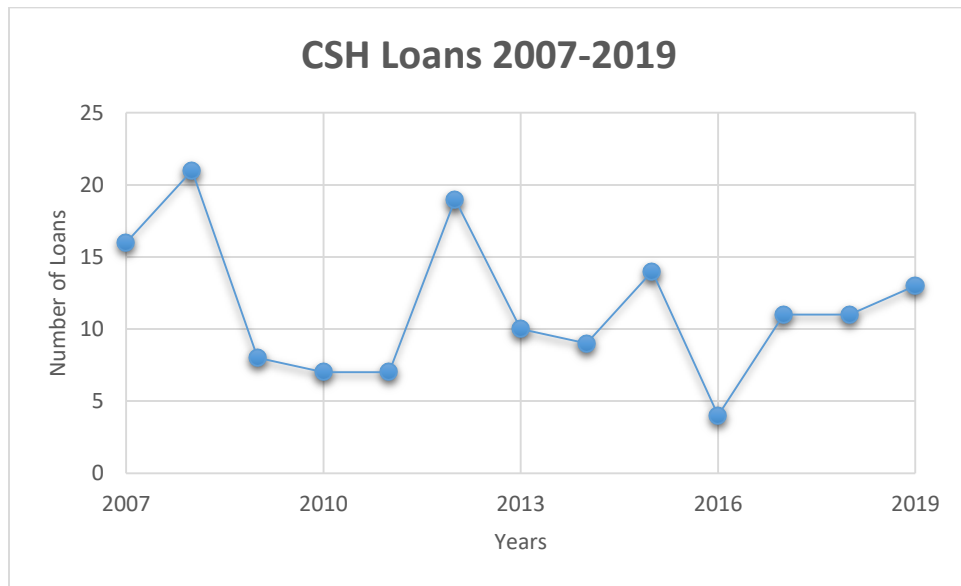
Thank you for allowing CSH to testify on NYC's 2020 Budget. CSH's mission is to advance solutions that use housing as a platform to deliver services, improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, and build healthy communities. CSH has 25-year track record of innovation and investment in New York City. CSH is deeply committed to sustaining and increasing access to permanent housing solutions in New York especially for those individuals who are highly impacted like those in the homeless, emergency health, and justice systems.

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that the need for housing is tremendous. People without a home are at incredible risk of becoming ill, and if unable to self-isolate, are at risk of infecting others. Now is not the time to abandon housing efforts. The 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 would devastate the supportive housing community and negatively impact the homeless system for years to come.

Supportive housing is permanent affordable housing that provides extra services so that people live and thrive in their communities just like any other New Yorker, and it is co-developed with affordable units for the community. It stabilizes people and communities, and serves as an economic generator. A permanent and stable home is what is needed to help individuals and communities thrive and remain safe.

CSH is also a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that specializes in financing the acquisition of sites for new supportive housing development. It is very important for you to know that non-profit service providers and supportive housing developers are still actively working to purchase sites. These organizations are experiencing a unique window of opportunity given COVID's impact on the financial markets to compete for sites that would otherwise not be financially feasible for supportive housing projects. We currently have **at least 20 acquisition loan inquiries** for such sites in NYC alone, but will be unable to finance any of the acquisitions without soft financing commitments from HPD. We also have another 5 projects with outstanding acquisition loans that were scheduled to begin construction in 2020 and are unable to do so due to the city's budget cuts; it is still unclear when these projects will be able to begin construction leaving their non-profit sponsors with substantial and mounting carrying cost. This translates to the creation of approximately 1,500 new supportive housing units and 1,000 new affordable housing units in our pipeline for individuals and families desperately in need of stable, permanent housing.

Our experience shows that once a development pipeline slows down or even stops, it takes multiple years to pick up production again. In the years 2012-2015 as NY/NYIII was at its height, CSH closed an average of 13 acquisition loans per year (\$17.7 million). Then, as the initiative was ending in 2016, we had a dramatic decrease and closed only 4 loans (\$11.8 million). Once the NY4 initiative was agreed upon and NYC 15/15 created, we once again saw a great uptick, closing 35 loans (\$78 million) in 2017-2019, as depicted in the chart below. This upward trend was expected to continue to rise as supportive housing developers gained momentum.



We cannot urge the city strongly enough to do whatever it can to preserve the capital budget and keep this pipeline flowing so that crucial supportive housing units continue to open. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. Delaying closing dates for these projects means more people stuck in shelters or on the streets, at a time when this poses more health risks than ever before.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Kristin Miller, Director
Kristin.miller@csh.org

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. Marquis Studios is founded on the belief that the arts are essential to education and that all students deserve access to quality arts programs. We have witnessed the positive impact creative thinking and expression have on students and families in our programs; artistically, academically and socially. We ask that you reconsider the proposed budget cuts to the Department of Education, which affects arts vendors like Marquis Studios.

Marquis Studios was founded in 1977 as a multi-disciplinary organization providing arts education services to 40,000 students annually, in Pre-K through 12th grade of all ability levels. We currently work in over 170 New York City public schools in all five boroughs. We have a strong partnership with District 75; approximately one third of our programs serve students with IEPs. Through collaborative school partnerships, we provide a full spectrum of visual and performing arts residencies taught by a team of 90 professional Teaching Artists. Marquis Studios provides in-school residencies, after-school residencies and parent-child workshops to high needs school communities.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Marquis Studios has been proactive and innovative in our response to continue providing students with remote arts programs. As the country recovers from the pandemic in the coming months and years, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City. Our teaching artists are ready and committed to continue partnering with schools and community-based organizations to take steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding for the arts.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Not only are these programs imperative for the youth, the teaching artist community served as a vital worker for the students. The artists depend on this work for their financial viability. Artists have educated themselves for year to serve this function, and there are hundreds of artist who depend on their paycheck.

Countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts through arts programming such as ours. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Best,

Laine Barton

laineb@earthlink.net



May 21, 2020

Laura D., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear, City Council,

Hi my name is Laura Diaz I grew up in Dominican Republic, I live in the Bronx NY. Working with my life coach is the best thing because she really helps me to get where I need to get, she is really helpful, and I am glad to have someone who inspires me to be a better person and follow my dreams. She helped me to apply for jobs and assisted me with finding one. The COVID-19 have impacted my life a lot because I am a person that likes to go out and likes to study, and my coach helps me to stay focused, and encourages me to practice self-care and to explore new things to entertain myself. If I didn't have her support, I would be really depressed because I am a talkative person and I like to express everything I am going through.

I'm a voting constituent in District 5, I'm a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that prioritizes building the resilience of our communities, not abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

We have seen that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. We have seen police treat Hasidim in Williamsburg with relative dignity, while they treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. We have seen it on video. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, more than homeless services, DOH, housing, and youth and community programs combined is unconscionable.

On Roosevelt Island, where I live, the Public Safety Department officers have at most verbally reminded passerby that they should be wearing a mask. In other parts of the city, NYPD officers have violently arrested Black New Yorkers who are behaving no differently than residents here.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for everyone.



Testimony Prepared by
Nicholas Buess for
Food Bank For New York City
for the
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing May 21, 2020

Thank you Chair Dromm for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Food Bank For New York City. The coronavirus crisis and corresponding economic downturn have increased need at emergency food providers and forced significant changes to how the emergency food network serves New Yorkers that continues to evolve.

Led by volunteers and run on shoestring budgets, over a third of emergency food programs made the difficult decision to suspend service within the early days of the NYS PAUSE order. Open programs quickly shifted their distribution to protect themselves and their clients. Resilient and dedicated, programs have slowly started to reopen but today more than a quarter (28%) of emergency food programs in our network have been faced with the difficult decision to close to protect the health and safety of volunteers and staff. Open programs have been witness to growing need within communities across New York City. 75% of the food pantries and soup kitchens have reported increased food need since the COVID outbreak and more than half of pantries reported running out of food in April.¹ The average number of people served has doubled across our network and our own direct service location in Harlem served nearly three times as many people in one week in April alone. We have redoubled our efforts in supporting our member network who have the experience and community connection to continue to serve, including supporting service at 21 Community Response Partners - agencies with the distribution capacity in all five boroughs that have expanded their hours of service and are offering innovative services like drive-through or appointment-based food distribution.

Programming supported by the City Council has been essential in responding to the pandemic. The Council's **Food Pantry Initiative** continues to be an essential resource for hundreds of community-based organizations serving during the pandemic. The **Food Access and Benefits** initiative which helps New Yorkers access SNAP, free Tax preparation and other social services has seen client assistance increase by 300 to 600% via our call center. We have increased staffing to support this need, and are coordinating with our partner organizations to manage growth in new enrollment for these essential programs. The importance of services that local community organizations provide to help New Yorkers navigate evolving and new benefits – from stimulus payments to Pandemic EBT school meal replacement - is increasingly important. Through coordination with the Department of Education and by leveraging cornerstone partnerships, the **Campus Pantry** initiative supported by the City Council continues to provide food and personal hygiene items to children in need.

¹ Based on Food Bank's most recent Network Survey Analysis conducted in May 2020



Testimony Prepared by
Nicholas Buess for
Food Bank For New York City
for the
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing May 21, 2020

Addressing hunger in the wake of COVID-19 will be a marathon, not a sprint. Food Bank applauds the City Council for moving swiftly to mobilize **\$25 million** in crisis funding for the emergency food network. We must work in partnership for ongoing assessment of need, and continue program flexibility to meet that need. Continued investment in City Council **anti-hunger initiatives**, ongoing support for **EFAP**, the City's baseline support for food pantries and soup kitchens, and additional funding for **operational support of the network, non-food items including PPE, baby and hygiene items**, will be essential. We are confident that our continuing partnership will be essential for our city's emergency response and recovery.



**Testimony of Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst, Children's Aid
Submitted Testimony on the FY 21 Executive Budget
Committee on Education**

My name is Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst at Children's Aid. I would like to thank Chair Mark Treyger, Chair Danny Dromm, and the members of the Education and Finance Committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY2021 Preliminary Budget and its effect on the state of education and community schools in New York City. Given the current crisis with COVID-19, it is clearer than ever that NYC public schools provide essential services to children and families, and these are services that must be sustained and adequately funded for the challenging times to come. The role of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) in this time has been so important, and schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) who partner with schools have been the lifelines of their communities.

For nearly 167 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. We have also constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood that builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Today our over 2,000 full and part time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families through our network of 40 locations including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Children's Aid has continued to serve our communities and families in ways that are responsive to their needs. Our community health clinics serving more than 5,000 patients remain open and are testing symptomatic children and young people for COVID-19. Our Behavioral health team is fully operational for tele-mental health services, including psychiatric evaluations, and has provided over 3,401 behavior health visits since March 16. Our Go!Healthy Food Box Program has expanded its operations at our sites in the Bronx, Harlem, and Staten Island and moved to a pay-what-you-can model, giving families the opportunity to access high quality and nutritious food with the majority given out for free. We currently serve about 1000 meals weekly at two locations offering grab and go food, and we deliver food directly to our families in Washington Heights, some of whom are undocumented, Harlem, and the Bronx. Since March 16, we have distributed over 15,930 free meals. 397 items have been



purchased by staff, donors, and community members off our Amazon Wish List for families, including diapers, wipes, and other basic household needs.

For over 25 years, Children's Aid has operated community schools in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. We believe the community schools strategy effectively removes the barriers to learning that get in the way of youth success – both academically and socially—and we believe this strategy is more relevant than ever right now. At our community schools, we integrate expanded learning programs, comprehensive health services (physical, mental health, dental, and vision), and family engagement strategies into each school building so that school staff can focus on teaching and children can focus on learning. Currently, Children's Aid partners with 21 community schools in New York City. Children's Aid community schools provide programs and services across four domains: academic, social-emotional, health and wellness, and family and home.

During this crisis, Children's Aid has continued many of these services, and has filled in many of the gaps of services that are causing real challenges for NYC families. Our staff has been conducting 1:1 calls, emails, and zooms to check in with families on how remote learning/access were going, whether food was available, and general inquiry about needs and/or provision of community resources. Our staff has also been providing remote mental health, counseling, teletherapy, and social emotional support sessions. Our mental health support has been crucial; many of our students are facing real loss, fear, anxiety about the future, and depression. We have played a significant role in helping students through the college process, when so many students are feeling despondent and overwhelmed by the future. We have also been helping a great deal with tech support and making sure devices are going to the families they need to go to. Active learning and engagement has also continued, including tutoring, afterschool clubs, Family Life and Sex Education, and homework help. We have continued robust parent engagement work, with a few virtual groups rapidly becoming a real parent support group to help families through this difficult time. Success Mentors have continued their support of students, as have College and Career Access and Success teams. Between 3/30 and 5/8, our community school staff made 32,925 contacts with clients through calls, emails, and zooms.

We are still serving our families, and they need us more than ever. One Children's Aid family of 6 kids and 1 parent had not had a stove for months because NYCHA failed to give them a new one, and had been surviving off of microwavable food. Despite this challenge, the students were still logging in to complete their work remotely, and because of engagement with our staff we were made aware of their needs. Children's Aid got the family \$600 worth of groceries as well as a portable burner to make home-cooked meals during this time. Another single-parent who has experienced job loss due to the crisis and does not have access to stimulus assistance because of her unresolved immigrant status has been able to feed her children through our Food Box program, and has just started utilizing our mental health services to help her cope and parent through these challenges.



Because of our consistent intimate work with families, we are uniquely aware of the ways the COVID-19 crisis has made even more obvious the needs of low-income families and children in NYC, as well as the crucial role that schools and social services play in meeting those needs. Our needs assessments are showing us the families we serve are desperately in need of food, housing, and other basic needs assistance, as well as social-emotional and psychological support. Between one needs assessment of over 700 of our families in mid-April and another in early May, the percent of families requesting food support jumped from 36% to 60%. The percent of families with someone who is COVID-positive in the home went from 4% to 10% in that time, and the percent of families who have lost work due to the pandemic rose from 24% to 40%. Over half of our families are ineligible for unemployment and our immigrant and undocumented families were not eligible for the Economic Stimulus Fund. We have responded by offering food delivery services and grab and go food pickup for many of our families.

As the city rethinks education in reopening and recovery from this health and economic crisis, investing in social services that help youth with the significant challenges their families are facing become even more imperative. We already know that, despite our best efforts to support students and families, schools will be faced with students who have experienced months of learning loss, significant poverty, trauma, and unmet social-emotional needs. Children, families, and communities will need more wraparound resources (grief counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.) than ever. They will also need summer academic support and engagement, after-school programming, extended learning time, and other services. There will also need to be strict measures to keep kids safe and healthy, which will require a robust health care aspect to reopening schools. We want to lift up community schools as a strategy that is uniquely positioned to help New York City's children and families recover from this crisis. Community schools are a community hub strategy that offer wraparound services serving the whole child. CBOs who partner with schools work closely and alongside their school partners and educators to offer integrated supports in service of the students and the entire school community. They also often have School Based Health Centers (six of our sites have these) that are well positioned to play invaluable roles in testing and other health protocols that will need to go along with schools reopening. Community schools can help with the learning loss, trauma, and health needs that will remain with NYC youth long after the public health aspect of the crisis abates, and can act as a bridge between the current crisis, the summer, and the new school year.

Not only is the community schools strategy uniquely suited for this moment, there is an abundance of recent data that shows the strategy works. A groundbreaking RAND report published in January of this year shows that the community school model is working in New York City. A comparison of 113 of the city's community schools with 399 other city schools with similar demographics and levels of student achievement showed that community schools have had markedly positive impacts on students and communities. New York City's community schools (NYC-CS) were found to have a positive impact on student attendance in all school levels, and across all three years of the study. The study also found that NYC-CS led to a reduction in disciplinary incidents for elementary and middle school students, and had a



positive impact on math achievement and credit accumulation. There was also evidence that NYC-CS supported improvement in school climate for elementary and middle schools.¹

We believe the community schools strategy can be effectively drawn from to help our students recover from a time of intense trauma, learning loss, and isolation. The community schools strategy at its core educates the whole child, acknowledging that child is part of a family system and a community with real challenges that must be addressed in order for the child to be able to get the most of their education and reach their full potential. More than ever, these social-emotional and trauma-informed approaches to school and learning must be prioritized. Teachers have been so inspiring in making the difficult switch to remote learning, but they are very overwhelmed, and the presence of CBO partners can ease many of their burdens during this crisis. Community schools is already a proven strategy in the education space that successfully addresses education from this perspective. The community schools work with School Based Health Centers can also help the city reopen schools safely. The infrastructure is already there, thanks to both City and State investments in community schools that have made New York City the largest community schools initiative in the country. Community schools are an efficient way to leverage multiple funding streams to get services directly to the children and families that need them. **We recommend that the city works with existing CBO-school partnerships and community schools to expand the strategy and help our schools reopen safely and in the most supportive way possible, as well as help the city recover from this devastating crisis in a way that centers on children and families.**

Additionally, the nonprofit sector is in need of its own support during this time to ensure that we can continue to provide these essential services. There has been an underfunding crisis in the human services sector long before COVID-19 came to our City. Because our government contracts drastically underfund the cost of implementing mandated services it has been very difficult to be nimble and respond to New Yorker's immediate and long-term needs during our continued pandemic response and recovery. The human services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust to make sure that individuals get the lifesaving services they need now, as well as long-term support for their own recovery. But none of that will be possible unless the City commits to support the financial stability of the sector.

Our workers are now on the frontlines of New York City's pandemic response and they need your support more than ever. The City Council must commit to providing human services workers with a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million. The previous COLA for human services workers from the City is set to expire at the end of FY20 and we must not allow this benefit to be stripped away. Further, the City Council needs to work with the human services sector to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely. We're also calling on the City Council to stand with the nonprofit sector and help ensure the community-rooted human services providers that New York City relies on are financially stable now, and in the coming months. Please ensure that no



bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts. It is also imperative that City Council commits to holding New York City's historic investment to cover the true indirect costs on human services contracts steady.

As an agency committed to eradicating poverty in the neighborhoods that we serve, we will do all that we can to advocate, protect, and increase funding for the most under-resourced communities. It is the right and moral thing to do to ensure that our children and families have the best opportunity available to realize their full potential, and in these trying times even more so. We understand the challenges the City faces to meet the needs of the NYC students, especially given the academic and social-emotional challenges of families that have been exacerbated through this crisis. Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council for their vigorous support of children, youth, families, and communities in New York City, and we stand ready to be your partner to address the immediate needs of students and their families as we look to the months ahead.

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

¹ Johnston, W.R.; Engberg, J.; Oppen, I.M; Sontag-Padilla, L.; Xenakis, L. (2020) *Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative*. RR-3245-NYCCEO. www.rand.org/t/RB1

|| Mi nombre es **Leticia Jiménez**. Pertenezco a la comunidad de Cypress Hills/East New York, Brooklyn hace 11 años y tengo 3 hijos que han crecido en esta comunidad. Para mí y para mi comunidad ha sido muy importante tener los talleres de nutrición porque en mi país había muchos vegetales desconocidos y no sabía cómo prepararlos y lo deliciosos que saben. Cuando voy a los talleres de nutrición a mis hijos les encanta ese tiempo porque también ellos prueban y aprenden. Gracias a que tenemos la marqueta agrícola de los jóvenes, podemos comprar allí mismo los vegetales para preparar la receta en casa y como nuestros hijos participaron también tienes el gusto por ayudar y aprender en la cocina. Gracias a ellos supe que existía la ayuda para el programa de SNAP y ayuda a las familias pobres como yo, ya que el salario que recibe un inmigrante es tan poco que solo cubre la renta y ropa de la familia. Cuando acudía a las oficinas de SNAP, fui maltratada y no solo yo. Toda mi comunidad recibió desprecios nos hicieron esperar 6 o más horas para poder aplicar por food stamps y nos tratan de mentirosos nos hacen sentir que no debemos recibir esa ayuda. Sin embargo, ahora podemos recibir ese servicio en las oficinas de **Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation**. Nos tratan con tanto amor que hemos sentido que ellos son nuestra familia y el perderlos sería muy triste y devastador porque muchos de nosotros ya no aplicaremos por SNAP/food stamps porque solo ellos nos han tratado con dignidad y nos hacen sentir parte de la comunidad, así como los servicios de salud es tan hermoso saber que tu comunidad te puede ayudar a sentirte querido y bien venido en un país desconocido para hacer más llevadero y poder adaptarte a una nueva realidad lejos de tus familiares y es por eso que nosotros sentimos tanto amor por las grandes personas que forman las oficinas de **Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation**.

05.20.2020



Testimony of

David Long
Executive Director, The Liberty Fund

before the
New York City Council

(Budget and Oversight Hearing)

May 21, 2020

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dave Long and I am the Executive Director of The Liberty Fund.

From August 2017 to December 31, 2019, The Liberty Fund operated as a citywide charitable bail fund. Staff were diligently stationed every evening in arraignment courts, allowing people to resolve their cases while avoiding detention and remaining in the community and with their families. Successes during this period include:

- Posting bail for 975 people.
- Achieving an 87% court appearance rate.
- Preventing 5000+ days of pretrial detention with a \$3.7M cost savings.
- Making over 300 social service referrals.

The Liberty Fund clearly represents a more economically sensible alternative to pretrial detention, while addressing economic and racial inequities in the criminal justice system.

On January 1, 2020, New York State took monumental first steps toward a better justice system with sweeping reform-centered legislation. As more individuals are no longer eligible for bail and instead released into the community, The Liberty Fund's pivot to the **ROR Case Management Program** continues this reformatory process by:

- Building trust with clients released on their own recognizance (ROR).
- Supporting clients in their lives through voluntary services.
- Facilitating clients' personal success to prevent further recidivism.

To achieve these goals, The Liberty Fund's **ROR Case Management Program** uses a unique, proactive and practical design with 4 key elements as follows:

- **Pretrial** - Interventions initiated at the most critical touchpoint for success.
- **Voluntary** - Non-mandated services to ensure no additional sanctions.
- **Person-Centered** - Best-fit services determined by the participant.
- **Court-based** - Engagement leveraged at court for effective time usage.

Since January 1st, The Liberty Fund **ROR Case Management Program** has been on the front lines providing comprehensive pretrial case management services for individuals released on their own recognizance (ROR). Clients from this start-up phase received robust needs assessments, service plans and individual follow-up. The most important outcome from this initial period is that we have established an enhanced case management service structure for all ROR clients which integrates the best-practices of our unique approach (*pretrial, voluntary, person-centered, court-based*).

With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020, The Liberty Fund immediately mobilized to ensure both the safety of our staff and continued provision of viable services for our clients during the pandemic. Highlights include:

- **Immediately established formal partnerships with CJA, NYC Defender Services and Legal Aid** for direct client referrals to provide our virtual case management. These partnerships have resulted in The Liberty Fund getting new ROR clients starting in April 2020.
- **Conversion to virtual case management** through daily client check-in calls to assess overall wellness, emerging needs and connection to resources. Phone calls are critical since many clients do not have emails or technology access.
- **Virtual infrastructure** developed to ensure service quality control and continued professional development of staff to adapt skills during the crisis.
- **Regular communication** with all client attorneys to help relay the most current information to all parties.
- **Resource manual** specifically adjusted to the COVID-19 crisis to ensure clients can navigate and access services in the new virtual landscape.

Areas of exploration for The Liberty Fund in the post-pandemic recovery include:

- Adapting with social distancing measures through our new virtual case management that can gradually increase to individual meetings in client communities.

- Providing a case management component to support MOCJ's Atlas initiative.
- Assisting in working with any COVID-19 released individuals during the crisis and connecting them to community-based services.
- Sharing our implementation data for model replication in other jurisdictions interested in bail reform.

Our agile infrastructure and partnerships with key court agencies give us the voice and flexibility required for continued systems change. Also, our expertise in providing pretrial social service interventions help tackle the many stubborn issues that overlap with criminal justice. The Liberty Fund's **ROR Case Management Program** is key in ensuring the New York City Council continues to innovate in the criminal and social justice settings.

In conclusion, I have personally been involved in the criminal justice system for over 30 years -- as a police officer, probation attorney and project director of several alternative-to-detention and incarceration programs. In my humble opinion, The Liberty Fund can be a key player in continuing to build a stronger justice system in the "new normal" of a post-COVID-19 landscape. The world is watching as New York handles and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, including our criminal justice system. The Liberty Fund provides a vehicle for the New York City Council to ensure a fair and more humane criminal justice system as we rebuild and move ahead in the future.

Thank you for your time today.

Lifen Wu: Student. Teacher. Census Worker. Supermom.

Adult Literacy Testimony



My name is Lifen Wu. I come from Guangdong, China. I just finished junior high school in China when I was 16 years old and then I went abroad to South America. I went there because we were poor. So I went to Venezuela and worked as a waitress in my uncle's restaurant. Life in Venezuela was challenging and interesting and I was willing to explore the new culture.

I came to the United States in 2017 for the air quality and education, both for my children and for me. I think there are a lot of opportunities in the United States. Even though I am married and have children there are still a lot of opportunities to improve myself.

This spring I got a job as a census worker with the Cooper Square Committee. Our Adult Literacy counselor Mayra helped me to prepare my resume and prepare for the interview. They were hiring two people, one person who spoke Spanish and English and one who spoke Chinese and English, and they hired me.

I thought I would speak more Chinese in this job but I speak a lot of English. We call people to make sure they're doing okay during the coronavirus and to ask if they've completed the census.

When we call people it's an unlisted number, so some people were suspicious and didn't want to answer my questions. I was working hard but felt sad because I didn't know how to deal with different kinds of native English speakers. So I asked my manager to give send me all of the scripts, and I printed them all out and studied and studied and these really helped me. The manager thanked me for doing a good job and for all my preparation.

At the same time we're all doing online learning at home. I have two kids in junior high school and three in elementary school. My two junior high school children can do their homework independently, but my three little ones can't do anything independently, it's all my job. It's crazy! But fortunately my online English classes are similar to my children's online classes—we all use Google Classroom and video conferencing and everything—so I could get settled in easily. So I need to thank University Settlement because before I didn't know anything about Google Classroom or how to turn in work. So I feel like I've been able to get settled into online learning easier than other parents. And now I'm helping parents in my neighborhood with online classes because I have the experience at University Settlement.

I recently found out I passed the TASC test! I still can't believe it! Before I came to University Settlement, I didn't know anything about High School Equivalency (HSE). So I came to the Adult Literacy Program office and they told me the correct way to take the test. I just finished junior high school in China so I still have my college dream. I want to go to college. I'm still looking for my major, but I realize I really like to serve the community and help people.



Main Office
2082 Lexington Avenue, Suite 204
New York, NY 10035

t: 212.206.7818
f: 212.206.7836

info@dccnyinc.org
www.dccnyinc.org

Queens Office
James C. Hall, Jr.
Family Child Care Network
York College
94-20 Guy Brewer Boulevard, Room 2F01E
Jamaica, NY 11451
t: 718.262.2247

TESTIMONY

City Council FY21 Executive Budget Hearing

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Caswell, and I am the Day Care Council of New York's Senior Policy Analyst. For more than 70 years, we have successfully served the needs of non-profit organizations sponsoring early childhood education programs across the city. Our 93 members currently operate more than 216 programs, all of which are under contract with the Department of Education (DOE).

We also continue to work closely with DC 37 and the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators to manage workforce issues as they arise. We have conducted Zoom meetings with DCCNY's members to ascertain how they are coping with remote learning, the status of their families, and to collect any recommendations and issues that they feel will help their communities during this unprecedented time.

When the COVID-19 shut-down began, child care workers were deemed essential workers for several reasons. We know their work supports the education and social wellbeing of young children. We also recognize that some parents were also deemed as essential workers and would need child care while they went to work. Child care workers are a critical component now and will be more so as we move to reopen the City.

The majority of child care workers are women of color. We also know a number of the families in the child care system are single-parent households. As we identify the critical needs and financial resources for public services, child care should continue to be viewed as an essential service that affects millions of people.

COVID-19 Response

DCCNY members reported that their major challenge after the shut-down was training staff on remote learning and determining how many of their staff and families had technological equipment, and internet access at home. It was a significant adjustment for staff and many families who were lacking computers. Fortunately, the Department of Education's (DOE) iPad loan program has been extremely helpful in addressing this need. We recommend that this resource be continued. Internet providers should be enlisted to provide low cost or free Wi-Fi

service for families. We anticipate that remote learning will continue in some form; however, it cannot be done sufficiently if we do not have vital tools.

Parents are overwhelmed having their children indoors all day. DCCNY members have integrated additional recreational and stress management activities into their weekly programming. Those programs that operate within settlement houses have also assigned social work staff to families in need of emotional support.

Major Concerns

Child care providers and the families they serve want to know when we will reopen, and under what conditions. The city's publicly-funded child care system is aligned with the public school system, as far as, major openings and closings. It is assumed, that the reopening plans (in September) will include child care programs. We and our members hope this is the case. They should continue to be viewed as essential workers and their role in the reopening a critical necessity.

On an operational level, child care programs will need access to nurses and social workers to cope with an entirely new system. While teachers shift from large groups to small clusters of children, the main issues will be social distancing and classroom ratios, but we must also keep in mind, mental health needs and regular testing for COVID-19. Child care programs can be hubs in their communities to have nurses present on a regular basis to monitor the children and parents. Social workers are needed to address ongoing anxiety and stress problems. These concerns will not disappear but may be compounded once people return to work and are in greater contact with others.

Current guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that no more than ten people can be in a classroom at one time, including both staff and children.

The question is, will we sustain our commitment to early learning at a time when the children need it most, or will we revert to determining access only by space availability? We hope the children win. Many unemployed parents will need child care while they look for work. We know several of our members have large available spaces that could accommodate young children with social distancing. We recommend that DOE and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene work closely together in establishing new spaces or maintaining existing spaces so that the children, families and child care workers benefit. These three groups must work in tandem with clear regulations and directions.

In the immediate aftermath of the shut-down, the priority for DCCNY members was to help meet with the widespread lack of access to food. Several DCCNY members became critical sources of food and meal distribution in their community by opening their kitchens to prepare meals and distribute food. This is a new volunteer service for some child care programs that must be continued by

providing the resources to buy food. Others referred their families to local resources and distributed their remaining food supplies.

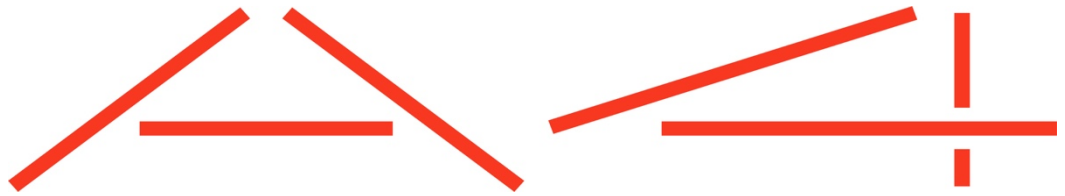
We recommend that remote learning and center-based learning be done concurrently. Child care programs could offer multiple sessions in a center per day and the remaining days could be spent at home. Child care staff could work split shifts and on Saturdays, as necessary. This objective is to have as much child care available for families and maintain employment for workers.

We also recommend that those family child care providers that are not part of the DOE networks be enlisted to offer continuity of care for young children. Again, the majority of child care workers are women of color. This is more so among our family child care programs. These small Minority/Women businesses are available and ready to help families as they return to work. They must not be overlooked.

Final Remarks

We would like to thank the City Council for their tremendous leadership at this time. Community based child care programs are awaiting your help knowing that a plan will be developed that addresses our concerns. The Day Care Council stands ready to help in any way we can.

Submitted May 21, 2020



Testimony to New York City Council

Re: FY21 Budget

Thursday, May 21, 2020

My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance. We are a 37-year old service organization representing a diverse coalition of artists, arts organizations, and arts supporters. We are dedicated to ensuring greater representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations, as well as providing a critical voice for this community.

We at A4 have been extremely fortunate to have received funding through the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs which has helped us to build systems and infrastructure and employ talented staff. We are greatly concerned about the drastic cuts proposed to the city budget that will disproportionately effect people of color and artists, especially the Asian American community which has suffered an astronomical increase in hate and bias crimes on top of health and economic losses.

It was already the case that city funding was disproportionately under-allocated to Asian American-led and serving cultural organizations. In the DCLA FY18 budget, 937 grantees received over \$41MM, yet only 45 of those were Asian American--a total of 4.8%. And the total amount of funding for those organizations? Just over \$1.2MM--approximately 3% of the DCLA programmatic budget. And, of course, these figures don't take into account the \$40 million + allocated to CIGs, only one of which is Asian American-led.

Asian Americans make up nearly 15% of New York City's population, yet receive far less than our share of city funds. Not only have our artists lost income, they have faced fear and isolation due to political and racial attacks based on the origins of the Coronavirus. Many are concerned about ongoing effects of racism and bias in their ability to find work.

A recent study¹ conducted by Americans for the Arts of more than 10,000 working artists and creatives finds that 95% of creative workers have experienced income loss and nearly two-thirds of artists report having become unemployed since the start of the pandemic. According to City Comptroller Scott Stringer's recent report on the Creative Economy², nearly 300,000 New Yorkers were employed in the creative industries in 2017 earning wages in excess of \$30 Billion.

Creative workers are just as vital to the recovery and the economy of New York City as those in the financial, real estate, and manufacturing industries. I implore you to ensure equity and fairness in the FY20 budget to ensure that creative workers and Asian American-led and serving organizations receive their fair share of city support. We count and we vote.

Thank you.

Lisa Gold

Executive Director

Asian American Arts Alliance

1) COVID-19's Impact on The Arts Research Update: May 18, 2020

Americans for the Arts

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/news-room/americans-for-the-arts-news/covid-19%E2%80%99s-impact-on-the-arts-research-tracking-update-may-18-2020>

2) The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City.

October 25, 2019

New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

To: New York City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted on behalf of: Green City Force
Re: Greener NYC and Green Jobs Corps

Dear members of the Committee on Finance,

Thank you for your leadership at this difficult time. Appreciating the challenges you face in making budget cuts, I am writing to urge you to consider the power of environmental programs at this time as generators of jobs and community benefits in communities hardest hit by the coronavirus and its impacts. This is a time for investment, not divestment, in green jobs and green programs that can employ young adults to serve their communities, in particular in public housing.

City Council funding, through the Speaker Green Jobs Corps Initiative and Greener NYC has enabled Green City Force to enlist and employ young adult residents of public housing, in training for careers, as leaders in addressing critical issues in public housing developments, building urban farms that generate thousands of pounds of organic produce in the heart of developments and acting as credible messengers reaching thousands of fellow residents with information to improve their quality of life. These farms have created beautiful and safe green spaces, access to healthy food for residents of all ages as well as offered a means to engage in composting and volunteering. They are an example of how green jobs can anchor efforts towards green and healthy communities. They encapsulate how the Green New Deal can be brought to life.

Along with a Green New Deal, calls for a renewed effort at the scale of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) have multiplied at the national level. The CCC helped create infrastructure in national parks that endures nearly 100 years later. In our modern day, the iconic effort must be in cities and focused in frontline communities, with frontline young adults at the center. The experience of Green City Force demonstrates that young adults in public housing are ready to serve their community, their city and their country - they are ready to lead.

Let us not sacrifice a generation of young adults at this time. The cuts to the Summer Youth Employment Program and to Composting suggest a trend. The opportunity is to call young adults to action. Greener NYC can be the vehicle through which the City Council issues this call. We envision an effort that can capture the desire of young people to serve and to work and feel part of something bigger. Please consider not only maintaining but expanding funding for environmental programs that create jobs and benefits for residents, where they are critically needed now and into the difficult year ahead. We stand ready to do whatever we can to help make this a reality.



**New York City Council
Joint Hearing
Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on Capital Budget
Chair Dromm and Chair Gibson
May 21, 2020
Remote Hearing**

Thank you to Chair Dromm and the full Finance Committee and Chair Gibson and the Subcommittee on Capital Budget for holding this important hearing amidst these challenging times.

With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations, LiveOn NY's members provide core services that allow older adults to thrive in our communities, including senior centers, home-delivered meals, affordable housing, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, NORCs, case management and more. DFTA's network provides services to over 50,000 older adults and caregivers daily.

Seniors are the most at risk to COVID-19. Their funding for services should not be at risk too.

Just this Tuesday, LiveOn NY held our 25th Annual Aging Advocacy Day. We did so virtually, with more than 200 individuals registering to participate in the event and a shared commitment to calling on the City to make critical investments in senior services, as well as thanking fellow providers for their work throughout COVID-19. Many Council Members engaged via Zoom and social media, as well as fielding calls from constituents; *thank you all for participating in this exciting event.*

While we couldn't be physically on the steps of City Hall, the calls for support somehow felt louder and more clear than ever. Amidst our calls for support, one provider shared a story of receiving a call from a senior whose food supply had run out, a call not unfamiliar during this time; another confided that their organization had lost more than forty clients during this time, not unlike many providers who speak regularly about struggling with the loss of clients and colleagues; and participants having shared messages of how essential their teams have proven. With every point made, the need for increased support from the City became both urgent and undeniable.

To respond to these stories, and the abundantly clear need for robust support of older New Yorkers throughout our City, LiveOn NY and our partners request the following key investments to be made.

\$26.2 million for home-delivered meals for seniors

This program—unique from GetFood in that it serves seniors who were homebound *prior* to COVID-19 and will remain so after—has been chronically underfunded for years. Today, the reimbursement rate for meals is 20% below the national average, even as providers have experienced a 20% increase in demand amidst the pandemic. Together, it's a recipe for leading our City's non-profits to the brink of insolvency. Even worse, providers have yet to receive any additional funding to provide drivers incentive pay as they continue to make door-to-door deliveries in spite of the increased risk. This is unsustainable and

wrong. **The funding requested will compensate for: increased demand; incentive pay for essential workers; adequate support of the weekend meals; and will close the per-meal reimbursement deficit.** Together, the funds will enable the program to meet demand resulting from increased need and awareness of the City's incredible senior service sector, as well as ensuring providers can continue to provide high-quality, culturally competent meals provided by local, community-based non-profits.

Please also note that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for this contract is currently due June 1st, meaning that providers—who are already inundated with increased demand, as well as concerns for staff and participants—must also grapple with responding to an RFP that would substantially alter the system at-large. **This procurement, and all similar procurements, should be delayed until COVID-19 has subsided and its effects can begin to be understood.**

\$10 million for Senior Centers, which was already promised in 2017

In 2017, the City undertook a “model budget process” for numerous contracts, including senior centers, to bring these in line to reflect true costs, with particular emphasis on right-sizing contracts to allow for more competitive wages of the oft underpaid human services staff. During this time, the senior center portfolio was promised \$10 million to be received by FY21; senior centers even received notices of how much assistance would go directly to their programs. This funding, however, remains excluded from the Executive Budget, despite initial promises in 2017 and further promises during the preliminary budget hearings. This must be rectified by budget adoption. Beyond being wrong to renege on such a promise to seniors and providers, these funds are critical to supporting a predominantly female and minority workforce that—as evidenced throughout COVID-19—can no longer bear the burden of such persistent disparities.

Restore all one-time senior services funds

Funding for services must be permanently maintained to prevent any sort of disruption in critical programs. The \$2.8 million for senior centers, \$2.84 million for home delivered meals, \$1 million for NORCs, and the \$2.1 million for NYCHA community spaces should all be baselined and to sustain these programs moving forward. Further, by only making these investments on an annual basis, rather than baselining the investments as we are requesting, providers are unable to use funds to address salaries or fill budgetary gaps as is most urgently needed.

Additionally, City Council's \$1 million case management investment should be baselined, as waiting lists for this program continued to grow prior to COVID-19, and have skyrocketed along with an intensification of client needs since the pandemic began.

Continue City Council Discretionary Funding

City Council has long been a staunch supporter of City and district-wide senior services programs through allocations in Schedule C. We thank you, and while recognizing the budget challenges that are upon us, we continue to advocate for full restoration for all Senior Service Programs funded in Schedule C. At the outset, these funds helped to fill gaps existing in the infrastructure of support for seniors, they



therefore remain as critical as ever to supporting older New Yorkers as we embark on our new normal. Examples of key initiatives that support the wellbeing of older adults include: NORCs, Support our Seniors, SuCasa, Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations, Health Aging Initiative, Social Adult Day, and others.

Invest \$1.7 Million to Achieve Pay Parity for NORC Staff

Currently, there are 11,000 older adults spread across dozens of NORCs across New York City. However, the NORC staff that provide these critical support services earn, on average, \$15,000 less than their DFTA-funded senior center counterparts, even if they are performing the same duties. \$1.7 million in new funding is necessary to achieve pay parity across DFTA programs and ensure fairness not only for staff, but for the older adults living in these NORCs.

Continued Investments in Human Services Sector

Years of underfunding the sector have resulted in the entire human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. A 3% COLA on the personal services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million is needed in the FY21 budget to ensure this vital workforce does not slip further into poverty. The Mayor and City Council have taken important steps to begin to address this crisis with previous multi-year cost-of-living investments, but there is no COLA in place for future years. The 3% COLA is a needed investment while workers, advocates, providers, and elected officials continue to work together on more comprehensive solutions to ensure that human services workers finally earn fair pay for their labor.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of the above needs.

Please contact Katelyn Andrews, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY with any questions (Kandrews@liveon-ny.org).

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors



Making New York a better place to age

on important topics to help them age well in their communities.

Lizzette Colon on Behalf of the NYC iSchool

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Lizzette Colon, and I work for the NYC iSchool in New York City.

The mission of the NYC iSchool is to provide a safe environment for New York City students to grow academically and socially. We serve students in all five boroughs and can truly say we have diversity within our building. Our students come eager to learn and we accomplish that with different modalities.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Lizzette Colon

Deborah Lohse
Choreographer. Performer. Teaching Artist

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 19, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Deborah Lohse, and I work as a teaching artist for New York City Ballet, Lincoln Center Education. I also serve on the dance faculty of the New School and Dancewave. I am also a professional dancer and choreographer.

The mission of my work over the last 17 years in NYC is to serve the school communities of New York City (K- Grad School) through dance education and to serve the larger arts community through teaching, performing and creating space for young artists.

Since the pandemic halted the city, I have seen a majority of my work in the school turn to online service. Not a single organization I work for stopped its programming. We all worked hard to re-imagine our programs quickly and with whatever resources we had created digital content to make sure the students of NYC felt supported during this difficult time. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. With the whirlwind of change that we are artists weathered and continued to serve under during the darkest of times, it would break my heart to step out into a new reality of no arts and lose the 17 year dance career I have built here in my beloved NYC. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Deborah Lohse

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

TESTIMONY TO THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020

SUBMITTED BY LOUISE MIRRER, PRESIDENT & CEO

To the Members of the Council Committee on Finance and the Subcommittee on Capital Budget:

Thank you for your service to the arts and culture community in New York City, and thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the New-York Historical Society, New York's oldest Museum.

At this incredibly difficult moment in our history, as the city faces the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and state-wide PAUSE, New-York Historical is doing what it can to support the city's students, teachers, and families with programming that is made possible because of our partnership with the Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am honored to share with you some highlights of what this vital funding has allowed us to accomplish.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

With generous **capital project allocations from the New York City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs**, New-York Historical has made major institutional advances such as the establishment of the Center for Women's History on our fourth floor. In 2019 we were delighted to partner with **Speaker Johnson and the Women's Caucus** to mount an exhibition featuring the first-ever portraits of important NYC women to hang in Council Chambers—a project was reinstalled this year for Women's History Month.

It is the annual support of the **Cultural Development Fund** that makes possible exhibitions like:

- ***Stonewall 50 at New-York Historical (2019)***, a suite of exhibitions and programs that examined the Stonewall uprising and the dawn of the modern U.S. gay liberation movement.
- ***Women March (2020)***, an immersive celebration of the suffrage centennial that explores women's collective action over time—including those women of color who were left out of the 19th amendment's privileges.
- ***Dreaming Together: New-York Historical Society and the Asia Society Museum*** (upon safe reopening in 2020), a multi-venue festival of art, ideas, and innovation, using works drawn from both institution's art collections to generate dialogue about environment, protest and rebellion, identity, and borders.

Since the Museum's closure on March 13, staff have been working remotely to develop new ways of delivering content to our constituents at home. We have launched new video content, blogs, and highlights from our collections and archives, all available free of charge through our website and our social media channels.

K-12 EDUCATION

The **Cultural Development Fund** and **Council-directed CASA funding** also fuels our K-12 educational programs, which serve more than 200,000 NYC public school students and teachers from all

five boroughs each year through field trips, classroom-based workshops, teacher training, and digital resources. More than 75% of the students we serve are from low-income households.

Of note is our new **Academy for American Democracy**, a four-day residency at the Museum for sixth grade students that encourages in-depth study of the concept of democracy—training students to become engaged and active participants in the democratic process. The Academy has welcomed classes from 14 schools in Manhattan and the Bronx: five with student bodies that identify as primarily Black/Latinx; two that identify primarily as Asian, and the rest as White/Asian or White/Asian/Latinx. Five schools also have English Language Learners making up more than 10% of their student bodies. **DCLA capital funding** from both the Council and the Administration will allow us to establish expanded classrooms and galleries to support this program reaching more than 3,000 students per year.

In the wake of the PAUSE, New-York Historical's staff is working remotely to provide critical educational services to New York City residents—offered completely free-of-charge through our newly launched **History@Home initiative** (<https://www.nyhistory.org/education/history-home>). Here, we offer free social studies enrichment programs, weekly teacher conferences, vocational training and tech programs for teens, and intergenerational family activities, all via live video conferencing. The Academy has also shifted to virtual experiences for the time being, starting its first online residency on May 19.

History@Home serves 2,000 people per week, and we are on track to reach 30,000 by the end of June 2020. Given the uncertainty of the months that lie ahead, New-York Historical is also working to adapt its Museum-based offerings to virtual spaces; for example, for the first time, New-York Historical will offer K-12 virtual field trips in the fall.

DIVERSIFYING NYC'S CULTURAL WORKFORCE

This city-funded programming has positioned New-York Historical to address the pervasive lack of diversity in American museum leadership staff and diversify the City's museum workforce. To address these issues, we developed a **Master of Arts in Museum Studies** degree program offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS). Students receive scholarships underwritten by private donors, and the initiative is a vital part of our larger institutional work towards centering diversity and equity in all aspects of our work.

The program has enrolled 74 students in its first year. In our fall 2019 cohort, 39% identified as coming from non-white backgrounds, including Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Native Indian. The program continues throughout the PAUSE, and we look forward to re-instituting our Museum-based practicum sessions as soon as it is safe to reopen.

CONCLUSION

The New-York Historical Society remains deeply grateful for the important programmatic and capital funds from New York City that have allowed us to expand our resources and reach and adapt to the urgent needs of our local community. These funds will become even more essential in the months and years of recovery ahead. In this time of fiscal uncertainty, we deeply appreciate the city's investment in cultural education and its support of our ongoing capital projects that increase our capacity for exhibitions, public education, and K-12 offerings. We are particularly grateful for the Council's efforts to facilitate swift approvals in the capital contracting process and reimbursement process—essential lifelines for funded non-profits during this time of uncertainty.

We thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

*Louise Mirrer, President and CEO
(212) 485-9273 // Louise.Mirrerr@nyhistory.org*

**Testimony to the City Council
Thursday, May 21, 2020**

**Virginia “Ginny” Louloudes, Executive Director
Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York**

My name is Ginny Louloudes and I represent the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York the service and advocacy organization for NYC’s 420 nonprofit theatres. It has been humbling to listen to the speakers who came before me. Thank you for this hearing.

On May 2nd, PP award winning playwright Lynn Nottage, tweeted:

Walking in Brooklyn today. Just passed the enormous line at the pawnshop. Seriously, Longer than the supermarket line. Real and heartbreaking.

Playwrights are the conscience of our culture; distilling the facts into words and images we can never forget. **Artists, like Lynn Nottage see the world as it is and show us what the world can be.**

That is why I ask you to maintain baseline funding for NYC Dept of Cultural Affairs; so that artists like Lynn Nottage can literally have a stage (be it online or at the Public Theatre) to share her vision of a new NYC beyond the strict character confines of Twitter!

DCLA funded theatres are working to rebuilding the future of NYC to one that centers access, equity, and justice.

Here is how 4 examples of how DCLA funded theatres are responding to the pandemic, and working to ensure that the many voices you are hearing today NEVER have to go without housing, food, shelter, domestic violence abuse, or MEDICAL care AGAIN!

- **Signature Theatre** held a Facebook Live Panel with Lynn Nottage and Sharon Salzberg on loss, loneliness, and grief!
- **Target Margin Theatre** hired 3 costume designers to make COVID Masks that they distributed to community centers in Sunset, Park Brooklyn.

-Pregones/PRTT in the S. Bronx- last night Pregones Theatre in the South Bronx hosted a conversation about how stories can build community and create spaces that leverage restorative conversations related to gentrification, social justice, women’s empowerment, criminal justice, and racial inequality with indigenous artists

Queens Theatre – Last night Queens Theatre launched their *Senior Sing Along Wellness Program*, which invited Seniors from everywhere to join with theatre artists online or by phone, for an hour of singing, classic comedy, dance, poetry and a wellness check in with their contemporaries. They sang to old tunes from radio and Broadway. And listened to performances from past radio comedies like Abbott and Costello and others. Most of the time, they connect with each other!

- Artists tell stories of the human condition; and New Yorkers, who have suffered more than any other residents in the Country from this pandemic, are tuning in to hear their stories and their songs.

These stories are told in different languages; come from people of all races, ethnicities, and gender identities; and from diverse physical abilities and economic backgrounds.

Supporting baseline funding for DCLA is critical so that we can continue to provide spiritual help to New Yorkers during this crisis and beyond. No civilization has existed without its culture. Why should we?

LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING POOR

City Fiscal Year 2021

City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MAY 21, 2020

Introduction

Good afternoon. My name is Jeanette Zelhof and I am the Executive Director of Mobilization for Justice, one of the five members of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition that includes CAMBA Legal Services, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and TakeRoot Justice, all of whom are members of Leap as well. Other legal service providers have been added to the initiative, but are not part of the LSWP Coalition. The Coalition was created 16 years ago with support from the City Council to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose income is slightly higher than the poorest New Yorkers, thus rendering them ineligible for free civil legal services. LSWP's services help working New Yorkers maintain financial independence and preserve economic stability in communities across New York City. These services are critical for preserving New York's City's working poor and helping them maintain economic stability and self-sufficiency. In Fiscal Year 2020, the LSWP initiative was funded at \$3,205,000 from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving \$455,000.

Services and Population We Serve

Working poor New Yorkers, who serve the City, yet barely make ends meet, can face catastrophic consequences as a result of civil legal problem, such as not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; seizure of a bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they did not even know about; or being denied public benefits to which they are entitled. The consequence of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. These working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor if they do not have access to lawyers to assist them. Our legal services organizations represent these New

Yorkers in all five boroughs in housing, consumer, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and employment matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

Acute Consequences of COVID-19 on the Working Poor

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, now and in the months and years to come, working poor New Yorkers will disproportionately face legal problems in unprecedented numbers. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, tens of thousands of New Yorkers were hanging on by a thread to their homes, their families, their well-being, and their dignity. As the crisis has laid bare, neighborhoods of color and immigrant communities across the City have been especially hit hard by health and economic disparities. The crisis has already resulted in unprecedented problems related to unemployment insurance, as well as workplace safety concerns, issues with CARES Act stimulus payments, price gouging, and scams, and has caused many New Yorkers to incur unexpected debt, which will mean an increase in debt collection litigation, and for some, bankruptcy. Those working poor who are adversely affected will need members of our Coalition to advise them, help them navigate various complex legal processes, and fight their legal battles.

Case Examples

One example of a working poor New Yorker whose legal problem is compounded by the COVID-19 crisis, is a Bronx resident who is the victim of stolen or mistaken identity. Her joint bank account is restrained pursuant to a judgment obtained a decade ago in a case she knew nothing about before losing access to her bank account. The suit was for rental arrears for an apartment that she never lived in, and has no connection to whatsoever. The attorney for the landlord has refused to release the bank account (to which the consumer's wages were deposited after the restraint),

despite providing him with proof of the consumer's identity. Not having access to the restrained funds was causing a hardship for her family's ability to pay for basic necessities. Working remotely during the pandemic, an MFJ attorney was able to have her affidavit virtually notarized and to electronically file an order to show cause to vacate the underlying judgment.

Another client we successfully helped is D.D., white, 46, of Brooklyn, in zip code 11210, who lives with his elderly mother, whom he helps support. He works as a security guard in a hospital, making approximately \$47,000 per year. Mr. D. has a criminal conviction from 2003, and MFJ previously helped him obtain a security guard license despite his criminal history. He then sought help sealing his record pursuant to New York's relatively new sealing law. Mr. D had successfully completed residential drug treatment and obtained a certificate of relief from disabilities and taken several steps to be a contributing member of his community. We helped him prepare his application materials and filed the requisite motion, and also sought that the decision granting his request not include his full name. The motion was successfully granted. We then sent the Sealing Order to the Department of State requesting that it remove the previous decision granting Mr. D's security guard license from the website because it included the criminal conviction information that had just been sealed. DOS complied. With Mr. D's record successfully sealed, future employers may not review his record or use his criminal history to deny him employment.

A CAMBA Legal Services (CLS) for the Working Poor client, Mr. W, is a Staten Island resident who works as a security guard. Unfortunately, Mr. W was recently laid off due to Covid-19. Some time ago, when Mr. W's car lease was about to expire, he and his wife went to the dealership to lease another car or see about extending the current lease. Mr. W met with a sales person who told

him that he could not lease a car because his credit was too bad. Mr. W never gave the sales person permission to run his credit and did not believe he had bad credit. This would be the first in a series of frauds perpetuated by the car dealer that would bilk thousands of dollars from Mr. W and leave him being sued for tens of thousands of dollars.

Mr. W was pressured into buying a car that cost more than he could afford as he knew he needed a car to get to work, his lease was expiring, and the dealer said he had no choice because his credit was bad. When the sales person told Mr. W that his payment would be \$515 a month, Mr. W was worried he would not be able to afford it, but the dealer had already taken possession of his leased vehicle so Mr. W felt he had no choice. The dealer then had Mr. W sign some papers, the terms of which the sales person obscured with his hands. Mr. W then drove off the lot.

Almost immediately, the car began having mechanical problems, leaving Mr. W stranded multiple times. Mr. W took the car in for repairs but the issue persisted and eventually he had to give the car up. Although he gave up the car, he still owed the monthly payments, and shortly after returning the car, Mr. W was sued on the balance. Mr. W proceeded unrepresented but did not know what to do. He came to CAMBA Legal Services who agreed to represent him. CLS reviewed the transaction and found a number of illegal acts by the dealer including inflating the cash price of the vehicle above the sticker price in order to absorb a down payment credit. They also discovered that the contract submitted in the court case was not the actual contract Mr. W signed, but a forged version with a different date and worse terms. CAMBA is currently investigating the extent of the fraud and has defeated the finance company's motion for summary judgment, helping Mr. W to push back against the predatory lending practices of the dealership.

Another client, C.V., 52, who is Hispanic and lives in the Bronx in zip code 10465, works as a private transportation driver making \$31,000 per year and helps support his 13-year-old granddaughter. Last spring, he received an income garnishment seeking to collect on a judgment that a debt buyer had obtained against him in 2004 pursuant to an alleged credit card debt. Mr. V. had no idea what the case was about, had not had a credit card, and was very worried about losing his job over the matter. Mr. V. was unable to utilize resources in the courthouse because he could not afford to take time off from work. MFJ represented Mr. V and successfully vacated the judgment and got the case dismissed with prejudice, avoiding garnishment, much to his relief.

Lastly, D.C., age 37, is a Hispanic domestic violence survivor and single mother of two children who lives in Queens. After she fled her abuser, she lived on credit and tried to start her own business, which ultimately failed. She then joined the gig economy and started working as for-hire vehicle driver to make ends meet. Like tens of thousands of other people in New York City, she was sued by a debt collector, who had obtained a judgment against her, and then used that judgment to start garnishing her meager ride-share earnings. D.C.'s story is like so many other New Yorkers who are currently facing and who face the fearful prospect of judgment enforcement.

These are our clients, and these are the life-threatening problems they face. But for our legal services, the working poor community would be detrimentally impacted, and the cascading effect of not being able to support working poor families at this time will quickly lead to greater homelessness and poorer social health determinants.

Conclusion

This Council's funding for Legal Services for the Working Poor is the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for families struggling to survive in New York City. If we are not able to meet the legal service needs of the many people who seek our help, particularly those affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the human consequences will be dire: immigrant families will leave their homes because their landlords threaten to report them to ICE; children whose families have been wrongly denied unemployment benefits, public assistance, or SNAP/food stamps will go hungry; families whose homes could be saved through aggressive foreclosure or eviction defense will become homeless; people with disabilities will be denied the disability benefits they need to live with dignity; and workers who have been cheated of wages by unscrupulous employers will go unpaid.

For the above reasons, it is vitally important that the City Council continue to support this flexible funding stream that allows legal service organizations to provide a diverse array of civil legal services to working poor New Yorkers. We urge the Council to restore funding for civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for the Working Poor allocation in particular. We ask that the Council maintain the funding for the Legal Services for the Working Poor initiative at \$3,205,000 in FY 21. The positive benefits of civil legal services funding for the city's budget and its economy make it the right choice for economic, social, and humanitarian reasons.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Luz MacManus and I am the Development Manager Midori & Friends in Chelsea. We are honored to have counted on the support of various New York City Council Members to bring music to NYC youth.

Midori & Friends (M&F) serves NYC public school students (K-12) by providing high quality music education programs in over 80 schools and community centers with little or no access to music education in less advantaged neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. M&F collaborates closely with our partners to define program objectives and design customized musical experiences that mirror the values of each community, spark students' creativity and cultivate them as lifelong learners.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Luz MacManus

Arts, Culture, Education - THEY MATTER

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

May 27, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Madeleine Cutrona. I am an artist and arts educator- I work at an arts nonprofit organization in DUMBO and I am a student in education at CUNY Brooklyn College.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

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Indeed, programs that foster renewal, arts and culture, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Madeleine Cutrona

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"Beauty, no doubt, does not make revolutions. But a day will come when revolutions will have need of beauty." Albert Camus

Good afternoon,

My name is Madeline Borrelli and I am a mother of two and a special education teacher at IS 228 in Gravesend, Brooklyn. I am also a member of Teachers Unite. I chose to testify today because the Mayor's proposed budget is an absolute devastation to our schools.. We cannot provide the youth of this city the free and appropriate public education they are entitled to if we are stripped of our funds and subjected to violent policing and surveillance. The Mayor has decided that there is no money for new school staff or community-based programs, but that there ARE funds to increase the NYPD-DOE subcontract for school safety by \$4 million dollars. Students will return to school carrying the grief and trauma of this pandemic, only to be welcomed back by metal detectors and more cops, instead of new teachers, counselors, and social workers. To take \$641 million dollars from our schools next year alone, is indefensible. And yet, the NYPD who has continued to terrorize Black and brown communities throughout this public health crisis will not share the burden of the City's financial deficits. Teachers, students, and parents were asked to undertake the monumental task of creating, implementing, and engaging with remote learning. WE did this together with no preparation or forewarning. We have risen to the occasion as united communities, and have provided learning experiences and social-emotional outreach for our 1.1 million students. Now we have found out that we are being refused the funds to continue the work of healing and educating our children. Meanwhile the NYPD, who will only receive only 1.2% of the proposed City's budget cuts, goes on brutalizing our neighbors in the name of public health. It is time for the City to do the right thing: divest from policing, invest in healing and fully fund New York City schools. Thank you City Council members for your time.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 27, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Madeline Cohen and I am the Education Director for Symphony Space on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Symphony Space was founded on the belief that the arts bring people together, transcend barriers, and celebrate both our similarities and differences. Our Pre-K - 12 arts education program, Global Arts: Cultural Literacy & Heritage, serves upwards of 18,000 NYC public school students annually, including English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. Since 1980, our hands-on workshops, fully-produced interactive cultural performances at our theatre, afterschool programs and family programs focusing on African, Asian, Native American, Latin American, and Early American cultures have brought the social studies curriculum to life and have demonstrated how to “read” traditional works of art as primary source documents.

Once schools closed, we quickly pivoted to provide an array of online arts learning and experiences: streamed and videotaped workshops and performances, accompanied by self-directed student lessons and teacher resource guides. The response from our partner teachers and their students has been overwhelmingly positive. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

.../



Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Madeline Cohen
Education Director
Symphony Space
Madeline.cohen@symphonyspace.org

Symphonyspace.org/Education



**Testimony to be delivered to New York City Council Committee on Finance and the
Subcommittee on Capital Budget**

RE: Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget

May 21, 2020

My name is Maggie Moroff and I coordinate the ARISE Coalition, a group of parents, advocates, educators, academics, and other stakeholders focused on the day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes of students with disabilities in New York City public schools. Our members have been working together for the past 12 years to provide a collective voice in support of NYC's 220,000 students with disabilities. I'm here today to speak about the importance of ensuring that the budget protects mandated instruction and services and key supports for students with disabilities.

First, we cannot impress strongly enough how critical preserving Fair Student Funding is to our students with disabilities as the primary source of funding for instruction for all students, including students with disabilities, in non-specialized schools. We already hear from schools that they do not have enough funding to provide students with the Integrated Co-Teaching or special education classes mandated on students' IEPs. We understand the City's budget challenges, but the City must ensure students not only get their mandated instruction but get the support they need to make up for months of missed in-person services when school buildings reopen. The final budget must reject the proposed \$100 million cut to FSF.

Next, we are concerned about the proposed \$40 million cut to School Allocation Memoranda. While the City has not specified which programs will be cut, this funding stream pays for a number of supports important for students with disabilities including related services like speech and counseling; specialized programs like the ASD Nest program for children with autism, bilingual special education programs, and the new early childhood literacy program; supports for students in District 75 schools; and the Literacy for All program that is working to help students read on grade level by the end of 2nd grade.

Last year, the City Council and the Mayor made great strides in addressing the appalling state of school accessibility in NYC when they committed \$750 million to improving school accessibility in the 2020-2024 Capital Budget. As the City revisits the Capital Plan, we urge the Council to ensure that any revised plans protect the full funding the City committed to making schools accessible for students, teachers, and parents with physical disabilities. Thirty years since the

passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is critical for the City to continue addressing the appalling lack of accessibility that prevents so many with physical disabilities from entering and fully becoming a part of the community at the vast majority of New York City schools.

Additionally, our members are gravely concerned about the City's preschoolers with disabilities who require preschool special education classes, but do not have placements because of the current shortage of seats. ARISE members call upon the City to ensure a special education placement for every preschool-aged child with an IEP that mandates such a seat. Hundreds of preschoolers with disabilities were sitting at home in violation of their legal rights prior to the pandemic. When students return to school, every preschooler with a disability whose IEP requires a special class seat must have one. Logic dictates, and research shows that early childhood education can offer critical academic and social-emotional support to all students setting them up for future school success. We recognize that the current administration has worked hard to increase access to early childhood programs through 3-K and Pre-K for all programs, and for that we are grateful. However, we also note with great consternation that too many children with more significant disabilities who have IEPs requiring more specialized settings have essentially been left out of those efforts because there simply aren't enough seats in the special education classes they need – seats where those students can receive the targeted academic and social-emotional supports they require. The budget must include sufficient funding for the City to open more preschool special education classes or to support community-based organizations to do so. While we appreciate the salary parity agreement in last year's budget for 3-K and Pre-K teachers, the agreement left out preschool special education class teachers at CBOs, making it likely that they will leave preschool special education classes for other teaching jobs unless the City intervenes.

And lastly, during the months that students have been learning remotely, multitudes of students with disabilities have gone and will continue to go without many of the special education services they are legally entitled to receive. The Fiscal Year 2021 budget must include dedicated funds to ensure that those students will be able to receive those missed services as soon as feasible.

I appreciate the opportunity to have spoken with you today. I am, of course, available to answer any questions you may have about my testimony.



SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Adaptive Design Association • Advocates for Children of New York • AHRC New York City • The Bronx Defenders • Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled • Brooklyn Defender Services • Center for Hearing and Communication • Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York • Citizens' Committee for Children of New York • Citywide Council on High Schools • Citywide Council on Special Education • Citywide District 75 Council • Coalition for Educational Justice • Collaborative for Inclusive Education • The Cooke School and Institute • Disability Rights New York • Dyslexia (Plus) Task Force • The Go Project • Goddard Riverside Community Center • INCLUDEnyc • The Learning Disabilities Association of New York State • Lenox Hill Neighborhood House • The Mental Health Association of New York • Metropolitan Parent Center of Sinergia, Inc. • Mobilization for Justice, Inc. • National Economic and Social Rights Initiative • New Alternatives for Children • New York Lawyers for the Public Interest • New York Legal Assistance Group • New York Performance Standards Consortium • Parents for Inclusive Education • Parent to Parent of New York State • Parent to Parent New York, Inc. • Partnership for the Homeless, Education Rights Project • Promise Project • Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project • Teach For America – New York • United Federation of Teachers • United We Stand • Unity Preparatory Charter School of Brooklyn • Vibrant Emotional Health • Wishes of Literacy

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Ursula Abbott Connolly • Cathy Albisa • Steven J. Alizio, Esq., M.S.Ed • Mark Alter, *Steinhardt School of Culture, Education & Human Development, New York University* • David C. Bloomfield, *Professor of Education, Brooklyn College and The CUNY Graduate Center* • Bay Brown • Tamesha Coleman • Ziograin (Zio) Correa, Sr., M.S.Ed • April Coughlin, *School of Education, SUNY New Paltz* • Susan Crawford, *Director, The Right to Read Project* • Sahre Davis, *Parent/Community Advocate* • Amber Decker, *Peer Family Advocate* • Ruth DiRoma • Richard and Lora Ellenson • Yuvania Espino • Esther Klein Friedman, Ph. D • Ramona Garcia • Ruth Genn • Olga C. Gonzalez • Jay Gottlieb, *New York University* • Tiesha Groover • Emily Hellstrom • Paul Hutchinson • Patricia Jewett • Donna Johnson • Revere Joyce • Joseph Karam • Jeannine Kiely • Laura Kennedy • Rebecca Kostyuchenko • Mylinda Lee • NeQuan C. McLean • Aurelia Mack • Matthew Mandelbaum • Shelly McGuinness • Diana Mendez • Rodrigo Mora • Elise Murphy • Srikala Naraian, *Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University* • Dana Neider • Michelle Noris • Kathleen Nowak • Jaclyn Okin Barney, Esq. • Samantha Pownall • Cathy Rikhye, Ed.D., *Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University* • Raphael Rivas • Melanie Rivera-Mora • Marilyn Rubinstein • Miguel L. Salazar • Jennifer and Peter Sellar • Iriss Shimony • Jon Sigall • Jo Anne Simon, *Jo Anne Simon, P.C.* • Karin Spraggs • Mark Surabian, MA, ATP, *Instructor, Assistive Technologies, Pace Graduate School of Education* • Tanzea Taylor • Constance Van Rolleghehen • RueZalia Watkins • Chevion Weak-Lopez, *Queens High School Presidents' Council* •

Coordinator: Maggie Moroff -- mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org -- (212) 822-9523

My name is Makeda Gershenson. I'm a staff developer and restorative practices trainer at Morningside Center.

Today I'm working with Teachers Unite to express my concern with the proposed budget. Over the past 4 years, I've been working in public schools with tens of teachers and administrators and hundreds of students, specifically in Harlem and the Bronx. I support families and school communities in building stronger relationships, through skills like self-awareness, self-management, responsive choices and understanding what's happening in our communities.

The proposed cut of \$641 million from our schools next year will remove important in-school supports, specifically restorative practices as a way to build

community, skills and support all students, but specifically underestimated populations.

The proposed cuts mean NOT filling vacant positions for teachers or social workers who retire. Teachers, students, parents need support right now.

We are profoundly interconnected. Our students mood and wellbeing affects learning. Our teachers mood and wellbeing affects teaching. Our parents

We need to ask ourselves what is important as we rebuild.

What is important?

What's the point of reopening our schools if our minds and bodies are so overwhelmed we can't learn anything. We

are experiencing collective trauma, collective loss. We all need trauma-informed support to transition back to schools.

We're all grieving - family members and loved ones, colleagues. People had no closure to the end of the year. Families missed out on milestone memories and are struggling with mental health, economic

They need to be welcomed back to schools by their teachers, grief counsellors, restorative practices that help them heal.

A 2015 study out of Columbia suggested that every dollar spent tending to the social -emotional development of students gives an \$11 return.

Every \$1 offers \$11 return AND our

communities are cared for during this extremely overwhelming and confusing and tragic situation.

Restorative practices help school communities create space to process what people are going through.

Please invest in our communities.

Please invest in our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jennifer Jones Austin Chair
Stanley Richards, Vice-Chair
Robert L. Cohen, M.D.
Felipe Franco
James Perrino
Michael J. Regan
Steven M. Safyer, M.D.
Jacqueline Sherman

Margaret Egan
Executive Director



BOARD OF CORRECTION
CITY OF NEW YORK
1 CENTRE STREET, RM 2213
NEW YORK, NY 10007
212 669-7900 (Office)
212 669-7980 (Fax)

Testimony of Executive Director Margaret Egan
City Council Hearing on Executive Budget
May 27, 2020

As the agency with primary oversight and rule-making responsibility over New York City's jails and one of the earliest established oversight bodies over custodial detention, the NYC Board of Correction (BOC) plays a vital role in shaping and maintaining a safe and fair jail system in New York City and contributes to the national field of jail oversight and reform. This is a critical moment for jail oversight. Front-end justice reform across the country is reducing rates of pre-trial incarceration, yet the needs of those who remain incarcerated are increasingly acute and demand greater vigilance over the system of services, safety, and health and mental health care in the jails. As jails are reformed to become smaller, safer, and fairer, jail oversight must also evolve as well.

The BOC plays a central role in making the administration of New York City jails accountable and transparent to the public. As the City works to close Rikers Island and transition to a borough-based jail system, the BOC is adapting its approach by working closely with its partners – including the Health and Hospitals Corporation's Correctional Health Services (CHS), the Mayor's Office, the Department of Correction (DOC), advocates, unions, and the public – to support reform, drive policy change, and build a new model for jail oversight.

With new executive leadership in place, and at a time of transformational jail reform in New York City and around the country, the BOC seeks to coalesce around a new vision for jail oversight, strengthen the organization and its practices, and position itself as a driver of policy change and a model for jurisdictions across the country that are seeking safer and more humane and accountable uses of jail. Strategic budgeting, planning, and restructuring together will support this effort.

The Mayor's Executive Budget sets a Fiscal Year 2021 budget for the Board of Correction at \$3,025,000 which includes a baseline reduction of \$178,000, accounting for two positions. The Board has requested the Mayor's office restore the two positions eliminated in the Executive Budget and asks the Council to fund the Board's new needs request for an additional five (5) positions. These positions are necessary to implement the outcome of the Board's strategic

planning process, and allow the Board to support the City's reform goals, including Council mandates.

The Board currently has six (6) open positions which had not been filled due to the change in leadership. When the COVID crisis hit, three of the positions had been posted with the remaining positions being held pending the outcome of a strategic planning process. While the Board recognizes the City's unprecedented financial situation amidst this pandemic, the Executive Budget's proposed cuts represent nearly 6% of the agency's budget.

Additionally, following the Council's historic vote to fund new jail construction and close Rikers Island, this is a moment for the expansion of independent jail oversight, not a retraction. In response to the FY20 preliminary budget, Council called on the City to make the Board's budget .5% of the Department's budget. Unlike funding for the Civilian Complaint Review Board's police oversight, the Board's budget has not been fixed to the Department's, a move the Council has acknowledged would allow for more effective oversight for years to come.

The five (5) new positions the Board is seeking to fund include a Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Strategy; a position to support the Transgender, Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Intersex (TGNCNBI) Task Force created by the City Council last year; and three (3) positions to support oversight of the borough-based jail plan also mandated by the City Council last year. When the Council passed the bills requiring the Board create the TGNCNBI task force and begin regular reporting on the borough-based jail plan implementation, it appropriately identified the Board would need new staff members to implement the new mandates however, the City has not yet allocated this funding.

Finally, for the fifth fiscal year in a row, the BOC has requested funding for a new secure information technology system that will keep pace with DOC's transition to new technology and the Board's mandates to investigate and evaluate jail conditions and monitor compliance with the Standards. Investment in a new technology system is critical to agency's long-term stability and necessary to continue the Board's data-driven oversight. In its FY20 preliminary budget response, Council called for the City to fund this project however, it has not yet been funded.

COVID-19 Response

The current public health crisis impacting both the City and the jail system has demonstrated the importance of the Board's independent oversight, as well as its potential for robust reporting and driving change. In this moment, it is more important than ever that the BOC aligns and strengthens its role as a critical emergency response partner to ensure the health and safety of staff and incarcerated people in New York City.

Like all others, the BOC has been forced to quickly adapt to a new normal in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. In the short term, the Board has redirected its oversight, setting priorities to monitor both DOC and CHS's evolving COVID-19 response and facility compliance with agency plans; and DOC and CHS' general operations and compliance with BOC Minimum Standards amidst the public health crisis. Our work seeks to independently and publicly document the scope of the public health crisis in the jails and the criminal justice system's

response to understand successes and challenges and, ultimately, ensure that lessons can be learned quickly.

Early on, the Board called for all criminal justice system stakeholders to reduce the population of the jail system believing this was a critical tool to reducing transmission of the virus.

Stakeholders came together, and the population is at its lowest in decades. The Board also quickly began compiling and publishing daily reports providing the public with information on the number of people in custody who have been confirmed to have COVID, as well as the number of DOC and CHS staff who have been confirmed. We have also included a full analysis of the jail population to show custody status and certain demographic information.

In addition to daily data reports, the Board has developed a new, crisis-responsive jail monitoring program. We believe that these monitoring efforts are critical to provide the agencies, the public, defenders, advocates, policy makers, and families with information on what is happening in the jails. We plan to continue this work, monitoring the response to the pandemic and adherence to the Minimum Standards in the crisis, for the duration of the crisis.

Conclusion

Despite the COVID pandemic, the Board's monitoring and reporting work must continue. Notwithstanding the obvious challenges of a leadership transition over the last year, the staff continued to do critical work in the areas of rulemaking, monitoring, research, and reporting. With new leadership in place, the strategic planning process will be critical to setting the Board's priorities for the coming years. Broadly, these priorities will be centered on the borough-based jails. As we all know, simply moving into new buildings will not address the challenges faced by the Department and Correctional Health Services.

The Board's monitoring efforts inform policymaking and problem-solving, promote transparency and accountability, and make the City a national leader in correctional transparency. This higher level of transparency and increased engagement by the Board has meant more fact-based and data-driven policy decisions in the jails. More strategic, independent oversight by the Board of Correction will more effectively support the shared goals of smaller, safer, fairer, and more humane jails in New York City.

As someone who has grown up in New York, moving from Elmhurst to Oakland Gardens to Yorkville Upper East Side and now Bushwick Brooklyn and likewise moving class statuses upwards of upper class, I've been so alarmed by the increasing police violence that has surfaced. I remember walking by the Met on Christmas with my parents and seeing a dozen police officers with their fingers resting a little too comfortably on the triggers of their assault rifles—why was that necessary?? I remember being afraid that if anyone somehow accidentally bumped into someone, a shot would ring out just by chance, regardless of the “soft target” racial and class status of the area. The articles highlighting training that calls black and brown children “targets” should've slashed the budget alone! Even applying the “one bad apple” rhetoric reveals the systemic issue of the NYPD's violence—scientifically, one overripe/rotting fruit will create a cascading effect on the bunch that signals them all to likewise change. Likewise, the unchecked behavior of one officer emboldens the rest to create a culture without accountability. The city as a whole has voiced in agreement that decarceration efforts are needed for our public health and safety. The staggering statistics the racialized breakdown of arrests in the borough most hard hit during the pandemic highlights what has always been disgustingly embarrassing for this city. Our public services rooted in community led care clearly needs the budget that the NYPD does not.

Margarita Ren

Save CUNY from further cuts and budget shortfalls! CUNY has been steadily underfunded by NYS for decades! CUNY is the economic engine in NYC which lifts the working class and impoverished residents into the middle class. I am a CUNY graduate from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Class of 1987. I have been a faculty member at CUNY since 1992—as an adjunct and then a full-timer.

My grandparents came from Puerto Rico with my 5-year old mother and her siblings. Due to extenuating circumstances, my mother, the first high school graduate in the family, became head of the household, and we had to make use of public assistance. CUNY made all the difference in the world for my family and I. I received an outstanding education. CUNY was affordable and NYS TAP and Pell grants helped me through. I went on to Fordham University on a full scholarship—a National Institute of Mental Health Fellowship. I graduated in 1993 with a Ph.D. and joined Brooklyn College. I could not have made it into the middle class without CUNY and those vital assistance and scholarship programs.

All students who are in low socioeconomic circumstances deserve the same opportunity as I got. So many CUNY students become professionals in NYS, the US, and throughout the world. I am just one success story; there are hundreds of thousands more. CUNY is in the business of recreating and resuscitating lives—those of its students and their families! Numerous CUNY students become medical professionals and volunteer workers who have stepped up during this pandemic and have saved lives! Let's ensure CUNY can make this possible for our children and their children's children for generations to come! Saving CUNY saves lives, literally.

Mr. Robert Mujica, the NYS Budget Director, is a CUNY graduate. He knows CUNY is an engine of social mobility. I urge him to do right by CUNY so that others like him can have a fighting chance after this pandemic. He was a conscientious and hard-working student of mine in the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Brooklyn College. I call on him to ensure a bright future for CUNY and its students.

Keep student tuition the same! No cuts to CUNY! Keep the faculty employed—full-time and adjunct faculty as well, who represent the majority of the faculty at CUNY due to long-standing disinvestment! Keep ethnic studies and interdisciplinary programs alive and well so that all of our students can learn key skills to navigate a globally diverse world! Fund CUNY fully--not flatly! No cuts to CUNY! CUNY is in the business of recreating and resuscitating lives—those of its students and their families and your family, too!

Saving CUNY Saves Lives, Literally. No cuts to CUNY! Fully fund CUNY!

Thank you.

Paz, Dr. María E. Pérez y González
Acting Chairperson
Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies
Brooklyn College, CUNY
2900 Bedford Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11210

Survived and Punished New York is submitting testimony concerning New York City's FY 2021 Executive Budget. We urge the New York City Council to champion and vote for a budget that will improve the lives of all New Yorkers, and provide a safety net for those most vulnerable to economic and social hardships, especially poor and working class people of color who have been historically subjected to structural racism and inequality. **To that end, we ask the New York City Council to advocate and vote for a budget that divests from harmful agencies and institutions and reinvests in programs and services for a brighter future. In particular, it is incumbent upon New York City Council to reject the disproportionate and immense funding allocated to the racist and abusive New York Police Department, District Attorneys Offices including the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the Department of Corrections and all future funding allocations for borough based jails. Rikers can and must be closed now without building new jails and using tools of control (such as policing, surveillance, electronic monitoring, mandatory mental health courts, and much more) that expand the carceral state at tremendous economic and social cost.**

Accordingly, we demand that the New York City Council reject the over 455 million dollars allocated towards the District Attorneys and Special Narcotics Offices in the FY 2021 budget, including an increase of 33.5 million dollars allocated towards the District Attorneys in the FY 2021 budget compared to the FY 2020 adopted budget. We also implore New York City Council to defund the bloated NYPD budget of almost 6 billion dollars, especially since racist police violence has always been pervasive and has been escalating under the pandemic.

The executive budget proposes over \$3 billion in cuts, including the total elimination of the city's summer youth employment program. The budget includes an \$800 million cut to education but cuts less than 1% of the NYPD's historically huge budget and actually increases the overall funding for District Attorneys offices, including for the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. **The FY 2021 executive budget reflects the inequitable and inhumane funding priorities we have seen in our city over the past decade and more. Therefore, we ask New York City Council to oppose these cuts to vital programs and services benefiting communities and to call for defunding agencies that foster institutionalized racism.**

The police, prosecutors, prisons, jails, and all of the instruments of the carceral state have perpetually been a destructive force in our society; and under the pandemic they are death camps. Although a plethora of public health officials and people from various sectors of society have overwhelmingly called for releasing mass amounts of people from our jails, district attorneys have blocked the releases that the Board of Corrections have recommended and have only approved the release of a small percentage of people from pre-trial detention. They have the power to stop prosecuting people, drop charges and consent to the release of people on their own recognizance while in pre-trial detention. However, they continue to wield their enormous power to send more people to jail and to block release efforts, further endangering the lives of mostly Black and Brown New Yorkers.

District attorneys have also testified about the need for more money for domestic violence programs as domestic violence escalates under the pandemic. They also have justified blocking the release of people charged with violent and sex offenses contending that they are a risk to public safety. To that end, DA's perpetuate the dichotomy of people who are deserving and undeserving of freedom while denying that jails are inherently toxic and reproduce violence. Carceral solutions to gender-based violence have proven to be ineffective and in fact, often lead to the criminalization and incarceration of survivors. It has been shown that survivor-driven community accountability processes that support healing, prevent harm and that operate outside the criminal legal systems are most effective in preventing gender violence. The city must invest in economic development opportunities and social

safety nets that empower survivors to leave unhealthy relationships. The city should not allocate funding to DAs for ineffective domestic violence programs that criminalize people and expand the police and carceral state or for their ongoing actions to incarcerate people while claiming to be working for progressive criminal justice changes.

Since the city spends enormous amounts of money incarcerating people in jails - the city could save a great deal of money by releasing everyone from city jails and reinvesting in humane community resources. Countless studies have shown that incarceration and policing do not promote public safety but inflict tremendous harm. Black and Brown people make up the predominant portion of people in our jails. Concomitantly, people of color, including immigrant communities, also comprise the largest number of people impacted by and who die of COVID- 19 in New York City. As the city claims to be addressing the disparate impacts of the pandemic- which magnify and reveal historic racial and class inequities - they should heed the call for mass release of people from jails. The city should defund the Department of Corrections and use the savings to fund life affirming community programs instead of cutting them. We urge New York City Council to reverse the city's continued commitment to pouring more than \$10 billion dollars to building new jails, which will likely be the largest capital expenditure in the city's budget for the next decade— although the funding allocation for FY 2021 has been delayed to future budget years.

Furthermore, the budget must fund support services for people released from jails that do not entangle them in systems of criminalization. The DAs testified that they need more funding for community supervision as people are released from jail. However, electronic monitoring, probation, parole, mandatory drug or mental health programs, and other forms of supervision expand dehumanizing and oppressive carceral punishment and surveillance into people's homes. The City Council must also reject the DA's request for more funding to support technology needs under the pandemic, as this is a pretext to more efficiently surveil, control and jail people of color.

District Attorneys fuel the racist and cruel systems that cause tremendous suffering and inequity while holding undue power. New York City Council must shrink the budget for DAs and weaken the enormous power they have to destroy people's lives as they entrench the racist criminal punishment system. We urge you to instead reinvest in resources that promote community wellness and address the root causes of social problems.

The only way to recover from our current crisis is through investing in what communities have been asking for over the course of decades: affordable, low-income housing; free transit; youth programs; improvements to NYCHA; living wages; and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recover, but stay healthy and thrive.

In ten, twenty, fifty years, when we talk about this moment in history, please ask yourselves— do you want to say that during NYC's most awful public health crisis, where tens of thousands of New Yorkers have died in a matter of weeks due to government negligence, you decided to cut 47% from Youth & Community Development and decided to increase policing and corrections, while allocating over \$455 million towards prosecuting, and 6 billion for police?

NYC is saying enough is enough !

Free them all Now ! Public health is public safety. Fund Community Needs not criminalization.

NI UNA MENOS NY-RD

TESTIMONY

FULLY FUND THE DOVE INITIATIVE

TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SUBMITTED BEFORE:

NYC Council Finance Committee

Thursday, May 21, 2020

SUBMITTED BY ON BEHALF OF NI UNA MENOS NY-RD:

Rosita Romero, Executive Director of Dominican Women's Development Center (DWDC)

And

Maria Lizardo, Executive Director of Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC)

Ni Una Menos NY-Rd, is a grassroots organization comprised of over 120 women representing all sectors of the community including activists, mental health professionals, business owners, non-profit leaders, and religious leaders. We came together in January 2020 in an effort to address and highlight the high number of femicides in the Dominican Republic and New York City. On a cold night on February 27, 2020, we held a vigil to raise awareness on domestic violence and over 400 persons attended. In addition, on the very same day, a vigil was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Since NYS went on PAUSE, we continue to meet in order to identify and develop strategies that can be supportive to victims of domestic violence during and after Covid-19.

Home isn't a safe place for everyone. With victims increasingly trapped at their homes with their abusers, global domestic violence is suspected to intensify. DV has always been underreported and while some places are seeing some increase in calls to hotlines and the police, many others are not due to many complicated factors. Many survivors are operating from a place of 1 crisis at a time, trying to get through Covid-19. Survivors are worried about trade-offs- if I go into a shelter, will I get sick? If I continue to work, will my ex-partner follow through on his threats to take my children away? If I call the police, will I be deported?

Dominican Women's Development Center (DWDC) is a community-based non-profit, founded in 1988, whose mission is to empower all women and communities to advance gender equality and social justice. DWDC's programs focus on education, health promotion, home-based services that support families prenatally, or at birth through age five, early head start

program and childcare and learning center, and a drop in center for LGBTQA youth. Nuevo Amanecer, founded in 1998, is DWDC's domestic violence program that provides a 24-hour hotline, support groups, information and referrals, individual counseling, advocacy, community educational presentations, and is a member of the organizing body of the Brides' March. Through its comprehensive programming, Nuevo Amanecer serves 1,000 women year.

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a community-based settlement house founded in 1979. We have grown into a leading multi-service agency with a staff of over 140 persons, serving low income persons and families primarily in New York City. During the COVID-19 crisis, NMIC has shifted services to continue to provide critical community support in response to our current public health crisis. To address evolving and emergent needs, NMIC operationalized four emergency hotlines in areas that have seen drastic increases as the city continues to respond to COVID-19. Hotline assistance is currently available in Spanish and English and offered for benefits, housing, immigration, and unemployment services.

NMIC has served survivors of domestic violence since 1998 through its community based Domestic Violence Project (hereafter, "DVP@NMIC"). We serve primarily immigrant survivors of Latin America who live below the poverty line, speak limited to no English and have deep fears due to immigration status. DVP@NMIC is comprised of a team of bilingual and bicultural counselors, attorneys and advocates who provide holistic support and expertise. All services are trauma informed, no cost, confidential and long term. During calendar year 2019, DVP@NMIC provided services to 718 survivors that included 695 females, 22 males and 1 transgender; 597 reported Spanish as their primary language and 102 English, and 541 having limited English skills.

Currently, DWDC and NMIC are receiving funding through the DOVE Initiative to support non-residential services for victims of domestic violence. Ni Una Menos NY-RD requests that the City Council continue funding community-based programs like Nuevo Amanecer at DWDC and DVP@NMIC that provide essential and life-saving services to clients. DWDC and NMIC are in the opportune situation to serve survivors of domestic violence because they have a trusted relationship as community-based organization who for decades have provided services. Domestic violence work is fueled in large by hope and we have witnessed thousands of survivors transform hope into safe, peaceful and meaningful lives. Our collective hope is to help contribute to the healing of New York City in these difficult times and not return to “normal,” but build more sustainable, and violence free communities. The DOVE initiative and its financial commitment are invaluable to achieving this for survivors and all of New York City. Ni Una Menos NY-RD will continue its efforts to highlight domestic violence as an issue that is ravaging our communities and is committed to working with DWDC, NMIC and other advocates to provide victims the support they need to thrive.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and wish you, your families and your constituents much health and safety.

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (NMIC)

TESTIMONY

In support of

City Council Initiatives That Provide New Yorkers With a
Social Safety Net

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

May 21, 2020

PRESENTED BY:

Maria Lizardo, LMSW
Executive Director

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (NMIC)

Good afternoon Chair and council members. My name is Maria Lizardo and I am the Executive Director at Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (hereafter, “NMIC”). I am a life-long community member and product of what New Yorkers can achieve when provided the support they need to succeed. On behalf of NMIC, we thank you for inviting us to present our views on the resolution calling for the council to keep city contracts and discretionary funding in FY 21 at their current amount and that the work scopes allow for maximum flexibility to enable us to address needs as they emerge for over 14,000 community members which depend on our services yearly.

NMIC is a community-based settlement house founded in 1979. We have grown into a leading multi-service agency with a staff of over 150 employees, serving all of New York City. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our community on their paths to secure and prosperous futures. Our legal, organizing, and advocacy services include immigration legal services, housing court representation/eviction prevention, counseling for immigrant communities and mental health support services. Our education and career services provide the community with the additional tools necessary to build secure and prosperous futures. We also offer weatherization services to improve the housing stock in Upper Manhattan. Community members receiving our services are also able to connect with our Connections to Care mental health services if the need arises. NMIC does not charge any fees for services and serves low income and immigrant persons and families.

During the COVID-19 crisis, NMIC has shifted to remote service provision to continue providing critical community support in response to our current public health crisis. To address evolving and emergent needs, NMIC operationalized four emergency hotlines in areas that have seen drastic increases as the city continues to respond to COVID-19. As a result of the Legal Services for the Working Poor funding, hotline assistance is currently available in Spanish and English and offered for benefits, housing, immigration, and unemployment services. NMIC has also implemented a food distribution and cash assistance program to respond to the on-going crisis which has hit our low income and immigrant communities the hardest.

These hotlines have been life saving for New Yorkers like Teresa who recently contacted us via NMIC's unemployment hotline with a question about her benefits after losing her job due to COVID19. She did not identify as a survivor of intimate partner violence, but the attorney staffing the hotline homed in on details of her story where she suspected her husband may have hacked her username and password on the Department of Labor website. Teresa was referred to our Domestic Violence Project (DVP@NMIC) where a full assessment revealed that she had recently been assaulted by her partner who then fled the home. She had called 911, but no arrest had yet been made. Teresa felt frightened, vulnerable, and confused. An experienced DVP@NMIC counselor immediately began assessing risk and safety planning with her since her husband still had access to the apartment, their bank accounts and her phone which he had taken from her. While on the call with her, Teresa used a location app and noticed that her husband was coming back to their apartment. Her counselor told her to hang up and immediately call 911 to report there was an open warrant and the perpetrator was approaching her home. Her husband was arrested, and she was provided information about how the criminal justice system works, especially information about how to respond to defense attorneys and the new Criminal Justice Reform laws around discovery.

Teresa now receives trauma focused video therapy weekly and has received a consultation with our family law attorney. She will receive assistance filing a Crime Victims' Board application to help replace her phone and receive ongoing safety planning. Now that Teresa is in a safer situation, NMIC's universal assessment of need was completed and she is currently connected with our housing and benefits team for assistance with a range of other issues including rent arrears, unemployment and income tax filing. NMIC staff are committed to providing long term services and support as she heals and moves on from her abusive marriage.

MCCAP & Access Health

We incorporated a benefits hotline to address the dire needs our community is facing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated the city's healthcare affordability and exposed flaws in our healthcare system. The pandemic has shown how much our healthcare system fails to provide equal access to coverage and care to low-income communities of color who have been

disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) via Access Health is a valuable resource for New Yorkers who lose their job-based coverage or cannot afford care and need help understanding their insurance options and troubleshooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers. This funding allows NMIC to continue to help address health disparities in our community by providing culturally and linguistically competent health advocacy services in the hardest-hit areas of the city.

Through MCCAP we serve over 100 community members yearly like Pedro* (name is altered to protect client identity), an undocumented man in his thirties from Dominican Republic who was looking for health insurance but was unclear of the process for enrollment. After listening and reviewing his situation, our Health Care Navigator Ruth concluded that the best option for him at the time was emergency medical assistance. The help and assistance provided led to his approval for emergency Medicaid.

After a short time, Pedro called NMIC to thank Ruth for her guidance and patience but more importantly for assisting him obtaining medical coverage because a medical issue had required him to have emergency surgery. As a result of the Ruth's assistance, all the cost involved in the surgery were covered, allowing Pedro to concentrate on his recovery without an additional stress of financial burden.

As a complement to health insurance coverage we also aim to prevent underlying illnesses that affect our community members and cause a higher risk of a fatal outcome if affected by COVID-19. To aid in keeping our community members healthy, NMIC has continued to provide crucial outreach and information in Spanish and English related to health care needs during this time. This is important now more than ever as immigrant and low-income New Yorkers are disproportionally impacted by COVID-19. Finally, the Access Health funding has allowed NMIC to provide our community access to food pantries and healthy food options. We continue to host a twice monthly mobile food pantry where 300 families receive food allowing us to at a time when food insecurity is dramatically impacting our communities health.

DOVE

In addition to incorporating new programs during this pandemic we have also pivoted our existing services to remote programing; such is the case with our Domestic Violence Project (DVP@NMIC) which has become crucial during this time when survivors are forced to stay home, which for them isn't always a safe environment. The DOVE funding has allowed our DVP@NMIC team to adapt and provide access to support for survivors via various platforms such as What's App, text, email and other safe forms. The team has been able to provide virtual support groups in Spanish, which foster community and allow for information sharing and connection during a time of physical distancing. Staff provide virtual trauma focused therapy via telephone and video, work closely with community partners to conduct outreach, and provide crisis intervention. Since survivors' safety and independence is directly linked to having access to essential basic needs, DVP@NMIC continues to address economic empowerment linking survivors to benefits, emergency grants, food pantries and other resources.

In the beginning of April, at the height of the pandemic in New York City, Camila* (name is altered to protect client identity) sent us an email pleading for help. She stressed that email was her only form of safe communication while quarantining with her abusive spouse. Camila's DVP@NMIC counselor worked quickly on two fronts- building rapport and trust over email and conducting a danger assessment for further intervention. It became rapidly apparent that Camila was high risk. Camila is undocumented and her legal spouse is currently in the military waiting to be deployed. Previously she had been in a domestic violence shelter and returned to her marriage, hoping her husband might have changed, only to find him more violent. Camila's husband has made explicit and gruesome death threats causing her to be extremely fearful of taking any action that may provoke him. Her husband never filed to adjust her immigration status which he uses to routinely threaten her with ICE and tells her she would never be able to survive without him because she would be considered a "public charge." Her husband is extremely controlling and monitors nearly all her activities and telephone. He has also been sexually abusive on multiple occasions. Camila recalled that he uses COVID19 to wield power and control over her, scaring her by saying that he would not use a mask or social distance in order to bring home the virus and purposely infect her. Camila's counselor conducts safety planning with every opportunity including calling 911, filing for an order of protection, entering shelter, creating code words, deleting email threads and emptying her trash folder. At the beginning Camila was too fearful to speak to our DVP@NMIC attorney however recently she agreed, and they have communicated by

email. Camila's counselor continues to offer trauma informed counseling that includes providing her with reliable information about her rights in the U.S. and in a relationship. They are working together so she feels more empowered, can better cope with isolation and feel a greater sense of self agency.

Legal Services for the Working Poor

NMIC is also part of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition that includes CAMBA Legal Services, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Mobilization for Justice, and Take Root Justice. The Coalition was created 16 years ago with support from the City Council to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose income is slightly higher than the poorest New Yorkers, thus rendering them ineligible for free civil legal services. LSWP's services help working New Yorkers maintain financial independence and preserve economic stability in communities across New York City. These services are critical for preserving New York's City's working poor and helping them maintain economic stability and self-sufficiency. In Fiscal Year 2019, the LSWP initiative was funded at \$3,205,000 from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving \$455,000.

Working poor New Yorkers who serve the City yet barely make ends meet, can face catastrophic consequences as a result of civil legal problem such as not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime, identity theft, seizure of a bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they did not even know about, or being denied public benefits to which they are entitled. The consequence of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. These working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor if they do not have access to lawyers to assist them. NMIC helps to represent these New Yorkers in housing, consumer, immigration, benefits, and employment matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, now and in the months and years to come, working poor New Yorkers will disproportionately face legal problems in unprecedented numbers. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, tens of thousands of New Yorkers were struggling to maintain their homes, families, well-being, and dignity. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that neighborhoods of color and immigrant communities across the City have been especially hit hard by health and

economic disparities. The crisis has already resulted in unprecedented problems related to unemployment insurance, workplace safety concerns, issues with CARES Act stimulus payments, price gouging, and scams, and has caused many New Yorkers to incur unexpected debt, which will mean an increase in debt collection litigation, and for some, bankruptcy. Those working poor who are adversely affected will need NMIC and other members of the LSWP Coalition to advise them, help them navigate the various legal processes, and fight their legal battles.

YouthBuild

Our city's youth must not be forgotten during this pandemic. Their physical health is not being affected as much as other populations', but they are still seeing a huge shift in their lifestyles that cannot be ignored. NMIC has been running YouthBuild programming with discretionary dollars for six years, serving more than 200 opportunity youth to provide them with high school equivalency instruction, vocational training, and leadership development. Last year alone, 19 YouthBuild participants received valuable vocational certificates in customer service and digital literacy skills and 18 earned their high school equivalency diplomas. Academic instruction is provided by a Department of Education (DOE) Pathways to Graduation (P2G) teacher, which allows NMIC to dedicate more resources to participants rather than staff. This partnership also brings extensive services to participants, including student MetroCards and specialized instructional and support staff. In addition to high school equivalency and vocational training, NMIC's participants learn about life skills and employment readiness, and they participate in service-learning projects to give back to the community. Participants are assigned a case manager who work with students to determine their goals and establish steps for them to realize their goals. We do this by providing referrals to services, including on-site counseling offered through NMIC's mental wellness program, Connections to Care (C2C). Since shutting down due to the pandemic, NMIC's participants have continued to receive remote high school equivalency, vocational and employment readiness instruction through Zoom and Google Classrooms. Some of our participants will still have the opportunity to earn their diplomas despite the lack of available testing because of NMIC's relationship with the DOE. Staff regularly check in on our participants and make sure that they have everything they need in order to remain engaged with the program, including emotional support during difficult times.

Anti-Eviction and Housing Court Resources

NMIC's eviction prevention services are at the core of NMIC's Housing Unit. In fiscal year 2020, our housing attorneys and paralegals successfully resolved over 2,600 cases. These cases directly benefitted over 5,600 members of the community and saved our clients over \$2.6 million.

In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, NMIC transitioned its housing and eviction prevention services to a remote work model and expanded our work to ensure that our clients and members of our community remain securely housed through this crisis. Specifically, we created housing, public benefits, and unemployment insurance hotlines that allow for a wholistic approach to our community's evolving needs. For instance, attorneys on our housing hotlines provide advice on eviction prevention, rental assistance and affordability concerns, and other pressing housing issues. In some cases, attorneys provide representation to tenants on emergency cases in housing court. Meanwhile, cross-referrals to the public benefits and unemployment hotlines ensure access to critical benefits that improve financial stability and self-sufficiency.

In order to publicize these expanded services, NMIC leveraged its social media platforms by creating updated flyers that are shared online and with elected officials, community partners, and members of the community. These flyers include information about our hotlines and other expanded services, and instructions on how to access our services remotely to ensure the safety of our staff and community members. NMIC has also used social media as a mechanism to provide information to clients through Facebook live events. Our housing attorneys and other legal staff have presented in English and Spanish on a wide variety of topics, including the eviction moratorium, securing rental assistance, navigating housing court during the COVID-19 crisis, and how to access critical public benefits and/or unemployment insurance. These live events provide an opportunity for NMIC to connect with the community and serve as a reference for anyone visiting our social media pages facing similar issues. These videos have received over 5,000 views and have been one of NMIC's most popular electronic resources.

While NMIC has pivoted its services to address the urgent needs of the community, our housing staff continues to conduct intakes over the phone for clients referred through our established

partners, including community partners, elected officials, other legal services providers, the Office of Civil Justice (“OCJ”), and Housing Court.

NMIC’s effort to modify its housing practice has proven successful. For instance, a client recently called NMIC’s housing hotline seeking advice on how to pay her rent. After some discussion, the client revealed that she is a domestic violence survivor, and that both she and abuser are co-tenants on the lease to her apartment. While she has a criminal order of protection against her abuser, she felt unsafe in her home. She was unsure how to address this threat as the apartment is unaffordable without the contributions of her abuser. So, while she called our housing hotline to ask how she can afford her rent, what she really wanted to discuss were options that would make her housing feel safe and secure. A housing attorney advised her on various options, and ultimately, she wanted to explore whether she could break her lease. Our housing team collaborated with NMIC’s Domestic Violence Project to assist our client with the process of breaking her lease under Real Property Law § 227-c, which allows domestic violence survivors to break their leases after service of a 30-day notice of termination to the landlord. Our housing team drafted a letter for our client to send to her landlord terminating tenancy. Our DVP team is providing ongoing assistance and case management with the help of a social worker. Our hotlines have facilitated this type of coordination for many clients and callers and have allowed NMIC to effectively address a wide scope of issues that exacerbate a tenant’s ability to remain securely housed.

Outside of our hotlines and direct eviction prevention services, NMIC’s housing team remains dedicated to addressing ancillary issues like access to affordable health care and mental health needs. Our housing staff work closely with the Benefits Access program to facilitate applications for critical benefits like Medicaid, Social Security Disability (SSD) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These benefits help promote financial stability and increase self-sufficiency and ensuring that members of our particularly vulnerable community have access to them is critical during a pandemic. For that reason, our housing staff has added additional screening tools to each housing and hotline intake, and eligible clients are referred directly to the benefits access team. The benefits access team includes two Healthcare Navigators who connect eligible clients to affordable health insurance through the New York State Healthcare Marketplace.

To supplement our direct services NMIC has used its membership in city and statewide coalitions to promote coordinated service provision and citywide advocacy efforts around the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. For instance, NMIC is a proud member of Leap, a city-wide coalition that works collaboratively to increase the availability, breadth and depth of legal services for low-income persons in New York City. Leap members are able to provide high-quality client representation with the support of New York City Council through discretionary fund & initiatives as well as through City Administrative programs such as the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program, the Universal Access to Counsel program and the Assigned Counsel Project. These funding streams are crucial for our work to continue and grow, especially as we face the needs of our communities impacted by Covid-19.

Job Training & Placement (JtBO)

Jobs to Build On (JtBO) provides a fast track to work for those without significant barriers to employment, as well as a flexible training opportunity for participants who are not receiving SNAP benefits. Our candidates can participate in trainings toward the completion of industry-recognized vocational certificates in food and customer service, security and home health aide. Last year, 35 community residents received vocational training, and NMIC helped a total of 69 candidates find employment. We follow up with our participants for a year after they become employed to ensure that they continue to have the tool and resources they need to remain employed.

During the public health crisis, case management staff have remained in touch with our participants, not only to check on their employment status but also to connect them with important services. We refer participants to NMIC's hotlines for assistance, or any other social service that they might need. Additionally, NMIC's counseling program, Connections to Care (C2C) continues providing services to clients. Those who were already receiving regular counseling at NMIC continued to have their sessions either over the phone or through teleconferencing. As participants present new mental health issues, particularly in response to the current crisis, we are still able to make referrals for services.

In order to engage participants who have gone through training, NMIC launched a workshop series two days per week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The workshops are administered by staff

over Zoom video conferencing. We initially attempted to focus on expanding the employment readiness instruction participants received while in programming, and we saw we needed to ease this type of instruction because participants were still getting used to online-based learning. More importantly, though, we realized that we needed to address their social-emotional needs during the crisis. To that end, we created workshops on topics including Coping & Relaxing, Stress Management, Connecting Your Feelings with Family & Friends and Taking Care of Your Body, which are delivered along with financial literacy and employment readiness workshops.

Adult Literacy (Initiative) and Adult Education (Speaker)

NMIC's highly successful adult education program provides robust adult basic education, high school equivalency, ESOL and citizenship classes to the largely immigrant communities of upper Manhattan and the southwest Bronx. We offer classes at all levels, both in the morning and in the evening to make sure that our programming is accessible for working adults and those who are caretakers, regardless of their incoming literacy levels. Last year alone, we served more than 700 New Yorkers across our education portfolio. Twenty-eight students earned their high school equivalency diplomas, which exceeded our contractual goal of 20, and we maintained an impressive 84% pass rate, which is 14 points above industry standards. Another 68 percent of our students made at least one academic gain, bringing them one step closer to their diplomas. Seventy-three percent of our ESOL students made an academic gain, which allows them to be more engaged with their children's education, pursue their citizenship, or advance their career prospects.

In addition to our traditional classes, NMIC also attempts to meet the needs of nontraditional students through two unique class offerings. We teamed up with Literacy Partners, which recruits, trains and places qualified volunteers in community-based organizations like NMIC to deliver the *We Speak New York (WSNY)* curriculum. *WSNY* is a New York-Emmy award winning documentary series that provides contextualized English instruction for immigrants new to New York City. Those with higher levels of English who need some practice speaking, or those who can't commit to thrice weekly classes have an opportunity to practice their language skills while also learning about valuable resources to our City's immigrants.

Two years ago, through our discretionary funding, NMIC resurrected citizenship classes through partnerships with New York Cares and the New-York Historical Society. The class meets three times per week and instruction is led by staff from the New-York Historical Society and volunteers recruited, trained and placed by New York Cares. We work closely with immigration staff in our Legal, Organizing & Advocacy Department to accept incoming and make outgoing referrals to ensure that we are caring for our students holistically.

Since transitioning to a remote work model, NMIC has moved classes online through Zoom and Google Classrooms. Additionally, to ensure that we meet students' needs, we record and post class sessions to Google Classroom so students can participate asynchronously if their schedules or technology capacity do not permit synchronous instruction. Students are still able to participate in counseling sessions with Connections to Cares staff remotely, and our case managers are providing unprecedented emotional support and referrals to students.

Community Housing Preservation Strategies

NMIC's Buildings and Organizing Team, which is part of the larger Housing Unit, is composed of several full-time organizers, attorneys, and paralegals who work directly with tenants and tenant associations provide an array of services that give tenants the tools and provide legal assistance to tenants pursuing group cases. NMIC is unique in that it offers both organizing and group legal services on-site, which lends itself well to a collaborative work environment and cohesive service model that incorporates all aspects of tenant support. The Buildings and Organizing Team uses an interdisciplinary approach that builds unity with organizers, attorneys, and paralegals working together.

The heart of our organizing work centers around supporting tenant groups and local leadership development. Our organizers are familiar with and committed to the community, which allows them to bring a linguistically and culturally informed lens to all their interactions with community members. As of March 16th NMIC moved to a remote work model in response to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. NMIC organizers have pivoted to digital organizing by scheduling tenant and leadership meetings using remote technology (e.g. Zoom) and contacting tenants regularly via phone and WhatsApp. Organizers continue to help tenant leaders develop communication protocols for their buildings so that tenants stay connected and supported during

this difficult time. Organizers also regularly reach out to tenants in buildings we are working with via phone and WhatsApp, and are in the process of disseminating a survey among the buildings we are working with to gather information on how the pandemic is affecting tenants, particularly their ability to pay rent, so that we can identify the evolving needs within our community and develop appropriate strategies in response.

Immigrant Opportunities

NMIC's Immigration Unit aims to bridge the gap in the access to justice for all immigrants in our community. Through immigration advocacy, NMIC aims to advance the economic, educational, and vocational opportunities afforded to those in need. NMIC proactively uses its community partners to ensure that community members are being efficiently and effectively connected to services they need. NMIC liaises with elected officials and their respective staffs to disseminate information about our various programmatic offerings and actively participates in forums, trainings, and community meetings that speak to current immigration legislation and legal issues that are relevant to our immigrant community members.

NMIC provides immigration application assistance to enable immigrants to apply for permanent residency, U and T visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, citizenship, applications for alien relatives, or other immigration benefits. In addition to screening community members for eligibility for immigration relief, NMIC staff help to complete and prepare applications for submission to USCIS. Staff are also able to assess clients' eligibility for other forms of ancillary relief and directly refer them to internal services offered at NMIC.

In addition to individual immigration assistance, NMIC hosts Community Education Workshops to provide legal information to a wider range of community members and increase social capital within the neighborhood. One notable workshop series has been the "Know Your Rights" trainings where immigration staff members provide educational workshops on immigrant rights issues relevant to specific communities or seasons. For example, in November 2019, the Immigration Unit hosted a Know Your Rights training on safe travel for legal permanent resident community members in advance of the holidays, which can be a time of increased travel for many families.

NMIC also collaborates with elected officials to participate in outreach events and street fairs that help community members connect to the services they need. For example, NMIC consistently participate in a monthly Constituent Service Night hosted by Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez. At these events, NMIC staff join other community-based organizations to present information on legal services offered at NMIC, and to connect community members with both legal and additional social services offered at the agency. Multiple staff members from different units within the Legal Department typically attend these presentations so community members with different legal issues (e.g. housing, immigration, consumer, etc.) can speak with staff members who have extensive experience within that issue. Staff have found that connecting community members to staff with subject matter expertise has been much more helpful than speaking with a general NMIC representative.

The trust that develops between our staff and community members leads to the discovery of other needs the specific client or a family members' might have. This is how our Supervising Immigration Attorney began working with Marco* (name changed to preserve anonymity), the son of an immigration client that the attorney had previously assisted, in 2016. Marco's mother is a survivor of domestic violence who NMIC attorneys helped to obtain legal status via a I-918 U Visa in April 2012. The agency continued to work with her to provide immigration assistance to her son, who was still in Mexico at the time.

Marco was born in February 1999 however, due to domestic violence, his mother fled to the United States with his sisters in April 2000 leaving Marco to be raised with his grandparents in Mexico when he was under a year old. When his mother was granted legal status in 2012, she was unable to file his application because she needed his father's signature, who was serving time in jail in Mexico. The only option for the family was to obtain a passport for Marco when he turned 18- which they promptly did with NMIC assistance.

NMIC then helped Marco file an application for U Visa status, which he was granted. In August 2019 Marco entered the country and staff helped him to file both an I-539 Application to Extend Non-Immigrant Status and an I-765: Employment Authorization application that same month. If granted an extension of status, Marco will potentially be able to fulfill eligibility requirements to

apply for legal permanent residency in the future. There were several complications with his I-539 application, including an instance during an interview with the National Visa Center where center staff could not find his application in their system. The Supervising Immigration Attorney worked closely with Marco throughout the process to overcome any challenges and was in constant contact with consulate to monitor the status of his application. Both NMIC staff and Marco are still waiting for an approval notice, however Marco is happy to have been reunited with his mother and sisters whom he had never met before in person. Though he was well supported by his grandparents in Mexico and spoke to his family often by phone, he felt lonely and is overjoyed to be reunited with his immediate family for the first time in his life.

Tenant Advocacy (Anti-Poverty)

This fiscal year the NMIC Housing Unit was able to broaden its capacity by expanding its housing advocacy work to better complement its legal eviction prevention services. Providing free civil legal assistance has been a cornerstone of NMIC's service model since its inception and is offered at all its offices in the Bronx, Washington Heights, and Manhattan Housing Court. In early 2020 the Housing Unit developed a staffing structure that allowed clients with housing advocacy issues (particularly landlord/tenant conflicts) to receive advice and council on a walk-in basis. Housing staff worked in close collaboration with other units, particularly the Case Coordination and Organizing teams who historically worked with the most clients in need of housing advocacy services, to develop a robust referral system and internal guidance. This initiative helped to solidify collaborative systems throughout the department while simultaneously providing a critical service for tenants in upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

The funding via the previously stated initiatives has expanded NMIC's capacity to respond to community needs as they arise. This has been exceptionally important during our current unprecedented reality where we have had to change to remote programing all while incorporating new services that have seen an increase demand due to the pandemic. We ask for your ongoing commitment in ensuring the continuation of NMIC's crucial services for over 14,000 New Yorkers by keeping their funding streams consistent in FY 21. We thank the City Council for taking the time to hear from the community. We look forward to serving the thousands of New Yorkers affected by COVID-19 with your continuing support.

New York City Council FY 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
City Council Committee on Finance
Testimony of Maria Policarpo, President of Local 1757, DC37
May 21, 2020

Good Day members of the City Council. My name is Maria Policarpo; I am President of DC37, Local 1757, which represents Assessors and I work as an Assessor with the NYC Tax Commission. Now more than ever, with the financial impact NYC faces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to prioritize funding for the hiring of additional Assessors in both the Department of Finance and the Tax Commission.

Staffing remains at crisis level with over twenty vacant districts in the Department of Finance. This is unacceptable and detrimental to the largest source of revenue for NYC. Assessors are responsible for overseeing the valuation of approximately 1,100,000 parcels within the five boroughs of NYC. There are hundreds of millions of dollars in uncollected revenue to capture which would be sustainable that could fund vital public services. Cell towers and billboards need regulation and monitoring; along with an audit process for those who do not report the income they produce. Physicals from alterations, new buildings, flip sales and condo conversions are being missed due to the lack of time an Assessor has to spend in the field and the large unmanageable districts they are responsible for.

The City continues to rely more and more on a flawed modeling system which generates poor values. The tax roll is supposed to be produced based on fairness, equity and transparency. Instead, there are increasing complaints from frustrated taxpayers because values are incorrect. The number of property tax appeals filed with the Tax Commission is 56,000 plus and counting. The current workforce is insufficient and is being overloaded.

The number of individuals eligible to retire in the near future calls for a line of succession to be addressed. The hiring of 100 additional Assessors will help to back fill the current vacancies and create smaller more manageable districts. The Assessor position is a hard to recruit title; therefore, we urge you not to miss the opportunity to hire individuals who have expressed an interest in the profession and move Civil Service Promotional Exam #9541 and Open Competitive Exam #9005 given in March 2019.

The impact of the shortage of assessment staff will be the loss of billions of dollars in tax revenue in the coming years along with tremendous liability incurred if property tax appeals are not settled. Local 1757 thanks you for your time and consideration.

Maria Spizuoco

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/22/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Maria Spizuoco and I work for Marquis Studios. Our office is located in Dumbo Brooklyn; we serve NYC students in every borough.

I have been with Marquis Studios for 6 years. During this time, I have brought dance to countless youth in Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx. The excitement the children feel when they are learning and have completed and performed their dance is palpable. Parents often tell me they were surprised that their child rehearsed at home; they also tell me they had no idea their child could perform the way they did.

The arts in schools are vital to children in communities throughout NYC, children who otherwise would not have access to learning music, dance, drama, visual arts, and poetry. Marquis studios has continued to provide remote learning opportunities to these children during the pandemic.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Maria Spizuoco
ED.M Dance Education



May 21, 2020

Marielys M., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

My name is Marielys Munoz and I am currently a senior at Marble Hill H.S. I grew up in The Bronx, and currently live in Manhattan with my foster family. The coaching provided by Fair Futures has provided me with the necessary support to be successful. During the pandemic, the coaching has provided me with the academic support necessary to overcome the challenges of remote learning. Besides providing me with academic and personal advice, my coach has assisted me with job placement information as well as escorting me to the DMV in order to get proper identification. My coach has encouraged me to be a better person and pushed me when I really felt like giving up. Fair Futures is the type of program that needs to be funded by our City Council and Mayor because it provides young people like me with the necessary social and emotional support that we need to move forward in life. The support of our coach before and after this pandemic is necessary, if we all plan on living in a successful city where all citizens matter.



**Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance**

**Executive Budget Hearing
Thursday, May 21 2020**

Submitted by C. Mario Russell
Director
Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services

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Good afternoon to Chairman Dromm and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. I am Mario Russell, Director of Immigrant and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding the work of Catholic Charities with immigrants and refugees in New York City.

You have heard testimony from our executive leadership about the impact of COVID-19 on the communities we serve, particularly immigrants and communities of color; it has been, is, and will be harsh, disproportionate, and lasting. Catholic Charities' connection to the immigrant and refugee community has a long history and today is as extensive as it is deep, with our Division serving 28,000 immigrants and refugees each year—through legal, resettlement, detention, integration, ESL, clinical, family reunification, children and court defense services—and providing information and referrals in over 86,000 calls to our immigration assistance hotlines. Through this extensive network of outreach, legal, and education services in New York City and Lower Hudson Valley communities, we come into contact with and have come to know and understand the many needs and realities facing workers, families, children who have recently arrived or are long-time residents with no status. In particular, our work with day laborer groups and work collectives in the Bronx and in Yonkers—our day to day engagement with them on workplace rights and safety—gives us a unique perspective on their needs and realities.

Catholic Charities' Immigrant and Refugee Services client base is 75% composed of individuals, children, workers, and families from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia, Jamaica, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Trinidad, and China. They represent the breadth of diversity of nationality, ethnicity, culture, and race that make New York City strong and unique. They are mostly from communities that, for the most part, live with significant

economic and social disadvantage. And they are our city's fabric, its "new" ancestors who will shape its economic growth, cultural life, and rich future.

I need not remind this Council—but it is critical to restate here—that the onslaught of COVID-19 in March 2020 was preceded by years of sustained legal, social, and economic assaults on immigrant families and vulnerable newcomers. Whether it was curtailing the reunification of families and refugees, eliminating important asylum protections such as those for victims of domestic violence, setting a moratorium on prosecutorial discretion for long-time residents, pulling out the stops on enforcement and detention and deportation, commanding the judge corps to accelerate and diminish case review, force the border separation of children from parents, or raising the bar on public charge, these policies—and there are many more—have had the cumulative effect of marginalizing immigrants economically, socially, and legally.

As a result, leading into 2020 and during the beginning months of the year, the clients we worked with reported already far higher levels of anxiety, distress, uncertainty, instability in family life, economic insecurity, lack of income, and food insecurity, than before. This has effectively acted as a pre-existing condition on immigrants, rendering them more vulnerable to the many effects of COVID-19 and intensifying the health, social, economic, and financial challenges that, with each day, have become increasingly dire.

It is for these very reasons that we urge the Council, today, to renew its discretionary spending commitments in two important areas—legal defense for unaccompanied children and integration assistance—and continue to commit itself to the critical work it has undertaken in several crucial areas, including legal assistance to children in schools, deportation defense for separated families and adults, and the coordination of legal services through the hotline referral system. I have laid out in discrete sections in my written testimony the value of each of these programs for the clients and communities served, the value of each for New York City, and the staggering harm discontinuation—pulling the lifeline—will have on them, and by reflection, on us. The bottom line is this: this Council has always demonstrated its belief in the fundamental truth of what immigrants and refugees are for this City and for this nation—putting its actions behind words and supporting assistance to over 82,000, just through the work of Catholic Charities in the past 6 years. This work is the patient but real work of integration, of welcome, and of building a just and compassionate society. In time of crisis—such as now—we remind you of this sacred work, which you must not abandon but, to the contrary, must stand by more than ever.



**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Discretionary Priorities

ICARE

May 2020

Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort // ICARE

- Especially in this difficult and challenging time, when children who have been reunified with parents—and many who are with sponsors and other custodians—continue to be at social, educational, and health risk, it is critical for New York City to maintain and increase its support to a child-welfare and care program that it has built, nurtured, and proven to be a model of success for providing meaningful and direct care to thousands of children, so that they become successful and productive members of our community. Abandoning these children at this time—who already are excluded from federal and state supports—would run counter to core values of this city and would leave hundreds of children's legal cases without representation.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants.

- Places vulnerable new child-arrivals to the United States on a pathway to permanent residency, social integration, and economic success.
- Connects young immigrants and their families with social services beyond legal representation, including school and health insurance registration, access to medical and mental health care, English-language learning, and vocational training and job assistance.
- Without a lawyer, only 5% of children avoid deportation. With a lawyer, 92% of cases avoid deportation.
- Connects children to badly needed psycho-social and physical health resources

Value of program for New York City.

- Since 2014, the City has been a national leader in the movement to protect children from deportation, establishing ICARE as the first major municipal funding for lawyers for unaccompanied minors.
- The City's investment ensured that New York has always been ready to respond to major humanitarian crises affecting immigrant children.

- i. In 2018, ICARE attorneys represented the hundreds of children in New York who had been separated from their parents at the border.
 - ii. In 2020, ICARE attorneys are connecting children and families to life-saving medical services through the Catholic Charities medical-legal partnership with Montefiore Hospital, Terra Firma.
- Stronger social supports that come with legal services for immigrant youth strengthen our neighborhoods and communities by connecting youth and young adults to opportunities for education, medical care, housing, and vocational training.
- NYC has built an integrated connection to psycho-social and physical health resources with Montefiore Hospital // Terra Firma

Risk to Catholic Charities clients. To date, since 2014:

- Catholic Charities has represented 404 children and adults with children in court proceedings, with 90% or more resolved favorably
- Next year we would take 25 additional cases and maintain litigation on 240 more
- Number of staff tied to cases (more or less): 4, but 7 including portions of some
- Number of cases orphaned without funding as a result of loss of funding: 280



**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Discretionary Priorities

ESL

May 2020

English as a Second Language

- COVID-19 has made it more clear that preserving funding for adult literacy programs in New York City is critical. In this time of vulnerability for immigrants and refugees—those left behind by federal, state, and city supports—literacy funding will allow for stable, continued support by our International Center in areas of integration that permit its students to support their children’s schoolwork, successfully communicate at work, advocate for themselves and their families, and be meaningful participants in their communities. Catholic Charities seeks to maintain its modest discretionary funding so that our students, who are especially vulnerable at this time, can continue working toward their goals of becoming productive workers and supportive parents at this difficult time for our city.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants

- These programs are designed to help New Yorkers gain the literacy skills and credentials they need to successfully integrate into their communities and increase their employment and earnings potential.
- Adult literacy programs are frequently the main connection that immigrant adult learners have to the wider network of New York City’s programs and services.
- Non-English speaking parents are being supported through our ESOL classes, leaving them better prepared to take on a greater role in the education of their school-aged children, a role that has become necessary in our current environment. There are thousands of adult literacy students and prospective learners that are home, scared, and in need of the support that a trusted teacher provides them.
- In addition to programming on-site, we serve about 300 vulnerable adult learners in underserved communities around the city. Many of these learners are unable to leave their neighborhoods because of fear around their status.
- An integral part of our programming is pairing our students individually with trained volunteers for 10 weeks to improve communication skills, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. This partnership is a uniquely valuable resource for students to develop friendships and expand their professional networks.

- We are living at a moment when the need for digital literacy and health literacy; the ability for parents to independently support their children's education; and the ability to access, understand, and interpret complex information; has never been more apparent.

Value of program for New York City

- CCCS serves over 1,000 adult learners each year. Many of our students are grocery store workers, delivery workers, and home care workers who are risking their lives to maintain their livelihoods and to care for us all. These students provide key and critical work in our city's economic infrastructure.
- Adult literacy programs and providers are part of the larger human services sector, providing critical services to millions of New Yorkers. This sector must be kept whole as human services providers will be on the frontlines as our City responds, reopens and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Adult literacy education – and the additional support services that adult literacy programs provide – will play a vital role in the coming year to help stabilize the lives of many of our most essential, yet vulnerable, fellow New Yorkers.
- The educational gains made during this time can prepare our adult learners to help restart the economy instead of leaving them even further behind.

Risk to Catholic Charities students

- This is our fourth year of DYCD-funded programming and since inception in 2016, 500 students have been served
- This year CC has served 135 students and is currently serving 40 of those students remotely
- This programming supports portions of 3 FT positions
- Students CC would be able to serve again next year: : 150



**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Budget Priorities

ActionNYC in Schools

May 2020

ActionNYC in Schools

- ActionNYC in Schools launched in April of 2016, with CCCS as the sole inaugural, and current, legal service provider for programming that supports vulnerable immigrant youth and their families in the safe spaces of public schools throughout the five boroughs. In partnership with MOIA, collaborating with localized outreach partners, and through DOE, CCCS engages school partners reporting high foreign-born and recently arrived middle and high school students by providing on-site legal screenings and full representation before NYC family courts, USCIS, and the NY Immigration Court. Our services provide immigrant youth with time sensitive representation in age-out SIJS, support mixed status families to gain greater stability, increase economic mobility during a time of expanding need, and close a gap in legal services through a sustainable partnership with public schools. In April 2020, despite a pending proposal before the HRA, in response to COVID-19, MOIA granted ActionNYC in Schools a one-time, six-month contract extension through December 2020. The students and families served through ActionNYC in Schools rely on this programming, which provides access to exemplary legal representation and a direct conduit, within a trusted space, for referral supports ensuring effective community integration. Loss of city-based support for this legal services program would be devastating as these students and their families are often overlooked given the necessary focus on detained and removal defense representation.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants.

- Co-locates legal services for immigrant youth and their families throughout the trusted NYC public school system.
- Closes the family court representation gap for non-removal age-out Special Immigrant Juvenile Status applicants.
- Places vulnerable new child-arrivals to the United States on a pathway to permanent residency, social integration, and economic success.
- Connects young immigrants and their families with social services beyond legal representation, health insurance registration, access to medical and mental health care, English-language learning, cash and food assistance programming, safe housing options, and vocational training and job assistance.

Value of program for New York City.

- Since 2016, ActionNYC has provided access to high-caliber legal services through the City's immigrant trusted partners – hospitals, community based organizations, and schools.
- Since 2016, the City has continued to innovate ActionNYC to meet the needs of the diverse immigrant communities the programming serves, expanding with demand, serving as a first responder collaborative in crises and during mass-application changes in law.
 - iii. ActionNYC providers present a connectivity network for referral and capacity building programming, including responding as a collective for TPS deadlines and threatening DACA renewal expirations as well as scalable screening delivery in response to federal executive orders.
 - iv. The City continues to add community driven partners to ActionNYC programming, specifically for the in Schools Project:
 - local CBOs partnered with public schools for outreach and appointment scheduling,
 - NYC shelters for expanded service delivery and referral capacity,
 - partnering with the Administration of Children Services to serve abandoned, abused, and neglected youth within the NYC foster care system through directed referrals,
 - expanding to include *pro bono* NYC firm partners, with long-standing CCCS partnerships serving immigrant youth, for representation expansion of ActionNYC in Schools for SIJS eligible children.
- Stronger social supports that come with legal services for immigrant youth strengthen our neighborhoods and communities by connecting youth and young adults to opportunities for education, medical care, housing, and vocational training.
- NYC has built integrated connection to legal services through NYC public school partners, engaging principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, community school representatives, and parents to expand access to justice for NYC immigrant youth through the City's trusted school system.

Risk to Catholic Charities clients. To date, since 2016:

- Catholic Charities has served 4,312 immigrant youth and mixed status family members through ActionNYC in Schools,
- We have accepted 1,065 new cases, ranging from DACA applicants and green card renewals to the full gamut of complex affirmative representation and removal defense cases,
- We have made approximately 650 social services referrals for immigrant families served through ActionNYC,
- We have provided 250 clinics at over 45 school partner sites, and after immediately implementing remote assistance for immigrant families due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have provided nearly 100 screenings for individuals from 12 DOE schools,

- Next year we would continue to employ a universal representation model for all affirmative applicants as well as increase removal defense capacity and maintain representation on nearly 500 cases,
- Number of staff tied to cases: 9 FTEs, including some supervision in kind from state and foundational contracts
- Number of cases orphaned without funding as a result of loss of funding: 300

**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Budget Priorities

ActionNYC Hotline

May 2020

ActionNYC Hotline

- Since 2016, leveraging its in-house expertise on immigration, CCCS has operated the ActionNYC hotline and appointment-scheduling system. Funded by the City through the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the ActionNYC hotline provides valuable information about immigration benefits, makes appointments for legal services with ActionNYC providers throughout the five boroughs, and connects callers with other legal service providers. The hotline, which can be accessed by calling 311 and saying “ActionNYC” or directly by calling 800-354-0365, operates from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. on weekdays and currently answers an average of 2,000 calls per month. Our hotline operators speak English, Spanish, and Russian, and also use a language service line to answer calls in up to 200 languages.

Over the past 4 years, the ActionNYC hotline has become a crucial resource for New York City immigrants to obtain information about immigration developments and to schedule an appointment with an ActionNYC provider for free, safe immigration legal help. The ActionNYC hotline is also funded and has developed the necessary infrastructure to expand operations in emergency situations, and to work with partners to offer broader, live coverage when needed. Our knowledgeable attorneys regularly train and update ActionNYC hotline staff on legal developments, and regularly partner with multilingual media and other providers to provide important and accurate information to immigrant communities by hosting televised phone banks on emergent issues. For example, in the past twelve months, in partnership with MOIA, ONA, the New York Immigration Coalition, other non-profits, and Univision and El Diario, the ActionNYC hotline participated in 6 phone banks that answered 2,622 calls about public charge regulations, immigration raids, standby guardianship, and drivers’ licenses for immigrants, providing accurate information and legal referrals. Two of the phone banks culminated with expert discussions on Facebook Live, reaching thousands of viewers.

Since mid-March, the ActionNYC hotline has been functioning remotely and has quickly pivoted to providing information and referral to immigrants on COVID-19-related needs beyond legal representation, including access to Medicaid and health insurance, unemployment benefits, paid leave, food assistance, eviction stays, etc.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants.

- By connecting immigrants and their families with free legal services through trusted ActionNYC providers, the ActionNYC hotline reduces the likelihood that

immigrants are defrauded or placed at risk of deportation by fraudulent practitioners.

- By leveraging CCCS' in-house immigration expertise, the ActionNYC hotline has continuously been responsive to developments affecting New York's immigrant communities, such as, for example, in June and July 2019, when the hotline remained open on weekends to provide support and Know Your Rights information to callers terrified by the announcement of massive ICE raids.
- By continuing to clarify the effects of public charge changes, the ActionNYC hotline reduces the likelihood that immigrants and citizens not subject to public charge forgo important benefits, including food stamps and Medicaid.

Value of program for New York City.

- Since 2016, the ActionNYC hotline has provided close to 75,000 New Yorkers with accurate information about immigration issues, appointments with ActionNYC providers, and referrals to reputable non-profit legal service providers funded by the City to assist immigrants.
- ActionNYC hotline operations increase access to accurate legal information, as well as help eligible immigrants access important safety net benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic, including food banks, health and mental health services, etc. The health, safety and well-being of immigrants increase the health, safety and well-being of all New Yorkers.
- ActionNYC hotline has been deployed to keep New Yorkers informed of the benefits of participating in important public programs, including NYC ID, Green Light drivers' licenses, and the 2020 Census. Participation by immigrants in these programs benefits all New York City residents.
- As described above, the ActionNYC hotline leverages attorney expertise and technical and administrative infrastructure to regularly partner with City agencies, the media, and legal staff from other non-profits to set up large-scale, televised informational phone banks in response to developments that affect immigrant communities. Phone banks are hosted at the hotline during primetime hours on 1-2 consecutive evenings; during this time, CCCS staff and volunteers answer hundreds of calls, providing accurate information and referrals to non-profit legal service providers. During phone banks, our attorneys impart information about immigration policies and developments to a larger audience through live interviews, and some phone banks culminate with a Facebook Live panel of experts answering questions posed online. These large-scale events reach thousands of New Yorkers to clarify complex immigration policies and legal developments, reduce anxiety, warn against *notario* fraud, and provide referrals to free legal services.

Risk to Catholic Charities:

- The ActionNYC and ONA hotlines work synergistically to increase our capacity to respond to crises affecting immigrants; half of this trained, efficient workforce and all of the effort put into training staff and acquiring technology would be lost.
- Number of staff tied to ActionNYC hotline: 5.75 FTE



**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Budget Priorities

Legal Aid Immigrant Opportunity Initiative Sub-Contract

May 2020

Immigrant Opportunity Initiative ~ Separated Families and Adults with Children

- In the summer of 2018, a historical federal cruelty exploded at the southern border and simultaneously in NYC as hundreds of thousands of children were torn and transferred to Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters across the country away from their young parents who remained in ICE custody in Texas as well as Arizona, with several hundred immigrant youth moved to New York. Through the strong foundation built by the City's ICARE program, legal service providers banded together, joining forces with their long known *pro bono* firm partners to immediately address this vulnerable community's needs. These families, known as adults with children, are fleeing unconscionable persecution, extreme violence, and an utter lack of protection from their governments. In the fall of 2018, the City's Human Resource Administration stepped in to support this life-saving legal service provision, and for the first time, offered baseline funding for legal services *pro bono* programming dedicated to immigrant representation. To date, the migration of young families, with infants and toddlers, fleeing their homes to avail themselves at our borders, has only abated due to increased US enforcement policies preventing their entry. Despite facing immigration detention camps in Mexico, forced returns to countries where they fear for their lives, inhumane treatment processing entry to the United States, and deplorable access to effective legal representation, these children and young parents continue to seek refuge in our country, hoping to make NYC their forever home. Abandoning these families at this time—who already are excluded from federal and state supports—would run counter to core values of this city and would leave hundreds of children and young parents' legal cases without representation.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants.

- Places vulnerable new child- and family-arrivals to the United States on a pathway to permanent residency, social integration, and economic success.
- Connects young immigrants and their families with social services beyond legal representation, including school and health insurance registration, access to medical and mental health care, English-language learning, and vocational training and job assistance.

- Connects children and parents, many of whom who faced extreme abuse and cruelty, to badly needed psycho-social and physical health resources.
- Preserves due process for newly arriving families facing enforcement under the fiercest federal regime in history by increasing access to representation through rapid response programming.
- Offers exemplary, scalable collaboration responsive to emerging needs such as frivolous challenges to SIJS eligibility by federal adjudicators infringing on state family court discretion and rapid network creation to ensure access to City resources during crises such as the current global pandemic.

Value of program for New York City.

- Since 2014, the City has been a national leader in the movement to protect children from deportation, establishing ICARE as the first major municipal funding for lawyers for unaccompanied minors.
- The City's investment ensured that New York has always been ready to respond to major humanitarian crises affecting immigrant children.
 - v. In 2018, ICARE attorneys, with the support of *pro bono* partners, represented the hundreds of children in New York who had been separated from their parents at the border.
 - vi. In 2020, IOI AWC attorneys continue to connect children and families to life-saving medical services through the Catholic Charities medical-legal partnership with Montefiore Hospital, Terra Firma.
 - NYC has built integrated connection to psycho-social and physical health resources with Montefiore Hospital // Terra Firma.
- Stronger social supports that come with legal services for immigrant youth and families strengthen our neighborhoods and communities by connecting children and their parents to opportunities for education, medical care, housing, and vocational training.
- IOI-AWC partners the City's preeminent immigrant youth legal service providers with trusted *pro bono* firms, who under the supervision and mentorship of LSPs, increase direct representation capacity for this ever-growing population of vulnerable families.
 - To continue streamlining referral processes with an eye toward continuous expansion of our own capacity for supervision, the CCCS Pro Bono Project offers existing and new pro bono partners the opportunity to host signature events where volunteers receive both legal training in assessing legal relief and developing cultural humility while also serving clients under the supervision of CCCS through small-scale clinics.
 - Incorporating our pro bono partners in the secondary screening process will broaden our ability to place cases effectively on a tighter timeline, an essential component to serving young people who face impending deadlines for asylum or age-out risks, particularly during the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 crisis.

Risk to Catholic Charities clients. Through this funding, to date, since 2018:

- Catholic Charities has accepted over 330 removal defense cases representing unaccompanied children and families seeking asylum, with over 100 matters supported by *pro bono* partners,
- We have engaged over 300 *pro bono* volunteer attorneys, trained over 50% of them, and continue to receive new capacity opportunities through *pro bono* partnerships, who specifically seek to support UAC and AWC representation,
- Number of cases orphaned without funding as a result of loss of funding: 340



**Immigrant and Refugee Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

NYC Council // Budget Priorities

IOI - CILEC

May 2020

Immigrant Opportunity Initiative - Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (IOI - CILEC)

- Since August 2016, CCCS has received IOI funding through the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC), a partnership with the Urban Justice Center/TakeRoot Justice, Catholic Migration Services, and Make the Road New York, to provide a wide range of free immigration legal services to indigent New York City residents. In addition to legal consultation and representation in straightforward immigration cases, CILEC attorneys handle a wide variety of complex cases, including asylum, U and T visas for victims of serious crimes and trafficking, special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS) for children who have been abandoned, neglected or abused by their parents, self-petitions under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), removal proceedings, bond hearings, motions to reopen, appeals, and federal court litigation.

CILEC's partnership with grassroots, base-building groups is especially designed to reach under-represented immigrant groups in New York City. Thus, CILEC accepts referrals from eight base-building groups that serve different immigrant communities: African Communities Together, Chinese Staff and Workers' Association, Damayan Migrant Workers Association, Desis Rising Up and Moving, MinKwon Center for Community Action, National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, New Immigrant Community Empowerment, and Workers' Justice Project. In addition, CILEC accepts referrals of complex and removal defense cases from the City's ActionNYC programs, which generally handle only straightforward matters.

In 2018, in recognition of its valuable work, CILEC was awarded additional funding to take on more complex and removal defense cases in response to the rising need caused by increased immigration enforcement. To date, CCCS has served 2,238 New York City residents under the CILEC program.

In addition to immigration legal services, several CILEC partners provide assistance with employment legal matters, including workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, unpaid wages, family & medical leave, etc. The base-building groups provide outreach to immigrant communities and case management support on ongoing immigration and employment legal cases. The CILEC partners also join efforts to organize and provide trainings, clinics and community presentations, a testament to the effectiveness of this collaborative. Preserving the CILEC model is crucial at this time, when the relentless rollout of federal policies that hurt immigrants and refugees is unequivocal in its intent, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic that should bring us closer together: the exclusion of minorities and vulnerable immigrants, the division of families, the undermining and scapegoating of immigrant workers, the dismantling of due process, and the turning back of fundamental principles of human rights, family unity and refugee protection.

Value and purpose of program for immigrants.

- Provides wrap-around services to immigrant New Yorkers, particularly those in hard-to-reach communities that trust and turn to our partner base-building groups.
- Connects immigrant New Yorkers to both immigration and employment legal services, including representation in complex immigration cases not available through the ActionNYC network.
- Provides the opportunity to offer legal consultations by phone and video conferencing to members of the communities served by our partner base-building groups. For example, last month, African Services Together facilitated a number of referrals for legal services to CCCS, the first of many "virtual legal clinics."

Value of program for New York City.

- Since FY'2017, the CILEC collaborative has provided effective immigration and employment legal assistance to thousands of the City's immigrants.
- By partnering with grassroots base-building groups, the CILEC legal partners have served hard to-reach communities through one-on-one lawyering, community clinics, and informational workshops.
- CILEC partners are now organizing to provide presentations in response to the increased demand for information from immigrants who are concerned that their eligibility for various immigration benefits might be affected by the changing COVID-19 circumstances, and/or are confused as to when their cases might proceed due to temporary closures and delays at federal agencies.

Risk to Catholic Charities clients. To date, since late 2016:

- We have provided services to 2,238 New Yorkers, assisting many of them with multiple matters.
- Number of staff tied to cases: 9.3 FTEs
- Number of cases orphaned without funding as a result of loss of funding: 750+

May 19, 2020

NYC Council

Dear Honorable City Council Members

I understand that the City Council is conducting hearings before they pass the budget, I believe this crisis offers an unprecedented opportunity to shift the conversation around where and how the city invests in safety, schools and the environment.

Mayor de Blasio's proposed budget includes cuts to essential social services across the board, and outright cancellation of the summer youth employment program. What's not cut, though, is the NYPD's bloated funding. This is not just a crisis response but comes against a backdrop of consistently increased spending on policing under de Blasio—from \$4.6 billion in 2014 to \$5.6 billion in 2019—even as crime has dropped to historic lows. The services the Mayor wants to cut now are services New Yorkers depend on to be healthy and safe, and are especially critical to Black, brown, and low-income New Yorkers—the very same communities the NYPD criminalizes, abuses, and locks in cages while leaving alone white and higher-income New Yorkers. There is also a real danger that the budget as currently proposed will result in the police being more integrated into social services—which we know is especially dangerous for communities of color.

I also am concerned about prioritizing quality education for all children and making the city a shining example of a green city vs a car centered culture with options for walking, biking and mass transit and prioritizing vulnerable populations.

What we need is housing, health care, jobs, education and the environment. Will you commit to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections? What is your idea of budget justice for NYC? What are you willing to fight for to make our city a safer and healthier place for everyone?

Sincerely yours,

Mark Graham



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of The Arts and Arts Education. We are Mark Kross and Louise Rogers, the founders and directors of Jazz WaHi, Inc.

Jazz WaHi, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, promoting jazz performance and music education in Washington Heights. Our mission is to connect jazz musicians with an audience of jazz lovers and to expand that audience through accessible performances and educational opportunities. Among our programming are the Annual Washington Heights Jazz Festival, the WaHi Wednesday Weekly Jazz Jam (both of which are partially funded by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation), The Jazz WaHi Vocal Series, Random Acts of Jazz, The Jazz for Kids Concert Series, and various clinics and music lessons within our community. During this time of the pandemic we are also supporting both musicians and local businesses by sponsoring and producing live concerts on the businesses' Facebook pages.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Mark Kross
Managing Director
Jazz WaHi, Inc.

Louise Rogers
Artistic Director
Jazz WaHi, Inc.



P.O. Box 310482
Brooklyn, NY 11231

May 23, 2020

Daniel Dromm
Chair
Committee on Finance
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007

Re: Testimony for Committee on Finance – Opposition to Funding Cuts to Department of Parks and Recreation

Dear Chair Dromm,

When parks thrive, people prosper. Under normal circumstances, we visit parks and open spaces in large numbers, in these current times, we flock to them for rest and relaxation, to heal our minds and restore our broken bodies. Parks are essential for our wellbeing. Therefore, they must be cared for and protected.

City parks workers or gardeners, urban parks ranger or parks enforcement patrol, they are the ones on the frontline helping to make this happen. Seven days a week, 365 days a year, they show up to protect, maintain, and keep safe our parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers. In Red Hook, they oversee and care for Coffey Park, Valentino Pier, Bush Clinton playground, ball fields and soccer fields, and approximately 40 other green spaces in District 6. They are committed and they are loyal. They ensure that our little green slice of heaven is accessible, clean, and healthy for Red Hook and the surrounding communities.

We understand NYC finances are under strain, but so is the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Decade after decade, in good times and bad, DPR's maintenance costs continue to increase while their allocation remains stagnant, hovering around half a percentage point of NYC's budget each fiscal year. Only through vigorous advocacy last year was DPR able to realize an increase in their budget for the first time in decades. Our parks and open spaces have improved with this investment, with more workers to care for our gardens, manage forestry projects, host recreation events, and patrol park spaces, and so much more. But, with Covid-19, the burdens are greater so that even more support is needed because volunteer groups like Red Hook Conservancy which would have contributed support are sidelined, no longer able to help with park maintenance, beautification projects, and program planning and implementation. There is no timeline for when volunteers will return, thereby compounding what is already a difficult case and placing even greater burdens on our park workers.

Clearly, this is not the time to roll back the modest gain DPR has made and the benefits our parks and open spaces have enjoyed. Now more than ever we ask you, councilmembers, to be resolute and committed to our parks and to NYC. Now is the time to show that a healthier NYC is possible. Red Hook



Red Hook
Conservancy
Vibrant Parks & Recreational Spaces

P.O. Box 310482
Brooklyn, NY 11231

Conservancy is committed to supporting our greenspaces. We still communicate with Red Hook park staff, provide moral support, and plan projects for when we return. We will continue to give our time, labor, and funds to our parks. We ask you to do the same. **Invest in our park workers**, so that they can show up at the start of the new fiscal year to continue the work of protecting, maintaining, safeguarding and promoting our parks, recreation centers, and gardens for us Red Hookers and all New Yorkers.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

Marlene Pantin
Executive Director
Red Hook Conservancy



**Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20, 2020**

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. Marquis Studios is founded on the belief that the arts are essential to education and that all students deserve access to quality arts programs. We have witnessed the positive impact creative thinking and expression have on students and families in our programs; artistically, academically and socially. We ask that you reconsider the proposed budget cuts to the Department of Education, which affects arts vendors like Marquis Studios.

Marquis Studios was founded in 1977 as a multi-disciplinary organization providing arts education services to 40,000 students annually, in Pre-K through 12th grade of all ability levels. We currently work in over 170 New York City public schools in all five boroughs. We have a strong partnership with District 75; approximately one third of our programs serve students with IEPs. Through collaborative school partnerships, we provide a full spectrum of visual and performing arts residencies taught by a team of 90 professional Teaching Artists. Marquis Studios provides in-school residencies, after-school residencies and parent-child workshops to high needs school communities.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Marquis Studios has been proactive and innovative in our response to continue providing students with remote arts programs. As the country recovers from the pandemic in the coming months and years, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City. Our teaching artists are ready and committed to continue partnering with schools and community-based organizations to take steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding for the arts.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts through arts programming such as ours. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Paula Heitman, Executive Director

Marquis Studios Administrative Staff

Testimony for Capital Budget Hearing

On behalf of Black Veterans for Social Justice, a 41 year-old multi-service agency in Bedford Stuyvesant, we are directly affected by the potential reduction in the City's capital budget which directly affects tenants and clients. We are grateful for this opportunity to describe them to the City Council.

Black Veterans for Social Justice operates shelters for the homeless, employment programs for homeless veterans and the community, and manages low income and supportive housing. As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, an estimated 40% cut to the capital budget over each of the last two years will affect our ability to partner with the City to start up shelters for homeless people and to re-develop 52 units of low income housing for various supported population in Central Brooklyn. Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people on the streets. We hope the City uses every available tool to ensure funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical housing and service programs to create more housing opportunities for homeless New Yorkers.

Housing is a critical component of healthcare, and a safe place to live minimizes the use of emergency rooms and hospital wards by vulnerable communities. In the COVID crisis we face, housing is a way to provide more people with a safe place to live. As we approach Memorial Day, Black Veterans for Social Justice also hopes the City remembers those who sacrificed and died to keep our nation safe and the American way of life secure. Maintaining that trust for those who served is a vital component of our social safety net.

Thank you and God Bless America.



**Center for
Family Life
in Sunset Park**

SCO Family of Services

TESTIMONY

Finance Committee Hearing

“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative: Worker Cooperatives as an Essential Model for Business Sustainability, Recovery and Resilience”

Presented to

New York City Council, Committee on Small Business

Hon. Daniel Dromm, Chair

Thursday, May 21, 2020

Prepared By:

Maru Bautista, Director, Cooperative Development Program

Center for Family Life/SCO Family of Services

Center for Family Life

443 39th St., Brooklyn, NY 11232

Phone: 718-633-4823

Good afternoon, Chairperson Dromm, and the distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Maru Bautista, and I am the Director in the Cooperative Development Program at the Center for Family Life (CFL), a 40-year old social service organization based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. CFL has been part of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) since its inception in 2014. We are deeply grateful for the support that City Council has committed to worker cooperative development to fight economic inequality in New York City.

Since 2006, CFL has provided tailored and long-term business incubation and technical assistance services to more than 20 worker-owned cooperative businesses in service sectors including cleaning and childcare. Since 2012, we have also trained 46 community-based organizations in cooperative business development, many of whom have since developed worker cooperatives. CFL-supported cooperatives have generated over \$15 million and helped stabilize the families of more than 500 workers in low-income communities. Worker-owners in the cooperative businesses we currently partner with are primarily immigrant women who are English Language Learners. Among the cooperatives CFL has supported, 76% of worker-owners are Spanish-speaking, 83% are women, 73% have high school education or less, and 72% are parents. Prior to joining a cooperative, the vast majority of these workers have struggled to make ends meet by cobbling together low-wage gigs, often in exploitative and unsafe conditions. As small business owners in worker cooperatives, these workers have been able to create better jobs for themselves and their communities, establishing a path to their family's economic stability, and building the skills and knowledge to take on leadership positions in their small businesses and communities. In the worker cooperatives we support in the cleaning sector, for instance, workers on average see their wages double after joining the cooperative. In a 2019 CFL survey, the majority of worker-owners reported that joining a cooperative had enabled them to become more financially independent and to establish savings. The Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative is not only helping start worker cooperatives, but is at the forefront of business model innovation to bring worker ownership to scale in communities historically underrepresented in small business ownership. At CFL, we developed Up & Go (upandgo.coop), a cooperatively-owned web app through which worker cooperatives from across the city jointly market their services, and Brightly® cleaning, the country's first worker cooperative franchise; these scaling initiatives provide shared branding, startup toolkits, office infrastructure, and business supports to reduce the barriers for worker-owners to startup and sustain successful cooperative businesses.

Despite the growth and strength of these cooperative businesses and their members, they are facing grave financial impacts from the current COVID-19 crisis. While CFL has modified many of our programs to continue to provide services in this difficult time, offering remote technical assistance and trainings, the worker-owners with whom we work do not have the same luxury. Many of the domestic work cooperatives provide services such as home cleaning and have been deemed non-essential under the New York State on PAUSE order. The cleaning cooperatives we support saw a 100% loss in income for their residential cleaning services since April 2020. Amidst this crushing financial pressure and absent robust and accessible public aid, CFL and our WCBDI partners are providing critical rapid-response and longer-term planning services to help worker-owners, their families, and their businesses survive. CFL is helping Brightly cleaning cooperatives adapt by expanding to specialized commercial cleaning services as

a new line of business, including accessing training and navigating certification and equipment requirements, so that worker-owners can safely secure income.

The resiliency of the Brightly cleaning cooperatives, who are a multi-outlet group, is founded in their shared business infrastructure: there is a brand and a customer base that can be leveraged when conditions allow for return to market. Brightly cooperatives, together, benefit from economies of scale and overall, are able to lower their costs of operation, including their shared back office systems, which are currently helping them keep their businesses afloat through this financial hardship. As they pivot their business model to include specialized cleaning services, and adapt to a new reality when doing residential cleaning, their online tech platform will allow them to design effective customer engagement strategies, and continue to remain competitive in the market.

The Brightly Cooperative Franchise Model is a model built for scale:

- For low wealth communities, having the structure and materials that come with the franchise system has helped to ensure that there is an orderly corporate structure, supplies, and system of operations that does not rapidly degrade in an uncertain and unpredictable market environment.
- There is a brand and a customer base that can be leveraged when conditions allow for return to market.
- Worker-owners have essentially no distance between customer engagement and business strategy actors. Worker-owners can gauge market stress through committee analysis of sales and cancellation data, gauge their customers' interest in face to face encounters and directly influence strategy around positioning, marketing product delivery, pricing, etc.
- There is the ability to engage in planning around the market opportunities because there is a committee structure that allows for multiple business processes to happen simultaneously. In market forward times, this can promote creativity around exploiting new market opportunities, and in challenging times, this can be the key to identifying new opportunities, for example, COVID cleaning, that the organization can rapidly train for, obtain supplies for, etc. to exploit as soon as the market reopens.
- A multi-outlet group can build reserves over time and they can use these difficult times to break-test the reserves and their distribution plan.
- A multi-outlet group can use very difficult market conditions to "break test" the operations plans and supply chain, discover weaknesses and recalibrate.

Funding for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative is enabling us to provide worker-owners in low-income communities with both these emergency response services and longer-term supports to help their businesses and communities remain resilient through disasters like the current pandemic. We stand ready to scale our successful cooperative franchise model with the support of the City Council, and to enable low wealth and immigrant communities across New York City to participate in commercial cleaning and other franchise concepts as a pathway to economic recovery and prosperity.

We thank you, and urge continued support from New York City Council for worker cooperative development in Fiscal Year 2021. This commitment will sustain and expand transformational small business ownership opportunities for workers as an essential part of the recovery of our beloved city.

Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge you to reject the FY2021 Budget proposal.

The mayor's executive budget does not serve the people of New York City; in fact, this budget includes over \$3 billion in cuts and tax revenues losses. The severe budgetary gaps will have an immediate and adverse effect on a whole range of services that New Yorkers rely on, such as public education and the city's summer youth employment program.

This budget is a slap in the face to communities across the city, whose most urgent needs are health justice and economic recovery. Instead of funding local health initiatives to increase hospital capacity and expand access to COVID-19 contact tracing and testing, the mayor's budget prioritises the expansion of mass incarceration and domestic militarization. This cruel and callous extraction of public resources will only exacerbate health inequalities within the city and further contribute to an already hyper-violent system of surveillance and control.

Through this budget, the mayor is demonstrating his allegiance. His allegiance is not to Black, brown, and marginalised New Yorkers, whose communities continue to be devastated by the spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent expansion of racist policing and jailing to "enforce public health measures". Instead, he pledges his allegiance to the prison industrial complex.

I will conclude my statement with comments from Free Them All For Public Health, who unlike the mayor, are tirelessly working to protect and promote harm reduction in communities that are most affected by this devastating pandemic.

"The only way to recover from our current crisis is through investing in what communities have been asking for over the course of decades: affordable, low-income housing; free transit; youth programs; improvements to NYCHA; and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recover, but stay healthy and thrive.

Mayor De Blasio must stop the war against Black, brown, and marginalized New Yorkers, especially in the Bronx and Brooklyn, where [arrests and jailing rates are highest](#). We need to stop the steady and unaccountable budget increases in policing and jailing, while pressuring the NYPD, DAs, Judges, and the DOC to free our neighbors, now."

It is your moral obligation to reject the current budget proposal and instead fight to fund key services that will save thousands of lives.

Regards,
Mary Sullivan

Matthew Turkle

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Matthew Turkle, and I am a recent graduate of the Master's program in Educational Theatre at City College and a future theatre teacher.

Theatre has always been vastly important to me in my own life, and in the lives of my students and colleagues. Theatre has the power to bridge gaps between cultures and communities. It can reach all types of learners, teach important life skills, and allow for vital self-expression. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. As a hopeful and future theatre teacher in NYC schools, I depend on budgetary allocations to the arts in order to give my students the education and experiences they deserve. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Matthew Turkle

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council Committee Public Testimony on the FY21 Budget

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Daniel Dromm
From: Maureen Fleming
Date: May 21, 2020

Dear Councilmember Torres,

Thank you for your leadership to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in New York City. While we defer to public health experts on the social determinants of health and environmental drivers contributing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, we join in our city's concern and call for resources and attention to the fact that Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID, and fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second highest in the city.

One issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council discretionary funding. We know the city is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However **any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on smaller organizations serving communities of color.** Grassroots organizations led by and serving communities of color often do not have the organizational capacity to engage in the onerous City agency RFP process.

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for **0.42%** of the city budget. **Discretionary funding is how small organizations closest to New Yorkers and organizations led by people of color get access to public funding.** Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the city to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Maureen Fleming
Artistic Director
Maureen Fleming Company
6 East 2nd St.
NY, NY
10003

p 212.677.6998
c 646.431.8747

www.maureenfleming.com

FY 2021 Executive Budget

Dear Council Member Dromm

I am submitting my testimony on the FY 2021 executive budget. I hope this will be the year to defund the racist NYPD, District Attorneys and Department Corrections and reinvest in life affirming caring programs & services for everyone in the city.

Thanks in advance

Maureen Silvermann

Audre Lorde Project Testimony
Finance Committee
Thursday, May 21, 2020

Greetings to Council Person Dromm and the Members of the Finance Committee, Council Members Adams, Ampy-Samuel, Ayala, Cornegy, Cumbo, Gibson, Gjonaj, Grodenchik, Koslowitz, Lancman, Louis, Matteo, Moya, Powers, Rosenthal, and Van Bramer.

My name is Maxwell Scales and I am the Co-Director of the Audre Lorde Project, a community organizing center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming New Yorkers of color, based in Fort Greene. The Audre Lorde Project (also known as ALP) works to promote collective care and community-based strategies for the safety of LGBTSTGNC people of color.

ALP is a member of NYC Against Hate, a coalition of nine community-based organizations working across identities to make New York safer for our communities. Our partner organizations include the Arab-American Association of New York, the Brooklyn Movement Center, The Center for Anti-Violence Education, DRUM - Desis Rising Up and Moving, Global Action Project, Jews For Racial & Economic Justice, Make the Road New York, and New York City Anti-Violence Project. We come together as members of the communities most impacted by the continued rise of hate violence to create community-centered approaches that prevent hate violence, respond to incidents of violence, and provide healing support following an incident.

With funding from the City Council for the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative that supports NYC Against Hate, we have been able to accomplish the following: the creation of a policy platform that pushes for increased investment in restorative responses to violence rather than policing and surveillance that criminalize people of color, resources to help communities start conversations about responding to hate violence, trainings in bystander intervention to ensure that New Yorkers are all prepared to support each other when we witness harmful hate-based interactions, and the NYC Day Against Hate on February 13, 2020, which resulted in 24 workshops and events over two days, across all 5 boroughs.

During this time as NYC is the epicenter of a global health crisis, the work of our coalitions has shifted to address to operate virtually as well as address the surge in anti-Asian and anti-Semitic hate violence. This includes:

- The Center for Anti-Violence Education has hosted webinars on bystander intervention training and decreasing tension within our own homes
- DRUM has made over 1,000 calls to do education around anti-Asian sentiment
- ALP has hosted virtual trainings to increase organizing skills and worked to increase solidarity and education between Black and Asian communities; and
- Our coalition has increased mental health resources for survivors of violence and partnered with additional Asian-led organizations to center the needs of Asian communities.

We are asking for the Council's support to continue this life-saving work. By investing more deeply in our communities, rather than the militarized NYPD, we will be able to reach more people with education, resources, and an opportunity to build stronger bonds, instead of punitive measures that have been proven time and again to not be nearly as effective. We know that violence is a product of poverty, fear, and ignorance. We urge the City Council to fund the people, not the police. At this moment, while there are cuts to many of the city agencies that support our community's most vital needs, the New York Police Department has proposed cutting less than 1% of their \$6B budget, that includes non-essential staff, non-essential training, and an increase for cops at events that no longer exist and on streets that are empty due to COVID-19. What those officers will really do is continue to profile, criminalize, and abuse communities of color, low-income people, people without homes, and LGBTSTGNC people. More police will not make our people safer. The \$100,000 salary that employs 1 detective could have a greater impact if used to fund Jews for Racial and Economic Justice or one of our Asian-led community organizations to respond to their members' needs during this surge of hate-based harm. Throughout all of 2019, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice received 420 complaints of hate violence, a number which we believe is much lower than the actual amount of incidents faced by communities who are often too afraid of the police to self-report; with increased funding, we could grow our capacity to reach a much greater number of people during our next Day Against Hate event.

In closing, the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative and NYC Against Hate are needed now more than ever to help our city come together during this time and build a greater sense of community, create resources, educate each other, and keep each other safe. We are urging you to increase the initiative's funding and divest from policing strategies that do not keep our communities whole and well.

My thanks to the Finance Committee for your time.

Meg Smith

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Meg Smith, and I work with Young Audiences New York at P.S. 205 in the Bronx.

The mission of Young Audiences New York is to use art, in all of its forms, as a catalyst for exploring creativity and advancing equity among youth, families, and communities in New York City. Working as a Teaching Artist with YANY provides both students and NYC artists such as myself with an incredible partnership. YANY supports artists by employing them to share their skills with NYC students, and supports students by providing them with diverse artistic enrichment programs. Many of the students YANY artists work with do not have any other access to arts education, and value the time they have to create, express, dream, and learn very highly.

Myself and other YANY artists have continued to serve as artist instructors during the pandemic by transitioning our classes to both Google Classroom and asynchronous pre-recorded content based classes as well, providing students with necessary opportunities to express themselves artistically and have some fun in this incredibly traumatizing time. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Meg Smith

Meghan Grover

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Meghan Grover, and I live in Crown Heights. I work for Park Avenue Youth Theatre, Trusty Sidekick Theater Company, Bluelaces Theatre Company, and New York City Children's Theater. I am a teaching artist, which means that I create artistic curriculum for and teach at schools and temporary housing spaces across the five boroughs.

As a teaching artist, I get to experience how these arts organizations impact young people's self-confidence and collaborative skills. I create original theater with young people, using all of their ideas. As we create our theater, the young people frequently say how artistic education programming has changed their lives: they talk about how grateful they are to collaborate with each other, to develop confidence, and to share what they want to say about the world! Also, as I have adapted my curriculum and teaching to virtual platforms, caregivers and family members have said how the arts give their children a place to express themselves in this time of isolation.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Meghan Grover

Fund Schools & Cancel the Proposed Hiring Freeze for Educators and Support Staff!

My name is Megan Moskop and I'm a Special Education Teacher at Community Action School on the Upper West Side. I'm a member of Teachers Unite, an organization of NYC public school educators working to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

I teach in the ACES Program- for Academic, Career, and Essential Skills. It's for students with mild/moderate Intellectual Disabilities. And let me tell you, my students have their priorities straight. They come to each of our class meetings ready to learn, and more than that, ready to be together and to connect...

They come to connect, with each other, and with the adults who love and care for them. When we talk about what is happening in their lives, the highlights are always other people they got to spend time with. "Ms. M, I saw my speech teacher today!" "Ms. M, yesterday I talked on the phone with the guidance counselor!" "Ms. M, when are we going to see our P.E. teacher next?" "Ms. M. can we invite Ms. So-and-so to our party? We miss her!"

The people are what make school what it is for us. Teachers, paraprofessionals, social workers, counselors, therapists, administrators and support staff-- they are the people who create a school.

If this budget passes in its current form, with a hiring freeze on educators, but not on police, my students won't get the care and attention they need to continue thriving and contributing positively to their communities.

Right now, the resilience and brilliance of my students is shining, but they are also feeling sad, bored, and isolated. We love to see each other on video, but it's not the same as playing together in real life. When we come back to school, we'll need to re-learn social skills. We'll need to redouble our commitment to trauma-informed teaching, and to building relationships grounded in the values of restorative justice. **To do the work of recovery, we'll need extra mental health support-- social workers, teachers, and counselors- not less, as the budget proposes.**

If this budget passes, students are going to have brand new metal detectors in their schools but no new teachers over the next four years. This budget cuts 2800% more from education than it does from policing, and that's unacceptable. We need learning resources, now more than ever.

Members of the City Council, your commitment to Justice and Equity has been apparent over the last several years, and because of it, our schools have improved. **Please continue that trend, by diverting funds from policing to healing-- which is what our communities need!**

Feel free to contact me further at megan.moskop@gmail.com.



New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
Submitted by Melanie Kruvelis, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy
Thursday, May 21, 2020

Good morning. My name is Melanie Kruvelis, and I am the Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Young Invincibles. Young Invincibles is a policy and advocacy non-profit dedicated to elevating young adults in the political process and expanding economic opportunities for our generation. We work with young adults to ensure that our voices are at the table when it comes to higher education, health care, workforce development, and civic engagement. I want to thank the members of the New York City Council's Committee on Finance, including committee chair Councilmember Daniel Dromm for the opportunity to submit testimony for today's hearing.

Today's executive budget hearing for the Committee on Finance comes amid one of the most challenging moments ever faced by New Yorkers. While we do not yet fully comprehend the long-term impacts the COVID-19 pandemic will have on New York City, in just a matter of weeks, we've seen how this crisis has already reshaped our city's commitment to its younger generations. While many will focus their testimony today on the challenges facing New York City's P-12 education system, I will focus my testimony on strengthening the bridge between P-12 and a quality, postsecondary education — and why, more than ever, we must preserve the programs that place students on a path to economic stability and dignity.

Today, nine out of every ten jobs created in the United States go to those with a college degree.¹ In New York City, workers with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, \$550 more per week than those with a high school diploma.² While there are multiple pathways to a living-wage career, a college degree remains one of the best bets a person can make to attain long-term economic stability. For decades, the City University of New York (CUNY) has served millions of low-income, first-generation, and students of color, propelling generations of New Yorkers into the middle

¹ Goldstein, Steve. (2019). Nine out of 10 new jobs are going to those with a college degree. Retrieved from: <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/nine-out-of-10-new-jobs-are-going-to-those-with-a-college-degree-2018-06-04>

² New York State Department of Labor. Labor Statistics for the New York City Region. Retrieved from: https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/why_go_to_school.shtm

YOUNG INVINCIBLES

class. As an organization committed to the success of the next generation of students, we are thus deeply concerned about the recent proposal to cut \$20 million from the City's support of one of CUNY's most successful programs — the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP). This means that over 5,000 first-time full-time freshmen may be delayed the benefits of ASAP at the start of the fall 2020 semester. We understand that the challenges posed by the COVID-19 public health crisis mean that the City is reevaluating its financial support of many programs and initiatives. But after a semester disrupted by a pandemic and a recession, we urge you to reconsider the cuts to ASAP, and instead, recognize ASAP as a key tool in supporting the City's long-term recovery from COVID-19.

Across several CUNY campuses, ASAP creates a strong supportive community for its students, many of whom are low-income, students of color, and/or the first in their family to enroll in college. ASAP combines both individualized academic advising with much-needed financial support; ASAP provides not only tuition waivers for its students, but also non-tuition costs that aren't often covered by other financial aid programs, such as MetroCards and textbooks. Research shows that ASAP's student-centered model works: A study from MDRC found that students enrolled in CUNY ASAP graduated with an associate's degree at nearly double the rate of their non-ASAP peers.³ Today, the ASAP program's three-year graduation rate is 53 percent — more than three times higher than the national urban community college three-year graduation rate of 16 percent, and more than double that of similar CUNY associate degree-seeking students. The strong returns associated with CUNY ASAP has led to similar models both regionally and across the country, with recent expansions to community colleges in Westchester County and in Ohio.⁴ Just last month, CUNY ASAP was recognized by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University, earning the prestigious 2020 Innovations in American Government Award. Importantly, ASAP students corroborate what the research tells us. In focus groups Young Invincibles held across New York City over the last year, students told us again and again about the value they saw in the CUNY ASAP program. *"I feel like in college, ASAP is*

³ MDRC. (2019). Evaluating Replications of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). Retrieved from: <https://www.mdrc.org/project/Evaluating-Replications-of-CUNY-ASAP#overview>

⁴ The City University of New York. (2018). CUNY Expands Its Promising 'ACE' Program to Lehman College in Partnership With Robin Hood Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/12/10/lehman-college-ace-program/><https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/12/10/lehman-college-ace-program/>

YOUNG INVINCIBLES

one of the best programs anybody can join,” one student told us. “If they bring it to the four-year colleges, I’d go back to school to purposefully get in that program.”

At a moment when more New Yorkers are facing unprecedented economic insecurity, programs such as ASAP are critical to ensure New York City’s most vulnerable students and families can not just recover, but thrive after this crisis. Even before COVID-19, CUNY’s students struggled with homelessness and hunger — with the CUNY systems experiencing higher rates of student homelessness than the NYC’s public P-12 school system. We are already seeing the ways in which this pandemic is exacerbating New Yorkers’ basic-needs insecurity, and are alarmed by the disproportionate damage this crisis has done among our city’s immigrant community and communities of color. Cutting the very programs that support these communities robs a generation of achieving their full potential — at a moment where support is needed more than ever. It also denies our city of an educated workforce that can contribute to its economic and civic recovery.

As leaders that work to increase opportunities for young people across this city, it is imperative that the NYC Council’s Finance Committee fight to preserve CUNY ASAP for the incoming freshmen cohort. The New York City budget cannot be balanced on the backs of the city’s future. Please protect ASAP and help set students up for success, rather than deprive them of the necessary support needed to stay on the pathway to college completion. Thank you for your time, and your collective commitment to the next generation of New Yorkers.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
20 May 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario, and I am the founding Executive Director of Art and Resistance Through Education (ARTE), serving youth across New York City and based in Brooklyn.

ARTE is a grassroots, community-based organization that uses the visual arts to amplify the voices of young people of color, in schools, jails, and community institutions, to organize for human rights change. We primarily work with adolescents (12-18) or young women and men (19-24) and occasionally organize multigenerational projects (with folks over 24 years old). Since 2014, ARTE has engaged over 6,000 community members around human rights through the visual arts.

As a human rights organization, long before COVID-19, our priority has been to help community members address the human rights violations that directly impact their communities. Some of these rights violations are at the global level, but many are right in our own backyard: racial discrimination and profiling, immigrant detention, injustice within the mass incarceration system. No New Yorker should experience any violation of their human rights and all New Yorkers should understand that as human beings, they are entitled to the rights within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a document that outlines the inherent rights and freedoms guaranteed to every human being.

In this letter, we focus specifically on our work as an arts and cultural organization. The arts have immeasurable value, yet in a post-COVID-19 world we recognize that they are at stake. Even during a pandemic, we have seen the ways in which the arts play a critical role, including by providing entertainment, healing, and comfort during a challenging time. Before and during this pandemic, the arts are a way for young people and their communities to express themselves, including some of the pain and trauma they may experience in their everyday lives. Through the work of artists, cultural institutions, and community based art organizations like our own, young peoples' lives are continuously enriched; be it through the development of a new skill, the creation of their own piece of artwork, or the beautification of a public space after a youth arts program

has been completed. We believe that beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, but in order for this to happen, city cultural agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. Funding cuts for these programs would cause irreparable damage on the next generation of young people in this city; future artists, creatives, visionaries, and cultural workers in a city that regards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Cuts in these programs would particularly harm smaller, grassroots organizations like our own and may make it impossible to carry out the much needed services in schools or communities that have little or no access to the arts. Our programs, like so many other arts organizations, help foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation and should be the last cut, not the first.

We frequently teach the young people that we work with that if you value something, you advocate for it, as fiercely as possible. Therefore as a cultural organization, we are determined to advocate for the arts in the city that we love. ARTE believes that art manifests hope and hope manifests justice. As our vision is grounded in the idea that art education is a powerful foundation for creative communication, we believe that through the arts, young people can become social justice agents working towards creating a more equitable world for themselves and their communities. But in order to help create that world, those in leadership must protect access to the arts for the young people that deserve it the most.

Thank you for your attention.

With great gratitude and in loving resistance,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read 'MARSA' or similar, with a stylized, flowing script.

Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario
Executive Director
Art and Resistance Through Education (ARTE)
www.artejustice.org

ARTE Board of Directors



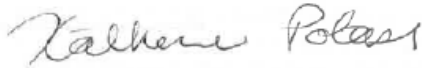
Aissatou Barry



Ana Seastone Stern



Carmela Muzio Dormani



Katherine Potaski



Myra Hellerstein



Nina Sethi



Dear City Council Members,

We appreciate your response to the Preliminary Budget and your emphasis on equity in rebuilding New York City after the COVID-19 pandemic.

We at Jumpstart urge the Council to continue its support for early learners during the FY21 budget negotiations by supporting the City's First Readers program. As New Yorkers from all communities face unprecedented challenges, we ask that you address the needs of children, one of the city's most vulnerable groups, and recognize the connection between literacy and public health. While the pandemic has created new demands, it has also exacerbated long-standing social inequities with long-term implications.

Only 46% of NYC third graders living in poverty are reading at grade level, compared to 74% of their more economically secure peers. This gap puts children living in poverty at great risk for falling further behind and makes them vulnerable to consequences including failure to graduate from high school, dependence on public assistance, low levels of civic engagement, significantly poorer health outcomes, and the "school to prison" pipeline.

Literacy is critical for public health. The ability to understand medical advice, read prescriptions, and follow public health guidance is based in literacy. Education inequity does not only place young children at an academic disadvantage, it also poses personal and public health risks throughout life.

Jumpstart, as well as our partners through the City's First Readers initiative, has responded quickly to the changing needs of families as a result of social distancing, school disruption, and the physical and mental toll of COVID-19. We have created a [space](#) on our website to share resources with families and educators. Our Education Team has developed extension activities to accompany virtual read-alouds, while our Family Engagement Team has shared activities, educational tips, resources and the book readings through Ready4K, our family text messaging partner. Finally, we're developing a plan to offer virtual summer programming to families.

Though young children across New York City are facing disruption in their education, Jumpstart and the City's First Readers partners are providing families with the tools to educate our future leaders. Support for early literacy is at the foundation of a more equitable and resilient future. There will be no economic recovery without a healthy and vibrant early education community taking care of the children of our workers. To that end, please support funding for City's First Readers in this budget.

Thank you for leading the city through these challenging times.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naila Bolus", written in a cursive style.

Naila Bolus
President and CEO

Executive Budget Hearing-Met Council Testimony

5/21/20

Since the COVID-19 pandemic first hit New York, the Met Council has led the fight to keep impacted New Yorkers fed and healthy. Its dozens of kosher food pantries continue to feed New Yorkers as the city faces unprecedented levels of unemployment. Met Council has added six new services and expanded their hours during this crisis ranging from home-delivered groceries to help for those who have recently lost their jobs to assistance for those who are victims of domestic violence. To better serve those in need, we have now extended our hours: 8AM-8PM

Food Program:

Met Council has been actively responding to emergency needs since the self-distancing/stay home protocols were put place to mitigate COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March. Within the first two weeks the Kosher Food Network pantries saw a 31% increase in demand for emergency food assistance. Met Council quickly responded by:

- Expanding our Food Program capacity significantly, with a new warehouse storage space leased for additional capacity for safe food storage.
- Met Council piloted a food delivery program in partnership with Uber to reach 500 homebound Holocaust survivors in need of emergency food assistance and have expanded on this successful pilot to reach more survivors. We are now offering regular, twice monthly home deliveries of food boxes to more than 1,000 survivors/clients.
- We significantly expanded our Passover food distribution, doing over 160 food distributions in just 5 weeks, and we deployed new programs to specifically support households that lost their source of income due to COVID-19.

Social Services (Crisis and Benefit Access):

Crisis Intervention

- Met Council has created a COVID 19 Crisis Call Center which receives calls by staff who are trained to connect callers to information and resources to meet their needs throughout the 5 boroughs. Staff are primarily focused on connecting callers and their clients to other resources and helping them access them – primary areas are answering questions and providing information on obtaining food and filing for unemployment.
- **On average each month, we receive around 200-225 calls through our Helpline. We have received 930 calls so far from 4/1/20 through 5/13/20, requesting information and referrals for resources.**

Benefit Access

Benefit Access Department is providing clients impacted by COVID19 virtual direct service via telephone, Zoom conference, encrypted emails and efax.

Our SNAP Specialist are assisting the newly unemployed New Yorkers with applying for SNAP benefits via HRA's ACCESSHRA web portal and connecting them to other HRA safety net programs. SNAP Specialist are discrediting myths and misconceptions regarding the programs response to COVID19 (i.e. Emergency SNAP benefits).

In addition, our Free Tax Prep program is assisting client with completing their tax files, accessing all important state and federal returns resulting in them being eligible for all important stimulus checks

Family (Domestic) Violence Program

The mission of Family Violence Program at Met Council is to assist New Yorkers impacted by intimate partner violence and sex trafficking to become empowered and obtain safety, foster healing, and work towards self-sufficiency.

The program is one of the only programs in New York City that offers comprehensive case management services, trauma-informed psychotherapy, financial assistance, and food assistance under one roof. Our number one priority when working with clients is ensuring that they are safe and then to lead them toward a path of sustainability.

Met Council has also seen trends in forms of abuse related to Covid-19. We have heard from many survivors who have told us their abuser is not practicing social distancing and after being outside will refuse to wash their hand or use sanitizer before approaching or touching survivors or their children. Additionally, we have seen that when abusers have contracted Covid-19 they often do not quarantine themselves and place tremendous blame on the survivor for “making them sick.” Additionally, many survivors have not been allowed to look for employment as a part of the violence before the pandemic began and now are being blamed for their abuser’s loss of income and additional financial stress the family faces. Given the additional stress families now face, the program has seen an increase in physical violence in the past few weeks. We have seen many more incidences of choking as well as increased sexual violence.

SNAP Story

On 04/01/2020 Chaya contacted our BPJCC SNAP Specialist to apply for SNAP Benefits. Chaya resides with her spouse and two daughters (ages 3 and 6 months old). Chaya lost her job due to the Coronavirus Pandemic causing the family due hardship for her the only current income in the household is from her spouse who is receiving \$342 in unemployment. Chaya is desperately waiting to receive word on her recent unemployment application filed. After paying the rent for \$1,200 dollars and monthly utilities of \$180 the household cannot afford food. **Due to our virtual SNAP application submission work the family received emergency SNAP benefits for \$285 and will receive ongoing monthly benefit of \$646.**

VITA Free Tax Prep Story

At the beginning of March, Kaila came to the BPJCC office with her 5 months old daughter just to inquire about the tax preparation services. Kaila recently graduated from College and worked as a counselor. Her husband is a student. The family relied only on Kaila's earnings. Our Free Tax preparer was supposed to see the couple at the middle of March but the office got closed. The clients was supposed to send over additional paperwork. After sever calls and text messages on April 4, 2020 we received the text message from Kaila: "I am so sorry. I never got back to you. My husband and I both had the virus, so we can't get out, and my printer and my mothers are both having trouble... I will let you know later today if I am able to work it out, otherwise I guess I'll need an extension... Thanks so much!"

It's really a sad story. The young family desperately needed money. After speaking to Kaila and her mother we faxed over the papers to her mother, she brought it to her daughter for signatures (not coming inside the house), and then – the paperwork was faxed to us for e-filing.

On April 13, 2020 their tax return was e-filed. The Federal refund was - \$5,666, which included EIC -\$3,526, ACTC (Additional Child Tax Credit) \$ 1,400; NY State refund -\$ 2,147.

Crisis Stories:

E.G. 83 years old, who lives in Brooklyn by herself contacted Met Council seeking food assistance for Passover as she could not leave her home to get food needed for the holiday and she had no one able to go to the grocery store for her. On a fixed income she struggles each year to afford food for the holiday due to increased cost as well. The staff member explained about MC Passover food delivery program available at that time and instructed her to apply for it online. The client mentioned that she was not able to use the internet, so the worker helped her fill out the application over the phone. The client was very thankful and appreciative, and she was not sure how to get the food she needed for Passover.

The client is a 58 year old, lives with 5 children on her own. She receives SSDI only for income and does receive SNAP benefits. She spoke to a crisis case worker about needing additional food assistance and resources, as well as affordable housing options for herself and her five children. The crisis case worker provided her information on how to access food options in her area as well as through NYC run food programs and provided her information on affordable housing and how to access it.

Client AO is a male asylee living with his two minor daughters. He reached out the Met Council's Crisis information helpline because he is in need of assistance with paying off two month's rental arrears in the amount of \$4,200.00 (March and April 2020 rent payments) . AO disclosed that he usually works as a UBER driver, however he had to stop working when his children school closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The client was informed of the federal public program available to support individuals and families, the Families First Coronavirus Response ACT and Coronavirus AID Relief and Economic Security(CARES) Act. Under the Family First Act the client and his two daughter will qualify for SNAP benefits . Under normal circumstances they would not have qualified for SNAP benefits. In addition Mr. AO was referred to the department of labor to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PAU), he was informed of the Coronavirus stimulus package, neighborhood food pantries available in Queens , the Emergency food hotline ,and finally the client was referred to the City Wide Helpline as well as Human Resources Administration(HRA) to seek assistance with paying off his rental arrears.

Testimony of
The Simon Wiesenthal Center
Eastern Regional Director
Michael Cohen
Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
On the City's
Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

May 21, 2020

Fiscal Year 2021 Discretionary Funding Application # 83462
Hate Crimes Prevention & Digital inclusion Initiative

Rabbi Marvin Hier
Founder and Dean

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New York City Council, Finance Committee
VIA EMAIL

May 21, 2020

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for providing the Simon Wiesenthal Center this opportunity to come before you and most importantly, thank you for all of your continued dedication and commitment to the people of New York in confronting the immense challenges this unprecedented pandemic presents.

My name is Michael Cohen and I am here today representing the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC), a leading Jewish global human rights organization confronting anti-Semitism, racism, and hate and standing up for human dignity of all. The Center has a constituency of over 400,000 households in the United States with 150,000 in the New York Metropolitan area. I serve as SWC's Eastern Regional Director.

I am here today to address an issue critical to our City's youth, an issue that has increasingly magnified during the pandemic – online hate and bullying.

For more than a quarter of a century, the Center's *Digital Terrorism and Hate Project* has been monitoring and exposing how hate groups and other extremists leverage internet technologies to spread their nefarious goals by targeting our children. Today, social media is saturated with hate and bullying activities. Since the COVID-19 attacked our world, Jews and Asian Americans, especially Chinese-Americans, have been targeted with vile hate, scapegoating and threats. Our City's children are especially vulnerable as they are online virtually every waking moment during the lockdown.

Just over the last week alone our City has witnessed a couple from Queens get out of their car in Williamsburg, go over to Hasidic Jews - including women and children - and forcibly removed the facemasks from the Jews while yelling that Jews are spreading the virus. At the same time in the Bronx, four teenage girls assaulting an Asian passerby with an umbrella while blaming her for the virus. The NYPD reports that since mid-March there have been 13 anti-Asian hate crimes - including five violent incidents leading to nine arrests. Tragically, similar incidents are playing out online and on the streets of communities across North America.

Just over a decade ago, bullying and access to hate groups and hate speech predominately ended at the conclusion of the school day – those days are long gone. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and in the case of young people, online gaming platforms, have not presented our youth any refuge from those wanting to spread hate, threatening and negative content. The bottom line is that the need to protect our children from this scourge and the need to empower them with the tools to deal with online hate is critically important.

Part of our strategy has been to press social media giants to do more to degrade the marketing of hate on their platforms, but clearly our children will continue to be exposed to the hate and bullying we are seeing today.

For three years now, the Simon Wiesenthal Center has been conducting workshops in junior high schools and high schools around the country helping our youth to enhance their skills to recognize and to deal with offensive material; how to stop being bystanders and what they can do proactively to stand up against hate.

We are looking to the Council for critical support to help us bring such programming — online and in the classrooms (when schools re-open) to the New York City Public School systems middle and high schools.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has produced a *CombatHate App*, providing youth with a direct way to report online bullying and hate so that not only can they feel that they are doing something constructive in this fight, but are in fact capable of making a difference in real-time.

I want to once again thank the Committee for prioritizing the issue of hate speech and bullying and for taking a leadership role in creating meaningful strategies to help the City's diverse student population. The Simon Wiesenthal Center will continue to work with all your colleagues on the Council during these difficult days and beyond.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Cohen
Eastern Regional Director
Simon Wiesenthal Center

New York City Council:

My name is Michael Mangieri; I am a resident of Manhattan and a lifelong New Yorker.

I believe that the mayor's proposed budget reflects a major misplacement of priorities. Cuts are made to essential social services across the board. However the NYPD's budget remains intact, and has increased by \$1 billion over the last 5 years despite the fact that crime has dropped to historically low rates.

The services that are cut or reduced in the proposed budget—education, affordable housing, homeless services, and the complete cancellation of the summer youth employment program — are especially critical to low-income New Yorkers and communities of color. These are the same communities that are being most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and that have been impacted for generations by overpolicing and mass incarceration. These inequities need to be repaired by a more just redistribution of the budget.

What is needed to rebuild from the current crisis is investment in communities, especially those most vulnerable and historically disadvantaged. The NYPD should not be charged with acting as a social service provider. Please restore funding to the programs that are most needed.

I hope you'll consider my testimony. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Michael Mangieri

**New York City Council
Finance Committee and Subcommittee on Capital Budget
Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

Written Comments by Michael Pope - Youth Represent

Youth Represent improves the lives and futures of young people affected by the criminal legal system. We provide legal representation, education, and civic engagement opportunities to young people age 24 and under who have been affected by the criminal legal system.

This crisis is acutely impacting our young clients and their loved ones. Their fear is real, as is the impact that Covid-19 is having on the most vulnerable in our city, including low-income¹ communities of color² that are the core of Youth Represent's client base.

We acknowledge and appreciate the swift leadership that the City Council has taken to address this impact and implore your continued action. We at Youth Represent have also quickly adjusted to respond to this crisis through pivoting our legal service delivery model, expanding our legal support to respond to the imperative legal needs Covid-19 has exposed, and adapting to this new reality to **ensure our clients are safe during this crisis and beyond.**

My comments focus on how we are meeting the remote challenge for youth and what essential legal services are required to ensure youth with criminal system involvement are safe.

Meeting The Remote Challenge

Responding to Covid-19's necessity for remote support is particularly challenging for organizations supporting youth as young people most in need of services are often the hardest to reach. Our traditional community-lawyering model responds by physically meeting with clients where they are and in their neighborhoods. However, given the new remote demands, we have developed creative tools and strategies to reach clients – starting by expanding the ways we proactively and reactively connect and communicate with young people.

¹ Pew Research Center, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/04/21/about-half-of-lower-income-americans-report-household-job-or-wage-loss-due-to-covid-19/psdt_04-21-20_covidimpact-00-10/

² “In the majority of states reporting data, Black people accounted for a higher share of confirmed cases and deaths compared to their share of the total population.” Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/growing-data-underscore-communities-color-harder-hit-covid-19/>.

Youth Represent has worked with thousands of youth since our inception. When the crisis hit, we immediately began **proactively communicating** with our clients through a number of new, innovative methods.

- In the beginning phase of Covid-19's impact, we knew our response needed to center the vocalized needs of our clients. As such, we **called, texted, and emailed** our active and prior clients and conducted “**wellness checks**” with hundreds of youth to not only analyze what legal needs they were facing, but to also gain a better sense of their emotional and non-legal support needs.
- We have empowered our **Youth Speaker** graduates to connect with their friends, family, and networks, on behalf of Youth Represent, to deepen our access to communities in need of legal support and ensure communities have access to our support.
- Young people are also turning to local community nonprofit providers, such as Getting Out and Staying Out, for support. Many of these providers are our long-term partners, are working tirelessly to support young people during this crisis, and rely on Youth Represent to support their young people's legal needs. We have **produced and released a training video** for these community partner organizations that explains how Youth Represent supports young people and also how to connect to our staff. The video, along with handouts and materials, is accessible to our partners and can be found at <https://youthrepresent.org/our-partners-video>, with the password Courtroom2Community.

We also recognize that **thousands more young people need our support** during this time. To ensure we are also supporting these young people, we have established new tools for youth to connect with our staff and services.

- As young people rely more heavily on remote communication, we have rolled out a **live online chat-bot** on our website, so internet traffic that learns of our website can connect with a staff person with minimal barriers or hesitation. Much of the communication that we have received through this chat-bot has been individuals needing support around the increased prevalence of employment discrimination.
- We will shortly be launching our first ever “**Covid Legal Hotline**,” which will serve as a resource for young New Yorkers with criminal system involvement. The hotline will give access to our legal support to address the many legal needs and questions that the Covid-19 crisis has amplified.

These efforts have given us the privilege of meaningfully connecting to hundreds of young people since this crisis began, which has defined how we have pivoted and what essential legal services.

Essential Legal Services for Youth During the Crisis

We have seen an continued demand for our traditional legal support and advice. As such, our **core essential services** continue to support young people on criminal matters (particularly on ensuring safe warrant returns), housing conditions support, name change process support, and family court matters such as visitation rights and child support.

Unfortunately, we are also seeing a greater need for fighting **employment discrimination**. As the labor market tightens, we are seeing discrimination against system-involved youth of color increase. Qualified, dedicated, and experienced candidates are being denied employment due to their criminal histories without basic regard to an individual analysis required by the Fair Chance Act passed by this City Council. We have deepened our relationship with the law firm community, particularly through the law firm of Outten & Golden. Collectively, we are investigating, responding, and ultimately litigating these cases to ensure that, during this crisis, qualified individuals seeking jobs have equal and fair access to employment.

This crisis has also necessitated our adaption to providing **new services and support**. To stay true to our value of being youth-driven and meeting our client's needs, we have developed and expanded into new areas of programming to respond to Covid-19.

- **Unemployment Insurance and Equitable Access to Benefits** – We have expanded our work to support clients navigating the complex world of benefits, including unemployment benefits advocacy and support, as well as ensuring public assistance and stimulus check access. Many of our clients in extreme financial hardship are unaware that they qualify for these benefits and, through our expanded practice area, are able to access this financial support for themselves and their families.
- **Workers' Rights** – We are deepening our existing employment law practice to combat workers' rights abuses, including counseling clients on their right to a safe workplace under OSHA. Many of our young clients are seeking income through the unstable gig economy, which has a poor track record when it comes to the treatment of system-involved youth of color. Young gig workers are particularly at risk of being wrongly classified as independent contractors, and thus denied access to paid sick time and other workplace benefits. They are also vulnerable to pressure to continue working in unsafe conditions while Covid-19 continues to spread, putting them, their families, and everyone they interact with at risk.
- **Expanded Virtual Know Your Rights** – We have expanded our Know Your Rights Workshops to ensure public knowledge around the ever-changing Covid-19 laws and challenges, particularly related to education on social distancing policing practices, ensuring individuals know their rights and how to invoke them, and unemployment insurance and public benefits access.
- **Emergency Fund** – We have reallocated limited internal funding to allow us to respond with emergency financial support given directly to young people in the greatest need. This fund has supported many young people, including bringing food to the table of a family waiting for cash assistance, paying for the cab fare to and from the hospital for a pregnant client, and purchasing a box full of activities and toys for the child of a young women trying to finish her remote undergraduate classes.

Conclusion

While our physical doors are temporarily closed, our virtual doors are busier than ever. This crisis has amplified the injustices that Youth Represent fights every single day. We **refuse to turn our**

backs on those experience the most significant impact from this crisis: low-income communities of color.

I'm proud to stand along with you, our colleagues, community partners, supporters, and the broader community, against discrimination, misinformation, and fear. The core and expanded legal services Youth Represent provides are pivotal now more than ever.

As this crisis unfolds, we will evaluate these new measures and will adapt our services to meet our clients' needs. Our response will continue to change, but what won't change is our commitment to delivering justice for system-involved New Yorkers.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**New York City Council
Honorable Corey Johnson, Speaker
Committee on Finance, Honorable Daniel Dromm, Chair
Committee on Education, Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair
Committee on Youth Services, Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair
Committee on Immigration, Honorable Carlos Menchaca, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Presented by Michael Rivadeneyra, Senior Director of Government Relations**

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

Good day, my name is Michael Rivadeneyra, I'm the Senior Director of Government Relations for the YMCA of Greater New York, and I will be testifying on behalf of the YMCA. Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, Chair Treyger, Chair Rose, Chair Menchaca and the Finance, Education, Youth Services, and Immigration Committee members, for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Executive Budget. We are deeply concerned that the Executive Budget eliminates funding to summer youth programs and lacks a full restoration to adult literacy programs. We understand that the City is going through a fiscal crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the City should not balance the budget on the backs of our youth and immigrant communities.

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor's Executive "Pause" Order, our organization had over 4,000 employees who worked to help people make positive changes in their lives and in their communities. With 24 YMCA physical branches and more than 100 community sites across the city, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to adulthood — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic we have lost staff members to COVID-19. I would like to take a pause to remember them and all those we have lost to COVID-19.

For decades the City has relied on the nonprofit human service sector to provide services to residents from infancy to late adulthood. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the city, the YMCA and the entire human service sector rapidly pivoted to remote learning and to other services that

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK 5 West 63rd Street New York, NY 10023
D 212-630-9600 W ymcanyc.org

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK | Where there's a Y, there's a way.

complied with social distance protocols. As the City moves to reopen and reboot, human services providers will be critical in these efforts as trusted community partners with proven records of delivering virtual and socially distanced services. It was shocking when the Mayor announced the cancelation of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) for this summer. Then it felt incomprehensible that even as the Mayor talks about reopening by mid-June, the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) proposes to eliminate summer youth programming through COMPASS, SONYC, Beacon and Cornerstone.

As a provider of COMPASS, SONYC, Beacon, Cornerstone and SYEP programs throughout the city, we have a responsibility to our youth, families and communities at large. Summer youth programs have been critical in the past for working families because they provide a safe environment and quality activities that keep children engaged, prevent summer learning loss, and offer youth employment. It is undisputed that youth development providers can offer remote services to thousands of youth. It is a strategy that the Department of Education (DOE) is implementing as the agency expands summer school to serve 177,000 children to combat COVID-19 learning loss and traditional summer learning loss. Unfortunately, DOE's summer school expansion will not serve all youth, leaving many children and families without academic support, family support, and arts and recreation activities. In order to resolve this disconnect, we stand with our colleagues in the Campaign for Children and all the youth service providers in the sector in calling on the City to restore funding to all summer programs. Furthermore, we call on the City to engage youth service providers in a meaningful and substantive discussion to develop a reopening strategy for the sector that includes:

1. Education – helping students build and strengthen cognitive skills through project-based learning activities and workforce development opportunities;
2. Social Emotional Learning – offering youth opportunities to build positive and rewarding relationships with others and strengthen their self-efficacy and resilience;
3. Health – providing opportunities for safe and regular physical activity and health and nutrition education; and
4. Family and Home – supporting parents, caregivers, and families to help promote learning and healthy development in safe and stable homes.

Though the Mayor cited health and safety concerns as justification for the elimination of these programs, youth services providers themselves were never given an opportunity to weigh in on this decision in advance. Had they been asked, they could have shared the tremendous knowledge they have gleaned through pivoting to a combination of remote and in-person, socially-distant programming to help inform alternative models that would keep youth engaged and supported while keeping them safe.

Workforce recruitment and retention has long been a challenge due to instability of funding. Unique to the FY21 budget conversation is that many in the human service sector, the YMCA

included, have furloughed and/or laid off staff due to loss of revenues, pre-existing gaps in funding under City contracts, or the City retroactively eliminating programs, e.g. SYEP. It was alarming to hear Commissioner Chong state at the Youth Services Executive Budget hearing that if funding for summer programs is secured by the adoption of the budget that the sector will ramp up summer programming rapidly. There are many issues with that statement:

1. It fails to recognize that providers have labor obligations to give staff termination notices in early June if funding is not secured;
2. If funding is secured and providers are able to rehire and recruit new staff, there will be delays as new staff go through background checks; and
3. It fails to recognize that as of today DYCD has not developed guidance for potential summer programming, without which providers will not be able to properly prepare.

Furthermore, if funding is not secured for summer programs, it is unclear how providers will retain full-time staff throughout the summer to prepare for the upcoming school year.

For the above-named reasons, we call on the Administration to fully restore all summer youth program funding and to engage providers in developing a strategic reopening plan.

As member of the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, we support their recommendation to integrate and implement the community schools strategy as a comprehensive method to reopen schools and help communities heal and recover from this crisis. The efficacy and success of the Community Schools model in New York City was recently touted in a groundbreaking 202 RAND report. Community Schools provide comprehensive services to support youth and community development, thereby leading to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities. Adopting the Community Schools model will help schools adequately prepare and provide them with the tools and resources they need to confront academic, social-emotional, mental health, and other non-academic needs aggravated by the pandemic. Thus, we applaud the City for keeping the DOE's community schools initiative fully funded. As the DOE prepares to release a new Community Schools RFP, we have been assured that all participating community schools will be funded at the former Renewal School model rates, thus creating funding equity among the schools. We recommend that the City continue to invest in Community Schools, and to work with existing CBO-school partnerships to expand the strategy and help our schools reopen safely and in the most supportive way possible.

Next, as a member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL) and provider of adult literacy education in seven New Americans Welcome Centers (NAWC) throughout the city, we call for the full restoration and baselining of the \$12 million for adult literacy. Many of our NAWC students are currently on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing essential work that is sustaining our communities. A recent survey of programs conducted by the Literacy Assistance Center found that job and income loss, support for children's schooling, food and housing insecurity, and mental health concerns are all significant, pressing issues for students in adult

literacy programs – and that these issues have all been exacerbated by limited reading, writing, English language, and/or digital literacy skills.

Similar to our COMPASS, SONYC, SYEP, Beacon and Cornerstone programs, our NAWC adult literacy programs quickly pivoted to remote learning and support for our students. Adult literacy education – and the additional support services that adult literacy programs provide – will play a vital role in the coming year to help stabilize the lives of many of our most essential New Yorkers. Therefore we urge the City to fully restore and baseline adult literacy funding.

Last, as member of the Human Services Council, we support their call for the City to commit to providing human services workers a 3% cost-of-living adjustment on all human services contracts and that the City secure incentive pay for all frontline human services workers.

The human services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust to make sure that individuals get the lifesaving services they need now, as well as long-term support for their own recovery. But none of that will be possible unless the City commits to support the financial stability of the sector. Balancing the budget with devastating cuts to human services will exacerbate existing inequities, disproportionately impacting the communities that have suffered the most during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you so much for fighting for children and families across New York City. We look forward to working with you to address these urgent concerns.

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



575 Grand Street, #E901
New York, NY 10002
Contact@friendsofcorlears.org
www.friendsofcorlears.org

May 24, 2020

Re: Testimony for the NYC City Council Finance Committee Executive FY21 Budget Hearing

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of Friends of Corlears Hook Park. Founded in October of 2014, Friends of Corlears Hook Park is a 501c3 volunteer group that works to maintain and revitalize Corlears Hook Park for the benefit of the general public and residents of the Lower East Side. We accomplish our work by planning and organizing park clean-up and planting events, providing community programming in the park, raising funds to support park programs and initiatives, and collaborating with other government agencies, non-profit organizations and community groups for the betterment of the park.

We would like to thank our Councilmember Carlina Rivera for supporting Parks, such as Corlears Hook Park, in her district.

We strongly believe that NYC Parks is underfunded. They have been for many, many years and this needs to change. Friends of Corlears Hook Park happily joins the Play Fair Coalition to urge Mayor de Blasio to increase funding for NYC Parks.

Currently in Corlears Hook Park, there are the following issues which are related to lack of funding:

- Lack of staffing and proper equipment leave our lawns unmowed for weeks at end. The tall grass prevents the lawns from being used by the community and encourages the breeding of mosquitos.
- Our spray shower area has not worked in over a decade and the drainage is clogged making it yet another breeding ground for mosquitos every time it rains as water pools in the area and sits there for days slowly draining.

To address these issues plus issues in other parks throughout NYC, we would like the NYC City Council to work with the NYC Mayor to increase the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation expense budget by \$47 million to focus on keeping open spaces safe, healthy, and well maintained, and on protecting jobs within NYC Parks. Specifically, this funding should be used for:

- \$10M to baseline the 100 City Park Worker and 50 Gardener staff lines added in the FY20 budget.
- \$9M to baseline and preserve the 50 new Urban Park Ranger and 80 new Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created in the FY20 budget.
- \$7.4M to baseline 15 Green Thumb and 47 Natural Resources Group staff added in the FY20 budget added in the FY20 budget.
- \$5.5M to create 100 City Seasonal Aide positions for Parks Opportunity Program participants citywide.

Friends of Corlears Hook Park is a non-profit, volunteer group that works to maintain and revitalize Corlears Hook Park for the benefit of Lower East Side residents and visitors. Tax ID #47-3832182

- \$7.85M to invest in recreation and programming, creating five new positions with Partnerships for Parks, new positions in a Natural Turf Management citywide crew, and additional staff to host structured sports and afterschool programs.
- \$3M to create an in-house comfort station improvement team to target a comfort station in every borough, with 18 full-time staff, and 20 seasonal positions.
- \$950K to more than double the NYC Parks staff conducting the critically needed citywide needs assessment.
- \$520K to hire four full-time crews to conduct lake and pond maintenance.
- \$2.5M to bring much-needed maintenance equipment to all 51 Council Districts.

Friends of Corlears Hook park fully support the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and its efforts to maintain and improve all parks in NYC. It is important to the future of our borough that we fund our Parks.

Michael T. Marino
President



**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance,
jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget
May 21, 2020 Hearing**

Hello, Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. I am, Michelle DeMott and I am the Chief of Staff to Mitchell Netburn, President & CEO of Samaritan Daytop Village. I first want to thank you for your continued support during these challenging times. Samaritan Daytop Village (SDV) is a nationally-recognized human services organization that provides comprehensive services to more than 33,000 people each year through a network of over 60 facilities primarily located in the five boroughs of New York City and depends on funding from the City Council to continue to safely provide these services for many New Yorkers. We offer a rich array of programs including treatment for mental health issues and substance use disorder, transitional and supportive permanent housing, and innovative services for veterans, homeless individuals, women, children, youth, seniors and families.

The importance of mental health and substance use services has perhaps never been clearer than at this moment. It is clear that the pandemic is not only a physical health crisis, but a behavioral health crisis. New York City faces an unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral health services. The clients that we serve are the most vulnerable New Yorkers, many of whom are low-to-no income with complex medical and behavioral health needs. The physical and emotional isolation as a result of the pandemic has manifested into new and increased feelings of anxiety, restlessness and stress which can be triggers for those with behavioral health and substance use disorders. From mid-March to present, we have experienced a 31 % increase in admissions to our out-patient behavioral health services alone.

Behavioral health funding simply cannot be cut. Our programs were already operating on razor-thin margins before the pandemic. We have had to spend tens of thousands of dollars buying technology for staff and clients to enable telehealth, purchasing PPE, and adding additional cleanings. Thus far, we have experienced a 28% loss in revenue across the organization. Furthermore, in order to ensure we remain fiscally sound, we have been forced to make prudent but painful financial decisions, including furloughing staff.

To name a few, our organization receives City Council funded: Mental Health Services for Veterans, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, and Support Our Seniors funding. We use this funding to serve thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers annually. Without this funding, we would not be able to provide therapeutic experiences to our veteran clients, wellness activities for aging adults, one of the hardest hit populations during this pandemic, and combat the continued devastating opioid epidemic. The well-being of everyone we serve is our most important priority at this time.

We quickly adapted our services to continue reaching our clients safely amid the pandemic. To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, SDV was committed to serving our clients, and in order to allow clients to remain in their homes to reduce exposure and transmission during this public health emergency, and in order to remain consistent with governmental mandates, we immediately adjusted our program operations to include telehealth platforms. In order to continue to deliver these critical services, we have had to purchase devices for both staff and clients incurring a huge expense. Additionally, we've provided both staff and clients with PPE, enhanced our cleaning and disinfecting protocols, including hiring outsourced vendors, adjusted policies and workflows, and took guidance from city, state and federal partners. We know that behavioral health is essential, and our programs have stayed open.

We stand ready to help our city and our communities recover from COVID-19. We know that the long-term success of New York requires behavioral health care to help individuals process the trauma, grief, anxiety and stress of this crisis. With the financial support of the City Council, we can ensure that New Yorkers regain their health and well-being, and that our city retains its commitment to take care of those in need.

I thank you, on behalf of Samaritan Daytop Village and we look forward to continuing to be on the front lines in partnership with you and your communities serving the most vulnerable New Yorkers.



The New 42nd Street
Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Hearing Date - May 21, 2020

The New 42nd Street (New 42) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the New Victory Education Program and arts education programming in general. New Victory Theater is one of New York City's largest providers of live performing arts and classroom arts education programming, reaching 40,000 students in all grades annually. Through our own research on the intrinsic impacts of the performing arts on children, New 42 knows young people who have access to the arts receive myriad benefits that help them become more collaborative with their peers, as well as empathetic and understanding of the lives of others. Crucially important in a city where thousands of children live in underserved neighborhoods, the arts also inspire students to imagine a more optimistic future for themselves.

New 42 believes access to the performing arts is an essential right for all. In immediate response to the closure of the New Victory Theater, the organization launched a new, weekly digital program, New Victory Arts Break, in order to continue bringing the performing arts into the lives of young people. The interactive program takes kids on guided video explorations of an artform such as puppetry, percussion and song writing, and gives kids the tools they need to flex their own creative muscles. Arts Break has been a huge success, garnering more than 380,000 video views, and helping the Theater reach thousands of new people across the City.

New Victory has shared this resource with our 500+ partner classroom teachers, many of whom have successfully incorporated Arts Break content into their virtual classrooms. We have received fantastic feedback from educators about the program, who appreciate the tiered structure of the content, which includes activities for each day of the week. Liz Wolter, a teacher at Lexington School for the Deaf, told us, *"Every Monday we are in a race to share the new Arts Break materials with the school. I have definitely enjoyed every one that's caught my eye. And they are inspiring!"*

New Victory's School Engagement team has also designed arts learning resources rooted in culturally-responsive education, and informed by input from our partner teachers. The learning resources have been created to engage students as artists, activate critical thinking skills, encourage risk-taking, boost creative problem-solving, and to be enjoyable. The resources include activities for grades Pre-K through high school, and are extremely flexible, so teachers can customize curriculum for their students' needs. The program is being distributed to

educators at our 200+ partner schools across the city and arts education liaisons across the entire New York City Department of Education.

New Victory is in the midst of creating an array of digital performing arts education programs that can be utilized this summer and in the 2020-21 academic year. We are imagining how our Teaching Artists, who normally enter classroom spaces to engage students in performing arts activities, can instead engage with classrooms in virtual, but still interactive, ways. Despite the limitations imposed by the virus, New 42 will find a way to bring the special joy of the performing arts to as many young people as possible.

We fervently believe New 42 will be part of New York City's recovery, and that expanding access to the arts to all children will help us move toward a more equitable and just society. With the City Council's help, and continued funding of arts initiatives, we will bring the performing arts into an ever-expanding number of homes, classrooms and schools across the City.



Michelle Villagomez
NYC Legislative Senior Director

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY
TO ANIMALS

Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget

May 21, 2020

I am Michelle Villagomez, New York City Legislative Senior Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). On behalf of the ASPCA I would like to thank Chairman Dromm, for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of funding for Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) in FY'21.

We are grateful that the Council and the administration have made clear their commitment to protecting at-risk animals by passing legislation to establish full-service animal shelters in every borough, providing funding for such shelters, and selecting sites for new facilities in the Bronx and Queens. ACC is a national leader in the placement of dogs, cats and rabbits among shelters that publicly report data and have average annual intakes exceeding 25,000 animals. In FY'20 the Council provided ACC with \$3 million dollars, which allowed them to grow their medical staff, expand their mobile adoptions program, as well as grow their community outreach and pet retention programs. We urge you to ensure that this funding is continued into FY'21 so that ACC can continue to provide these critical programs throughout the city. We expect the pet retention work to grow as the pandemic unfolds, and like so many other societal issues that become only more pronounced during times of great economic and social upheaval, housing challenges for pet owners, especially those with lower incomes, will almost certainly become more prevalent as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, which will result in surrenders to the shelter system.

Pet retention is a major area of focus for both ACC and the ASPCA. The aim is to keep more pets in their homes and help owners access needed services. This includes veterinary care, spay/neuter, supplies, and other pet care resources. In addition to the unprecedented challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created for people, it is also putting animals at risk by straining essential owner and shelter resources. Considering the vital role pets play in our lives—especially in times of crisis and stress—it's extremely important to safeguard their health and welfare as much as we possibly can.

The animal welfare community has recognized that economic hardship is making it difficult for pet parents to care for their beloved animal companions. Currently, the ASPCA and ACC are hard at work providing free pet food and emergency animal boarding services for overwhelmed New Yorkers affected by Covid-19; delivering expanded Urgent Veterinary Care services at the

ASPCA Animal Hospital in Manhattan, Community Veterinary Center in the Bronx, and in our mobile primary pet care clinic in Brooklyn; and partnering with the Animal Planning Task Force of the NYC Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to establish and run a COVID-19 Pet Hotline, which serves as an information, planning, referral and service coordination hub for residents seeking support for their pets during the pandemic. We are critical relief partners delivering these much-needed services to New Yorker's affected by the pandemic.

Proactive steps taken now by government at all levels and by other key community stakeholders can minimize the damaging impact and help ensure that people and pets have a safe and secure place to call home during this crisis and long after it has passed. Housing insecurity is a daunting problem that looms over many pet owners in our country even in times of relative social calm and economic stability. The COVID pandemic threatens to exponentially exacerbate this problem for pet owning renters and homeowners alike. Unprecedented job loss and widespread illness and the resulting financial stresses will undoubtedly mean missed rent and mortgage payments and the threat of eviction and foreclosure. Victims of domestic violence, along with their children and pets, often compelled to "stay at home" with their abusers, face additional challenges. The need to transition from one residence to another due to crisis-induced factors such as finances and health and safety concerns also take an enormous toll on the entire family. Each of these factors, let alone several of them occurring in tandem, may force heart wrenching choices, such as relinquishment of pets to shelters, which in turn may become overburdened with the unanticipated influx of animals.

We respectfully ask you to ensure that ACC can maintain and enhance their levels of service, as their work is essential and needed now more than ever. This important funding will go a long way toward helping ACC deliver a level of care and protection that New Yorkers both need and deserve. We are grateful to the Council for recognizing the value of investing in our sheltering infrastructure and look forward to making the most of this opportunity to best protect animals across the city.

Thank you.

Testimony at New York City Council Budget Hearing

Fund the New York City Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative

Thursday, May 21st, 2020

Remote testimony and written testimony

Good morning Co-Chair Council Member Dromm and the entire Committee on Finance. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the importance of continuing to fund the New York City Viral Hepatitis Initiative while maintaining the ability to remain safe at home. My name is Mike Selick and I am the Hepatitis C Training and Policy Manager for the national Harm Reduction Coalition, a national organization with offices in New York City and Oakland, CA, that promotes the rights, dignity, and health of people who use drugs. As part of my role at Harm Reduction Coalition I coordinate the Injection Drug Users Health Alliance (IDUHA) which is made up of all health department waived Syringe Exchange Programs (SEP) in New York City. All IDUHA programs are funded under the New York City Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative to provide prevention and linkage to care services for people who use drugs in NYC. In my testimony today, I will briefly outline the importance of this initiative both to eliminating hepatitis C in NYC as well as connecting people who use drugs to the broader medical system, allowing them to access care they would otherwise never receive - a particularly important service as we are all engaged in a global public health fight to contain COVID19 and mitigate its effects.

The NYC Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative currently funds 34 organizations to provide hepatitis B and C prevention and access to care services, as well as training and technical assistance for providers (see list of organizations below). The Initiative currently fully funds employment for more than 50 people: Syringe Service Program (SSP) peers, patient navigators, and training and technical assistance providers from the communities they serve. The Viral Hepatitis Initiative serves people at highest risk for hepatitis B and C, HIV, overdose and coronavirus, including the uninsured, immigrants and people who have used drugs. The Initiative has served over 15,000 people at risk for hepatitis B or C in navigation programs and linked over 6,500 to care. The initiative has trained and employed over 58 patient navigators and over 111 Peers from syringe exchange programs and has trained over 2,000 clinical providers in hepatitis B and C testing and treatment.

Currently, the programs are building telehealth capacity to continue critical prevention and access to care services to address the COVID-19 pandemic. For most of the people we serve, this Initiative is the first or only interaction with the health care system they have and we serve as vital connectors to and validators of the medical system. Syringe Exchange Programs meet people who are homeless, poor, using drugs, and with criminal justice system involvement many of whom are completely disconnected to all medical care and have not seen a doctor in years. Through the outreach provided by IDUHA programs, people that are traditionally "hard to reach" are brought into the medical system and supported through finding a doctor and culturally competent medical care free from stigma. We know that during this crisis it is more important than ever for us to find ways to support our participants by making sure they are staying connected to peers and patient

navigators who will support them in both testing and treatment for the range of health needs that may arise because of COVID19. That's why we have worked quickly to adjust our services to stay connected to our participants during NY on PAUSE and continue to reach out to communities that most need our help.

Under the NYC Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative, the national Harm Reduction Coalition is funded to provide trainings for all hepatitis C navigators at local syringe exchange programs. We work in partnership with DOHMH to hold monthly meetings of the Hepatitis C Peer Navigator program as well as meetings every other month for the Check Hep C Patient Navigators who are working at IDUHA agencies. We provide the required trainings for both Hepatitis C Peer Navigators and Check Hep C Patient Navigators as well. In addition to the meetings and trainings, we also provide one on one mentoring and support to individual hepatitis C peer navigators. This support includes signing up for the New York State Peer Certification program as well as resume building, developing skills for outreach, and much more. As just one example, one of the peer navigators we worked with this year was brand new to the program and to patient navigation, and nervous about doing outreach. Through our program they received one on one mentoring and coaching, training in outreach and services, and are now in the process of receiving Peer Certification and looking for full time employment in patient navigation. Our work under the Viral Hepatitis Initiative makes the work of hepatitis C peer and patient navigators at syringe exchange programs possible and provides pathways for personal and professional development. Injection drug use is the most common and most likely way to spread the hepatitis C virus so these programs are reaching the most impacted population.

The COVID19 pandemic is threatening to undo all the gains that have been had from the many years of City Council funding the Viral Hepatitis Initiative. Service programs have been particularly impacted by both NY on PAUSE and the social distancing and safety guidelines required to operate services, and are having trouble keeping up with the increased need for services. There are many reports from program participants of being forced to share syringes, which will both increase the incidents of hepatitis C as well as put this population at risk of COVID19 breakouts. We need to ensure these essential services are continued so that as our city opens up in phases we are prepared to hit the ground running and make up for lost time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Selick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Selick, MSW
On behalf of Harm Reduction Coalition
Phone: (201) 755-3474
Email: Selick@HarmReduction.org

Viral Hepatitis Initiative Funded Organizations (FY20)

African Services Committee
After Hours Project
AIDS Center of Queens County
Alliance for Positive Change
APICHA Community Health Center
Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center
BOOM!Health
BronxCareHealth System
Brownsville Multiservice Family Health Center
Charles B. Wang Community Health Center
Community Health Action of Staten Island
Community Healthcare Network
Empire Liver Foundation
Family Services Network of New York
H+H Bellevue Hospital
H+H Coney Island Hospital
H+H Elmhurst Hospital
H+H Kings County Hospital
Harm Reduction Coalition
Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group
Housing Works Crosby Street
Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center
Korean Community Services
Montefiore Comprehensive Care Center
Montefiore Einstein Liver Center
New York Harm Reduction Educators
NYU Seventh Avenue Family Health Center
Positive Health Project
Praxis Housing Initiatives
Public Health Solutions
Safe Horizon Street works
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction
VOCAL-NY
Washington Heights CORNER Project

05/23/20

I am writing to give my testimony for the New York City Council.

The mayor is proposing 2 billion dollars worth of budget cuts to core social services which New Yorkers rely on- this is disturbing news particularly as there are almost no cuts being proposed to the budget for policing and jails. I understand that the police union is a strong force in city politics, but I respectfully request that the City Council reconsider the logic and ethics of this imbalance.

New Yorkers need social services in this crisis more than ever. Health care, education, jobs, and housing. What this city does not need is more people in jails in the middle of a public health crisis. Sending a person into a jail right now is sending them to a highly increased likelihood of illness and death. This budget will be remembered by New Yorkers for years to come: what did Mayor DeBlasio and you the City Council of 2020 do to New Yorkers struggling for their lives? Did you use the city's budget to help those who need it the most? Or you they maintain the status quo of funding the police budget and criminalizing a disproportionate number of the city's black and brown residents. We are watching you, and hope that you will act with compassion and courage to help us get through this.

Sincerely,
Mikhaela Maricich
371 State St #7
Brooklyn, NY 11217
khaelamaricich@gmail.com

Hello,

My name is Milenny. I am a high school teacher in NYC and I am extremely concerned about the possible cuts to education. COVID has shocked us all and has taken so much from everyone but some of the hugest losses have occurred in education. Our students have not only lost valuable knowledge and support but also have lost a lot of the emotional support they get from being in a physical building interacting with their friends and teachers. Next year is sure to bring on additional challenges and will require even more support for our students.

As a teacher, I no longer have a schedule. I have to meet my kids where they are at whatever time they reach me because many are working during the day. I have had to reshape everything I do in order to help my students feel supported throughout this time. Cutting funding could reduce the supports my students need and cause more damage to their education than has already been done. Please find another way to get this done without hurting the students of NYC. They need the most right now in order to recover from all this.

Respectfully submitted,

Milenny Then

My name is Montravius Williams and I am with St. John's Residences for boys.

Through the Fair Futures Organization I have been working with my coach for over 3 months. I am not in school and really don't know what I wanted to do with my life. Working with my coach Kepriecé has helped me to develop my goals. Within a month of working with my coach we are faced with this new norm, the COVID-19 pandemic. We are still able to communicate and work on any goals and issues I might need help with. She has created a comfortable environment that I can address my concerns. She explains things that I might not fully understand and need to be clarified. These are some of the things that are important to me but also what I need to get to the other side of the pandemic. Please restore the funding to Fair Futures in the City's FY2021 budget, which we desperately need to help other youths like myself with the emotional and academic support we need.

Append the message with the disclaimer 'This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. It may contain confidential, proprietary or legally privileged information. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by email and delete the original message from your computer. We reserve the right to monitor all email communications. Although this email has been scanned for viruses, we do not guarantee that it is virus-free, and we accept no liability for any loss or damage arising from its use.'. If the disclaimer can't be applied, take no action.

Morenike Lambert
115 Ocean Ave, Apt. C4
Brooklyn, NY 11225
May 21, 2020

To the Members of City Council:

My name is Morenike Lambert; I am a long-time resident of our city, and I am writing to express my concern about the proposed cuts to the city budget in response to COVID-19. I understand that the city will have to contend with an unprecedented deficit of up to \$7.4 billion or more due to a loss in revenue, and that balancing a budget with a deficit of this size is not an easy task. We have seen from the data that COVID-19 has most impacted black, brown, and low income communities (which often overlap due to generations of structural inequity), and my concern is that these cuts will further the devastation already experienced by these communities.

As an education advocate and employee of Uncommon Schools, which serves over 9,000 families in Brooklyn, I worry that the proposed cuts will negatively impact students and families. The current budget proposal includes a \$231 million in cut to the education budget, \$100 million of which comes out of the Fair Schools Funding (FSF) program. FSF is a major source of funds for many schools, and it funds schools with the most need. Schools that have high numbers of English Language Learners and special education students benefit from this funding. These are students will need some of the most support as they have already bore the burden of the digital divide in remote learning and will experience the largest levels of academic slide. A cut of this magnitude will put the neediest students at risk. I am also concerned by the proposed cuts to social work staff, as contending with the social and emotional well-being of students will be paramount in the upcoming school year.

In addition to education cuts, there are other parts of the budget that I find worrisome. I live in Prospect Lefferts Gardens in the 41st Council district, and we have some of the highest renter turnover and evictions in the city due to rising rent prices caused by gentrification and decades of deregulation encouraged by the real estate lobby. The proposed \$1.039 billion cut to the affordable housing development plan would devastate low income people who are already rent burdened looking for housing solutions in their communities. It does not make sense that these vital elements of the budget are being cut, when other areas, like the Police budget, have not faced the same type of austere cuts. Programs need to be trimmed in ways that are equitable and will not cause more undue harm. I hope that you will consider these sentiments as you negotiate the budget for our great city,

Sincerely,

Morenike Lambert

May 18, 2020

Dear Honorable NYC Councilmembers,

The following is my testimony on the vital importance of the services provided through our MCCAP program. These services help community members with their healthcare and medical needs, which we can all agree is a most vital human necessity.

- **MCCAP's mission:** New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) provides culturally and linguistically competent assistance to New Yorkers about how to enroll in and use health care and coverage. The program relies on the Community Service Society (CSS) and a network of 12 community-based organizations (CBOs), which our organization is part of, that work directly with the most vulnerable populations who struggle to interact with the health care system, including enrolling in and understanding health insurance, and accessing low-cost health care.
- **MCCAP's history:** MCCAP first started in 1998 as a model consumer assistance program funded by the City of New York. The program had to be dismantled in 2010 when the City Council funding was eliminated for Fiscal Year 2011. Between 1998 and 2010, MCCAP served more than 140,000 residents in all five boroughs through a network of 26 CBOs led by CSS. In 2019, the New York City Council restored \$500,000 in funding for MCCAP to address the growing need among underserved residents needing help with navigating the healthcare system and accessing affordable care. The program was officially launched in February 2020.
- **MCCAP's services:** MCCAP uses a "hub-and-spokes" model to provide services. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline; while advocates at 12 CBOs serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in every borough. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people:
 - Navigate and make the most out of their health insurance coverage
 - Resolve health insurance problems
 - Get prior authorizations
 - Access specialists, out-of-network services, and affordable healthcare
 - Apply for hospital financial assistance programs

MCCAP services are advertised in multi-lingual fliers to ensure that immigrants and linguistic minorities are informed of these services. In addition, information about NYC MCCAP's Helpline at CSS is also available through insurance notices, NYC's 311, websites, and through social media.

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- **Why MCCAP:** Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, we have seen hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers access healthcare coverage for the first time in their lives. However, these gains in coverage are undercut by anti-immigrant coverage exclusions, rising healthcare prices and a complex healthcare system, causing profound barriers to care. Many people, particularly low-income communities of color, struggle to access healthcare because of affordability barriers. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this healthcare affordability crisis with many New Yorkers losing their job-based coverage or cannot afford care. These New Yorkers need help understanding their insurance options and troubleshooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers. MCCAP can help address these needs by providing health advocacy and health insurance navigation.

- **COVID-19 Response:**

- MCCAP's Helpline is providing much-needed advocacy assistance to clients whose medical needs have become increasingly unmet by an overwhelmed healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges of working remotely, our helpline staff has maintained a 95 percent live-answer rate. CBO partners have also transitioned successfully to providing services remotely.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the city's healthcare affordability crisis. MCCAP can be a valuable resource for New Yorkers who lose their job-based coverage or cannot afford care and need help understanding their insurance options and trouble-shooting potential problems accessing coverage and care because of financial barriers.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed flaws in our healthcare system, which fails to provide equal access to coverage and care to low-income communities of color who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. MCCAP, with its diverse network of trusted CBOs, can help address these health disparities by providing culturally and linguistically competent health advocacy services in the hardest-hit areas of the city. More than 80 percent of MCCAP clients are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home.

- **MCCAP's impact:**

- MCCAP agencies provide services in more than 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs.
- Since its launch one month ago, MCCAP has handled 700 cases and engaged with 350 clients through community outreach and workshop events.

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1525 Central Avenue
Far Rockaway, New York
11691-4001
Tel: 718-327-7755
Fax: 718-327-4903
www.jccrp.org

Our organization provides services to the entire borough of Queens and most importantly to the Rockaways, which is a hard to reach location. The JCCRP case managers speak English, Russian, Hebrew and Spanish. This year, we have helped hundreds of community members with these services.

- **Ask of City Council:** MCCAP CBOs receive an average award of \$26,000 (not including Article 6 match) which is only enough to hire a part-time case worker. The intense health advocacy work they do require, however, a full-time case worker. The need for health advocacy services has only intensified during the pandemic as clients' medical needs have become increasingly unmet by an overwhelmed healthcare system and people who have lost their job-based coverage or were previously uninsured need health insurance navigation. MCCAP CBOs have transitioned successfully to provide these services remotely, becoming first-line responders to low-income, communities of color who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. But without additional funding, they will be limited in the assistance that they can provide during this difficult time. **We urge the New York City Council to enhance MCCAP funding from \$500, 000 to \$700,00 to increase capacity of existing CBOs in underserved communities. The enhancement will allow MCCAP to serve an additional 3,000 clients in FY21.**

These additional funds will allow our organization to increase the hours of our MCCAP case manager. These additional hours are needed to meet the high demand for these services.

Thank you for your continued and dedicated leadership. The care and concern that you have for struggling New Yorkers is what makes this the greatest city in the world.

Sincerely,

Moshe Brandsdorfer
Executive Director

President
Mordecai Zvi Dicker

Vice President
Yoni Dembitzer

Treasurer
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Testimony to the New York City Council Budget Hearings- May 21, 2020

Create a Green New Deal Recovery Through NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform

**Nancy Romer, Peoples Climate Movement-NY,
member organization of Climate Works 4 All, Align**

The Covid-19 crisis has upended our lives, killed 16,000 New Yorkers and put hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers out of work. My comments today will be on the looming climate crisis, its similarity to the Covid crisis and what the City of New York can do now.

Scientists warned us about minimizing Covid-19 back in January—had we heeded their warnings we could have saved thousands of lives and jobs. The scientists are warning us about much more devastating consequences to run-away climate change: if we don't act NOW the lives we love, the people we love and the planet we love will be devastated. The scientists tell us we have ten short years to respond and shift away from a fossil fuel-based economy to one based on renewable energy. This can be done while we are recovering from the health and economic devastation of the pandemic and prevent the greatest threat—climate change—from advancing. Our city must take the lead if we can ever expect the rest of the nation and the world to follow.

We are asking the City of New York to advance a Green Recovery. It will require massive investments right now in green infrastructure, real and thorough retrofitting of ALL buildings in NYC to maximize energy efficiency, and dramatically expand solar, wind and composting capacity. This is not the time to pit one important crisis against another. It is the time to create a future that takes the health of individuals, communities and our planet as central to our solutions.

The Peoples Climate Movement-New York asks that the City of New York support the following as part of the NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform:

- Implement LL 97 which would expand retrofitting of buildings and making them energy efficient; this will create 40,000 + jobs by funding oversight positions in the Department of Buildings.
- Continue and expand solar installations in all City buildings and support the installation of solar panels wherever feasible.
- Continue the planning and development of off-shore wind installations to expand City renewable energy capacity.
- Continue and expand the composting program—closing it down will be costly and starting it up will be even more costly. Composting costs can be covered by expanding the program and making it more self-sustaining. The public outcry for this program can translate into broader education of New Yorkers and effective participation in the composting program now and in

the future. Composting sequesters carbon in our atmosphere; putting food scraps into landfill creates methane, a GHG 82 times more potent and dangerous than carbon and creating respiratory illnesses in nearby communities. Because most waste transfer stations and landfill are in low income communities they will be most affected--again.

There are ready sources of financing for these projects: from FEMA, both old and new programs, municipal liquidity grants and state and federal workforce development grants. We do expect funding to be provided for local infrastructure projects in CARES 2 from the federal government.

Moreover, the City of New York needs to go on an all-out campaign to get the NY State Legislature to allow the City to tax millionaires and billionaires, to institute a stock transfer tax and to develop other taxes that require the rich to pay their fair share. The people of New York and the people of the planet are crying out for a healthy, safe and decent life. We cannot do that with the middle class and the poor carrying the burden. The rich have had their day in NYC—we have provided them with a playground, homes and lucrative workplaces. They need to pay for it now.

Thank you for supporting a Green New Deal in NYC through NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform.



127 West 127th Street, Suite 220, New York, NY 10027 | 560 Riverside Drive, 9K, New York, NY 10027

347.683.2691 | naomi@dvpnyc.org | dvpnyc.org

Testimony to City Council
May 26, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the Department for the Aging. My name is Naomi Goldberg Haas and I am the Founder and Artistic Director of Dances For A Variable Population in Harlem. The mission of Dances For A Variable Population is bring strong and creative movement to older adults that supports wellness, happiness, and health. Dances For A Variable Population annually serves over 2,500 older adults throughout four boroughs of NYC with weekly programs of classes and large scale performances.

We are advocating for critical funding to be sustained for the arts that we and so many other organizations provide to people of all ages across the city, that is especially critical at this time.

The older adults we serve are primarily living alone, are highly vulnerable to COVID-19, and lack other outlets for physical exercise and social connections. Even before this pandemic pushed society in social isolation, loneliness was at epidemic levels affecting 60-80% of the population. Recognizing that loneliness decreases life span by 26% exceeding the risks of death associated with obesity, physical activity and air pollution, programs that mitigate this life-threatening condition are essential at this time.

This spring, we moved very rapidly to provide remote programming. We now offer 14 classes a week, 7 days a week via video, live Zoom, and even telephone-based classes for participants, which have been wildly popular for isolated older adults without internet. Our remote programs have an attendance of over 350 seniors each week, with 20-50 students in each virtual class, and our videos have had nearly 4,000 views.

At this critical time, programs like ours are maintaining the physical and mental health of New York City's most vulnerable populations. We rely on discretionary funding from the New York City Council through the Department for the Aging and Department of Cultural Affairs to sustain these programs, as we work in low-income communities that cannot afford to pay for them. Loss of New York City funding would have a devastating impact on the health and welfare of the communities we serve. These programs promote a sense of safety, and a sense of possibility for all our communities, and they must not be cut.

Thank you.

Naomi Goldberg Haas
Artistic Director

Dear City Council,

My name is Naomi Imbrogno and I am a lifetime resident of New York City. I find your current budget unacceptable. Our priorities as New Yorkers are safe affordable public housing, funding for education for all ages, including expansion of Universal PreK and after school, programs for seniors, improving transportation, increasing mental health services, housing the unhoused, sheltering women and children from domestic violence, feeding everyone, and providing full-time jobs for all currently unemployed New Yorkers. I request that you invest in these priorities rather than giving a huge bloated budget to the NYPD to further militarize New York. Having police everywhere will not ensure our safety, since the NYPD has not been held accountable for its abusive actions toward communities of color, including countless homicides of unarmed civilians. If police must be in our schools, they should be retrained as counselors, so as to have peaceful interactions with our parents and children. This money could also be used for decarceration programs, so that released prisoners could have affordable housing, counseling, decent medical care, food, and clothing.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Naomi Imbrogno

May 21st, 2020

Chair Dromm
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Dromm:

My name is Nasim Almontaser. I am a Yemeni American, born and raised in Brooklyn NY, an activist, and a full time student at Brooklyn College studying History and Secondary Education. During these times, I'm really trying to juggle this workload simultaneously ensuring I am healthy. As an activist, I believe in "voicing the voiceless." To learn more about the work I do, I am all over social media, please follow me on **Facebook**: NAlmontaser, **Instagram**: Nasim_almontaser, and **Twitter**: NAlmontaser3.

As a student who has gone through public education all my life, I aspire to complete a Doctorates degree in Education and be the future Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education to ensure equity is pushed throughout districts. Most importantly, to tackle the bigger issues in public education which have been brushed under the rug for way too long and building upon Chancellor Carranza's work. Chancellor Carranza, I know there is something special about you which is why you were selected to be the leader of one of the largest public education systems in NYC. I urge the Council to negotiate a just budget that will invest in our demands and diversify from policing. It's important to better fund the public education system because the one million diverse students are the leaders of tomorrow. If we fail in better funding our schools, then, we are failing as a nation and depriving our students from the education they deserve to be successful. In moments of crisis, as leaders we need to keep our heads up high and ensure our teachers, social workers, and school communities are safe in order to continue supporting our students. This support is urgent as many of our students are from working class families and getting a public education is their only way to become prosperous.

Throughout my experiences, I've been a part of numerous leadership organizations ranging from Student Government, IntegrateNYC, Girls for Gender Equity, the Superintendent council and speaking on issues where public education fails because I believe if injustice comes our way we need to fight back and do what's right. My personal experience as a NYC public school student has taught me the importance of having a just budget that truly supports young people like me. One experience I remember was Elementary School in the fourth grade. I failed the fourth grade because I did not pass the ELA state exam simply because I never had the resources. My parents did not speak English at the time. I remember translating every letter that came from the school to Arabic. One day there was an option to file an appeal in order to promote me to the 5th grade. I had to write that letter on behalf of

my parents because they did not know how to write and speak English. The administrators were unhelpful and not supportive in getting me the resources needed to pass. I was always a humble and respected student. It was unfair that there were students who were disrespectful and never showed up to class who got promoted. After everyone heard in the school that I was held back, I was teased by my peers called hateful works, punished at home and internally I began to feel like I was not smart enough. This was not fair because I've always been known as the student who works twice as hard in order to reach my goal. In moments of crisis, there are students who are walking in my shoes and remaining silent. Therefore, this is why I am demanding for justice now.

First, we need to keep teachers and social workers in schools and commit to restorative justice, healing, mental health support, and trauma informed responses to conflict. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of prioritizing mental health, relationships, and communities in our schools. The steps that the city can take are: rejecting the hiring freeze on teachers and social workers proposed in the Citywide Savings plan. Ensure one social worker and guidance counselor per 150 students and financially supporting schools in the hiring of peacebuilders and restorative justice coordinators. Substantially supporting access to restorative justice curriculum and resources for educators to ensure student trauma is addressed in the classroom because it's not all about the curriculum.

Second, we need to expand health and sanitation measures in schools to protect students, staff, and our communities. Upon returning to school, students, staff, parents, and other school community members need resources to ensure that their health and safety is prioritized. We demand that the City: ensure all schools have the staffing, funding, and supplies necessary to maintain exceptional, and, at minimum, sanitary conditions. Training for members of the school community, to implement and support social distancing at schools. Police should not be assigned to enforce social distancing in schools because that is why we would have trained staff and social workers.

Third, we need restorative funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), and with it, the 75,000 jobs that young New Yorkers are counting on. SYEP provides young people with the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences when school is out while helping to support their families. New York City youth cannot afford to lose this vital source of income. The City must uphold its commitment to young people and their families by: supporting community-based organizations who are preparing to offer meaningful remote Summer Youth Employment opportunities if social distancing remains in effect through the summer.

Fourth, we need to reduce spending for school policing and institute a hiring freeze on the NYPD. As we move through the crisis of the pandemic and prepare for reopening the city later this year, we must invest in systems that support young people, not systems that criminalize them. The city should cut NYPD spending and shift those funds to support mental health, restorative justice, and youth

employment by: moving to permanently get rid of police and invasive security from schools. This can be done by immediately shrinking the inflated school policing budget, limiting overtime, equipment, and OTPS, and moving the administration to identify further cost savings.

To conclude, please reconsider your decision and better fund our school system. You cannot hold an officer and teacher to the same level. The reason being is because an educator has the power and magic to connect and make bonds with their students. They are the ones who create the doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs and therefore need to be respected, remain present and not underrepresented. As we are trying to get through life in such unprecedented times, it is our moral responsibility to do what's right as a nation. This is the reason why I am a Paraprofessional for the NYC DOE and in school to become an educator, future administrator to tackle the injustices which are failing our students and the generations to come. In moments of crisis, it is important to do what's best for our students because we don't know what is to come tomorrow as they will be the new decision makers. It's important to hear from those who have experience in public education such as myself and the story I shared. Making these changes has a huge difference in a child's life. In the words of Barack Obama, "A change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things. The future of so many NYC students is in your hands. We're counting on you to pass a just budget that will protect our schools and divest from policing.

Once again my work revolves around "voicing the voiceless". I want you to all understand that I am here for you and for the core values NYC manifests. To get in touch, you can find me on all social media outlets. **Facebook:** NAlmuntaser, **Instagram:** nasim_almuntaser and **Twitter:** NAlmuntaser3.

Thank you and I have served my time.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed within a hand-drawn oval. The signature appears to read "Nasim Almontaser" in a cursive script.

Nasim Almontaser
Brooklyn College Student
Activist
Dignity in Schools: Member
nasimalmontaser@gmail.com
(917) 702- 6421

FY21 NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing

Thursday, May 21, 2020

Presented by:

Rachael Gazdick - CEO

Rigaud Y. Noel, MPA - Chief Partnership Officer

Thank you for the Council's longstanding support of **New York Edge (NYE)**, formerly known as the Sports & Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc. /SASF.

We are here today to ask for the Council's continued support of New York Edge under its After-School Enrichment Initiative AND to join with youth providers across the city in calling for the restoration of funding for COMPASS and SONYC summer remote and/or social distance programming.

Twenty-eight years ago, New York Edge (then SASF) was created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports, arts and academic help, did not exist. New York Edge with the Council as its partner was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming.

From these beginnings, New York Edge has grown into the largest provider of summer and after-school programming, serving over 40,000 young people and their families at 134 schools throughout the five boroughs. Core components of our programming include visual and performing arts, STEAM education, social and emotional learning and leadership, sports, health and wellness and academics and college readiness.

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap for New York City's students by extending the school day and year with wholesome, skill-building activities designed to improve New York City children's academic performance, health & wellness, attitude towards school, self-confidence, character and values, and opportunity for lifelong employment. Since its creation, New York Edge programming has consistently, and proactively, evolved through the years in order to meet the needs of New York City's children and families, the most recent example being our response to COVID-19.

With the implementation of the Governor's Executive Order and the closing of New York City public schools, New York Edge:

- *Moved our entire workforce to remote work;*
- *Reached out to our partner schools offering assistance to Principals and teachers as they transitioned and adapted to remote learning;*
- *Donated over **300** laptops and devices to students in need;*
- *Created a resource page for parents with information on: accessing food, staying abreast of health updates, and electronic resources for academics, art, and health and wellness;*
- *Successfully rolled out online programming and activities – academics, arts enrichment, health & wellness and college readiness - to students participating in **101** of our after-school programs;*
- *Engaged new partners to add innovative and creative programming to our offerings --most recently with Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Steven Van Zandt to implement his TeachRock curriculum.*

In anticipation of the summer, and the needs our city's youth after months of self-isolation, we have formulated a trauma-informed approach to summer camp that can be delivered online, or—if it becomes possible—in person with additional measures to support social distancing. Whether we deliver summer camp online, or in person, we will focus on a trauma informed approach and activities that promote collaboration, empowerment, and choice in addition to enjoyment and reinforcing academic progress. Online camps will feature: academic specialized tutoring, student councils for ongoing discussion and peer leadership, student kits for hands on learning, and group projects under the leadership of NYE instructors.

If it is possible to gather in July and/or August, we propose running summer camps at the schools that provide “grab and go” meals. We would create camps of 50 children, dividing them into groups of 5 with one adult assigned to each group. We would adhere

to physical distancing and provide each child with their own learning packs to avoid sharing of materials.

In order for our free programs to operate this summer and next school year, either remotely or using a social distance model, and for our programs to continue to positively engage, both physically and mentally, the youth of our city, continued Council funding is needed. Thirteen years ago, our citywide funding was reduced by 50% when the Council chose to fill a Mayoral created budget hole at DOE. Even with that reduction, we have continued to provide the highest level of after-school and summer programming to youth across the five boroughs, providing them with the supports and resources need to succeed in and out of the classroom. **Another cut to NYE would be detrimental to our mission and our ability to serve our city's most at risk youngsters.**

Continued funding of New York Edge under the After-School Enrichment Initiative will not only allow us to provide much needed summer programming to the youth of the city, it will also enable us to maintain the infrastructure needed to operate our citywide after-school programs. This is especially important as we were not eligible for any PPP assistance due to the size of our staff. **And as a self-insured non-profit, the loss of qualified and talented staff members will not only affect the quality of our programming , it will cost us millions of dollars (\$1.3M in July and August alone) in unemployment benefits, money better spent on our students.** Council funds will allow us to continue to extend after-school programming to Saturdays through special events, trips and tournaments and to operate our sites when school is in intersession such as during Presidents Week.

And in light of the fact that the Mayor this week announced his plans for remote learning summer school, the need for our programming is even greater. Under the Mayors' plan approximately 178,000 students – elementary, middle, high school and

those with disabilities – are expected to sign up. Enrichment activities such as virtual field trips and community building exercises will be provided to all summer school students. **The remaining public school population of about 850,000 youngsters will be left high and dry with no access to academic, arts, healthy & wellness or recreational online opportunities. New York Edge stands ready to help fill this void with its established online programming.**

As you well know, the Mayor's FY 21 Executive Budget has eliminated over \$213 million in funding for summer youth programs, leaving nearly 175,000 young people under the age of 24 without any positive enrichment or engagement this summer.

With the weather getting warmer and summer right around the corner, young people across the city will need respite and relief from these past few months. They will need physical activity, social interaction and academic supports to help lessen summer learning loss. And parents, finally able to return to work, will need access to free, quality childcare that summer programs offer, as well as the knowledge that their children are participating in safe, structured, engaging AND fun summer activities.

Free summer programs, online and social distance models, are an ESSENTIAL and NECESSARY part of the city's economic recovery from COVID-19. And the Program Managers, Site Directors and Staff that run these programs and nurture, support, engage and inspire our city's youth should be RECOGNIZED as the ESSENTIAL WORKERS THAT THEY ARE!

We recognize that the City is facing significant financial challenges as a result of COVID-19. **The Administration's elimination of summer youth funding however is shortsighted and detrimental to working families and youth providers throughout the city.** To completely eliminate funding for COMPASS and SONYC summer camps, Beacon and Cornerstone programs without an alternative recovery plan in place is tantamount

to abandoning those families who rely on these programs the most at a time when they are already dealing with emotional trauma and economic hardship. It also affects the ability of many youth providers, including New York Edge, to maintain staff, develop programming and prepare for the fall when schools will, hopefully, reopen and in-person engagement can resume. **The FY 21 Budget should not be balanced on the backs of working families, their children or the CBO's which serve them.**

On behalf of the over 40,000 youth annually served by New York Edge, we ask for your help and support. We have proudly partnered with the Council these past 28 years in providing the highest level of academic supports and enrichments to the youth of our city, many of whom are children of color living in low-income neighborhoods. **Please fight for the continuation of our \$1,000,000 citywide funding under the After-School Initiative.**

Thank you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio
Members of the City Council
New York City Hall
City Hall Park
New York, NY 10007

New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Cc: Education Committee Chair, Mark Treyger
Finance Committee Chair, Daniel Dromm
New York City Council Education Committee

May 11th, 2020

Dear Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson:

We write to vehemently oppose the proposed cuts to the Department of Education in the Executive Budget. Prior to the spread of the novel coronavirus, educational inequities in academic and social, emotional, and mental health supports and resources disproportionately impacted Black, Latinx, AAPI, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, gender non-conforming students, and students with disabilities. These same young people's communities and families have had to bear the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis. For a just return to schools, youth leaders from our public schools, educational and racial justice advocates, legal advocates, educators, parents, and community members are calling on the Mayor and City Council to pass a final budget that divests from school policing, surveillance, and invasive security infrastructure and ensures funding for social, emotional, and mental health supports, college access programs, culturally responsive education, and classroom teaching and learning resources.

The FY2021 budget must reflect an equitable approach to provide comprehensive social, emotional, and mental health care and providing high-quality education to all students. The crisis has laid bare for all to see that we must reduce the reach of NYPD into the lives of communities of color to effectively provide care and ensure equity. Decades of research and lived experiences show just how harmful police in schools are for young people pushed to the margins, especially students of color — Black, Latinx, Indigenous, AAPI; students of all genders—particularly transgender and gender non-conforming students; and LGBTQ students shows how harmful police in schools are for young people pushed to the margins. Analysis of school safety data demonstrates that, even with interactions between students and the NYPD decreasing, the racial disparities remain the same. For example, Black and Latinx students represented around 90% of punitive police interactions (juvenile reports, court summonses, and arrests) over the past three school years. Black students in particular are most impacted, consistently 100% overrepresented in police interactions in comparison to their relative population. When one considers gender as

well, Black girls faced even more disproportionate odds; in 2019, Black girls experienced 58% of in-school girl arrests despite representing only 22% of girls in NYC public schools. Black and Latinx students are nearly 100% of all students handcuffed by the NYPD during child-in-crisis incidents, with the youngest children being five years old. The only way to eliminate racial disparities of policing in schools is to eliminate policing in schools.

Much is uncertain about the immediate and long-term future, but some decisions are clear. Funding that is not used to ensure the education and health of students should be cut to save the programs, resources, and initiatives they need. There are only 2,892 full-time guidance counselors and 1,456 social workers for 1.1 million public school students. In comparison, there are over 5,400 NYPD School Safety Division personnel. By freezing replacement hires for the NYPD's School Safety Division, erasing the NYPD's New Youth Policing Strategy, and canceling growth of school policing in FY2020 and FY2021 we would save upwards of \$100 million in the coming year. We insist on a continued commitment to shrinking the system of school policing in the years to come. For safe and supportive school communities for all students the Department of Education has to embrace an approach to end school policing and invasive security measures by removing the NYPD from our schools. In addition to significantly reducing the budget outlay of the NYPD's School Safety Division, we implore the Mayor's Office and Council to cut funding for invasive and unnecessary school security infrastructure including any budget allocations for new metal detectors, upkeep of current metal detectors, x-ray machines, and wands.

If this crisis provides an opportunity for us to transform our schools and communities, it begins with the budget. We need to reallocate funding to increase Fair Funding shares for schools serving low-income students of color, release any hiring freezes on social, emotional, and mental health staff, fund restorative justice to create healing school climates, save college access programs to provide a path towards successful futures, drastically improve facilities, and continue the work to dismantle racism and gender discrimination in our public schools.

The current education budget sends the message that the City will respond to a pandemic by continuing to see youth from our low-income communities of color as problems to be policed and controlled, not as young people navigating an inequitable city striving to live with dignity and overcome discriminatory systems. We must decide as a city what we most value, and set the City's funding priorities towards building young people's futures, not cutting them short. We have to redefine public safety from policing and security to meeting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Educational Justice
Alliance for Quality Education
Advancement Project National Office
Arab American Association of New York

Brooklyn Movement Center
The Brotherhood/Sister Sol
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Popular Democracy
Citizen Action of New York
Churches United for Fair Housing
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
Data for Black Lives
FIERCE
The Gathering for Justice/Justice League NYC
Girls for Gender Equity
Indivisible Nation BK
Integrate NYC
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
Journey for Justice
Justice Committee
Movement of Rank and File Educators
New York Collective of Radical Educators
NYC Opt Out
New York Immigration Coalition
Parents Supporting Parents
Persist New York
TEEN Activist Project – New York Civil Liberties Union
True Blue New York
Urban Youth Collaborative
 Future of Tomorrow
 Make the Road New York
 The Rockaway Youth Task Force
 Sistas and Brothas United
VOCAL-NY
Youth Over Guns
Youth Represent

May 21, 2020
Hello,

My name is Nichole Davis and I am a New York City resident and tax payer. In this testimony, I ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. In graduate school, I had the opportunity to study composting and recycling in Barcelona, another world class city like New York, and as you will see from this report from the EU, Barcelona and other European cities have found composting to be a successful and worthwhile investment:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/publications/pdf/compost_en.pdf

From the report, “[m]any of the composting schemes considered in this report have realized substantial cost savings through implementation of their respective schemes. For example, in the Niort scheme in France, the unit cost of composting is half that of landfilling waste and, in addition, a State tax is not paid on waste that is composted. Cost avoidance is one of the most important benefits to composting.”

New York has the opportunity to lead the US in composting, not only as it is the right thing to do for the future and an environmentally sustainable measure, but because we, as an American leader, can demonstrate the cost savings to the City, and other municipalities, in a myriad of ways.

The Mayor’s proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today I urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we, as a City, have made in the past few years. I am not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, I am asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and

recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to my family, community and health of the City, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Nichole Davis
Brooklyn, NY 11216



May 20, 2020

Nicol F., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

Hi, my name is Nicol Flores, I was born in Puerto Rico, but I grew up in the Dominican Republic. Now I live in the Bronx NY. Working with coach is a great experience because I do not speak a lot of English and they really help me with my English and assisted me in getting into ESL classes.

Working with coach is really important because she is there for me when I need advice or someone to talk to. The COVID-19 have impacted my life because I deal with depression and speaking with my coach is helpful to me. I enjoy being able to express myself freely, I enjoy talking to her, and I feel comfortable expressing my feelings to my coach. I feel supported by her, and she helps me see things in a more positive perspective. She helps me practice self-care, especially during this pandemic. Now, I have been working out more. Without her support, I would not have known that working out helps me to get all my stress out. I am so glad to be apart of Fair Futures and have support from my coach. I appreciate her for guiding me to do the right thing.

My name is Nicole Follmann, and I live in West Harlem. I am submitting this testimony to decry \$3 billion in cuts and tax revenues losses in the executive budget and call for investments in education, healthcare, transportation, and housing. The budgetary gaps will have an immediate and adverse effect on a whole range of services that New Yorkers rely on, including more than \$800 million in cuts to education alone, and the total elimination of the city's summer youth employment program.

I strongly oppose an increase in budgets to NYPD and the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the allocation of 455 million dollars towards our District Attorneys and Special Narcotics Offices. At a time when our communities' most urgent needs are health justice and economic recovery, the last thing we should do is throw an even higher share of our public resources into the violent systems of surveillance and control. The continued commitment to pouring more than \$10 billion dollars to building new jails, amidst the worst economic and health crisis in most of our lives, is unacceptable.

Our community is only as healthy as our most marginalized neighbors, and the COVID-19 crisis has revealed just how fragile and ill our society is. This budget reflects an addiction to mass incarceration and domestic militarization, no matter how [just](#) and [community-oriented](#) he claims to be. We cannot police ourselves out of a public health crisis, and the imprisoned cannot practice social distancing in cages. While we cannot often see our incarcerated neighbors, they are highly connected to the rest of us and placed at extraordinary risk by the daily flow of correctional officers. These health, racial, income, and policing inequalities makes us all vulnerable. Their health is our health, literally.

Public health *is* public safety, and we must close Rikers now, without adding more to the city's jailing and policing budgets.

Money for police and cages has gone up consistently in the last decade, despite steady decreases in all kinds of crime, and countless studies show absolutely no correlation between jailing and public safety. These trends have only [accelerated](#) in this time of social distancing, further obviating the need for police and cages altogether and, at the very least, making it clear that we don't need even more resources for these violent systems than the year before.

At this rate, the city's misguided priorities mean we [are spending and plan to spend](#) more in the aggregate on policing and new forms of imprisonment than we do on education. In the words of an imprisoned comrade, Chance, "hiring more police isn't the instruments that require a better community, for they're the ones who are stopping a community to be discovered to begin with, they're the ones who are corrupted." Disinvesting from communities' needs and adding to violent systems is tantamount to a war on poor and marginalized New Yorkers.

Now is the time to shut down Rikers without pouring more millions of dollars into cages and policing. Although NYC's jail population is at an all time low (approximately 4,000 people), a majority of people detained in NYC jails (58%) are Black and an overwhelming majority (90%) are people of color. Structural racism, through imprisonment and policing, puts Black and brown New Yorkers at higher risk of exposure and infection.

Imagine if we instead immediately invested that money in hospitals, scaling up testing for the disease, and services for frontline healthcare and delivery workers? Imagine if we had that money to resource teachers, counselors, and mental health providers to help us cope with this crisis and beyond? Imagine if we could relieve people imprisoned with open cases, or for parole violations, of what essentially has become a death sentence? Imagine if rather than sacrificing imprisoned New Yorkers, we instead gave them and their families the affordable housing and resources they need to stay healthy, not just during a pandemic, but for our collective future?

The city must stop the war against Black, brown, and marginalized New Yorkers with these budget increases in policing and jailing. The only way to recover from our current crisis is through investing in what communities have been asking for for decades: affordable, low-income housing; free transit; youth programs; improvements to NYCHA; and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recover, but stay healthy and thrive.

Nicole Hogsett

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Nicole Hogsett, and I work at New York City Children's Theater based in Manhattan, but serving families and students in all five boroughs.

The mission of New York City Children's Theater is to promote children's literacy and social development through theater productions and arts in education programming. Our programming fosters empathy and creativity across the city. These qualities are more vital now, more than ever.

Our organization has immediately jumped into action following the spread of COVID-19. Our Education Department has designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and ELL's. We are running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners, adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to a digital format and are offering it free to schools in District 75, and are developing a series of trauma informed training webinars for educators to help handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students.

Artistically, our Teaching Artists are contributing 20 minute arts-based educational videos to NYCCT's Creative Clubhouse. These videos will be available throughout the summer when reading rates in students historically drop. NYCCT has also made our past productions available to Title 1 Schools for free to allow students to attend a Virtual Field Trip. In addition to the show, students are provided with enriching activities, theater games, and more. We're leading an online class designed to explore emotions and themes kids are dealing with now, allowing them to have a safe place to play and have their fears and worries be heard and acknowledged.

Lastly, we are offering all of our paid programming for free to families of essential workers and anyone profoundly impacted by COVID-19. It is NYCCT's intention to make sure we are supporting the most vulnerable populations.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to

restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Without funding from these incredible agencies, we will not be able to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hogsett

Nicole Serra

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/21/2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Nicole Serra, and I have been working as a Teaching Artist in NYC for the past 16 years. During this time, I have had the opportunity to bring arts programming to all boroughs – Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx, Manhattan – and sometimes Long Island, New Jersey, and upstate. I currently serve as Associate Director for Park Avenue Youth Theatre on the Upper East Side and have also worked with *Creative Arts Team*, *Two River Theatre*, *Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX)*, *LeAp*, and *CentreStage*. I have seen firsthand the powerful impact of arts education. I've collaborated with high school DOE teachers to elevate literacy skills by bringing English and History curriculum to life through theatre. I've used theatrical activities and improvisation to further develop critical thinking and public speaking skills with students aged five to eighteen. I've worked with students to create original full-length plays that offer them a platform to explore and advocate for their ideas across a multitude of topics including education, interpersonal relationships, racism, domestic violence, gender roles, and culture.

I'd like to specifically highlight New York City Children's Theatre, where I've been working as a Teaching Artist in schools and homeless shelters since 2015. Every year, New York City Children's Theater serves over 10,000 students with inclusive theatre and music programs that advance literacy and social-emotional skills in Pre-K-5th graders at schools and homeless shelters in all 5 boroughs. We are dedicated to serving every New York City student, and have designed original programming to serve special populations, including students with disabilities and MLL's.

Currently, 40 New York City Children's Theater Teaching Artists are working to develop innovative and engaging virtual programming:

- We are currently running 20 long-term residencies with our school and homeless shelter partners and creating a database of online programming named "Creative Clubhouse" that will serve the wider public online.
- We have adapted our multi-media musical, FIVE, to digital format, and are offering it for free to schools in District 75, the special needs district.
- We are developing a series of trauma-informed training webinars for educators so that they can learn how to handle the lasting effects of this collective trauma on students, and help to provide stability for their students.
- We are also creating a new applied theatre workshop for grades K through 4 that teaches skills in resilience, mindfulness, and anxiety management through traumatic experiences.

New York City Children's Theater relies heavily on the grant programs that we receive each year from DCLA and the DOE. Without this funding, our organization would be unable to deliver our arts programming to schools and homeless shelters at this time when the arts is imperative for healthy child development.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Nicole Serra



New York City Council Finance Committee Budget Hearing

I would like to thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Finance Chair Danny Dromm and the rest of the members of the City Council for holding this hearing. My name is Alba Lucero Villa, I am the Executive Director of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights (“NMCIR”).

Since 1982 NMCIR has been committed to expanding access to legal immigration services, participating in policy making and community organizing. Our almost four-decades long history of working diligently to educate, defend and protect the rights of immigrants has earned us the trust and respect of New Yorkers across the state, community leaders, government entities and organizational partners.

Most of the individuals who we serve are low-income, non-citizen immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America and, increasingly Africa and the Middle East. Some have lived in the United States for decades, others are recent immigrants. The Coalition is often their first experience with legal assistance or basic social services. Each year NMCIR serves over 8,000 families through one-on-one legal services consultations, Worker Center services, and education classes.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge our communities in unprecedented ways, and we continue to be at the frontlines providing much needed support and assistance. NMCIR is not only still open to offer virtual legal consultations and assistance, but we are also going out to the community to deliver food, masks and cash assistance.

As the state of New York starts to reopen its economy and the number of infections and deaths related to COVID-19 decrease, I would like to thank all of the frontline, essential workers that have worked long hours under grueling and dangerous circumstances to keep the City functioning through the worst of the pandemic.

Many of the frontline, essential workers are undocumented immigrants that have played a vital role delivering food and medicine and providing other essential services during this pandemic such as sanitizing essential places of business—often without the proper personal protection equipment. The City owes these workers a tremendous debt of gratitude for their dedication and courage. Let’s remember that these brave souls did not receive any economic stimulus from the CARES Act and will probably not receive any hazard pay from the proposed Heroes Act.

Our City and Country will be entering a challenging economic climate that we have not experienced since the Great Depression. Governmental resources are vital for nonprofits such as NMCIR to survive and continue providing important services.

New York state's shelter-in-place order did not make any of the issues that NMCIR's clients deal with suddenly go away. In fact, the order highlighted why we need to do more for our City's most vulnerable populations.

Over the past two months, NMCIR has received hundreds of calls for help--dozens daily from community members in dire need of assistance. Many are hungry and sick; most are desperate for help. Often organizations like NMCIR are the only channels they feel safely able to seek access to basic services, protection, and lifesaving safety measures. Immigrant workers who are out risking their lives right now to save ours are still dealing with wage theft, discrimination, unsafe working conditions, and widespread abuse. And they are in fear, so much fear. This fear is further fueled each time undocumented workers are excluded from another federal relief or recovery conversation. If you are constantly excluded the message transmitted is that you do not matter. This adds unnecessary additional trauma to our already traumatized community members who are dealing with death, sickness and an inability to provide for their families. This is also why our organizations are also critical. We counter that message and find families the help they so desperately need.

One of the most important initiatives that the City Council funds is the **Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative ("DoVE")**. Among our clients, at least 50% have either experienced or know someone who is experiencing Domestic Violence. Unfortunately, for many victims of domestic violence, the shelter-in-place order made it impossible to escape from abusive partners. Data suggests incidents of domestic violence may have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen an increase in both emails and calls from community members who are dealing with domestic violence during this time and diverted more legal resources to take on additional VAWA, U and T visa cases in response. With clients who are survivors and those at risk in mind, we also launched a new education campaign to safely get messages out. We created Domestic Violence infographics and then used Whatsapp, our clients' preferred communication platform to promote them. By sharing mass status updates, rather than sending texts, we were able to get critical information out to clients without the information being automatically saved onto our clients' phones, thereby risking a potentially violent partner from seeing it. NMCIR hopes to continue receiving DoVE funding to help victims and survivors of domestic violence with legal services and education campaigns. We ask that the City Council continue to fund DoVE and consider increasing funding.

The Trump administration continues its full-frontal assault on immigrants. In fact, the Trump administration has exploited the pandemic to continue deporting people without due process. Funding for **Immigration Legal Services** is vital for NMCIR to continue to provide free legal assistance for such issues as: Removal defense, Adjustment of Legal Status, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") renewals, Temporary Protection Status ("TPS"), filing for citizenship and naturalization and other family-based petitions. Given the sacrifices immigrants have been making during the COVID-19 pandemic, our grateful City should continue to provide funding for immigration legal services.

Beyond legal rights, NMCIR plays a key role in education. Our **Adult Literacy Education Programs** provide multiple levels of English and Civics courses throughout the year. NMCIR's education programs are free to the public and include all learning materials. To keep our students engaged, NMCIR classes are interactive and include team-building activities. Even after transitioning to a virtual platform for classes, we continue to have high attendance and interest in Adult literacy classes. Our education team has also played a critical role during this pandemic by providing clients information about citywide resources around health, housing and food assistance. Access to ESOL and Civics classes will be critical to workforce development in recovery efforts. We ask for City Council funding to continue to provide learning opportunities for immigrants.

NMCIR also seeks funding from the **Day Laborer Workforce Initiative**. This is an initiative that is critical to maintaining and expanding capacity of day labor centers in all five boroughs to continue doing the disaster relief work that we are doing in addition to providing job placement, workforce development, occupational safety trainings, wage theft services, worker's rights trainings and referral services to low-income day laborers, many of whom are immigrants. When there is economic certainty, unscrupulous employers will seek to take advantage of the scarcity of jobs by exploiting immigrant labor. This initiative helps prevent and tackle exploitation. NMCIR also asks that the City Council provide flexibility for meeting benchmarks given that the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order has made it impossible to provide in person OSHA-30 trainings and has required us to provide pandemic related essential services that could not have been contemplated. Worker Centers have essentially been operating as disaster relief centers. Through these very difficult times, NMCIR had continued virtually conducting outreach, engagement, and referral services targeting workers. We have been providing access to safety training, outreach, and referral services for workers remotely through weekly zoom meetings and virtual Know Your Rights trainings through Facebook Live. These meetings and KYRs are intended to provide workers with awareness of job-related safety and health hazards during the Covid-19 pandemic and inform them rights and resources they may access during this time. NMCIR staff conducts daily outreach to workers to maximize engagement and help meet pressing needs that have been prevalent throughout the community. Most of the workers we serve are struggling with loss of income, health issues, safety issues for those working in essential businesses, and food insecurity. As a result, NMCIR's Worker Center is also coordinating weekly food delivery of hot meals and groceries. Initially we were referring workers to a list of city resources but as the food insecurity grew, we started doing a weekly food drive to drop off hot meals to clients most in need given the difficulty in accessing services that they expressed.

Our City and Country are at a crossroads. This pandemic has exposed many of our vulnerabilities. I am grateful to serve on Mayor Bill de Blasio's Labor and Workforce Sector Advisory Council and be preparing alongside fellow leaders to rebuild a fairer post-COVID-19 City. I am also eager to work with the City Council to eradicate disparities that long plagued our City before COVID-19.



**Written Testimony
City Council Committee on Finance and Subcommittee on Capital Budget
FY21 Executive Budget & Capital Budget Hearing
May 21st, 2020**

**Submitted by Nicole McVinua
Director of Policy, Urban Pathways**

On behalf of Urban Pathways, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony regarding the FY21 Executive and Capital Budgets.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider. We assist individuals through a unique combination of street outreach, drop-in services, Safe Havens, and extended-stay and permanent supportive housing residences, which operate 24/7. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of our clients, including medical wellness and employment services. Last year, Urban Pathways served approximately 3,700 New Yorkers in need. Of those who received comprehensive services (about 1,800), 78% have a disabling mental health condition and/or substance use disorder, and 95% achieved 1 year of stability in a permanent setting.

We know what works to help our most vulnerable community members, those without a home. **Supportive housing provides comprehensive support services that allow residents with disabling conditions and histories of homelessness to lead independent and fulfilling lives, while taking care of their physical and mental health needs.** Our programs provide case management, medication management, an onsite nurse, and programming to assist clients with finances and self-advocacy. **Without it, thousands more New Yorkers would be on the street, in shelters, and in our hospitals.** The demand for these beds is high and our waiting lists long, as there are many more individuals who need and would greatly benefit from supportive housing than the current portfolio has available.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, **the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY21 causes us great concern.** Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. **The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs**

that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail.

Our programs also provide many jobs to the community. Urban Pathways employs over 350 people, most of whom are frontline workers providing critical maintenance, security, and food services in our facilities. **Throughout the course of this pandemic, our programs have remained fully operational thanks to these dedicated frontline staff that have continued to work on-site to ensure the health and safety of our clients.** Their commitment and dedication to those we serve have been nothing short of heroic, as they put their own health at risk to travel into work.

Unfortunately, there has been an underfunding crisis in the human services sector for a long time, and many of our frontline staff are grossly underpaid for the vital work they do in often challenging environments. City contracts pay roughly 80 cents on the dollar of the cost of implementing programs, which has ultimately resulted in the entire human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy.

Our workers are now on the frontlines of New York City's pandemic response and they need your support more than ever. **The City Council must commit to providing human services workers with a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million.** The previous COLA for human services workers from the City is set to expire at the end of FY20 and we must not allow this benefit to be stripped away. Further, **the City Council needs to work with the human services sector to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely.**

The current pandemic has led to many increased costs for human services organizations, from providing PPE to staff members, to technology costs for those working remotely and to ensure our clients stay connected, to cleaning supplies to meet enhanced sanitization procedures. **In light of this, it is also vital to ensure that budget deficits are not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services.** Sweeping across-the-board cuts resulted in reduced contract payments of \$114 million in FY12 and \$60 million in FY13 that wreaked havoc on human services providers and resulted in a direct loss of services. Following that same pattern today will only exacerbate existing inequality by resulting in scaled back services for those experiencing poverty and people of color who are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

We're calling on the City Council to stand with the sector and help ensure the community-rooted human services providers that New York City relies on are financially

stable now, and in the coming months. **Please ensure that no bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts. It is also imperative that City Council commits to holding New York City's historic investment to cover the true indirect costs on human services contracts steady.**

We are counting on the City to commit to supporting the financial stability of the human services sector. Please support us so that we can support the thousands of New Yorkers who rely on us each day, and the many more that will need us as a result of this pandemic. Housing insecurity and homelessness will surely be on the rise due to the dire financial impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, and we want to be sure we can provide quality housing and services for our community. We have the expertise to make sure that individuals get the lifesaving services they need now, as well as long-term support.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these important issues and for your partnership in supporting our communities.

For questions or further information, please contact:

Nicole McVinua, Director of Policy

nmcvinua@urbanpathways.org

212-736-7385, Ext:233



**New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020
Emily Walker, Director of Outreach & Programs**

Good afternoon. My name is Emily Walker, and I am the Director of Outreach & Programs at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). Our organization is a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 250 organizations citywide. We thank Speaker Johnson and the City Council Committee on Finance for allowing us to speak about the fiscal year 2021 Executive Budget.

The City Council's leadership last year secured everyday improvements for our parks, community gardens, and natural areas through the historic addition of \$44M to the FY20 Expense Budget for NYC Parks. We are grateful for the benefits that funding has provided to our public open spaces this year.

Now, we respectfully request the inclusion of an additional \$47M for NYC Parks in the upcoming Adopted FY21 expense budget. This funding will ensure that our parks remain safe, well-maintained, and provide equitable health and environmental benefits to communities across the city. Additionally, we ask that the Council help advocate to stabilize existing funding to NYC Parks and its nonprofit partners who collectively clean, maintain, and program open spaces throughout the city. It is important to note that Parks workers are deemed "essential city workers" in response to the COVID-19 crisis: they have been putting themselves on the line daily to help keep our parks clean and safe during this challenging time. As the Council knows, many of these dedicated professionals do not have job security beyond June 30th of this year. The FY20 funding added by the Council created 342 new staff lines for the agency, and we strongly believe these hard-working New Yorkers deserve the guarantee of a job on July 1st, and know that the Council can help preserve these vital positions.

The Play Fair Coalition's \$47M ask includes \$26.4M to stabilize the 342 positions created last year, which include 100 City Park Workers, 50 Gardeners, 80 PEP officers, 50 Urban Park Rangers, 47 Natural Resources Group staff, and 15 GreenThumb Outreach workers. We are also asking for \$14.8M which would help advance the Administration's goals for creating more programming opportunities in parks citywide, which we anticipate will be more needed than ever this summer as New Yorkers seek opportunities for safe recreation. Finally, our ask includes \$5.5M to provide vitally-needed maintenance and operations equipment for all 51 Council Districts, as well as targeted non-capital overhauls to comfort stations, long a source of frustration for New Yorkers, NYC Parks staff, and elected officials alike. Full details of our campaign platform are attached to our written testimony today.

We also want to note that as an agency, NYC Parks last fiscal year received slightly more than 0.6% of the entire City expense budget. In the PEG savings that have been announced in recent weeks, which total over

\$2.1B, NYC Parks has been asked to bear \$61.3M so far, which represents nearly 3% of the entire PEG for the City. While we understand that every agency needs to do its part, we are deeply concerned that NYC Parks is being asked to bear a disproportionate amount of savings relative to other agencies, when they are still being asked to remain open and be clean and safe for public use during this crisis. We ask our decision-makers to keep this in mind, as our parks are providing a level of essential service today that is proving crucial for the well-being and public health of all New Yorkers.

We know the Council is keenly aware of how integral parks are to our city as a part of our public realm. Fourteen percent of the land in this city is parkland, and now more than ever, our public open spaces have become recognized as a vitally needed resource for communities citywide as we live through this devastating public health crisis. Your leadership in calling for the City to open streets to pedestrian access will help to safeguard New Yorkers, giving them more options than our traditional parks and open spaces - allowing streets to act as a release valve for play and recreation, as well as providing alternative mobility options for our essential workers.

We recognize this is a challenging time for New York City and its budget process; this crisis, however, has also highlighted the essential role that parks play for our city. Parks have often been made to bear the brunt of past budget crises in this city, rendering our unique and incredible parks system overburdened and understaffed. This is a moment to learn from our City's past budget decisions, and ensure that parks, gardens, and open spaces receive the level of funding they need to best serve New Yorkers.

In a city that champions equity, we have to start treating our parks, gardens and open space as critical city infrastructure, which also means investing in the infrastructure of the thousands of people who care for them day-in and day-out. We ask that the Council continue to join us in advocating for this \$47M investment, and we urge the Mayor's office to make this meaningful and vitally needed addition to the Adopted FY21 expense budget for NYC Parks. Thank you for inviting me to speak today. We look forward to working with the City to create the best budget achievable for parks to benefit all New Yorkers. I'm happy to answer any questions the Council might have.

####

For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. www.ny4p.org



Year 2/FY21 Budget Platform
\$47M to invest in the Expense Budget for NYC Parks

\$21.95M to invest in critical Maintenance and Operations

\$10M to baseline the 100 City Park Worker and 50 Gardener staff lines added by the Council in the FY20 budget.

\$5.5M to create a pathway to full-time employment for 100 Parks Opportunity Program participants citywide.

\$3M to create an in-house comfort station improvement team to target a comfort station in every borough, with 18 full-time staff, and 20 seasonal positions.

\$2.5M to bring critically needed maintenance equipment to all 51 Council Districts, including new mowers, Gators, and other equipment needed to ensure NYC Parks maintenance crews have the tools they need.

\$950K to more than double the NYC Parks staff conducting the critically-needed citywide Capital Needs Assessment, decreasing the timeline on finishing this work to understand where improvements are most needed in our parks system.

\$7.85M to invest in Recreation and Programming

\$4M in the budget would mean that 395 playgrounds would be able to host structured sports and afterschool programs for children in every district. This means structure, safety, and imaginative play for tens of thousands of New York's children and their families.

\$1.75M to hire additional staff for after-school programs at Recreation Centers citywide, which would complement the Administration's goal of extending Recreation Center hours.

\$1.8M to create a Natural Turf Management citywide crew to better maintain and care for our natural turf fields in every borough.

\$300K to hire five new Partnerships for Parks Volunteer Program Associates to support park stewards and volunteers across the city.

\$9M to invest in Parks Safety

\$3M to baseline and preserve the 50 Urban Park Ranger positions created by the Council in the FY20 budget.

\$6M to baseline and preserve the 80 Parks Enforcement Patrol positions created by the Council in the FY20 budget.

\$7.92M to invest in Nature and Resiliency

\$3.4M to baseline 15 GreenThumb staff added in FY20, and expand access to resources and tools for community gardeners citywide.

\$4M to baseline 47 Natural Resources Group staff created in the FY20 budget to continue conserving and caring for our natural forests.

\$520K to hire four full-time crews to conduct targeted lake and pond maintenance and monitoring in parks citywide.

The New York City Charter School Center
Erik Joerss, Director of Government Affairs
Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committees on Education
and Finance
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings
May 21, 2020

The New York City Charter School Center respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committees on Education and Finance for providing the opportunity to comment on the Executive Budget Hearings on behalf of the New York City charter school sector.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City. Since the early years when charters were operating in small pockets around the city, the sector has expanded to include 260 schools in the 2019-20 school year, operating across all five boroughs, and in nearly every community school district (CSD). These public schools employ over 10,500 public school teachers and educate over 128,000 students, of which over 116,000 are African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income New York City families (79% are economically disadvantaged) with high quality educational options.

Charter schools are open to all students and may not employ any screening mechanisms to enroll students. They may, however, provide preferences for English Language Learners, students receiving special education services and students from low income families or who are homeless. Over the last several years, the charter sector has sought to further diversify its student populations. Since 2013, the proportion of students with disabilities served by the sector has increased by 35%. Multilingual Learners/English Language Learner enrollment has increased 51% in the kindergarten entrance grade from 2012 to 2018. The sector continues to add innovative programming to serve all students and embrace inclusion as a core tenet of its instructional philosophy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed life for every New Yorker and charters, along with the NYC DOE, have worked tirelessly to provide remote learning during the school closure. Charters have supported their community and families in various ways: running a food



bank, partnering with local businesses to provide meals to families, and providing PPE to essential workers. While the State, not the City Council, provides funding for charter students, charter school students and their families are an integral part of New York City and the Executive Budget. Charter schools, like districts are being held flat with state funding and we know the economic impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic will be felt for many years across New York City.

Contained within the Executive Budget Proposal is the elimination of the District-Charter Partnership (DCP), which is one of the Equity and Excellence initiatives established in 2015. The Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships at NYCDOE launched in spring 2016 with just 20 schools and has grown to reaching over 350 schools. This work has included School-to-School Partnerships; Professional Learning Partnerships; and Systemwide Partnerships. While we understand the financial reality of program cuts such as this one, we wanted to highlight some of the important work and partnerships that have developed because of the DCP and work that needs to continue.

As part of the School-to-School Partnership program, Campus District-Charter Partnerships was created to build positive cross-sector relationships in the more than 150 New York City school buildings where district and charter schools are co-located. CDCP seeks to foster collaboration between charters and district schools that share a campus through structured meetings focusing on topics of shared interest, including improving campus-wide instruction, student engagement, and parental involvement. As schools prepare for re-entry these co-location relationships will be important to maintain as schools work together to maintain the health and safety of all in the buildings.

One of the Systemwide Partnerships established under DCP was the District-Charter Special-Education Partnerships. While charter schools are autonomous in many respects, the DOE is the local education agency (LEA) for special education in NYC charter schools, which means all decisions about the provision of special education services for charter students is made by the DOE's Committees on Special Education (CSEs). Special Education students make up 18% of charter school students, representing 23,077 students. All 260 schools have benefited from the central support for the CSEs that has been improved and expanded under this program. We request that the Council reinstate funding to maintain central DOE positions that support the provision of special education services to charter students.



166A 22nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232 NYC-EJA.org

On the ground – and at the table

**NYC Environmental Justice Alliance Public Comment to the Committee on Finance Re: City Council Budget
May 20th, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Priya Mulgaonkar, and I'm the Resiliency Planner at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance. Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a citywide membership network linking 11 grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their fight for environmental justice.

The Covid-19 pandemic has ravaged low-income communities of color, both in terms of health and economic impacts. The same policies and factors that put Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities most at risk from Covid-19 are those that create the greatest risk from climate change. Proximity to polluting infrastructure and access to substandard housing (for example, drafty buildings or buildings with mold) increases a person's risk of suffering complications or even dying from Covid-19¹. Racist housing and environmental policy have placed power generators, highways, and landfills squarely in communities of color, and the disparate long-term health impacts of breathing in pollution are more evident than ever before during a respiratory disease pandemic.

Our recovery from this crisis must also address the looming climate crisis. New York City must invest in climate, resiliency and green infrastructure projects to put our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our climate goals.. We cannot return to the same extractive and unjust economy that disproportionately harms people of color.

The NYC Environmental Justice Alliance recommends a few ways to do so. First, the City must fully fund the implementation of Local Law 97 in order to tackle the biggest source of carbon emissions in the most polluting buildings, and create 40,000 good jobs in the process. The City must also press on with its solar goals and prioritize EJ communities for solar jobs. In addition, the citywide composting program is an essential service that should also provide good jobs for impacted communities while reducing our waste.

¹ <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm>

The City should tap into available resources, including those authorized via the federal CARES Act, existing FEMA funds, municipal liquidity grants, as well as state and federal workforce development grants. We must also advocate to increase state and federal revenue by taxing millionaires and billionaires

New York has less than 10 years to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, which will require rapid and equitable investment in every building in our city – and an unwavering and substantial financial commitment in the City budget.

Sincerely,
Priya Mulgaonkar
Resiliency Planner, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

NYC Independent Theatres Emergency Coalition

May 20, 2020

- 14 Street Y
- 244 Rehearsal Studios
- A.R.T. / New York – (Spaces @ 520)
- Abrons Arts Center
- Access Theater
- Ailey Citigroup Theater
- Alchemical Studios
- Ars Nova
- ART/NY (Alliance of Resident Theatres)
- Ave C Studio
- BAX (Brooklyn Arts Exchange)
- Clemente Center
- CPR (Center for Performance Research)
- CRS (Center for Remembering & Sharing)
- Dixon Place
- FABnyc
- FRIGID New York (The Kraine & Under St. Mark's)
- Gallery Players
- Gene Frankel Theatre
- Green Space
- HERE Arts Center
- Hook & Eye
- House of Yes
- IATI Theater (Bilingual Latinx Theatre Co)
- Indie Space
- Indie Theatre Fund
- JACK
- The League of Independent Theater
- Leimay / The Cave
- Mark Morris Dance Group
- MTC (Manhattan Theatre Club)
- My Space
- NYITA (NY Innovative Theatre Awards)
- New York Live Arts
- Paradise Factory
- Pearl Studios
- Playwrights Horizon
- Rattlestick Playwrights Theater
- RIOULT Dance Center
- Russian Arts Theater & Studio
- SassClass Studio
- Secret Theater
- The Artist Co-op
- The Brick & Vital Joint
- The Muse, Brooklyn
- Theater in Asylum
- Theatre 80 Saint Marks
- Town Stages
- TheaterWorksUSA
- WOW Cafe Theater!

Dear NYC City Council

We understand this is a challenging time for those in public office at a time of a fatal epidemic. The shutdown is, without doubt, necessary for the public good. We are a group of over fifty Off and Off-Off Broadway theater owners who have joined together to support each other during this difficult time, so that we will not become an unintended casualty of this historic response to the emergency.

We directly represent the theaters, however, we all have thousands of theatergoers on our mailing lists. Theatergoers are among the highest voting demographics of any group. They care about culture and care about their city and they will support those in public office who do what needs to be done to bring the art form they love through this time.

Presently, our prime concern is rent and mortgages for our theaters. Arts and Entertainment is one of the first industries to be affected by this crisis and will be the last ones to re-open. Without audiences, theaters have limited options to raise money to pay the rent. Therefore, we are asking you to please advocate for full rent forgiveness for small theater and arts venues, including performance and rehearsal spaces. Rent forgiveness, necessitates property tax adjustment and forgiveness for landlords and those theaters who own their properties. This is not a new concern.

We must also take on additional expenses when we reopen and implement new safety measures for our employees and audiences. Therefore, we are also seeking the creation of a plan for a safe reopening of our spaces. We will need grants and other sources of funding to cover the expense of insuring safety in our theaters.

We are the voice of the theaters who have struggled for years to be heard by City and State governments and must be on the committees which create this plan.

We serve a vital role in defining communities and making New York a cultural capitol. Small and midsize theaters are a training ground for new talent and a developmental home for new work and theatrical concepts, as well as work headed to Broadway. Our venues serve as incubators for these artists, which in turn affects the tourism and hotel industries. We will be vital to the city's economic recovery in the years to come. Whole neighborhoods depend on us, as the restaurants, hotels, hardware stores and a host of skilled workers benefit by our existence as magnets for world tourism and local commerce.

The decades long decline of governmental support of small businesses has impacted our theaters with the loss of more and more spaces every year. This is not a result of lack of support from the public. We have been heavily burdened by hyperinflation as fewer and fewer people own all the property in New York City.

Due to the high rents, steep property tax, and insurance costs for public assembly, theaters in New York have no financial safety net. Few banks will lend to us; and we have no savings.

The unprecedented financial and social impact of COVID-19 has put our small theaters and arts venues in an exceedingly difficult position. We are in danger of seeing a decimation of these spaces if nothing is done.

We hope that this is the beginning of a successful new partnership.

Sincerely,

NYC Independent Theatres Emergency Coalition

in partnership with The League of Independent Theater and IndieSpace & Theater Fund
nycindependenttheatres@gmail.com

**NYU**Government
Affairs**Government Affairs**665 Broadway
New York, NY, 10012**P:** 212 998 6866**M:** 646 265 6033

government.affairs@nyu.edu

Testimony of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University
before
The New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 21, 2020

Good Morning Chairperson Dromm and all Council Members present. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University. We seek to share information about the work we are engaged in, particularly with regard to our youth development and mental health support programs currently serving NYC Department of Education schools.

The COVID-19 fallout—the environmental, academic, social and emotional challenges the pandemic has exacerbated—will be monumental for school-aged children across the City. Our schools must be equipped with social workers and mental health services to address the emerging mental health and emotional support needs associated. The McSilver Institute’s expertise, not only in the study of these issues, but also in the successful deployment of innovative models that deliver such support services to NYC youth, will prove critical in the COVID-19 recovery effort.

Central to the McSilver Institute’s mission is working with community partners to rapidly translate our research findings into action through policy and practice. A prime example comes through our [Step-Up](#) program, a youth development and mental health support program funded by the Robin Hood Foundation. Step-Up aims to promote social-emotional development, key life skills, academic achievement, high school graduation, and a positive transition to young adulthood. Over the past decade, Step-Up has served over 750 high school students in a total of eight NYC public high schools and has achieved a graduation rate of 85 percent. Step-Up schools are typically under-resourced and have identified a need for both mental health supports and after school programming.

Step-Up uses evidence-informed practices to expand leadership opportunities for young people to improve their academic performance, promote their social-emotional health, and build upon their inherent strengths and resilience. While it is overseen by clinical social workers in conjunction with highly-skilled social work interns, the program’s evidence-based model is unique in that it is designed by youth for youth. Youth in program are not “diagnosed” and “treated” in the traditional sense. Rather, the program focuses on promoting resilience in students through exercises that build self-esteem, teach core leadership competencies, and emphasize the importance of building support systems. The program works with students five days per week and some select Saturdays throughout the year, holding life skills discussions, one-on-one counseling, parent engagement and out-of-school activities.

Step-Up staff consists of 2 clinical social workers with a combined experience of 30 years, as well as 10-12 highly trained Master of Social Work interns from NYU’s Silver School of Social Work. Interns receive ongoing trainings (anti-oppressive, motivational interviewing, social group work, etc.), as well as task and clinical supervision in order to ensure alignment with best practices. Through the

trainings, supervision, and real-world experience it provides, Step-Up serves as a pipeline for students to become well-trained social workers. Students also provide much-needed support to our clinical social workers, who like other social workers throughout the City, handle sizable caseloads, each of which requires a significant time and emotional commitment.

From 2014-2018, Step-Up received a grant from the NYC DOE Office of Safety and Youth Development to support a pilot program at five NYC public high schools in low-income communities, serving mainly youth of color from various immigrant groups and cultures. Since the conclusion of the NYCDOE pilot, our focus has been on our two remaining public high school partners, whose program resources are funded through a grant by the Robin Hood Foundation.

In recent years our efforts have centered on exploring opportunities to replicate the Step-Up model through public-private partnerships. With support from the City Council, we hope to soon provide dedicated mental health support and multicomponent program services to high-need students at additional DOE schools throughout the City. The McSilver Institute is recognized statewide for its expertise in behavioral health and research related to trauma-informed approaches. With your guidance and participation, we plan to leverage our expertise and help advance the City's mental wellness efforts, expand our impact, and ensure better care for NYC students experiencing both emotional and educational challenges.

We greatly appreciate the commitment of Councilmember Treyger and the Education Committee in emphasizing, for years, the important role that positive youth development models play in fostering resilience, life skills, and academic success among the City's youth population. We applaud the City's addition of 200 social workers in schools, as reflected in the Fiscal Year 2020 NYC budget. However, many more resources in this area are needed. As Borough President Brewer and numerous other elected officials have recently noted, COVID-19's impact deepens our need for more school social workers. As such, the McSilver Institute stands ready to offer assistance technical assistance, training, research and program support toward the social, emotional and mental health support that our city's youth need.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss the Step-Up program and the efforts of the McSilver Institute at large with members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have. (Please contact Konstantine Tettonis, NYU Government Affairs, kt1249@nyu.edu)

Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
Before the New York City Council Finance Committee regarding:
Executive Budget Hearing

May 21, 2020

Chair Dromm, Council Members, and staff, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Finance Committee about the FY21 budget. My name is Beth Goldman, and I am the President & Attorney-in-Charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence survivors, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, and others in need of free civil legal services.

Commitment to Civil Legal Services in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In my testimony on the Executive Budget over the past several years, I have repeatedly expressed my gratitude to the City of New York for its deep and ongoing commitment to funding for civil legal services. New York City is like no other city in its recognition of the need and support for making available legal services to those who would otherwise afford an attorney when facing crisis. This year, that commitment is more

important than ever, as every facet of society is challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, and New Yorkers experiencing poverty are facing unprecedented civil legal issues.

The advent of COVID-19 in March 2020 has changed everything about life for New Yorkers living in the center of a global pandemic. The pandemic has hit New York City harder than any other municipality in the country, claiming thousands of lives. At the same time, the economic downturn caused by the pandemic has affected hundreds of thousands more, particularly those already experiencing poverty, many of whom were already living paycheck to paycheck even before the crisis. While the stay-at-home orders are clearly necessary to save lives, they have had a ripple effect on low-income New Yorkers, who are losing their jobs and facing an inability to pay their rents or mortgages. Many “essential workers” are low-wage workers who were already facing challenging circumstances in the workplace. For those who are suddenly confronting these issues, civil legal services are paramount right now.

Although NYLAG staff is no longer working out of our downtown office, staff is continuing to provide services in every one of our practice areas, while at the same time providing rotating coverage of NYLAG’s COVID-19 hotline. I want to focus today on three areas in particular that are very active right now: housing, immigration, and the COVID-19 response.

NYLAG is proud to be a part of the expanding Universal Access to Counsel in Housing Court (UA) program run by the Office of Civil Justice. This groundbreaking program has already made an incredible impact on the lives of low-income tenants in New York City, exponentially increasing the chances that tenants will be able to stay in their homes, or at least be given the time they need to find alternative housing and avoid

homelessness. The Office of Civil Justice's most recent report on the program shows that more than 38% of tenants were represented in Housing Court in the first half of FY20, and an incredible 67% of tenants were represented in Universal Access zip codes.¹

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, NYLAG continues to partner closely with HRA and the UA program to provide essential services to low-income tenants. We are working in rotation with other providers to answer emergency calls and advise on issues surrounding the eviction moratorium as part of the City's housing hotline. In addition to addressing hotline generated issues, our lawyers are handling Housing Court emergencies. While the Housing Courts are closed for regular matters, they continue to be open for emergencies, which is critically important given that tenants continue to be at risk of losing their homes during this crisis. For example, NYLAG recently successfully advocated for Brian, who was illegally locked out of his apartment by his landlord after being hospitalized. When settlement talks were fruitless, Brian's NYLAG attorney appeared at an emergency Housing Court proceeding, and examined witnesses, including Brian and the landlord. The judge found that Brian had been illegally locked out and ordered Brian restored to possession immediately, even offering him the assistance of a marshal. The landlord complied with the judge's order and gave Brian the keys to his apartment.

The City of New York also continues to assist civil legal services providers in the fight for the rights of immigrants. This pandemic has not stopped the federal administration from detaining and deporting immigrants. Immigrants in New York City are rightfully terrified of immigration enforcement officials; the recent shooting of Erick Díaz Cruz by

¹ NYC Human Resources Administration. "NYC Office of Civil Justice 2019 Report." 18 May 2020. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2019.pdf

Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, who were looking arrest his mother's partner, exemplifies the reason. The federal government, using ICE, has targeted New York City and its immigrant population for being a sanctuary city, and for its tolerant and fair-minded policies toward immigrants. NYLAG is grateful to the Council and the Administration for the funding that has been put into immigration legal services, particularly in the area of removal defense. From the longstanding Immigrant Opportunities Initiative and New York Immigrant Family Unity Project to the new Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (through which NYLAG partners with Make the Road New York and UnLocal), the City has prioritized access to counsel for those immigrants at highest risk of deportation.

NYLAG's immigration work continues, and has at times become even more significant, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Detained courts continue to operate normally, and attorneys and their clients are not being allowed to appear remotely. We are working with our colleague organizations to advocate for the safety of our staff and clients while not risking that our clients will be deported. Immigration courts and administrative services remain open for filings and applications, and we are prioritizing the most urgent cases utilizing key funding from the City such as the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) grant. We are meeting with clients by videoconference or phone, and continuing to take new clients from our partner organizations and from our intake lines. We are providing information to immigrants about which courts and services are open and which filings and deadlines must still be met, as well as answering questions about policies like public charge and how it intersects with the federal stimulus, unemployment benefits, and medical care.

We are also increasingly filing habeas petitions in federal court, parole requests, and bond applications to advocate for the release of detained clients who are at risk of contracting COVID-19 in immigration detention centers, where the disease is running rampant. For example, NYLAG's Immigrant Protection Unit recently secured the release of an Eritrean client who fled to the U.S. after his partner was shot in front of him and presumed killed by government forces. NYLAG won a bond hearing before the immigration court based on Third Circuit court law and prevented his deportation at the eleventh hour. The detention center where he was being held has already had four staff members die of COVID-19, including two of the medical staff. Now our client will be safe as we fight for asylum.

In addition to continuing services in the areas described above, NYLAG has added new services to assist those who being most affected by the pandemic, utilizing existing funding from the City and other sources to leverage the expertise and capacity of its staff to address the crisis. Flexible City funding streams such as Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers and discretionary funding allowed NYLAG to pivot immediately as the crisis was unfolding. We launched the COVID-19 Legal Resource Hotline in April of this year, which helps New York City residents impacted by the pandemic get answers to their pressing legal questions. Through the hotline, NYLAG staff members assist clients with myriad issues related to COVID-19, including unemployment benefits, employee rights, housing, stimulus payments, consumer debt, public benefits, advance planning, and special education. Since its launch, the hotline has gotten more than 100 calls a week from New Yorkers with immediate legal needs.

Long-Term Legal Services Needs Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

NYLAG is now gearing up for what we expect to be an onslaught of cases from the client populations we serve. Courts will reopen, evictions will start again, consumer debt will be enforced, foreclosures will begin, immigrants will be arrested, benefits will be denied, and the list goes on. It is critical that NYLAG and other legal services providers are able to position ourselves for the future long-term needs of low-income New Yorkers. We understand the deep fiscal hole that the pandemic has caused in the New York State and New York City budgets, but cutting funding for legal services right now would be devastating to low-income New Yorkers for years to come. While our current funding allowed us to pivot and meet the immediate crisis, we need to be preparing now for the future.

The issues being experienced by those who have lost their jobs and cannot afford rent will continue to grow, and their issues will be compounded when federal stimulus ends and rent moratoriums are lifted. We are expecting a surge of need in the areas of public benefits and consumer debt, as well as financial counseling, as the crisis deepens and people are unable to find employment. We have also seen time and time again in crisis situations, that domestic violence worsens when people are stuck in their homes. We are currently working with clients referred by the City to file for emergency orders of protection for those who are able to do so, but we know that we will see a major increase in need in matrimonial and family law for survivors once the stay-at-home orders are lifted and they are better able to access resources like NYLAG. Domestic Violence & Empowerment Initiative (DOVE) funding has been absolutely essential to NYLAG's work with domestic violence survivors. The legal issues facing traditionally underserved populations, such as seniors and veterans,

are being exacerbated by the crisis, as government agencies such as the Social Security Administration and the Veterans Administration are delaying critical services and claims processing. We could not advocate for our clients effectively during this time without the funding we receive from the City.

We know low-income New Yorkers will be facing unique risks when courts start to fully open up. The surge of New Yorkers in need, many of whom do not have lawyers, will be crowding courthouses, and courts and legal services organizations alike will be overwhelmed. Tens of thousands of court cases have been suspended due to the shutdown, and limited notices and information has been sent out. If notice is sent out, it is often only in English, or requires technology that our clients do not have. We know there will be a lot of questions about when those cases will be rescheduled, how and if people can ask to reschedule urgent cases, and how we can continue cases that could not properly be prepared during the crisis. To avoid having hundreds of people showing up in courts to make these inquiries, guidance needs to be provided on individual cases by legal services providers. Now is the time to ensure that legal services providers are ready to absorb the need of New York's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to a strong continued partnership with the Council and the Mayor's Office to ensure access to justice for those in need.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Public Testimony, Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings
May 21, 2020

On behalf of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing (NYSAFAH), we would like to thank Chair Dromm and members of this Committee for the opportunity to submit this feedback on the FY 2021 Executive Budget proposal.

NYSAFAH is the trade association for New York's affordable housing industry, with nearly 400 members, including developers, lenders, investors, attorneys, contractors, architects and others active in the financing, construction, and operation of affordable housing.

The Covid-19 pandemic has upended every aspect of New York City life and governance. Beyond the unfathomable personal impact from the lives lost and families affected are an endless series of ripple effects that are social, economic and financial.

The affordable housing industry is no exception, and has been touched in many ways. While the market rate residential multifamily building stock has seen better-than-expected rent collection numbers to date, the same is not true for the affordable housing portfolio. Our members' projects house New Yorkers who are more economically vulnerable, with less in savings than average, and tend to have older and lower-income tenants. Due to the restricted rents, the buildings have thinner profit margins and are more threatened by sudden reductions in cash flow.

Meanwhile on the construction side, projects have slowed considerably in getting completed. Despite essential work status, sites undertook safety measures which greatly reduced the amount of work that could be completed and how many workers could be on site to complete it. Materials were delayed in traveling from other areas of the country and various inspections and benchmarks from other agencies or utilities have also been delayed.

New York City had an affordable housing crisis prior to Covid-19 and will have a greater, more dire need for safe and affordable housing when we emerge at the other side of this pandemic. NYSAFAH has worked with the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) to voluntarily take on a greater share of homeless families into buildings that are currently leasing up or will soon lease up. More than ever, people need a safe, clean way out of shelter, and out of overcrowded or substandard living conditions elsewhere—and they need it fast.

The Capital Cuts proposed to HPD's budget will put the brakes on a robust affordable and supportive housing pipeline and compromise our members' ability to bring units online for low-income New Yorkers.

Lost revenue and woefully inadequate federal support thus far have left us with a frightening budget outlook. We fully understand the reality of the situation. We ask that you please make every effort to target the cuts in areas that will not impact the New Yorkers who are most

impacted and most vulnerable to this health crisis—seniors, the homeless, low-income families and those for whom a rent-restricted new housing unit would be literally life changing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Budget for NYC schools

The NYC budget is being negotiated during the greatest public policy mistake in history. With all the respect one may muster, the governor and mayor have destroyed the economy, gutted the tax base, and rendered the civil rights of millions void having relied on hysterical "experts" fearful of being accused of doing too little too late. The ruins of New York finances are now yours to manage.

The purpose of this email is to make the case for the school system as a priority over the petty personal programs of the politicians who created this disaster. A virus did not create this man made mess! I am a graduate of the NYC public schools and went on to earn graduate degrees and specialty certification. Bayside High is my alma mater, an old school built by the "New Deal" and produced three generations of successful graduates and a forth in progress. Advocate for the schools in the upcoming budget. The alternative is further deterioration and decay in the city I grew up in.

O. Tebrock
Colonel, USAF, DC Ret.



**New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020 at 9:30 am**

Testimony of Dr. Liliana Polo-Mckenna, Chief Executive Officer
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good morning. My name is Liliana Polo-Mckenna and I am the Chief Executive Officer at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). Thank you to the members of the Council for the opportunity to speak today. I am here to discuss OBT's proposed programmatic response in light of COVID-19 and the need for education and workforce training in any recovery efforts.

Founded in 1983, OBT is one of New York City's largest providers of workforce development and education services for opportunity youth, ages 17-24, and adults who are disconnected from education and/or employment. OBT serves over 4,000 youth and adults annually across sites in Brooklyn and Queens. We exist to break the cycle of poverty and inequity through education, job training, and employment. OBT's programs serve as a bridge to economic opportunity for youth, individuals, and families in underserved communities. With programming that ranges from high school equivalency to ESOL courses to industry-certified training programs for high school graduates, we focus on meeting individuals "where they are" and work with them to meet their goals. Our programs have an 87% completion rate. 72% of participants earn employer-recognized credentials during their time with us and 70% are placed in jobs after graduating from our programs.

OBT During the Spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 has taken an incredible toll on our city. It has also had a disproportionate impact, and has been particularly devastating in low-income, Black and Brown communities. The very communities that organizations like OBT have served for decades.

Like many other organizations, we shifted to remote programming, literally overnight. We've had to figure out the technical issues: getting students laptops, mobile hotspots, practice test books, setting up zoom google classrooms, Slack, and other platforms. And while that was a challenge, nothing prepared us for the need to expand far beyond being a workforce organization. From counselors to instructors to job developers - everyone has had to pick up the mantle to support individuals with needs around food, diapers, everyday essentials, and keeping safe in the midst of this pandemic. We are proud and humbled to provide this support, and we know that absent resources, it is very difficult to imagine a way out of this that ensures access to a quality of life for the people we serve.

Challenges our Participants Face

We are particularly concerned about job prospects for 17-24 year olds and immigrant communities in a post-COVID economy; the truth is that the communities that OBT serves were already facing barriers to employment like needing to gain new skills, language access, childcare. This crisis will only exacerbate the already present economic needs. There will also be a lot more competition for those jobs. There are currently over 830,000 unemployed NYers, according to recent Department of Labor data, over a 1500% over-year change.¹ For young adults across the U.S., there is a predicted increase of over 600,000 18-24 year olds who will be unemployed this year.² In NYC, while we have seen the number of Out of School/Out of Work youth decrease over the past ten years, this crisis threatens to undo the progress made since the 2008 recession. It is also no secret that the more advanced skills someone has, the better their employment and career prospects are.

As recent research from Make the Road NY and Hester Street make clear, this crisis has had devastating effects on immigrant, Black, and Brown communities. Their survey revealed that in 92% of households, at least one earner had lost their job.³ Furthermore, the populations hardest hit by job loss have been the Latinx community (42%), those making less than \$50,000/year (34%), and those without a college degree (32%).⁴ In this face of such vulnerability, organizations that are already embedded in the functioning of communities must be called upon to increase support. In this context, too, job training and education is a critical stopgap to disproportionate economic strain and challenge.

OBT's Proposed Response to the Economic Impact of COVID-19

Job training, education programs and employment placement services have been and will continue to be essential resources to disenfranchised young people, adults struggling with the digital divide, and speakers of other languages.

As we plan for the coming year, OBT is focused in three areas:

1. Expanding sector-based advanced programs in healthcare and technology, increasing our scale by leveraging what we're currently learning through remote programming in order to offer blended, flexible and accessible industry-certified training for youth. This will be a critical next step for those who complete a high school diploma.
2. Building off of existing needs we witness through OBT's adult literacy and education programs, we also know that digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers. The transition to remote has only further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide through city-wide broadband access, and through localized efforts, like ensuring that all ESOL and adult high school equivalency classes include digital literacy.
3. Finally, there is a lot of work to be done to effectively connect local employers, workforce development organizations, and government in order to ensure that local residents are not continuously left behind. Any economic recovery would be incomplete without ensuring that access to training and retraining is available for newly unemployed New

¹ <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/Research-Notes-Initial-Claims-WE-5022020.pdf>

² <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/covid-19-pandemic-could-increase-youth-unemployment-by-600000-this-year>

³ https://hesterstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Excluded-in-the-Epicenter_final-compressed.pdf

⁴ <https://sph.cuny.edu/research/covid-19-tracking-survey/week-2/>

Yorkers and those who have already been living the impact of our city's inequities. Jobs to Build On is a critical program that helps connect unemployed and underemployed NYers to work. But it only works if we are in partnership with businesses. The siloed approach to economic development cannot continue.

This is an overwhelming time. But the reality is that many across our city have been living in crisis long before COVID. COVID has magnified the disparities, and now our communities need us more than ever. And while what we are experiencing is unprecedented, I have witnessed organizations, local mutual aid groups, young adults and neighbors step forward to do whatever it takes during this time. Cutting resources from the very organizations that are helping the City weather this crisis, is not only short-sighted, it is cruel. It is our hope and our expectation that the City Council and the Administration reflects its values of equity and racial, social, and economic justice in a budget that places youth, immigrants, and the most vulnerable at the center.



**New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020 at 9:30 am**

Testimony of Stephanie Tossas
Program Associate, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)
OBT Graduate, December 2017

Good afternoon City Council Members. My name is Stephanie Tossas and I am an alum of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's programs. I am also currently a Program Associate at OBT. I am here today to provide testimony on why OBT's programs are important and how they changed my life.

I attended Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow to obtain my High School Equivalency Diploma. I started at the Young Adult Literacy Program building my Math and Literacy skills. After I accomplished that milestone, I moved onto the Train and Earn Program to work towards earning my diploma, credentials, and job placement assistance. We had award ceremonies every month and I have never been awarded for doing well in school and was given many awards in the program. However, there were many days where I wanted to give up and I cried to my teachers because I thought I was not going to make it. The staff were extremely supportive and I kept pushing because OBT pushed me to work harder. I entered the program with a newborn daughter which was challenging for me, but with OBT's support I made it to the finish line earning my HSE Diploma in December 2017.

OBT helped not only me, but my family too. I decided to enroll at OBT because my brothers Jose and Alex attended the program before me and earned their HSE Diplomas. Because of their success in the program I decided this route may be a great start for me as well and it was. We even left an impact on my mom - our success gave her the confidence to apply and she now attends OBT's Adult HSE Program as well.

OBT continues to support all alumni from every cycle, providing a safe space and undivided attention to everyone. I know this because I now work for OBT and am one of the staff members who follow up with our students. Our participants and alumni still face many obstacles such as housing, benefits, and employment barriers. We want to continue to guide our participants, especially through this rough time due to COVID-19. It will be difficult if we do not have the tools to continue to do so. I want everyone to have the same opportunity that my family and I have been given to build towards our futures. We wouldn't have been able to do it if it weren't for OBT. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Olga Hiiva

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

[5/21/20]

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Olga Hiiva and I work at Marquis Studios in Brooklyn N.Y.

The mission of Marquis Studios is Marquis Studios is founded on the belief that the arts are essential to education and that all students deserve access to quality arts programs.. Marquis Studios was founded in 1977 as a multi-disciplinary organization providing arts education services to 40,000 students annually, in Pre-K through 12th grade of all ability levels. We currently work in over 170 New York City public schools in all five boroughs.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Marquis Studios has been proactive and innovative in our response to continue providing students with remote arts programs. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Olga Hiiva

Teaching Visual Artist

If services must be cut due to upcoming budget shortfalls, the NYPD budget must be on the chopping block. The city is literally swarming with police. On a recent visit to Sunset Park, I counted 14 police officers in the park, almost 1 for every park visitor.

There is plenty of evidence that the police are a force of racist terror in the city. New videos appear almost every day showing police officers assaulting New Yorkers.

Instead of investing in the NYPD, New York needs to invest in rent relief, medical care, shelters, and food assistance programs to help New Yorkers weather this storm.

Thank you.

Orion Martin

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of both NYC Composting programs and Youth Employment Programs. My name is Patrick Costello and I work as a gardener and educator with the Horticultural Society of NY. The Hort works to connect people with plants throughout the city, and my job specifically has me supporting folks living in NY Supportive Housing buildings. Together, we grow food and learn about the importance of many gardening related topics, one of which is composting.

Forward-thinking cities around the world have adopted thriving composting programs, eliminating hundreds of tons of waste from already overburdened landfills. I believe it is important that our city takes concrete steps toward mitigating the coming climate crisis, and a composting program is a small step towards that.

I also live in a house of six other registered voters, all of whom are educators, working with teens around the five boroughs. At Beam Center, a non-profit maker-space for young people, partnerships with the DOE and NYC Youth Employment Programs are critical to their programming. My housemates and I volunteer at the Red Hook Community Farm, where youth lead the way in maintaining giant food-producing beds -- many of them working through the city's Youth Employment programs.

Please maintain funding to the NYC Composting Program and NYC Youth Employment Programs. These resources help create a more equitable, forward-thinking city -- a city braced both to prepare our young people for success and ensure that those young people have an environmentally conscious, healthy place to live.

Patrick Costello
District 38

Paul B. Feuerstein, MSW
President/CEO

LeShan A. Gaulman, LMSW
Chief Operating Officer

Yueqin Li
Chief Fiscal Officer

Cynthia Amodeo, LMHC
Chief Program Officer

Barrier Free Living
Holding Company

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John F. Fritts, Esq.
Legal Consultant

Barrier Free Living, Inc.

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Robert C. Foote, III, Esq.
Vice Chair

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Chair

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Secretary

Ravi Kotru
Treasurer

Lenore Neier

Corinna Kwok Wong

Barrier Free Living
637 East 138th Street, Bronx, NY 10454
t 212 677 6668 f 212 539 1526

www.bflnyc.org



CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY May 21, 2020

On behalf of Barrier Free Living we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

We are developing an Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative project on property we own on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Our reservation for 74 units of supportive housing will expire in September if we don't have 100% of our capital in place by mid-September. Our reservation allows us to create 30 units for seniors transitioning out of nursing homes and 44 units for individuals and families who are survivors of domestic violence. We have a \$1 million commitment in Reso A funds thanks to the support of City Council and the Manhattan Borough President. HPD has given us a letter in the past committing \$9.5 million in capital funds for the project. We missed being funded by NYS Homes and Community Renewal in the last early round because we had not yet gotten a flood plain letter from the city and our demolition of our old building was not yet completed. We have our letter and the demolition is completed. Our architect's construction set is 90% complete. Plans have been filed for the building permit with the Department of Building's HUB. HPD is not renewing commitment letters without the input of OMB. That could compromise our application for 9% LITC from New York State. If we don't have our capital money by September, we will lose the commitment for service dollars. It is uncertain if there will be another round of ESSHI funding.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow. Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. **Barrier Free Living is a domestic violence intervention agency for people with disabilities. If ESSHI does not continue to support supportive housing for domestic violence survivors, we will abandon this project and seek to sell the property to recoup the money we invested to keep the building in repair (\$1.5 million) and to reimburse our developer for the \$2,000,000 they have invested to make this project happen.**



secret garden



freedom house



barrier free living apartments

Housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities.

Supportive housing development creates jobs: Our 120 units of supportive housing has created forty jobs in the Bronx community. We anticipate creating another thirty jobs once our building is in operation on the Lower East Side. We serve 238 tenants in the South Bronx. We estimate the new project will support over 100 tenants

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. We have put safety protocols in place for both tenants and staff. Many of our staff are supporting tenants remotely. Our child care staff is providing homework help for the school-age children in our facility. We have installed wall-mounted infrared thermometers near the entrance of both of our buildings so tenants and staff can check their temperature without having to touch the instruments. All common spaces are cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have via email at info@bflnyc.org.

Greetings esteemed Councilmembers,

My name is Paullette Ha-Healy and I am a member of the Citywide Council for Special Education. I am a mother with a daughter in District 20 and a son with autism in District 75. I thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns as a parent and as a member of the special education community.

Although the mayor has acknowledged that the next school year is going to present extraordinary challenges for teachers and students, he has still proposed budget cuts from the classroom estimated at over \$140 million. That would mean teachers, classroom aides, guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, and others could be dismissed or displaced. At the same time, his proposed budget includes increases for School Safety Agents, who already outnumber the total number of counselors, social workers, and school psychologists and the DOE continues to throw funding at unnecessary consulting firms and bloated bureaucratic salaries.

In this time of fear, stress and loss the notion that metal detectors takes precedence over the social and emotional support of our traumatized children is appalling. Our students with disabilities already faced obstacles in learning and access to resources prior to COVID-19. Hundreds of thousands of students were still waiting for access to appropriate classroom settings prior to the quarantine because special education programs are scarce even though the population of students with IEPs grows every year in every district. To anticipate a reduction in programs and supports upon the return from COVID-19 because of budget cuts is a hardship our families cannot afford. How can we prepare to deal with the deficiencies remote learning has left our students in with only a quarter of the budget our education systems had the year prior to the pandemic? The struggles of our children with disabilities should not be overlooked in this time of suffering. Our special education students make up one fifth of the 1.5 million total students enrolled in our school systems yet are almost always an afterthought when it comes to policy decisions that affect our city's children.

Lastly, in previous testimony City Comptroller Scott Stringer highlighted many other options where cuts could be made such as municipalities, the Department of corrections and DOE Central offices. He was adamant that we as a city, we should not look to making cuts when it comes to our children. Our children are the investment worth paying into and as one of the most vulnerable populations in our city, our students with disabilities deserves to have their needs recognized and addressed.

Thank you for this opportunity. Be well and stay well.

Best Regards,
Paullette Ha-Healy
Citywide Council on Special Education
Recording Secretary



5/21/2020

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Peter Bogdanos and my company does work for Midori and Friends at PS 54 in Queens.

The mission of Mexico Beyond Mariachi is to celebrate, uplift, and create awareness around Mexican cultural traditions – music, dance, art and storytelling - through touring performances, educational workshops and residencies for young audiences, families and communities. We reach a nationwide audience but consider New York City not only our home, but our inspiration because of the amount of talent and resources that are found here and nowhere else.

Right now we are adjusting our programming to online models that can still bring the quality of our work to students in an authentic way. While there is no substitute for an in-person experience, we are adopting new best practices to make sure students are staying engaged in their exposure to cultural intelligence and real world connections.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through

our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Bogdanos". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Peter Bogdanos

Executive Director

Mexico Beyond Mariachi

Given the circumstances and the unpredictability of the COVID 19 Pandemic and its cost to the economy of New York City, securing funding for an adult Latin Dance program might seem of little consequence to the revitalization and economic recovery of the city. However, like so many social programs, the benefits to a community are not always evident at first.

The P. J. Beacon Program in Throggs Neck at the I.S. 192 Campus provide support services to so many in multiple ways. One of the most popular is the Adult Latin Dance lessons offered in the evening twice a week. In its present format it serves the community in many ways. First, the students in the class are a true representation of, not only the population of the Bronx, but of the entire city: intergenerationally, racially, ethnically, and economically.

The ages of the students range from mid-twenties to eighty plus. It is not unusual to see a twenty-eight year old dancing with an eighty-five year old great grandmother. A lot of understanding, patience and caring are needed in an age group so diverse.

Statistics show that the majority of the students are of Hispanic descent but within that category are representatives from the Caribbean, Central and South America. Add to this are dancers of African American, Jamaican, Italian, German, Irish and Scottish backgrounds. How well this mirrors the cultural diversity that is our city!

At the conclusion of the class everyone returns home. Some to the Throggs Neck Houses (NYCHA), some to Co-Op City and some to private residences in Throggs Neck, Country Club and Pelham Bay. In effect people who probably would have never crossed paths have come together and enjoy each other's company.

We have socialized together beyond the classroom and have celebrated holidays, birthdays and other milestones as friends often do. At the end of the school year a dance recital draws overwhelming attendance and has been a big attraction since the start of the program over a decade ago.

For these reasons I respectfully ask that the City Council continue the funding of the P. J. Beacon Program.

Sincerely,

Theresa M. Benedetto



NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing - Thursday, May 21st, 2020

Joneé Billy, Director Strategic Partnerships & External Affairs, PowerPlay and Lead Agency for STARS CGI

Testimony

Good Afternoon, my name is Joneé Billy and I serve as Director of Strategic Partnerships and External Affairs for PowerPlay. I'd like to begin by thanking the Council committee members for taking time today to hear our testimony and for their crucial leadership and support of our work in youth development.

PowerPlay serves as the lead agency for **The Sports Training and Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI)**, a collaboration of ten leading NYC nonprofits helping girls and young women of color overcome barriers to success, gain access to high-quality out-of-school activities, and develop as leaders in their communities. The ten partners include — PowerPlay, Girls Write Now, Groundswell, Lower Eastside Girls Club, Row New York, Sadie Nash Leadership Project, The Armory Foundation, Figure Skating in Harlem, Girls for Gender Equity and the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute. Now heading into our 7th year, we have collectively served nearly 30,000 girls and gender non-conforming youth across all 5 boroughs and in all 51 Council Districts.

COVID-19 has negatively impacted the lives of our girls and their families in profound ways. The outbreak and accompanying economic hardship disproportionately affects the most marginalized communities. The already pervasive opportunity and access gaps are exacerbated as students face increased instability, health fears, barriers to remote learning, heightened stress and anxiety about their futures, and lost opportunities during this crucial time in their lives. The disparities exposed by COVID-19 reinforce the need for STARS CGI programs because we know **when the virus restrictions lift, we will see an even GREATER demand for our programs and services.**



For FY20 STARS CGI sought out to close the wellness gap with our initiative programming and we remain steadfast in our mission to be a resource to our community:

- As of May, 2020, the STARS partners have already served over **4,100** youth in all 51 city council districts.
- On **Saturday, December 14th, 2019**, we introduced a new initiative entitled - **#SelfCareSaturday**. This event was held at Nike Headquarters, and served **200+** girls and gender non-conforming youth, connecting our young people to resources supporting their overall well-being. The over 200 people in attendance engaged in amazing discussions and activities around Wellness and Mental Health, while gathering tools that they can use on their own time.
- Since COVID-19, the 10 organizations have joined forces to create the **STARS CGI Summer Syllabus**—capturing the depth and diversity of our programs across **arts, literature, sports, leadership, and activism**—with a focus on **filling the gaping hole of summer youth programming**. We will promote the calendar widely—**converting the majority of our programs to be open to the public while remaining free of cost**.
- This coming **Saturday, May 23rd**, we will launch **#SelfCareSaturday Series**, beginning with a Virtual Dance party which provides a unique opportunity for our community to reconnect, express themselves and reduce any anxiety they may be experiencing. This event is an extension of our previous **#SelfCareSaturday** initiative, and Nike Master Trainer Akira Armstrong, will lead attendees through a dance workshop.

Today, the STARS CGI partners respectfully requests a reinstatement of \$1,450,000 in FY21 from the Council.

Again, on behalf of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color across New York City, **thank you in advance for your continued support**. STARS CGI is meeting a variety of needs for thousands of vulnerable youth across all five boroughs - particularly girls of color - and these achievements would not have been possible without your strategic input and collaboration.



PowerPlay NYC

PowerPlay NYC advances the lives of girls through sports, helping them grow physically, emotionally, and academically stronger. We create a continuum of opportunities for girls ages 8-18. Partnering with schools and community based organizations to conduct after-school and summer programs we fill a critical service gap for girls and gender nonconforming youth of color living in poverty. These youth make up nearly 70% of NYC's public school system, but are dramatically underrepresented in the city's top public high schools because of systemic barriers to educational and social resources.

Our work focuses on young women of color living in poverty, who are among NYC's most vulnerable populations. Research (Women's Sports Foundation Report: "Her Life Depends on it") shows urban girls of color have the *least* opportunities to participate in sports or physical activity of *any* demographic group of youth. This is whom we serve, by offering our programming in all five boroughs, targeting low-income, underserved communities and Title 1-funded public schools. 95% of our participants are girls of color and over 90% receive free lunch in school.

The Sports Training and Role-models for Success (STARS) Citywide Girls Initiative, funded at \$1.45 million by the New York City Council, has offered the City of New York a unique opportunity to support the healthy development of thousands of girls and young women of color since 2015.

Mission: the STARS Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI) is a collaboration of nine leading NYC nonprofits that helps girls and young women of color overcome barriers to success, grow emotionally, academically and physically stronger, and develop as leaders in their communities. The ten partners—Girls Write Now, Groundswell, Lower Eastside Girls Club, PowerPlay NYC, Row New York, Sadie Nash Leadership Project and the newest partners The Armory Foundation, Figure Skating in Harlem, Girls for Gender Equity and the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute—all leaders in the out-of-school time space, will continue to create thousands of program slots and deepen programming for girls in all five boroughs. With support and funding from the New York City Council, the STARS CGI develops the life and leadership skills of NYC girls through after-school and summer sports, academic enhancement, STEM, college prep and the arts.



May 18, 2020

**Testimony to our New York City Council, Mayor and Elected Officials
regarding the New York City Budget
Submitted by Jessica Hall, Founder and Executive Director, Prison Writes**

Dear Elected Officials,

At this time of crisis, I am writing to request that, as our representatives, you take bold leadership in insisting that our New York City budget protect and provide for our most vulnerable. Life in the city for every day New Yorkers is shaped by the budget. A budget that invests in communities, providing housing, healthcare, employment and education, is the best way to ensure safety and security for all New Yorkers.

Policing should always be a last resort, but, when individuals and communities lack all resources, it seems the police are left as the only active presence.

I am encouraged that the Mayor has directed the police to no longer enforce the use of masks or social distancing.

Videos on social media showing the violent attacks on people of color by NYPD, are painful demonstrations of why we cannot police a pandemic.

This pandemic has highlighted the deeply embedded inequalities in our society. There is an opportunity now to begin to work towards correcting them in how funds are allocated in this new budget.

When the jail population has plummeted and the number of corrections officers has not correspondingly declined, when children can't be in school, but school safety officer jobs are protected while Summer Youth Employment is on the cutting block, communities most at risk continue to be those of people of color.

We understand that police, correctional officers, and school safety officers, are also citizens who need their jobs. We have learned in the past few months how quickly we can adjust to communicating, working and functioning as a city in new and

unprecedented ways. Redirecting the hundreds of millions of dollars currently allocated for policing and law enforcement towards social services will foster real security.

We have seen, at this time, how everyday New Yorkers step up to help one another. Community food distribution, checking on neighbors, sewing masks, in innumerable ways we have come together, and now we need the Mayor, and our elected officials, to support us and invest in our communities.

Let's use our incredible ability for ingenuity to think creatively and have a bold vision for what kind of a city we want to live in, and have that vision reflected in our budget.

When we commit ourselves as a city to social justice and equality, the possibilities are endless.

Funding is one side of the equation. To fund, we need revenue, and we know that has been drastically and critically reduced at this time. We also know, there are individuals and corporations, that enjoy the benefits of our city, and the profit from the sweat and blood of our front-line workers and working class, without being appropriately taxed.

We must do more than give lip service and bang on pots and pans for our essential and front-line workers.

There are two chants that I have heard, and shouted with the masses during my several decades as an activist.

'No Justice, No Peace!', and, 'If we don't get it, SHUT IT DOWN!'

These calls to action ring true now more than ever. They are, in fact, prophetic, and we must answer the call. Prison Writes supports the #BuildCommunities budget priorities of JustLeadershipUSA.

Now more than ever, we see how our wellbeing is connected, as humans.

Let us proceed humanely.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hall, LMSW

Fiscal Year 2021 City Council Testimony

Executive Budget

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and Members of the Finance Committee. I am Lisa David, President & CEO at Public Health Solutions (“PHS”). Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee.

Our city and our nation are in the midst of a health crisis. As the largest public health non-profit serving New York City, PHS was quick to organize and address the challenges presented by COVID-19, focusing on strategies that would mitigate the disease’s impact on health equity. We provide services directly to low-income families, support community-based organizations through our long-standing public-private partnerships and bridge the gap between health care and human services. Our work addresses crucial public health issues, including food and nutrition, health insurance access, maternal and child health, reproductive health, tobacco control, and HIV/AIDS prevention. **Our roots in NYC are deep, stretching back to the mid-1950s. Since the early 1990s, in response to the HIV epidemic, PHS has provided procurement, contracting, monitoring, fiscal management, payment and reporting on behalf of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). This work has grown over time, and today, nearly \$200 million annually to over 250 unique organizations – from grassroots non-profits to hospitals and universities across the metropolitan area.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we have centered our work and planning around the health, safety, and well-being of our staff, clients, and fellow New Yorkers. We have taken every precaution necessary to avoid the community spread of COVID-19 across

PHS staff and clients, while allowing our core operations and services to continue functioning as well as possible. PHS has rapidly transitioned to remote work, enabling our staff to work from home while still fulfilling our mission and meeting our funders' obligations—whether that means rapidly executing emergency grants that ensure that DOHMH can nimbly and effectively respond to COVID-19, or facilitating health insurance enrollment for the newly unemployed, we have continued to facilitate the crucial and essential services needed by the most vulnerable at this time.

Because PHS provides services for low-income families across the five boroughs, we know firsthand the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of New Yorkers, and the rapidly increasing need for the services we provide. **The number of people who have visited our website in order to find services has more than quadrupled, from 2,025 in March to 8,518 in April. We recently conducted a survey of 1,000 low-income NYC residents, which found financial difficulties to be particularly dire among communities of color: 82% of Black respondents, 92% of Hispanics, and 95% of Asians surveyed were worried about running out of money in the next month. Low income respondents across ethnicities are concerned about getting enough food (76%), paying rent or mortgage (66%), paying for medical costs (63%), and paying off debt (69%). More than half of Hispanic respondents reported being laid off since the outbreak began.** Respondents who had a confirmed or presumed COVID-19 case in their household were more likely than those without a diagnosis to have used or applied for public health benefit programs in the last month. **Widening health disparities in NYC during**

COVID-19 require that we rapidly respond through emergency efforts at the same time as we bolster and improve the social safety net to foster resilience during the economic fall-out. Our testimony will highlight PHS' role in these efforts, and how the city council has supported and can continue to support the communities we serve.

I. COVID-19 Rapid Response Efforts

Challenges in City contracting are well-documented and known to this Committee.

Data released over the past two years by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer sheds light on just how late, unpredictable, and costly funding under NYC contracts can be. To respond efficiently to COVID-19, New York City needs to be able to contract with and pay its healthcare institutions and human services organizations quickly and flexibly to keep New Yorkers healthy, safe, and thriving. PHS ensures that critical institutions receive the contracts and funds they need to do life-saving work for our city—we execute contracts within 90 days compared to the average of 1 year for city agencies, and pay within 30 days of complete documentation.

During COVID-19 crisis, PHS is working closely with our government partners to ensure that the City's non-profit health and human service grantees of New York City experienced no interruption to their contracts or payments during the crisis. PHS manages over \$25 Million in CDC emergency response funding as fiscal agent for DOHMH, enabling the rapid purchase of critical COVID-19 supplies and services. We have expedited contracting and

payment for the NYC Department of Homeless Services, so they could quickly deploy a Nurse Triage line, and clinical personnel to support homeless clients in the shelter system.

We've leveraged PHS' organizational strength and assets to support efforts across the City. PHS helped the NYC Mayor's Office of Contracting Services (MOCS) to vet the deluge of potential suppliers of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We are helping to identify and distribute emergency relief to low-income immigrant New Yorkers and their families through the NYC COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief Program, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, NYIC, and Catholic Charities. PHS is using its downtown Manhattan headquarters and citywide sites to receive and distribute goods to over low-income families and 60 non-profit partners alike, including from 76,000 face masks, 25,000 face shields, 100 isolation gowns, cribs, strollers, baby food, and cash cards.

In March, PHS joined with leaders from across the City and the country's healthcare and technology communities, to help serve the most vulnerable through the NYC COVID-19 Rapid Response Coalition (www.nyccovid19.org). Bringing together leaders in social services, hospital and clinical services, logistics and supply chain, technology, managed care, law, and other professions, this group deployed critical rapid response capabilities needed to support vulnerable populations. PHS serves as the fiscal sponsor for the coalition, which has achieved the following:

- Delivery of 172,000 meals to more than 50 high-need buildings across 4 boroughs

- Procurement of 8 metric tons of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gowns, masks, face shields, hand sanitizer, and distribution of donated PPE to more than 50 non-profit service providers
- Development and roll out of and SMS outreach chatbot, which has outreached to more than 40,000 people and connected more than 2,000 of the most vulnerable to needed clinical or social services, including home delivered meals, telehealth, and home delivered prescription services

II. Bolstering and Improving the Safety Net

As PHS has rapidly transformed our services—embracing remote work, digital signatures, and case management through televisits, phone calls, and limited, careful management of our in-person services for the City’s most vulnerable—PHS has experienced unplanned expenditures and revenue losses, in the face of a rising demand for services that will be difficult to meet.

i. Sexual and Reproductive Health

For more than 50 years, Title X has been the only federal funding source dedicated solely to sexual and reproductive health services. PHS was New York’s non-governmental Title X grantee for 37 years, directly receiving \$4.6 million annually to support SRH services in NYC. PHS administered Title X funding through grants to health centers, supporting a network of 13 service sites (including PHS’ two SRH centers) that serve 40,000 New Yorkers each year. These sites include community health centers in high-need neighborhoods serving vulnerable

populations, like immigrants, teens, the homeless, LGBT persons, and the uninsured. Because of the harmful 2019 Trump Administration gag rule, PHS made the difficult decision to withdraw from the Title X program. **We are thankful for the leadership and support of the Women's Caucus of the City Council, as well as the strong support of the Council Members that rallied to our side to ensure the State temporarily filled the Title X funding gap.**

We are closely monitoring the 2020-2021 fiscal cycle for the State, as funding for PHS' health clinics were included in the Executive Budget. While we are hopeful that the state will soon execute this new grant, we have already experienced impacts to our program's cash flow due to contracting delays. **If this expected State funding is cut, it will greatly impact our financial viability of our centers and our ability to provide critical sexual and reproductive health services in Brooklyn.**

In addition to your advocacy, the City Council's Contraceptive Access Fund, part of the Young Women's Initiative, and supported by Article 6 Matching Funds, has been crucial for PHS and our partners to provide women, men, and adolescents with affordable sexual and reproductive healthcare, regardless of their insurance status. PHS' clinics, located in Fort Greene and Brownsville, provide more than 4,000 patients per year with free, walk-in pregnancy testing, gynecological exams, prenatal care, preconception care, birth control (including IUDs and implants), emergency contraceptives, men's sexual healthcare, teens' sexual healthcare, STI testing and treatment, HIV testing and counseling, mental health services, and

health education. We also connect with over 5,000 teenagers annually in public schools to provide sexual and reproductive health education and support.

We hope the Council recognizes the importance of ensuring access to sexual and reproductive healthcare as the COVID-19 crisis evolves and NYC recovers, as these services are crucial in preventing patients from turning to the acute healthcare system for basic preventive healthcare reasons. Since the start of this outbreak, we have implemented new protocols to ensure patients can receive critical prenatal care, health screening, diagnosis and treatment in a safe environment. We have quickly implemented Telehealth capabilities for our patients, wherever possible. Ensuring Medicaid reimbursement for Telehealth visits be comparable to reimbursement for onsite care will be essential to continued access to care and reducing risk of transmission going forward.

ii. **WIC, SNAP, other benefits**

As indicated in our recent survey of low-income New Yorkers, access to health insurance and food benefits is more important today than ever before. **PHS is one of the largest providers of WIC, SNAP, and Health Insurance Enrollment in NYC, providing these services to more than 80,000 households each year.** Extensive research has found WIC and SNAP to be cost-effective investments that improve the nutrition and health of low-income families. **Women who participate in WIC give birth to healthier babies, children participating in WIC have lower risk of obesity, and children whose mothers participated in WIC while pregnant show**

improved cognitive development. SNAP reduces poverty by 14-16% and is considered one of the nation's most effective anti-poverty programs for low-income families with children.

Since the end of March, we have seen increasing numbers of new SNAP applications as well as new enrollments in New York's essential plan, which indicates large numbers of people seeking benefits for the first time, following loss of employment. To ensure clients are not forced to choose between receiving benefits and exposure to COVID-19, we have reduced in-person encounters to the bare minimum allowable under current Federal and State regulations. We have created new streamlined access to our services by phone and have been issuing benefits remotely wherever possible. In a recent survey we conducted with more than 1,000 WIC participants, we found higher rates of satisfaction with telephone encounters and remote issuance of benefits than with in-person encounters, so we are advocating to preserve those practices that make accessing benefits more convenient for families.

The City Council's Access Health Initiative supports PHS to ensure comprehensive health insurance and benefits access. We use these funds, including Article 6 matching funds, to break down the traditional siloes between benefits programs. The funding supports the time and effort of our health and benefits navigators to do more comprehensive assessment of needs to follow-up to ensure optimal health and benefits use. We launched this initiative after learning that an alarming number of people enrolled in health insurance returned to renew it the following year without having been assigned or used a primary care provider. The initiative also ensures access to legal and immigration resources for clients worried about how their benefits

decisions might affect them in the wake of the Public Charge Rule. We hope the council will recognize the importance of coordinated access to benefits as the COVID-19 epidemic evolves and NYC adapts and recovers.

In Conclusion

Public Health Solutions has been on the front lines ensuring quality, accessible health and human services for the New Yorkers who need it most. We are proud of our work and we are grateful for the support of this Council in the past and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank You.

Executive Budget Hearing
Submitted by Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library,
and Queens Public Library
May 22, 2020

Greetings: My name is Rachel Payne, Coordinator of Early Childhood Services for Brooklyn Public Library.

I am submitting this testimony and representing the three library systems of New York City. We are truly grateful for the City Council's generous support of City's First Readers.

Each year, Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library offer neighborhood early literacy programs with an annual attendance exceeding 600,000 people.

As part of City's First Readers, each library system is developing and expanding its own early literacy services. Here are some highlights:

- **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) offered storytimes in Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, French, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Tibetan, and Urdu. We also developed a workshop for parents on balancing screen time and literacy at home.
- **New York Public Library** (NYPL) updated early literacy corners and provided play materials in all 87 branches in addition to creating a new educator early literacy kit to support 3K teachers.
- **Queens Public Library** (QPL) was able to offer an expansion in our school readiness program, Kick off to Kindergarten. We started a new program that focuses on educating new mothers about their young child's literacy needs while also address postpartum health.

Here are a few examples of how this initiative has allowed us to collaborate with the program partners in unique ways:

- **Literacy Inc.** has worked with the libraries to provide programs to families citywide. Literacy Inc. staff offered storytimes regularly in East New York (BPL); throughout Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island (NYPL); and weekly in the South Jamaica community (QPL).
- **Jumpstart** corps members regularly support special events, like Read for the Record, throughout NYC.
- **ParentChild+** has been a strong partner- encouraging their families to get library cards and bringing their families to City's First Readers sponsored library programs.
- **JCCA** has partnered with NYPL and BPL to host family literacy events.
- **Video Interaction Project** partners with the library to provide library cards for all families in their clinics
- **Reach Out and Read** medical providers are prescribing reading and going to the library.

Since the libraries have physically closed locations each system has been offering virtual programming and support to young children & families communities including:

- **NYPL** offers daily storytimes at nypl.org/storytime. In addition to the daily storytimes we host a bonus bilingual program once a week. These bilingual programs were made possible with CFR funding. NYPL has also created 10 at-home storytime guides in English and 5 guides in Spanish as well as 8 play guides for families to recreate library programs at home with accessible materials and free
- **QPL** has offered live storytimes 3 days a week including a bilingual storytime once a week. We have been offering weekly programs in Mandarin and Spanish facilitated by our Early Learning Specialists who are funded by CFR. We have created a web series, Big City, Little Readers, to provide literacy tips and practical actions to parents of young children. We have pivoted to begin in June with a fully virtual Summer Read engagement including E books, activities, challenges, and continued learning support for families.
- **BPL** has offered [Virtual Storytimes](#) twice daily, including storytimes in Spanish, Urdu, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Tibetan. Several City Council Members have joined us as special guest readers including Council Members Cornegy, Cumbo, Levin, and Menchaca. We have also migrated our Ready, Set, Kindergarten school-readiness storytime to a virtual format once a week. We have used City's First Readers funding to increase access to e-books for families, including books on the 3K and Pre-K for All lists. Families can access these materials throughout New York State can with an [e-library card](#).

If the City Council authorizes funding for Fiscal Year 2021 for the City's First Readers Initiative, this vitally important work will only grow in NYC's libraries. We could expand specialized family learning opportunities, grow school-readiness activities, and provide more training, which is necessary for our staff, on working with families with very young children, both virtually and at our libraries when it is safe to do so.

Public libraries play a critical role in our society. We are the last, open democratic institution that seeks to transform people's lives by providing free access to knowledge and information, and by creating opportunities for growth and empowerment to all. Libraries are for everyone, regardless of people's background or identity.

We are proud of all we have accomplished this year and are optimistic about the future. While deeply appreciative of the Council's and Mayor's efforts, we cannot rest on our laurels because there is still a great deal of work to do. Demand for our programs and services are at an all-time high, and we are providing six-day service at all of our libraries on an operating budget that cannot sustain it. Faced with increased demand and rising costs, we continue to need your help.

Our Libraries are the first social and educational experience many of our young families have, and we want it to be the most enriching experience it can be. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Budget Justice Testimony 5/21/20
Rachel Posner

As a public school parent and teacher, I oppose a budget that cuts hundreds of millions from classrooms and critical programs at a time when our young people need more help, not less.

Although the mayor has acknowledged that the upcoming school year is going to present extraordinary challenges for teachers and students, he has still proposed budget cuts from the classroom estimated at over \$140 million. That would mean teachers, classroom aides, guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, principals, assistant principals, and others could be dismissed or displaced.

At the same time, his proposed budget includes increases for School Safety Agents, who already outnumber the total number of counselors, social workers, and school psychologists - and this is in the context of de Blasio continually increasing the NYPD budget--from \$4.6 billion in 2014 to \$5.6 billion in 2019—even as crime has dropped to historic lows. The services the Mayor wants to cut now are services New Yorkers depend on to be healthy and safe, and are especially critical to Black, brown, and low-income New Yorkers —the very same communities the NYPD criminalizes, abuses, and disproportionately incarcerates. The budget as currently proposed could result in the police being more integrated into social services—which is harmful and ineffective.

None of this is acceptable, and is especially disturbing in the current crisis, so I am writing to demand a budget that makes NO cuts for the classroom and for those adults who provide direct instruction, support, and guidance to NYC public school children. In fact, the public schools and the children they serve will need an infusion of increased funding to make up for the disastrous effects of the pandemic on school communities.

My name is Rafael Henriquez and I am a Fair Futures Coach at New Alternatives for Children. I was born and raised in the South Bronx, not far from Yankee Stadium. In the last 6 months, my work as a coach has made it clear that Fair Futures is the kind of support we should have been providing for foster youth city-wide all along.

At New Alternatives for Children, we primarily support families with at least one family member who has a disability or chronic medical condition. These are some of the most vulnerable and medically complex cases in New York City.

During COVID-19, we've been working to make sure that our youth have devices at home to access remote learning. We are also supporting them in accessing secure housing and the special education services that they are entitled to. Every day, our team works together to deliver packages of food, books, and essential household supplies to homes throughout the city.

Where many programs and opportunities were disrupted by COVID-19, the Fair Futures model jumped into action. We had some of the staffing, resources, and services required to reach out to families and support foster youth during a once-in-a-lifetime crisis.

The work is not over yet. We still have to overcome the long-term effects of everything happening today. Fair Futures has to be in the picture, if we are going to achieve our goal of providing foster youth with the opportunities and support required to succeed.

I am asking the City Council to work with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

Testimony
New York City Council Finance Hearing
FISCAL YEAR 2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
May 21, 2020
By Ralph Palladino, Local 1549 2nd Vice President

This testimony is on behalf of Local 1549 President Eddie Rodriguez and the 14,000 members and taxpayers of New York City Clerical-Administrative Employees Local 1549. Our members are front line workers in nearly every city agency, 311, New York Police Department (NYPD) and New York Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) and MetroPlus HMO. Our members are primarily women of color who live, work, shop and vote in every community in this city.

The present situation in the country is dire. Our city's healthcare system and economy are on life support. We need to get through this crisis and the slow rebuilding efforts in a smart way beginning with the resources we have at hand.

Our requested items, if placed in the final budget document, **will save taxpayers' dollars** and enhance public services. Some will help generate tax funds the city needs.

An additional benefit from our staffing requests in the final budget is to provide meaningful jobs to those who need them the most, in the communities that we serve and represent. It will help people move out of poverty into decent middle-class jobs. These jobs, in turn, will result in better services and greater tax revenues for the city. The buying power of our members will help businesses get back on their feet and help create more tax paying workers.

Reducing public services and staffing is unfair! Save Our Hospitals

Calls by some for reducing public services now and in the rebuilding process is wrong. The same is true for furloughing and/or laying off public employees.

The City Council together with ALL city leaders needs to speak up and tell the state leaders that cuts they voted on relating to city support and hospitals prior to April 1 should be reversed. The state is also expected to release its savings allocation plan to deal with the projected State deficit of \$13B exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We can expect more cuts. You will find specifics relating to NYC H+H in an Addendum at the end of this written testimony.

Our members are asking, "Where is the shared sacrifice in this crisis? We are not properly compensated, face layoffs and disease while the very rich and corporations do not even pay their fair share of taxes! The very rich can afford to buy multi-million dollar apartments overlooking Central Park but cannot help with the state and city revenue by paying more in taxes?"

More people will need public services than before. This is certainly true of childcare. The Pandemic is not likely to just "disappear" quickly. A real cure that is usable is a year or more in the future. The economic carnage and new rules of assembly will mean there will be a slow recovery.

The New York City Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) system has been and will continue to be in the epicenter of the fight to protect the public's health. H+H helps all who need help regardless of ability to pay, including immigrants. We cannot afford to lose any funding with an overhead of just 3%. We certainly cannot cut staff given the Pandemic's unpredictability, lack of a cure at this time and the likely need for further treatment of those who contracted COVID-19. We certainly cannot think that there will not be other

epidemics and Pandemics in our nearer future. Especially in part thanks to climate change. The upcoming influenza season is an annual epidemic that will compound problems in the fall.

The heroic work of our front line healthcare workers including those Local 1549 members who are the first to greet COVID-19 as they do all patients must be rewarded properly. Certainly these workers should not be losing their jobs. Their duties are responsible for generating insurance income for NYC H+H and they generate patient medical records. They provide valuable information to patients and their families. The duties of some include providing medical related translation services.

Downsizing government and the workforce is not the answer to health or economic recovery. Raising revenues by taxing those who can afford to pay known as tax fairness is! Thankfully the city administration that believes this. If the head of Amazon can buy three floors of a penthouse overlooking Central Park for \$80 million and then recently buy two more floors for \$18 million then they can pay more in taxes to support this city and state!

Need for Eligibility Specialists-Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Last year Local 1549 and advocates testified at the City Council about the need for hiring more Eligibility Specialists (ES) in the HRA. We were refused. Now the city and HRA have had to draft 200 higher paid Caseworkers and an unspecified number of MetroPlus Enrollment Sales Representatives to assist processing claims for food stamps (SNAP). The ES's are working overtime daily from 7 AM to up to 8:30 PM to process claims. Note that these claims are by phone (TIPS) and online. No one listen to us!

Two years ago the Error Rates shot up from the national average of 6% to a very high 9% due to the reduction of nearly 400 ES's in HRA. Last year the rate dropped only because of forced overtime and a using a reign of terror on the staff including following them to bathrooms disguised as "wellness checks". We documented this last year by members' testimonies at the City Council. Commissioner Banks, to his credit visited many worksites more recently with President Rodriguez and personally heard accounts of this harassment. We are told that it is no longer going to happen.

It is obvious there will be a need for more ES's given the long-range unemployment and underemployment forced by COVID-19 and lack of enough financial aid from Washington. The numbers offered in Commissioner Banks' testimony delivered of SNAP recipients in the city show that numbers always rise significantly for a few years following an economic crisis.

Management's drive to automate is primarily for financial reasons and not for wanting to be "client friendly". While numbers offered by management show an increase of cases processed by computer, note that we know that roughly 50% of people using computers and phones come into centers anyway.

The same is true of management shutting down centers. This was begun during the Bloomberg administration for the sole purpose of saving 10% on rental costs for the city and not for the convenience of those in need.

30-40% of city residents who are eligible for SNAP do not apply. Wonder why? Likely it is due to over automation, and lack of more convenient access facilities.

Increasing the numbers of Eligibility Specialists has been shown to be a critical need. ES are also needed in Medicaid, HASA and other programs. Remember that every \$1 spent by SNAP recipients generates over \$2 in local economic activity. Now is the time!

NYPD Civilianization

Crime has risen in the city during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The city and NYPD have designated that the Police Administrative Aide (PAA) position is not exempt from downsizing. Yet they allow hundreds of uniformed employees to sit at desks performing the work designated for the PAA title. This means that those who should be policing for crime prevention are not able to. The city continues to waste \$30 million a year in tax dollars.

While these able-bodied uniform employees sit at desks the number of PAA's have severely been reduced the past few years. Meanwhile the Court Assistant Processing job function has been given to the PAA's on top of their other duties. The PAA's gather all the information on record of cases and incidents that the ADA's need for court appearances.

Last year the NY City Council had requested a civilianization project over a few years beginning with 100 positions this year. This was taken off the table at negotiations. The reason I was told was that it was is that the NYPD said that there was a "clerical employee job freeze" for budgetary reasons.

The city and NYPD allegedly, in order to save tax dollars, decided to keep the 386 positions that they say (we say it is closer to 500) are able bodied uniformed employees who are performing Clerical-Administrative duties of a Police Administrative Employees. These uniformed employees cost the city and NYPD nearly double what a clerical employee would cost to perform these duties. These are 386-500 uniformed employees who could be out on the street keeping our citizens safe. These are positions that could be filled by applicants living in the city who took and paid for civil service tests but being denied jobs. This goes against three court ordered arbitration decisions.

There are 200 less PAA's and Supervising PAA's than there was five years ago. There are 16 less Clerical Associates. Uniformed employees are doing their work!

Civilianization of the NYPD will mean that New Yorkers from all across the city will have a chance at gaining meaningful employment. Those who fill the Police Administrative Aide positions live in the five boroughs of the city. Many of the able-bodied uniformed employees, who will be replaced, do not live in the five boroughs. Civilianization improves the morale of the Police Administrative Aides. It will do the same for those police officers who risk their lives in the streets every day, while others are sitting at desks performing clerical duties while taking jobs from others who need and deserve them.

It is estimated by various sources including former City Comptrollers, Public Advocates, Citizens Budget Commission and the Independent Budget Office that **NYPD Civilianization could save the taxpayers anywhere between \$17 and \$127 million dollars. Our latest figures factoring in our collective bargaining raises but NOT those of uniformed personnel show a saving of: Roughly \$30 million recurring year!**

Higher Paid Non-Competitive Titles Performing Civil Service Title Duties

The city, DCAS and various agencies, especially Agency for Children's Services and Human Resources Administration are wasting over \$3 million annually and under cutting the civil service system. They are doing so by replacing civil service employees, especially Clerical Associates with mostly higher paid non-competitive titles. The non-competitive employees performing the same duties as the replaced Clerical Associates.

In the **HRA** they are taking people off the civil service lists for Eligibility Specialists (ES), and making them non-competitive titles. While these employees are not performing ES

duties they do not have civil service protections. There has been an attrition of 269 Clerical Associate (33%) positions in HRA over five years and our members tell us those positions were turned over to non-competitive titles at a higher rate of pay though performing the same duties. The City Council should request that the city, DCAS and NYC H+H strictly adhere to the placement of employees in positions according to their job description and proper titles. These are higher paid titles performing clerical-administrative duties. Most are non-competitive titles taking civil service positions. But a significant amount are also higher titles including managerial and semi-managerial.

The City Council should ask that DCAS send a memo to all city agencies to cease this practice. That this practice begun by the Bloomberg Administration which is a waste of city tax dollars must be ended. Local 1549 has filed numerous grievances against management in several agencies, including the NYPD (other than the ones already won at Arbitration) and the NYC H+H, for replacing Clerical-Administrative Employees with higher paid, mostly non-competitive titles while assigning those replacements the same routine work that our members perform. Our analysis of most, not all, of the grievances filed shows that the city, by conservative estimate, is wasting approximately \$3,220,000 *annually* in just five city agencies and NYC H+H. This does not include the cost of processing and hearing the grievances nor the cost of arbitration. (We have already provided detailed documentation on this in earlier testimony.)

This is an attack on merit, the civil service system and a waste of taxpayers' money.

Additional Staffing for 911

To illustrate the need for additional staffing note that the NYPD had to move 400 less senior officers into the PSAC's in order to satisfy the demand of calls during the COVID-19. This was done as crime increased in the city! Texting work will begin in June.

Note that ALL emergency calls including those to the FDNY and EMS go through our 911 members first.

250 additional Police Communication Technicians (PCT) for the two Public Safety Answering Centers will enhance public safety, reduce the rising cost of overtime (\$1 million annually for the past three years) and increase the morale of 911 personnel. It will help to satisfy the increasing workload that will become more intense with the new 'text-to-911' requirements that are approaching next month. Currently there are many empty cubicles in both PSACs that could be utilized to better meet emergencies.

Many of those eligible for retirement are retiring. Staffing must be monitored constantly. The additional staffing has helped alleviate overtime, sick leave and stress. The centers receive just over 9 million calls.

Now, however, the amount of overtime has begun to rise again by roughly \$2 million from 2017 to 2018. This adds additional stress to these first responders. Now, texting has been added to their job requirements. Stress and burn-out, we believe is, partially responsible for absenteeism and the high turnover rate.

Requesting Funding from the 911 Surcharge to Enhance Public Safety

Reach out to the Mayor's office and request that the city work with Local 1549 to develop a grant proposal to secure funding from the various 911 Surcharges that appear on telephone and cell phone bills. The 911 Surcharge should be used for the purpose it was intended, to enhance the 911 emergency system. The FCC report issued the prior December says that 42% of the \$189 million of the funds collected were diverted from 911 use to the state

General Fund. Use the surcharge to upgrade the 911 system and hire 500 additional PCT/SPCTs for the NYPD 911 System call centers. The funding be requested on a recurring basis.

Hiring Civil Service Interpreters

While we do agree with the idea to provide enhanced interpreter servicing especially for the immigrant community. If the city can spend \$16 million on providing interpreter services for private entities it seems to us they can also do so for all the city agencies. That also would better serve those who need this service, especially the immigrant communities.

The Interpreter services should be performed face to face by the Civil Service Interpreter title. Currently interpreter services except in a very few areas is done by private for-profit phone lines. A New York Immigration Coalition study verifies that face to face interpretation is more efficient than phone use.

It is critical that the various agencies have their own interpreters to draw from given the different rules and laws governing servicing. For instance our members in HRA have complained about phone line interpreters egging on clients to challenge the rules that the ES's presented to the clients. Local 1549 asked at this hearing last year to meet to discuss this but heard nothing back from the City Council!!

Finally

Our 14,000 members hope that you will listen to our requests and make them happen. If you do it will make for better, more efficient servicing and help save tax dollars for the city.

THANK YOU

ADDENDUM ON NYC H+H and State's COVID-19 Allocation Plan

As you may know, the State is expected to release its savings allocation plan to deal with the projected State deficit of \$13B exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in addition to cuts of \$200 million already affecting NYC H+H due to the April 1 budget.

The cuts to NYC H+H are a slap in the face to the First Responders who are the real heroes in fighting the Pandemic.

NYC H+H and MetroPlus HMO operate with a 3% administrative cost! This leaves no other option than to lay off healthcare workers. This will hurt our ability to provide safety and health to all needy patients, not just COVID-19. Yet the private non-profits whose CEO's make millions of dollars running act more like for-profits and received more funding than they were entitled to based on patient mix. The tax dollars and Medicaid dollars are not following the patients.

- **The future of the health care system must address structural inequities.**
- **Safety net providers and the communities they serve need to be part of the discussion.**
- **They were not part of the Medicaid Redesign Team.Reinstate the enhanced safety net funds!**
- **No new cuts for enhanced safety net providers!**
- **Distribute DSH funds to H+H on a monthly schedule rather than in lump sum payments.**

Background: Safety net hospitals are at the front line of battling COVID-19, the worst public health crisis in this country in a century. We need support more than ever – not cuts!

“Re-imagine the health care system” should focus on:

- At a recent press conference, the Governor cited the need to “reimagine the healthcare system” in order to prepare for future challenges. The State should focus on:
- Addressing health care disparities, including the financing structure.
- Addressing the disparity between well-resourced and needier hospitals, by establishing a tiered Medicaid payment for safety net hospitals.
- **Solution: The future of the health care system must address structural inequities. Safety net providers and the communities they serve need to be part of the discussion on the future of health care.**

Reinstate Enhanced Safety-Net (ESN) Funds:

- The Legislature established the ESN definition in statute (Subdivision 34, of PHL 2807-C) and appropriated these funds for the past 3 years.
- Since 2017 the money was not distributed.
- In January 2020, DOB swept the funds saying CMS would not approve; we don’t agree. We believe there is a way to distribute these funds (via the plans) in a more straight-forward approach.
- The ESN hospitals need a tiered rate system just to keep more equity within the system—the Legislature recognized that and we shouldn’t let it go without more consideration.
- With the virus crisis, there is a need for permanent and targeted funding for enhanced safety net hospitals now more than ever.
- **Solution: Reinstate the enhanced safety net funds!**

Ensure safety net providers are held harmless from additional across the board (ATB) cuts:

- The enacted budget increased the ATB cuts to 1.5%, this disproportionately hits ESN providers who care for more patients who are in the Medicaid program or uninsured.
- **Solution: No new cuts for enhanced safety net providers!**

Timeliness of DSH Funding:

- DSH funds are intended to support hospitals unreimbursed costs of providing medical care to uninsured patients and Medicaid enrollees.
- Other public hospitals have first access to IGT DSH funds in state law.
- Since there is no required timeline for most H+H DSH, payments can be delayed pending estimates of other hospital needs or other issues.
- The sequencing of NYS DSH funds allocations means the hospital which provides the most care to Medicaid and uninsured people – NYC H+H gets paid last, not first.
- H+H is primarily reliant on a pool of leftover DSH funds, leaving it subject to fluctuating payment amounts/timing and first in line for devastating federal DSH cuts.
- **Solution: Distribute DSH funds to H+H on a monthly schedule rather than in lump sum payments.**

You are asked to reach out to all the Albany leaders. Call the Governor and State Legislators.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget — Education

May 21, 2020

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For nearly 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We speak out for students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, students from immigrant families, students who are homeless, students in foster care, and students with mental health needs.

Protecting school funding is critical to the City's long-term recovery; if our schools do not have adequate resources to address the unprecedented and widespread learning loss occurring as a result of the pandemic, the resulting cohort of under-educated New Yorkers will have ripple effects on the economy for decades to come. Even in our darkest days, we have to continue to invest in the future, and our schools are our best hope. That is absolutely key to full recovery.

Therefore, we urge the City Council to make it a top priority to work with the Administration to ensure that the Fiscal Year 2021 adopted budget:

(1) Rejects proposed cuts to education, including proposed cuts to:

- A. Fair Student Funding
- B. School Allocation Memoranda
- C. Social Workers
- D. Hiring of School Staff

Instead, the FY 21 adopted budget must include sufficient funding to ensure that when school buildings reopen:

(2) Every student has a seat, including preschoolers whose Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) require preschool special education classes;



- (3) Every student has a way of getting to school, including students in foster care;
- (4) Every student receives the mental health support they need, including students with significant mental health needs; and
- (5) Every student has the tailored instructional support and services they need, including:
 - A. Recently-arrived English Language Learners, ages 16-21, who need schools that are prepared to serve them;
 - B. Students with disabilities who need compensatory services to make up for the instruction and related services they missed during the pandemic; and
 - C. Students in foster care, who need the DOE to hire or designate a point person focused on improving their educational outcomes.

These recommendations, among others, are described in more detail below.

(1) Reject proposed cuts to education.

We urge the City Council to make it a top priority to reject the draconian cuts proposed to the education budget. We are particularly concerned about the following proposed cuts.

(A) FAIR STUDENT FUNDING

We strongly urge the City to reject the Mayor's proposed \$100 million cut to Fair Student Funding (FSF), the largest funding stream to our City's schools. Already, nearly *two-thirds* of schools do not receive their full FSF allocation; over 20% of City schools receive only 90% of their FSF allocation, meaning they already receive far less funding than the amount needed to support the students in their schools. As a member of the City's Fair Student Funding Task Force, we spent the past year learning about the shortcomings in FSF, the need to increase weights for students with disabilities and English Language Learners in order for schools to provide them with their mandated instruction, and the need to add funding for students who are homeless and students living in poverty.

Fair Student Funding is the primary funding source used to support school instruction, including for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. At a time when many students have missed out on meaningful participation in remote learning, now is not the time to cut this critical source of school funding. As we look toward summer and the coming school year, schools and students will need additional resources and support to make up for lost instructional time, address the trauma that so many have experienced due to COVID-19, and ensure that the pandemic does not



have lifelong consequences for the children whose educations have been interrupted. It is very hard to see how we can achieve these goals with the reduction in teachers and other school staff that a \$100 million cut in FSF would necessitate.

The City Council must reject cuts to Fair Student Funding.

(B) SCHOOL ALLOCATION MEMORANDA (SAMS)

We are similarly alarmed by the \$40 million proposed cut to initiatives funded through School Allocation Memoranda (SAMS). While the Administration has not specified which SAMS it will cut or by how much it will cut specific SAMS, SAMS fund a number of critical school programs and services for some of the City's most marginalized student populations. For example:

- Bridging the Gap school-based social workers, who provide support to thousands of students living in shelter, a population that may grow even larger with skyrocketing unemployment;
- Popular and effective specialized programs for students with disabilities, including the ASD Nest and Horizon programs for children with autism, as well as bilingual special education classes, of which there are already too few to meet the need;
- Translation and interpretation services, which allow parents who are not proficient in English to participate in their children's education and are particularly essential now that students are learning from home; and
- The Universal Literacy initiative, which is focused on improving literacy instruction in grades K-2—years that are critical for building the foundational skills necessary for proficient reading and long-term success in school—and will play a vital role in helping address COVID learning loss.

The City Council should reject the \$40 million cut in unspecified SAMS. Before agreeing to any cuts to SAMS, the City Council must know which SAMS are on the chopping block and must ensure that the cut will not harm marginalized students.

(C) SOCIAL WORKERS

We are also concerned that the DOE is proposing to cut 25 social worker positions that the City Council fought to add in last year's budget that have not yet been filled, including three Bridging the Gap social workers, five school-based clinicians, and 17 School Response Clinicians. While it is disappointing that schools have not already hired for these positions, that does not mean they are no longer needed. For example, the three schools that would lose Bridging the Gap social workers enrolled a combined 515 students in temporary housing last year, a third of whom were living in shelter. One of the three schools has nearly 100 students living in shelter.



As students return from the pandemic, they will need additional social-emotional support, and social workers are already in short supply; the DOE currently employs one social worker for every 625 students. ***At a minimum, the City must reject the proposed reduction in DOE social worker positions and maintain the number of school social worker positions funded in the FY 2020 budget.***

(D) HIRING FREEZES

At a time when students will need more support, we are concerned about the proposed education cuts from hiring freezes. Schools must have the ability to hire teachers, social workers, and other staff members to replace departing staff.

The City Council should reject school hiring freezes to help ensure schools can select qualified teachers to replace departing staff.

The proposed DOE budget cuts are particularly painful because we know that more funding is needed to address challenges that predate the pandemic and to provide students with additional support to make up for lost instructional time. Instead of cutting education funding, the City Council must work to ensure that when school buildings reopen, schools are ready to meet the needs of students including students from marginalized communities who have been hardest hit by the pandemic and by the closure of schools.

- (2) *When schools reopen, every student must have a seat, including preschoolers whose IEPs require preschool special education classes. The FY 21 budget must:*

Provide sufficient funding for preschool special education classes for children who need them.

When school buildings reopen, there must be a seat for every student, including every preschooler with a disability who has a legal right to a preschool special education class seat. Prior to the pandemic, hundreds of preschoolers with disabilities were sitting at home due to the City's shortage of preschool special education classes; some of them had been sitting at home for months. The DOE's own projections showed a shortfall of more than 1,000 preschool special education class seats for the spring of 2020.

For example, Advocates for Children recently assisted the parent of a preschooler with autism who had not received *any* special education services for two months. Though the DOE had recommended in February that the child be placed in a



preschool special education class and receive speech, occupational, and physical therapies, the DOE was unable to find a seat in a preschool special class prior to the COVID-19 outbreak—informing the parent that, due to the shortage of seats, the earliest her child could start attending such a program would be July or September. Meanwhile, the DOE failed to provide the child with any special education services, prior to AFC’s intervention.

We appreciate that, over the past two years, the City opened additional DOE-run preschool special education classes, increasing the number of seats by more than 1,000. These classes provide children with specialized instruction at a crucial time when their brains are developing rapidly, preparing them for future success in school and in life. However, the City is still falling far short of providing seats to all children whose IEPs mandate them. In fact, while the DOE opened more preschool special classes, a number of community-based organizations (CBOs)—which run the majority of the City’s preschool special classes—closed their doors due to insufficient funding. Unless government leaders intervene, hundreds of children may remain at home, fully excluded from the City’s early childhood programming, even as their peers return to school. ***The City has a legal obligation to provide a preschool special education class seat to every child whose IEP requires one—either by opening more DOE-run classes or by ensuring CBOs do so.***

In addition, the City must extend salary parity to teachers of preschool special classes at community-based organizations. The City’s shortage of preschool special class seats is at risk of worsening because teachers who lead preschool special classes at CBOs often earn salaries that are far lower than other teachers, making it difficult for providers to recruit and retain teachers for these classes. Last year, the City made strides toward salary parity for CBO early childhood educators, setting a schedule for salary increases so that their starting pay would be on par with DOE public school teachers. However, those salary increases apply only to educators in CBO preschool general education classes, excluding teachers working in CBO preschool special education classes (also known as “4410 providers”). As a result, CBO preschool special class educators will now be some of the lowest-paid teachers in the City, despite serving some of the City’s highest-need students. Without ensuring salary parity for this group of teachers, the City runs the risk that this talent will leave CBO preschool special classes in pursuit of higher salaries elsewhere—thereby undoing the DOE’s work to narrow the gap in preschool special class seats needed. ***The City must extend salary parity to teachers of CBO preschool special classes so they may continue to support preschoolers with disabilities.***

The City Council must ensure that the adopted budget has sufficient funding to ensure a preschool special education class seat for every child who has a legal right to one.



- (3) *When school buildings reopen, every student must have a way of getting to school, including students in foster care. The FY 21 budget must:*

Include funding to guarantee school bus or other door-to-door transportation for students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.

For students who have been separated from their families and placed in foster homes, school has the potential to be an important stabilizing factor in their lives. Recognizing the importance of school stability, federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students placed in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interests to transfer to a new school. Despite this legal obligation, New York City guarantees bus service only to students in foster care who have special transportation recommended on their IEPs. The City allows other students in foster care who do not meet the general busing eligibility criteria to apply for busing through an emergency busing request form and will provide bus service if a student can be added easily to an existing route. Despite some recent improvements, these busing requests can take 30 days or more to process—putting tremendous stress on already fragile foster care placements and over-extended agency staff in the meantime—and the DOE continues to deny some of these requests, offering only a MetroCard.

In part due to the lack of guaranteed bus service, one in four students changes schools upon entering foster care in New York City. These students are abruptly dropped into an unfamiliar environment with new teachers, peers, and curricula at the same time as they are coping with the trauma of separation from their family and home. In addition, without guaranteed transportation, foster care agencies have had difficulty finding homes for some children and have had to move some children from one home to another.

We were therefore very pleased when the City Council FY 2020 adopted budget stated that “the Administration has agreed to use existing resources to ensure bussing for students in foster care” so that no student would be forced to transfer schools due to lack of transportation. However, while the DOE has since taken the positive step of hiring a transportation liaison to assist students in foster care and students in temporary housing—a new position that has led to improvements in the process for adding pickups to existing bus routes—the DOE has refused to guarantee bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to students in foster care.

When school buildings reopen, students in foster care must have a way of getting there. At this time when the DOE will need to figure out how to make transportation work in light of social distancing requirements and potentially staggered scheduling, the DOE must honor its commitment and ensure that students in foster care, who have



a legal right to transportation between their foster homes and schools, are included in its door-to-door transportation plans going forward.

The budget should include sufficient funding for the City to abide by federal and state law and honor its commitment to guarantee bus service or other door-to-door transportation to the relatively small number of students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.

- (4) *When school buildings reopen, every student must receive the mental health support they need, including students with significant mental health needs. In the FY 21 budget, the City must:*

Invest in a Mental Health Continuum to provide a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools.

In light of the emotional and psychological toll that COVID-19 is taking on our communities, we were pleased to hear that the First Lady and Chancellor Carranza are working on a plan to address students' mental health needs. All students experiencing loss, trauma, and dislocation because of the pandemic—particularly those who had significant mental health needs pre-dating the pandemic—will require mental health supports and services upon their return to school. It is imperative that the Administration adequately fund necessary mental health services for all students, with allocations specifically for students with significant mental health needs.

As part of this effort, we urge the City to include and baseline \$15 million in the FY 2021 budget to launch and sustain a Mental Health Continuum to support the significant behavioral health needs of students in high-need schools in designated neighborhoods.

We deeply appreciate the Administration's investment in mental health and other school climate reforms over the past several years. However, significant gaps in services remain. The City's separate initiatives do not provide students with significant mental health challenges with the higher level of integrated services they need, including direct, ongoing mental health support. City data and our experience working with families illustrate that certain high-need schools continue to turn to police intervention and medically unnecessary calls to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) when students are in emotional crisis. In fall 2019, the NYPD reported intervening in 1,348 incidents involving students in emotional distress sent to the hospital for psychiatric evaluation. These students were overwhelmingly Black and Latinx (1,186 incidents, or 88%) and more than a third were younger than 12 (505 incidents, or 37%). City data also show racial disparities in the NYPD's continued



use of handcuffs on students in emotional distress: in fall 2019, 93% of those handcuffed were Black or Latinx, including a 5-year-old.

A Mental Health Continuum, recommended by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and supported by the City Council in its response to the preliminary budget last year, will help fill this critical service gap for students with significant mental health and behavior-related needs in high-need schools. With a Mental Health Continuum, schools will have access to necessary integrated and intensive services to meet the needs of these students without using police, EMS, and emergency room resources when they are unnecessary and squander taxpayer money. This innovative, trauma-informed initiative includes:

- School partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics;
- Call-in centers with clinicians who field questions and advise school staff how to respond to students in crisis;
- Clinician response teams who respond immediately during crises in schools;
- Student assessments to determine the appropriate level of care needed;
- Direct, ongoing mental health services for students, including intensive in-home individual and family behavioral supports when necessary;
- School-based mental health clinicians;
- Whole-school training in collaborative problem solving, an evidence-based, skill-building approach to changing the most challenging behavior; and
- Data collection and program evaluation.

AFC and 40 other organizations recently sent a letter to the Mayor, calling on City Hall to fund a Mental Health Continuum; a copy of the letter is attached to this testimony.

We urge the City to include and baseline \$15 million in the FY 2021 budget to launch and sustain a Mental Health Continuum in two designated neighborhoods with high-need schools.

We also urge the City to maintain its commitment to expanding Restorative Justice to all high schools and middle schools over three years and ensure there is funding in the budget for these programs to be effectively implemented and expanded in our schools. Now, more than ever, students need access to supports that transform schools into healing-centered communities and address the isolation and trauma this pandemic has caused. With effective implementation of restorative justice programs, students will learn to build and heal relationships and learn positive behaviors. Restorative justice programs also foster an essential sense of community and connection between students and staff. These programs will be vital when school buildings reopen; in order for students to learn, schools will need to take active steps



to reengage students, rebuild relationships, and create a sense of safety, inclusion, and community.

(5) *When school buildings reopen, every student must have the tailored instructional support and services they need. The Fiscal Year 2021 budget should include funding to:*

(A) Increase the capacity of existing DOE transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx to support recently arrived immigrant ELLs, ages 16 to 21.

As the City develops plans to reopen school buildings, the DOE must prepare to better meet the needs of 16-to-21-year-old English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs who arrived in the U.S. as teenagers have some of the greatest needs of any of the City's student populations. In addition to having to learn a new language and meet graduation requirements before they turn 21, many of these students also have gaps in their education and require academic remediation in order to access the curriculum; are juggling jobs and family obligations in addition to their schoolwork; and have complex social-emotional needs in part due to traumatic migration experiences. One in four ELLs in New York City drops out of high school—the highest rate of any student subgroup.

The pandemic has only magnified these challenges and increased the need for schools able to serve this population. Many older ELLs have struggled to access remote learning and have fallen further behind, including students who do not have access to the internet or computers at home and had to wait over a month to receive a remote learning device from the DOE; students who have struggled to use new technology due to low digital literacy or other barriers; youth who are working to help support family members who lost jobs or did not receive a stimulus check; and students living in communities hit particularly hard by COVID-19 who have lost loved ones or fallen ill themselves.

Unfortunately, there are few DOE schools able to provide the support older immigrant ELLs need to be successful. The DOE's "ELL transfer schools" provide a supportive learning environment for older immigrant students, including intensive English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, bilingual social workers, and partnerships with community-based organizations to help address immigration, housing, and other needs. However, there are only five such schools, four of which are located in Manhattan, making it difficult for students in other boroughs to attend. While the City is home to over two dozen non-ELL transfer schools, which are located across the five boroughs and serve over-age and under-credited youth, these



schools do not offer the intensive ENL classes and robust social-emotional supports that recently arrived immigrant students typically need.

To address the geographic limitations of the City’s ELL transfer schools, curb the ELL dropout crisis, and ensure more newcomer immigrant youth can attend schools that address their increased financial responsibilities and greater need for wrap-around supports in the aftermath of COVID-19, ***the City should allocate \$1.6M for FY 2021 and \$2.2M in FY 2022 and 2023 (for a total of \$6 million over three years) to pilot programs to support immigrant ELLs, ages 16–21, at existing transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.*** While we know that the City’s budget is very tight, this small amount of funding would enable four schools in FY 2021—increasing to six schools in FY 2022—to hire ENL teachers and bilingual social workers, offer culturally responsive wrap-around supports and services, and provide professional development so that all educators are prepared to support newcomer immigrant youth.

(B) Provide make-up services to students with disabilities.

During the period of school closure, thousands of students with disabilities missed out on their legally mandated services. These students have the right under federal law to compensatory instruction and services to make up for the support they missed and help them get back on track. The Fiscal Year 2021 budget must account for the mandate to provide compensatory services to students with disabilities.

(C) Hire a DOE senior leader focused on supporting students in foster care.

Approximately 6,000 New York City students are in foster care each year. For students who have been separated from their families and placed in foster homes, school has the potential to be an important source of stability. However, the DOE has long overlooked the needs of students in foster care, even though they are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be suspended, need special education services, and leave high school without a diploma.

Despite the significant educational barriers faced by students in foster care and the special laws and protections that apply to them, ***the DOE does not have a single staff member focused full-time on this population.*** As a result, the DOE has not developed and implemented needed policies to assist students in foster care, while schools, families, and child welfare professionals do not have a point person to contact with questions or concerns regarding the needs and rights of students in care—for example, who signs consent for special education evaluations, who attends parent/teacher conferences, and whether the school can release records to the



student's parent or foster care agency. The pandemic has further illustrated the necessity of having a dedicated staff member focused on the unique needs of this population and who has the expertise and knowledge necessary to work across City agencies and effectively address the needs. Such staff could have coordinated with the foster care agencies to help students access remote learning and resolve barriers such as iPad loan agreements, access to digital platforms such as NYC Schools Accounts or Google classroom, and consent to teletherapy or remote special education evaluations.

In March 2018, the City's Interagency Foster Care Task Force recommended that the DOE establish an infrastructure to focus on students in foster care, similar to the DOE's Office of Students in Temporary Housing with central and borough-based staff. However, the DOE has not yet acted on this recommendation.

We understand that the City Council has pointed to the DOE's central and borough-based offices as a potential place to make cuts in light of the City's budget challenges. However, the City Council should ensure that there is at least one DOE staff member dedicated full-time to students in foster care. While we recommend a small DOE office for students in foster care with a senior-level leader and borough-based liaisons, at a minimum, given the current budget challenges, the DOE needs one senior staff member dedicated to this population.

We ask the City Council to ensure that the final budget includes funding for a DOE senior staff member focused full-time on supporting students in foster care.

(6) Restore funding for AFC's Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline.

We are deeply grateful for the City Council's ongoing support of Advocates for Children's Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline, which has allowed us to help thousands of families navigate the education system each year. Over the past two months, while school buildings have been closed, our Helpline has been open and has assisted hundreds of families with questions related to remote education, helping families to obtain technology, resolve problems with remote special education services, and keep their children learning. We ask the Council to continue to fund this important Citywide Initiative at \$250,000, to help ensure that thousands of low-income families, many of whom have nowhere else to turn, are able to receive the guidance they need as they strive to understand a school system that is constantly changing and secure a high-quality education for their children, especially in this difficult time.



(7) Additional Recommendations

In addition to our priorities within the Department of Education's budget, we join with our coalition partners in recommending that the City:

- Restore funding for Fair Futures to provide long-term coaching and academic supports for youth in foster care from middle school through age 26. During the pandemic, the Fair Futures coaches and tutors have played an important role in assisting with the transition to remote learning and have provided academic and emotional support.
- Restore funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and other summer programming to help engage students in learning and enrichment this summer.

We appreciate the City Council's work to make key investments to support students in recent years. Now, we need our federal, state, and city elected officials to work together to ensure our schools have the resources they need so that the current crisis does not have lifelong consequences for a generation of children. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions.

As a middle school student activist I see the way our country views immigrants, prisoners, and people with mental health conditions as criminals. These people a large percentage of the time do not need to be locked up. These people need help. These people need our help. My classmates and I see that these groups of people are facing similar struggles. We want to stop this chain of events before it starts. One way to do this is by funding counselors in New York City public schools instead of funding police and security. While I go to a private school and do not face security, the treatment of public school students is blatantly unjust. Which is why we demand that The Ending Pushout Act H.R. 5325 and the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019 H.R. 1109 be passed. Our communities are safer when they are provided with engaging and restorative resources rather than of police officers. We should spread resources across neighborhoods instead of heavily supplying certain neighborhoods with particular resources.

Hello,

I am a NYC public school educator and I am making this testimony to state that **I do not support a budget** that cuts hundreds of millions from classrooms and critical programs at a time when our young people need more help, not less.

Although the mayor has acknowledged that the next school year is going to present extraordinary challenges for teachers and students, he has still proposed budget cuts from the classroom estimated at over \$140 million. That would mean teachers, classroom aides, guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, principals, assistant principals, and others could be dismissed or displaced. At the same time, his proposed budget includes increases for School Safety Agents, who already outnumber the total number of counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.

I am part of a group of adults who work tirelessly to provide direct instruction, support, and guidance to NYC public school children. The public schools and the children we serve **need increased funding** to make up for the disastrous effects of the pandemic on school communities.

At this critical time, we are ALL working incredibly hard to make sure our students have what they need, but **we NEED the support from the city**. Budget cuts for education is NOT the answer.

Thank you,

Ranisha Singh
She/her



Testimony from Women for Afghan Women (WAW)
New York City Council Public Hearing on FY 2020–2021 Executive Budget
May 21, 2020

Good afternoon. I am Roshni Ahmed, Outreach Coordinator at [Women for Afghan Women](#). Thank you, Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Finance, for taking the time to hear from New York City's diverse communities. Thank you for your amazing support of the 15% and Growing Campaign and for this opportunity to share why the City's continued support and budget equity are still critical for our Asian Pacific American communities.

As you may already know, Women for Afghan Women, has been providing comprehensive and culturally specific social services to low-income immigrants from the Afghan, South Asian, and Muslim communities of New York City since 2003. Altogether, our diverse staff members, who are from the same immigrant and APA communities we serve, provide services in six languages – Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Farsi, and Hindi.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we started working remotely in mid-March to lessen the risk of exposure among our community and staff members. In the two months since, Women for Afghan Women has already reached out to over 5,000 community members to find out what kind of support they need during this time.

Our team has been providing services daily through multiple channels—emails, phone hotline, Zoom, Whatsapp, and Facetime—because we know our community is traditionally hard-to-reach. For most of the folks we serve, they do not speak English fluently and they do not fully understand the different procedures and systems here in the US. We support them from day one until they can stand on their own, including providing interpretation services.

From our staff's tireless work of reaching out to everyone in the community, we have seen a tremendous need to continue our services and programs. The pandemic has hit our community hard, as with many communities of color in the City.

An overwhelming number of our community members need assistance with filing for unemployment, SNAP, and other financial support because they have lost their livelihoods. In addition, our community relies on us to connect them to essential services, including basic necessities like food, healthcare, and shelter. We are also providing our English classes remotely to ensure our students continue to build on their English language skills.

Our domestic violence cases have increased these last two months. All of our staff members have stepped up to assist survivors. We are constantly providing counseling by phone, helping survivors access critical resources and basic needs. One staff member provided financial support out of her own pocket to a survivor who recently got out of her abusive relationship, lost her job due to the pandemic, has no support network, and has to care for her infant child by herself.

Young people in our community are also facing high levels of stress because of the transition to online classes, staying home, and food insecurity. They live with multigenerational family members, and their parents have lost their sources of income due to the pandemic. They look to Women for Afghan Women to provide them with emotional and practical support.

As you can tell, Women for Afghan Women is a lifeline for the communities we serve that face many challenges in accessing services and benefits due to cultural and linguistic limitations.

Our community had already been facing so many challenges under "normal circumstances" but this pandemic heightened these needs by several factors. Long after this crisis is over, our community will feel the effects of the drastic changes to their livelihoods, access to services, food security, and physical and mental health.

Data has shown that the hardest hit communities during this COVID-19 pandemic are communities of color. Queens County, where Women for Afghan Women is based, continues to have the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the City.

Several studies have shown how chronic stress, especially due to poverty, leads to weakened immune systems and poor coping mechanisms. We must not let the support systems for low-income and communities of color fall by the wayside, but instead, increase their social safety nets to fully combat this pandemic and rebuild our City.

In our community alone, we have lost 15 individuals to COVID-19 and many more were sick and now recovered. We continue to receive news daily of additional community members experiencing symptoms. In addition, about a third of our staff members were also sick but all have thankfully recovered.

Our work has always been essential, and now more than ever, because Women for Afghan Women is the only organization that offers services in Dari and Pashto in all of

New York. While our community members can request for interpretation services, the interpreters available often do not speak the same language.

For example, we had a domestic violence survivor who was an Afghan woman and only spoke Dari. She had never been to school in her life. When she requested for an interpreter, they could only provide a Farsi-speaking one. For the survivor, it was impossible to communicate with the interpreter. Though the languages are similar, there are still many words that get lost in translation. The same thing happens for community members who speak the Afghan variant of Pashto. Most interpreters in New York speak Pakistani Pashto, which cannot be understood by our community members who have never been to Pakistan.

Women for Afghan Women fills this gap. City agencies call us for language support. Our local precinct, hospitals, doctor's offices, law offices, partner community organizations, and the Family Justice Centers know that they can call us. Because of this, we are the first number folks in our community call, because of the trust they have in us and for our culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services. We help take out some of their stress so they can start to thrive in their new homes in New York City.

Continued funding support from the City would allow us to ensure the long-term safety of the Afghan, South Asian, and Muslim immigrant families who depend on Women for Afghan Women's services.

We respectfully request for the City Council to continue supporting human service organizations and work towards budget equity in the Executive Budget for FY 2020-2021 during this most critical and vulnerable time for immigrants and specifically, Asian Pacific American New Yorkers.

We hope New York City supports the organizations that fill the gap for APA communities who face complex cultural and linguistic barriers. The City has long supported equitable access for all New Yorkers. During this crisis, it is even more important to ensure that all New York residents receive their equitable share in resources and services.

Women for Afghan Women thanks the City Council for its support and we hope to continue to address the needs of New York City's APA and Muslim immigrant communities with you.

Hi, my name is Raymond Ortega

I have the opportunity to work with my coach Kepriec Lindsay through a program called Fair Futures Elevations to Success program. We first talked for about 30 minutes and in the end, I wanted to have her as a resource. I am a new father and I a little scared but she was consistently available to help me through this process. She through many conversations we were able to handle everything that has been thrown my way within the last 3 months. When COVID-19 happened, it caused me to lose my job, and become unsure of myself. I wasn't able to think clearly and sometimes lost hope. My coach helped me through my emotions and I was able to get back on track. I am able to see that I have to find housing start applying for jobs. I needed to see that there are many things that I should be doing to kick start my stability and financial independence for me and my son/family. I would like to ask my Major to continue to fund this program because my youths he this system really need it.

Rebecca Del Toro - Education Budget Testimony May 21

My name is Rebecca Del Toro. I'm a special education teacher and Restorative Justice Coordinator at City-As School, and I'm a member of Teachers Unite. The proposed education budget does little to respond to the trauma and dire needs that students and their families are experiencing during this time. Divesting from mental health, guidance counselors, and student supports is a deliberate attempt at funneling our most vulnerable young people into the school to prison pipeline. And those same students are the ones who have been most affected by Covid-19. The Mayor's plan guarantees that our most vulnerable young people graduate in lower numbers and are pushed into prisons at higher rates in the next four years. Increased policing leads to decreased success. As a transfer school teacher, I am witness to the effects of school pushout everyday and I know that keeping our students connected and successful has everything to do with the relationships we build. During school closures, I have spent an average of 2-3 hours per day sending texts, making calls, planning virtual birthdays and graduation celebrations, or seeking other creative ways to re-engage my students. Relationships make schools safe, not police. Mayor de Blasio is dedicated to preserving and increasing one area of funding for schools: the subcontract from DOE to NYPD is slated to increase by \$4 million (totaling \$307 million). A budget that focuses on equity would cut funding from the NYPD. An anti-racist budget would eliminate funding for surveillance and metal detectors. A just budget would fund restorative justice, mental health, nurses, and SYEP. We demand that you invest in our communities and impose a hiring freeze on the NYPD and cut funding for school policing.

Thank you for your time

- De Blasio has decided that it's more important to keep metal detectors in schools than it is to keep teachers.
- The Mayor wants to cut \$641 million from our schools next year while the NYPD is set to receive a \$5 million increase from the preliminary figures released in January.
- Education is the #1 casualty in Mayor de Blasio's budget plan while the NYPD is protected.
-
- The Mayor's proposed cuts to the NYPD is loose change compared to what he plans to take from schools. If this budget passes, the loss to our education will be 2800% that of what is cut from policing.
- If this budget passes, students are going to have brand new metal detectors in their schools but no new teachers over the next four years.
- Students will be grieving family members and loved ones when they return to school. They need to be welcomed back to schools by their teachers, grief counsellors, programs, and opportunities for them to build their futures, not more police.

Prompts for Framing

- What is NEEDED in the budget?
 - What resources/staffing are ESSENTIAL, always, & **especially** with the trauma and disruption of the pandemic?
 - What makes your school community **safe for everyone?** (Name example that speaks to you. Examples include: caring guidance counselors, after-school sports, restorative practices, clean bathrooms, etc.)
- Where SHOULD we be making cuts?
 - NYPD is only seeing a tiny fraction of the cuts. Why aren't they sharing the burden?
 - Funding the NYPD is harmful to young people. We need the city to invest in healing and support, not punishment and surveillance.
- What message does this budget / capital plan send to students/eds/families during a pandemic?
- How does this budget translate into impacts on real lives to students/eds/parents?
 - Negative consequences of the budget cuts / investment in policing
 - ALTERNATIVELY: Positive impact of things we SHOULD fund
 - Invest in communities and hire community school workers as peacebuilders, youth advocates, and restorative justice coordinators

- This is a time when our communities need job opportunities that are secure and healing
- Children and young people benefit academically and emotionally from building positive relationships with adults from their communities
- Schools need additional staff capacity to build community and culture that is restorative and transformative, now more than ever

Expanded Talking Points:

- The Mayor announced \$827 million in cuts to the Department of Education for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, including **\$641 million for 2020-2021.**
 - Next year, \$100 million of fair student funding is being cut
 - \$54 million being cut from “Equity & Excellence” programs for the next four years, totaling \$216 million
 - “The Equity and Excellence for All agenda has been central to today’s improved student outcomes, including the highest-ever graduation and college enrollment rates, the lowest-ever dropout rate, and rising scores on state tests.” -schools.gov
- That is compared to \$23 million cut from the NYPD next year. The NYPD has not been cut it’s fair share – they represent 6.3% of the entire City budget but only 1.2% of the cuts.
- At the same time, the preliminary budget announced in January and the executive budget announced last week resulted in \$5 million being added to the NYPD’s budget. The City is adding \$5m to the NYPD’s budget and cutting the DOE by \$463m.
- The Contract for School Safety, that passes through the DOE’s budget to the NYPD, grew by \$3,960,109 (THREE (really four!?) MILLION!) - from a little over \$303 million to \$307 million.
- The mayor’s proposal would not fill vacant positions for teachers or social workers who retire. But it would for police officers (and actually slightly increase officer headcount)

On April 16, Mayor Bill de Blasio released his [war-driven austerity budget](#), and this week he began negotiations with the NYC Councils [Finance Committee](#), which is responsible for overseeing the hearing process until the 2021 budget is adopted. Today hearing will include no testimony from the public, which is an evasion of public responsibility for the Mayor's disastrous financial decisions: the executive budget has over \$3 billion in cuts and tax revenues losses. These budgetary gaps will have an immediate and adverse effect on a whole range of services that New Yorkers rely on, including more than \$800 million in cuts to education alone, and the total elimination of the city's summer youth employment program.

Despite these draconian cuts and unprecedented revenue shortfalls, two city departments came out of the revised budget process not only unscathed, but with a [budget increase](#) and guaranteed [capital-growth](#): the NYPD and the Department of Corrections (DOC).

This is, in a word, despicable.

At a time when our communities most urgent needs are health justice and economic recovery, the last thing we should do is throw an even higher share of our public resources into the violent systems of surveillance and control. Even less coherent is the city's continued commitment to pouring more than \$10 billion dollars to building new jails, which will likely be the largest capital expenditure in the city's budget for the next decade. The Mayor's controversial jails plan, which was sealed through backroom deals and rammed through the City Council's opaque land-use process, is being rolled out as part of the City's anemic budget, amidst the worst economic and health crisis in most of our lives.

Our community is only as healthy as our most marginalized neighbors, and the COVID-19 crisis has revealed just how fragile and ill our society

is. The Mayor's budget reflects an addiction to mass incarceration and domestic militarization, no matter how [just](#) and [community-oriented](#) he claims to be. We cannot police ourselves out of a public health crisis, and the imprisoned cannot practice social distancing in cages. While we cannot often see our incarcerated neighbors, they are highly connected to the rest of us and placed at extraordinary risk by the daily flow of correctional officers. These health, racial, income, and policing inequalities makes us all vulnerable. Their health is our health, literally.

We're saying: enough. Free them all, now. Public health *is* public safety, and we must close Rikers now, without adding more to the city's jailing and policing budgets.

Money for police and cages has gone up consistently in the last decade, despite steady decreases in all kinds of crime, and countless studies show absolutely no correlation between jailing and public safety. These trends have only [accelerated](#) in this time of social distancing, further obviating the need for police and cages altogether and, at the very least, making it clear that we don't need even more resources for these violent systems than the year before.

At this rate, the city's misguided priorities mean we [are spending and plan to spend](#) more in the aggregate on policing and new forms of imprisonment than we do on education. In the words of our imprisoned comrade, Chance, hiring more police isn't the instruments that require a better community, for they're the ones who are stopping a community to be discovered to begin with, they're the ones who are corrupted. Disinvesting from communities' needs and adding to violent systems is tantamount to a war on poor and marginalized New Yorkers.

Now is the time to shut down Rikers without pouring more millions of dollars into cages and policing. Although NYCs jail population is at an all time low (approximately 4,000 people), a majority of people detained in

NYC jails (58%) are Black and an overwhelming majority (90%) are people of color. Structural racism, through imprisonment and policing, puts Black and brown New Yorkers at higher risk of exposure and infection. Mayor de Blasio can address this unequal burden and our collective health and well-being by releasing people from NYC jails, while beginning to shut down Rikers Island now.

Imagine if we instead immediately invested that money in hospitals, scaling up testing for the disease, and services for frontline healthcare and delivery workers? Imagine if we had that money to resource teachers, counselors, and mental health providers to help us cope with this crisis and beyond? Imagine if we could relieve people imprisoned with open cases, or for parole violations, of what essentially has become a death sentence? Imagine if rather than sacrificing imprisoned New Yorkers, we instead gave them and their families the affordable housing and resources they need to stay healthy, not just during a pandemic, but for our collective future?

The only way to recover from our current crisis is through investing in what communities have been asking for over the course of decades: affordable, low-income housing; free transit; youth programs; improvements to NYCHA; and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recover, but stay healthy and thrive.

Mayor De Blasio must stop the war against Black, brown, and marginalized New Yorkers, especially in the Bronx and Brooklyn, where [arrests and jailing rates are highest](#). We need to stop the steady and unaccountable budget increases in policing and jailing, while pressuring the NYPD, DAs, Judges, and the DOC to free our neighbors, now. Sincerely,

Reed



May 20, 2020

- Regina Rivera, NGC Coachee
- Grew up in the Bronx, NY

Fair Futures has been important to you because, I get the support I need; I have someone to give me advice from and someone who is willing to listen to me.

Frame the message –

My Fair Futures Coach has helped guide me through my personal issues. Since my coach has been assigned to me, she has helped me grow as an individual. I have someone to talk to, someone who understands me and supports me. When I need assistance, she is one of the first people I turn to. Having a coach with Fair Futures has helped me academically because she helps me connect the dots on where/who I am supposed to go to.

COVID-19 has not affected me as much because I have support from my coach. I suffer from Anxiety and Depression, so my coach speaks to me once/twice a week, as oppose to twice a month. This has been helpful to me because during this pandemic, I would be more prone to having an increase of my symptoms. Instead, due to the increase of support from my coach, my anxiety and depression has been decreased.

If I no longer had a coach, I would lose the support that I have, and it is critical for me to have this continuous support. In few months, I will be aging out of foster care; and my fair futures coach will be the only agency connection I would have left.

Make the ask –

To support youth like me, is it possible for the City Council to work with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget?

Renana Fox

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

5/21/20

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Renana Fox, and I work as a drama teacher at a public elementary school because of the education I received at New York University in Educational Theatre.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Renana Fox

**Testimony of Rhonda Jackson
Member, Family Homelessness Coalition**

**To the New York City Council
Subcommittee on Capital Budget**

**Hearing on the FY Executive 2021 Budget
May 21st, 2020**

Dear New York City Council Members:

My name is Rhonda Jackson, I am a Brooklyn resident and a member of the Family Homeless Coalition (FHC), a diverse group of advocates, shelter and service providers, and affordable housing developers, has worked to combat family homelessness since before the current public health and economic crisis hit our city.

There is a more than necessary need for funds to be allocated to nonprofits to assist frontline service workers dedicated to serving our disadvantaged families and children. Homeless families are already last in line for services. However; this crisis has precipitated a war in our shelters!

I write to respectfully request the City of New York continue supporting nonprofit housing and service providers, like many of the members of FHC, so they will be able to expand and continue their work in in response to the Covid-19 crisis and prevent any increase in homelessness.

I am also respectfully requesting that [the budget priorities shared by the FHC](#) be included in the upcoming City budget so that, together we can work towards the critically important goals of:

- Investing in sustainable homeless prevention strategies,
- Improving family shelter conditions and ensuring that technology is in place for remote learning,
- Expediting the placement of homeless families into permanent affordable housing.

Additionally, our frontline workers that are serving homeless families daily must be supplied with the necessary personal protective equipment for safety in their work.

In closing, thank you for this opportunity to address this urgent need in our community and our beloved New York City.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Jackson

Good Morning City Council Members:

My name is Bob Monahan and I am President of the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council in Queens. This year, the GRYC celebrates its 40th Anniversary and my planned retirement in November. Maybe!!

Years ago, in 1972, there was a Fram Oil Filter commercial on TV that said, "You can pay me now, or, pay me later". Almost 50 years later, that is my question for you. Do we put money into essential service for youth and families now, or additional funds into the Criminal Justice and Juvenile Justice Systems, later? I have been in the kid business for over 40 years and have visited Youth Facilities throughout the State during that tenure. They are very costly and not the solution. Prevention is the solution to fewer young people getting involved in the Justice System.

NO Summer Youth Employment Program, NO Day Camps for COMPASS, SONYC or Beacons, will be the tip of the iceberg for the catastrophic, long term effects of not having high quality, robust services for kids and families in need. So here's the ticket:

- **If the DOE and DYCD currently conduct Regional Enrichment Centers utilizing some of my staff and budget, why couldn't Day Camps with 100 to 150 campers work by using SYEP workers to support these efforts in vacant school buildings, especially those connected to Public Park space? Same model, 10 classrooms with 12 children in a safe and enriching environment.**

If CBO's lose their entire Full-Time Core Staff for the summer months, putting all of them on Unemployment, who will be left to coordinate with families and Principal's for the Fall Afterschool Program start-up and other vital services needed in the summer?

Think for one second of your favorite small Community Based Organization and the work that they do in your District. Now say good bye to that agency and all of their passionate and dedicated staff, because a 48% cut to DYCD will shutter their doors, in many cases, forever. You can pay me now, or, pay the piper, later. Allow us to continue to do what we do best, serve families in need of our service and adequately prepare for the NEW future of Youth Services and Education in NYC. Please trust this old man, it will be worth every dollar invested and every effort made. Please be safe and well.

Bob Monahan
President
The Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, Inc.
59-03 Summerfield Street
Ridgewood, NY 11385
718-366-1395



Rima Fand
Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 21, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Rima Fand and I work for ArtsConnection as a teaching artist in various public schools in NYC.

To address the educational challenges for the 21st century, ArtsConnection's research-based arts programs create socially just learning environments. These programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. ArtsConnection's partnerships include and strengthen the diverse voices of New York City's children and youth, cultivating their arts and academic skills for success in a changing world.

We, the teaching artists of ArtsConnection, are currently engaged in creating online curriculum to continue to support NYC public school students and classroom teachers in arts-based learning. Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Rima Fand

My name is Rita Finkel and I am the Co-President of The Armory Foundation.

To some, The Armory, in Washington Heights, is the home of the National Track & Field Hall of Fame, and the Fastest Track in the World. To others, more importantly, The Armory is where magic happens. Occasionally on the track, and often in the classroom.

Our mission is “Keeping Kids on Track”

WHAT: Track & Field accommodates all body types and temperaments, and running is not only the basis of many sports, but is also a sport many can do for the rest of their lives with only a pair of sneakers. Track & field also opens doors for non-runners, those who prefer the high jump, long jump or pole vault, and those who would rather throw the shot put or weight throw. Through it we are able to touch so many lives in a meaningful way from among the more than 200,000 visits each year to The Armory.

WHO: Thousands of NYC high school track athletes call The Armory home for both training and competition. For the past 27 years, on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon from mid November through the end of March, we will have up to 1500 athletes that come to train with their coaches and teams from over 80 NYC public, independent and parochial schools. More than 100 track meets happen during these months, with some of our larger high school meets involving up to 6000 athletes.

COMMUNITY: In 2017 we piloted Little Feet, a no-cost program that welcomed over 200 elementary school children from Washington Heights, Inwood and Harlem to run, jump, throw and giggle, twice a week from October through the middle of May. In 2018 it continued and expanded to now include children in grades 2 through 5. In addition to the sport programming, we punctuated the year with some “special days”. One of those days was Real Heroes Day. So often children meet the people we would consider Real Heroes (firefighters, police officers, EMTs) in situations that are scary. We decided to invite our local real heroes in to interact with our children in a safe and fun setting and this is what happened:

(please copy and paste this link into your browser)

<https://vimeo.com/271302689>

In addition to Little Feet, we have a long running program for middle school children. The CityTrack program has been offered at The Armory for 20 years, imparting the joy of moving and promoting healthy habits for children in grades 6-8. Both CityTrack and Little Feet are offered at no cost to all the families of our participants. With more than 400 children registered this year, most sessions drew hundreds of children who were all closely coached by dozens of our coaches. For the last 7 years we wrapped up our year of Little Feet and CityTrack with the Uptown Games, Uptown Games (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://vimeo.com/273740397>

During the time of quarantine, we have been running this program four times a week live online with world class athletes as guest coaches: Olympians, World Record Holders, top high school and college athletes all have helped make CityTrack & Little Feet a fun and exciting workout. Recently, District 6 agreed to invite every District 6 student to participate.

ARMORY COLLEGE PREP: So you do not get the idea that all we do is fun and games - we also work with our track & field athletes to help them gain access to great high schools and four-year colleges, with the funding to make a college degree a reality. Armory College Prep is a dynamic after-school program that puts students in grades 5-12 on track for lifelong success by helping them to and through college. College choice exploration, test prep, college visits, personal statement creation, financial aid counseling, application and testing fees are all covered by our sponsors of Armory College Prep. For the last four years 100% of our seniors were admitted to 4-year colleges. Williams, Amherst, Cornell, Haverford, and Dickenson are just a few of the colleges attended by the students of Armory College Prep. Armory College Prep (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://vimeo.com/306452431>

During the past two months, beginning on March 16th, 2020, we have been working with all of our students remotely. The pandemic has affected our families disproportionately, and we are working to be sure we are supporting them in meaningful ways. One example is when the financial aid awards from their prospective colleges were made for this year's class of seniors, their families' finances were in one place, now, for many, their parents have lost their jobs, or have seen a reduction in their incomes. We are calling the colleges to advocate for our students, and we remain hopeful our interventions will create the intended outcomes.

MODEL PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: In the 1980's The Armory was a homeless shelter. 1000 homeless men lived on the space that is currently the track. The film, The Saint of Fort Washington, with Matt Dillon and Danny Glover was filmed at The Armory. A few years ago, I was touring The Armory with a client and when I looked over tears were streaming down her face - I paused and asked if she was OK - she looked at me and said 'I was on the crew that filmed the Saint of Fort Washington and cannot believe the transformation'.

Today The Armory is a representation of a public/private partnership that has had the great privilege to be part of the development of many of the world's top track & field athletes. We call our track "the Fastest Track in the World" because more records have been set on this track than any other indoor facility on the planet. You may recognize some of these faces: Elite Athletes (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://vimeo.com/288732621>

For the past two summers, like much of New York, we were heartbroken at the plight of the migrant children who were being separated from their families at the southern border and relocated around the country. We learned that hundreds of children were right here in Manhattan.

We offered to show the children a day of fun and track & field at The Armory, and our invitation was accepted, both years so long as we did not alert the press or take any photos. To date, we have welcomed close to 1000 children who were separated from their families or were unaccompanied minors.

We did our best to provide them with a break from their day to day. While we could not take photos, the Care Center, who has custody of the children, did and put this short video together after the first Run Love Day. (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://business.facebook.com/CayugaCenters/videos/311006539476023/>

One of the reasons The Armory is able to provide our ongoing programming is because of the funding received through the Sports Training and Role-Models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI)

I want to be sure to thank the City Council for their tremendous support of STARS CGI for the past 6 years and to ask for your continued support – by ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY2021 budget.

The last few months have been a time of upheaval for our planet, and especially for the young woman and gender non-conforming youth of color we serve. As a collective, we have shared our talented teams, our programming, and ideas to create the STARS Summer Syllabus- to fill the gaping hole of summer youth programming.

We would like to stress to the Council that our track record (forgive me!) of excellent, high impact programming will continue and we ask the Council to help make that possible.

We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our City Council funding of \$1,450,000 in FY21.

On behalf of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color across New York City, **thank you in advance for your continued support.** We look forward to our work together ensuring the social-emotional wellbeing of our communities.

Please come visit, as soon as the City and State allow The Armory to reopen! We have more than 100 track meets per season showcasing the entire range of track & field from the youngest runners who will join us for the Uptown Games to the Olympians who compete at the NYRR Millrose Games. Our educational programs run year-round and we also have a list of wonderful special events outside track season.

Many thanks for your attention!

May 22, 2020

Dear Finance Committee,

We are all aware New York City is facing unprecedented challenges and funding everything that makes New York City great will be a difficult hurdle. We also know that our parks and green spaces will never be valued more and hold such an important position to the health of the community.

I respectfully request that greatest consideration and thought be used when deciding on funding for our amazing New York City park system. We can not have healthy communities without safe, clean and welcoming parks for all. Our parks will see a major increase in usage due to Covid-19 and this is not the time to cut back on that funding. More than anything, Covid-19 has demonstrated the need to keep our parks a place all New Yorkers can go to escape the restrictions required by the virus. Personally, I cannot imagine how I would have gotten thru the last few weeks without the beautiful Hunters Point South Park just a few blocks away.

Please continue to fund our parks at the levels reached last year and support the Play Fair campaign. I look forward to many more years enjoying the splendor of our City Parks and with your funding they will remain the happy place for all New Yorkers and everyone else that ventures into its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Rob Basch

President – Hunters Point Parks Conservancy

**New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony Submitted by Student Leadership Network
May 21, 2020**

Good morning. My name is Robert Robinson, and I am the Senior Managing Director of CollegeBound Initiative (CBI) at Student Leadership Network (SL Network). As a Brooklyn native and proud NYC public school alumnus, I began my career as the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions at my alma mater, New York University (NYU). I worked with their Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) to increase enrollment for students from underserved communities. Following my time at NYU, I joined CBI as a Director of College Counseling (DCC) at Middle College High School at Medgar Evers College. I also served as a DCC at Juan Morel Campos Secondary School before joining SL Network's central office team in 2008. On behalf of SL Network, thank you to Chair Daniel Dromm and all the members of the Finance Committee for this opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget.

SL Network operates two programs in NYC that support young people from diverse underserved communities to access educational opportunities that prepare them to lead successful lives: The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), a high-performing network of all-girls' traditional district public schools, and CollegeBound Initiative (CBI), a comprehensive college access, persistence, and success program for young people of any gender. Today, more than 16,000 students in 31 NYC public schools are impacted by CBI, which places full-time Directors of College Counselors (DCC) in schools to support *all* students with college selection, test preparation, college and financial aid applications, scholarship resources, , essays, interviews, college tours, and so much more. Since 2001, CBI has helped nearly 18,000 students enroll in college. The cumulative college enrollment rate for students who graduate from a CBI partner school is a stunning 89%, with 74% enrolling in four-year colleges. This is well above the City's average college enrollment rate of 62% for the graduating class of 2018.

In this uncertain and unprecedented time, SL Network remains committed to ensuring that no student falls through the cracks or is left behind from securing a successful future. Our DCCs and other program team members are continuing to deliver college access and student support services via phone and video calls to students and their families across our 31 partner school communities. Throughout the remainder of the COVID-19 crisis, we will continue to meet our students' most urgent needs through online college counseling and other virtual programming; liaising between students and college admissions offices for acceptance, financial aid, and enrollment conversations; and preparing juniors to complete the necessary steps to be ready to apply to college in the fall. We are hopeful that we will be able to resume CBI in-person for the 2020-2021 school year but are prepared to continue to maintain the high level of support and outcomes for which CBI is known should schools remained closed. Our charge is even more urgent now that there is so much uncertainty facing our students and their families, who are at the epicenter and disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The critical support provided by CBI ensures that students from underserved communities earn college degrees leading to better career and economic prospects for themselves, their families, and their communities. Additionally, CBI is one of the NYC Department of Education's College Access for All vendors, and funding provided by this initiative and Council support makes possible our continued partnership with schools citywide. The DOE's commitment to enabling public schools to partner with CBI underscores its critical role in addressing the ever-growing college enrollment and completion gaps between students from NYC's underserved communities and their more affluent peers. Without the support of longstanding partners in the New York City Council and the DOE, SL Network's amplified reach and continued success would be virtually impossible. We sincerely appreciate the New York City Council's investment in SL Network's CollegeBound Initiative and look forward to continuing to partner with both the New York City Council and the DOE to ensure that *all* students have the resources that will propel them to achieve their dreams. On behalf of the students we impact, thank you for your consideration of this testimony and longstanding support of our students.

Goddard Riverside

INVESTING IN PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

Testimony of Executive Director Roderick L. Jones on the City Budget May 22, 2020

Dear Council Members:

As the executive director of Goddard Riverside, an organization serving more than 20,000 New Yorkers a year, I'm asking you to stand by the city's most vulnerable residents in their hour of need.

Goddard's 27 programs serve currently and formerly homeless people, those living with mental illness, disadvantaged youth, older adults and low-income families. These populations are already being hit hard by COVID-19 and its social impacts. We should not ask them to bear the brunt of the economic downturn as well.

When the pandemic struck, Goddard responded. Our kitchen staff began turning out meals to enable some 600 medically vulnerable residents of our buildings to shelter at home. That number quickly grew to include Senior Center members in our neighborhood. Employees from our youth programs helped deliver the meals. Our Lincoln Square center teamed up with private donors to distribute food to local residents. We also began working to coordinate relief with our neighboring NYCHA buildings. This week our staff climbed staircases to distribute hand sanitizer and face masks in the 36 buildings of NYCHA's Westside Urban Renewal Brownstones.

Phones became a lifeline as our programs checked in on their participants regularly. "I have received calls from the teachers, the social worker and the administration," wrote one parent of an Early Learning student. "Not only is my son's welfare taken into account, but also mine. There are no words that will ever say how much this means to me and my family."

As PAUSE continued, our programs for young people began meeting online. One parent wrote to us in gratitude when we launched After School sessions on Zoom. She said her daughter missed her peers badly and was thrilled to engage with them for the first time, since her school had only sent emails.

Having weathered the first phase of this crisis, Goddard is moving into phase two—offering direct financial aid to families facing mounting bills. We hope to help members of our community stave off the debts that can force people into homelessness and impact their future forever.

Goddard is knit into the fabric of our community. We understand how to support vulnerable people through tough times. Now, as the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression bears down on us, we feel keenly that our community needs us. But we must have the city's support to keep working.

Even before disaster struck, Upper West Siders were concerned about an apparent uptick in street crimes by young people. Residents were gathering to press local lawmakers, police and organizations like us for solutions. It was our belief then—and it is our belief now—that youth programs in our neighborhoods need more funding, not less.

Young people have now been in lockdown for months. Summer is here, and without programs like Summer Camp and the Summer Youth Employment Program, they may have no structure or access to positive activities. Those who face problems at home may have no mentors to turn to. They will be vulnerable to other, less positive forces in their lives.

Our own Associate Deputy Executive Director for Youth & Aging, Steven Portericker, came up through the Summer Youth Employment Program. He worked with younger children at a local nonprofit. He recalls how validating it was at age 14 and 15 to have a job with impact. "It was great to feel like my presence mattered,"

he recalls. "I felt proud of myself and confident. I realized what it means to get a paycheck, and it put less pressure on my mom to give me money for school clothes and things."

Every summer, we send young people into SYEP. Every summer, we hire them to work in our programs. Similarly, every summer we welcome many repeat campers back to our summer camps. They return to counselors they know and friends they've made in summers past. "They like the consistency," says Nadine Ware Evans, director of our Beacon program. "They build relationships." Now this consistency will be gone, along with the enriching activities our camps offer.

Taking the summer programs online is undoubtedly a challenge, but one can look to examples like our own Learning to Work program for inspiration. Learning to Work is embedded at West Side High, a transfer school. It supports students who need a little extra help and a different approach to finish school. It also arranges paid internships to help them build their resumes.

Learning to Work has gone online with gusto. One of the units it's offering is modeled on the reality TV show Shark Tank. Participants attend Zoom meetings to learn about entrepreneurship. Then they design a product, write a pitch for it, and make a presentation to their peers and a panel of judges. Our Learning to Work staff have also taught students budgeting, how to create a resume and promotional flyers, and how to research careers. They've offered extracurricular activities including fitness classes, mindfulness, and sign language instruction.

If restrictions on gatherings permit, later this summer we can design activities that keep our young people safe while still offering support and structure. We can play a key role in teaching them how to observe social distancing.

Even before COVID-19, community-based organizations like us were teetering on the edge due to city and state contracts that fail to cover the true costs of delivering services. Cuts to our existing contracts would force us to lay off staff, further intensifying the economic crisis. Meanwhile, the people we serve would face a greater threat of sliding into deep poverty.

In times like these, social services are often the first to get cut. But studies have shown time and again that austerity not only hurts the people at the bottom; it makes economic downturns longer and more severe. While understanding that the budget picture is extremely challenging, I ask you not to put the burden of this downturn on the backs of the poorest New Yorkers.

Our mayor has often spoken movingly about two New Yorks: one rich and one poor. We fear this crisis will not only widen that gap but set low-income families back for years to come. With your help, we can blunt this downturn and invest in creating the kind of fair and just society we all want to see.

Thank you for your time, and for your public service.

Roderick L. Jones, Ed.D
Executive Director
Goddard Riverside
593 Columbus Ave.
New York, NY 10024



**Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2021
Committee on Finance New York City Council
Joint Testimony of
Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374
Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321
May 21, 2020**

Chairman Daniel Dromm, speaker Corey Johnson and fellow committee members, thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify on behalf of all the union members of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. We are united in our request that the City Council save our libraries.

On July 1, 2019, the City Council and Mayor provided the city's library systems with an exceptional budget. These funds allowed the library systems to continue all the excellent library services your constituents expect from us, and to begin to meet the systems' expanding needs. Through this wide variety of library services and programs, our members welcomed all who entered our branches. We continued to offer toddler storytime, free computers and wifi, tablets, books, newspapers, magazine, CDs, DVDs, after school programs, programs to entertain and educate, adult learning programs, computer classes, and so much more. We ensured that the public and staff had clean and safe spaces to congregate.

On March 4, 2020, my fellow presidents and I extolled the hard work of our members, as always. We also talked about the pressures they were experiencing because funding levels, though exceptional, were not enough.

In the intervening two weeks, the reports of this novel coronavirus were spreading and creating anxiety and confusion. Few people in this City understood what would befall us and no one could fully appreciate the impact this virus would have.

Following the Mayor's lead and to the immense relief of all library staff, the library systems' physical locations shut down. That first week, we were able to catch our breath and assess the physical and mental health of the staff. The following week, we also began strategizing on how to provide library services virtually. Immediately after that we began moving our programs online, expanding our digital materials, and increasing wifi accessibility.

Now in our ninth week of this shut down, library staff have gotten into a groove of keeping our libraries operating and meeting our online demands. The four unions are working with the three library systems to ensure our patrons get as many services as we can safely provide. We are maintaining our physical sense of community with patrons, virtually. We are still doing toddler time and getting thousands of attendees. We are partnering with authors, musicians, and artists to bring their work to our customers. We are purchasing and cataloging more digital items. We are expanding our documentary programs as Queens Memory, Brooklyn's Our Streets, Our Stories that document, make available, and preserve our terrifying experience with this pandemic. We are expanding our wifi services, and of course, continuing the ever-popular, Drag Queen Story Hour.

As the City opens up, libraries will be there too, ready to help our city and our fellow New Yorkers on the road to recovery. Our patrons need and want our services. They miss us as much as we miss them. In opening up, we will need resources to ensure that our custodians and maintainers have the necessary personal protective equipment and cleaning materials to give everyone who enters our libraries the knowledge that their space is clean. We need the resources to protect our patrons and public service staff from this virus. We need you to make sure library funding is secure so we can safely and effectively be there for our communities.

When we are finally protected from this virus and all of our branches are open, we will be physically present in every New York City neighborhood and virtually all over the world. That physical presence will be more important than ever. We will not only restore our physical presence but will continue offering our newly expanded digital services. Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers will be unemployed and we will be there for them. We will be the only free space in every neighborhood where everyone can access computers, free wifi, research materials, books, take educational and enriching programs, and learn how to read and write English. We will be one of the many city services that will bridge the physical, mental, educational, and digital divide. We will be a stabilizing force in every neighborhood. We know that these are challenging times, but it is our hope to secure the financial support we need from the City Council and Mayor so that we can be an effective partner in our city's recovery.

We want to dedicate our testimony to the Local 374, 1321, 1482, and 1930 members who passed away or who have lost family members, friends and loved ones to this disease.

Ronaldo Barber, President, Brooklyn Library Guild, Local 1482
Val Colon, President, New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
John Hyslop, President, Queens Library Guild, Local 1321
Leonard Paul, President, Quasi Public Employees, Local 374

May 21, 2020

We want to thank you for everything you are doing to support the people of the City of New York during this incredibly difficult period. This crisis has done unprecedented damage to the lives of many New Yorkers as well as the City's economic outlook and we acknowledge the many sacrifices that all New Yorkers have made and will continue to make as the crisis continues to unfold.

As we face the evolving effects of the COVID-19 crisis on our City and our sector, The Public Theater, in concert with our Board of Trustees have made several painful but necessary decisions resulting in the following outcomes. In summary:

- We have cancelled all in person programming through August 31, 2020 including Free Shakespeare in the Park (7 full theatrical productions, humanities programming, and hundreds of Joe's Pub performances). This is the first summer since the Delacorte first opened in 1962 that there will be no in-person Free Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte.
- For our fiscal year ending on August 31, 2020, we are projecting a \$10 to \$20M contributed revenue shortfall as a result of lost ticket revenue and decrease in contributed revenue (our annual budget is \$60M).
- As a result of our inability to produce in person programming, thousands of artists, technicians, ushers and other part time workers who are regularly employed by The Public will face unemployment.
- As a result of the projected revenue shortfall, board and management jointly decided and announced the decision to furlough 160 employees (roughly 70% of our full-time staff) beginning May 4, 2020. Days before the planned furlough was to go into effect, we learned that we had received a PPP loan which will allow us to retain our full-time staff through June 28, 2020. We will reassess our staffing plan in mid-June but we expect without continued government support or significant changes to the status of the City's ability to reopen that many of those furloughs and salary reductions for the remaining staff will go into effect at the end of the PPP loan period.

We are deeply concerned about the road ahead for the performing arts. As one of the first sectors to be closed down we expect we will be among the last to reopen. The heart of our job is bringing a group of strangers together and telling them stories that make them feel less alone, less isolated individuals, and more part of a larger community. That's our mission. We believe intervention at all levels of government will be required to ensure performing arts organizations in New York City can survive this crisis for what could be many months beyond the point when strict social distancing measures are no longer required. The CARES Act and its many relief programs were important but they will not provide the life raft that is needed to see performing arts organizations safely to shore.

As we move forward, our primary areas of focus will be growing our digital content, supporting our community partners, and launching a resiliency campaign to support artists, staff, and operations, and continuity in maintenance of our theaters and other spaces. We commend the Department of Cultural Affairs for its efforts to make sure that New Yorkers still have access to culture during this time.

We are continuing our support of our partner communities and organizations (including The Fortune Society, DreamYard, the Military Resilience Project, and the Hunts Point Alliance for Children) with virtual community gatherings, newsletters, and any other touchpoints we can think of to help us stay connected and to provide our community an ongoing artistic home.



We are also focused on producing new theatrical offerings that speak to the most important issues of the day. Our first new play by Richard Nelson which premiered on April 29 was free and available to the public and has been streamed over 60,000 times by households in 40 states and 17 countries – the majority of viewers tuning in from right here in New York City. We are in discussion with several nonprofit partners about offering more digital programming over the course of the summer and will simultaneously continue to monitor our collective situation to determine the soonest date we can, medically and ethically, resume our core business of bringing crowds of people together.

We are moving forward with our Gala on June 1st as a virtual event which will be free for the general public to livestream from their homes. The Gala will be hosted by Jesse Tyler Ferguson and will feature performances by Public Theater artists including Antonio Banderas, Sandra Oh, Anne Hathaway, Audra McDonald, Oscar Isaac, and Sting.

Your patience and understanding as we have navigated this very difficult period in the history of The Public is appreciated. We know the arts have an important role to play throughout this crisis and we will work with all our might to continue serving our communities, to advocate for targeted relief for performing arts organizations, and to ensure we survive and use our artform to help the City process and grieve this unspeakable tragedy that has affected so many.

Submitted by:
Rosalind Barbour
212-539-8691
rbarbour@publictheater.org



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 18, 2020

As New York City recovers from the COVID-19 crisis over the coming months and years, the arts and culture community will play a crucial role in the recovery of schools and communities. In allocating cuts and resources, the City Council must put their faith in the arts to help process trauma, restore joy, support physical fitness, and build communities.

The New York City Arts in Education Roundtable is a service organization whose core purpose is to elevate, enhance, and sustain the work of the arts education community in New York City's schools and beyond. We are a community of organizations and educators that shares resources, provides professional development, and advocates for the needs of our members and the communities they serve. Our work lies at the intersection of culture, education, and community and occurs in over 1,290 public schools, in every neighborhood, and in all five boroughs.

Arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

Our request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city.

As you go about your duties, please remember that #ARTSareEssential and that arts experiences #buildCOMMUNITIES. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Sobha Kavanakudiyil, Board Co-Chair
Jennifer DiBella, Board Co-Chair
Kimberly Olsen, Managing Director
Rachel Watts, Board Member & Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee
David King, Board Member & Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee
NYC Arts in Education Roundtable

Testimony

Dear City Council Members and Chair

Despite my own personal struggles due to COVID19, I am using my own time here asking for more funding for NYC Park's Operation and Maintenance. Every year, park volunteers ask our city for more funding and it hasn't happened till last year when New Yorkers For Park launched their Play Fair for Parks campaign. Sadly, now even this funding from last year may be cut from this fiscal year budget.

During good and bad times, our parks are here for us but we don't Fund our parks during good or bad economic times. As a park volunteer, I am heartbroken with how our parks are not funded to care for the trees and the grass much less regular maintenance including trash pickups and cleanups.

And now more people are using our Pelham Parkway yet we don't have the adequate funding for parks maintenance and parks enforcement. And yes we need parks enforcement because there is lots of needed maintenance and operations since there is no parks enforcement to teach parkgoers on following the parks rules and enforcing it

All I can say that I see no future for our planet when we as a city cant care for our own parks and my heart breaks when I witnessed a beautiful asset of the community perish away slowly because our city only funds parks barely ½ of 1 percent of it city budget to parks operations and maintenance.

I don't know why the city keeps building and overdeveloping our parks into concrete amusement spots instead of diverting capital money into the parks maintenance and operations.

As I stated I see no future for our planet well being when our city cant care for our own green spaces . Playgrounds, basketballs courts, pools ate closed in our parks but our trees and our green grass and our nature are with us all the time when we need them even doting this pandemic. When will we ever be there for them and protect and preserve them for the future generations?

Thank you

Roxanne Delgado

Friends of Pelham Parkway

Arts funding

Hello,

It is my urgent duty to press you to fully support maximum arts funding for our NYC schools. The arts offer our children an escape from the mundane, a voice to their expression, a freedom beyond boundaries. It engages the brain, heightens sensitivities, builds communities and offers pathways to adventure. Music, Art, Theater-they are as important to students as Carnegie Hall, the MOMA, and Broadway are to NYC.

All students are not created equal, and creative arts outlets are an opportunity for gifted non-academic students to excel.

Do not take away these opportunities from NYC's students.

Please.

Respectfully yours,

Roy Weinberger

--

Roy Weinberger

646 327-3786

MusicalTeachingArtist@gmail.com

I'm a voting constituent in District 10, I'm a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC, and I want to urge the City Council to stand for a just budget—a budget that builds the resilience of our communities, not on abusively policing them.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails—nearly \$6 billion—virtually untouched.

So many people I know are struggling in these times. Many have lost their jobs (and thus their healthcare coverage), are scared to lose housing they can no longer afford, and are losing loved ones. I personally lost my mother several weeks ago to COVID-19, and I'm angry about it. Angry at our failure to adequately respond to this virus in time to protect her from contracting it; angry at our healthcare system's inability to save my mother from the havoc the virus wreaked on her body. My anger wants a place to go, whether it be at people agitating to open the economy, or my neighbors failing to wear masks or social distance in the parks or streets around me.

Yet nothing makes me angrier than seeing that the vast majority of people accosted by police “enforcing social distancing” are Black New Yorkers. Nothing makes me angrier than my (and white people who look like me's) anger being used to give license to the police to continue to treat Black and brown New Yorkers with aggression and violence. To ignore the clear and ample evidence of this racist violence and abuse by continuing to invest billions of dollars in the NYPD, *more than homeless services, DOH, housing, youth and community programs combined* is unconscionable.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers, even as the NYPD continues to overpolice and brutalize these same communities.

Aggressive policing does not make us safer. What will make us safer is housing, health care, jobs and education. These are the things I and those around me are scared of losing; these are the things I and those around me need to survive this pandemic. I am committed to fighting for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. I want my city representatives to do the same, and I will only vote for representatives who are willing to fight to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*.



Basement Apartment
Conversion Pilot Program
2685 Pitkin Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11208-1203

T 347 713 4911
eny-basement@cypresshills.org

cypresshills.org

**New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing – Finance Committee
Testimony by Ryan Chavez, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
May 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairperson Dromm and members of the committee. Thank you for convening this important hearing regarding the executive budget at this critical moment in our city's history.

My name is Ryan Chavez and I am Program Director for the Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program (BACPP) at Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. Founded in 1983, Cypress Hills LDC is dedicated to building a strong and equitable East New York, centered on educational and economic success, the creation and preservation of affordable housing, and the development of local leadership.

Since March 2019, Cypress Hills LDC has been leading the BACPP in East New York, an HPD-administered pilot to convert 40 basements units into safe, legal, and rent-restricted units. This pilot program promises to provide urgently needed financial stability to East New York homeowners while at the same time providing much needed affordable housing for this low-income community.

However, the FY2021 Executive Budget proposes a cut of \$1.09 million to the BACPP, leaving only \$91,580 to continue the program, counsel homeowners, package loans, and relocate tenants. There is no funding for the program allocated for after FY2021. This proposed cut all but ensures that an abrupt end to this pilot.

I am testifying today to urge this committee and the City Council to restore the \$1.09 million in FY2021 funding for this pilot.

The BACPP was a major victory for the housing movement in New York City, emerging from over a decade of advocacy by many non-profit organizations who founded the Basement Apartments Safe for Everyone (BASE) campaign in 2008. The first year of the pilot program have been successful:

- Nearly 900 homeowners have expressed interest in the program
- Over 320 homeowners have submitted eligibility paperwork
- 239 homeowners have had properties pre-screened, with more in the pipeline
- Over 100 homeowners have completed a home assessment, with more in the pipeline
- 9 homeowners have been approved to apply for the program, with more in the pipeline

Importantly, this pilot program was a promise made to the East New York community during the rezoning process four years ago.

East New York was the epicenter of the last foreclosure crisis. Before the pandemic, the neighborhood was already facing dramatic displacement pressures speculative real estate forces. The BACPP is a unique program that serves both landlords and tenants. It promises to stave off the crisis of foreclosure while providing critically needed affordable housing — now needed more than ever.

There is no more critical moment for a program like the BACPP than now. This is a program that brings financial relief to homeowners by ensuring reliable rental income, decreasing the likelihood of mortgage default and foreclosure. And it makes homes safer, and therefore healthier. COVID-19 is exposing the desperate need for safe spaces for vulnerable populations who need to socially distance. It's now more important than ever to help modernize and bring up to code informal basement apartment units, where living conditions may put people at risk of disease transmission.

Basement units are among the most affordable in the housing stock; however, if not formalized, tenants do not have the protections afforded other renters during the COVID-19 crisis and are vulnerable to eviction by the NYC Department of Buildings. With the pandemic hitting homeless shelters at extremely high levels, the city should be doing everything possible to safeguard existing basement units and create more. Indeed, with affordable housing construction considered 'essential', the creation of affordable basement units should be considered equally essential.

Indeed, the BACPP could lay the foundation for a citywide program, which, as the city heads into a bleak economic landscape, could potentially bring similar financial relief to homeowners in other vulnerable communities, while bringing significant numbers of affordable rental units into the formal housing market. In February of this year, the Mayor announced a citywide basement legalization program. We were thrilled by the announcement as it signaled that the city was serious about affordable housing development that put money directly into the pockets of small landlords. With an economic catastrophe unfolding, now is the time to invest in affordable housing programs like basement legalization. A one-time stimulus check from the

federal government is one thing. But providing additional rental income to a small homeowner is a monthly stimulus that keeps on giving, month after month, year after year. This is needed now more than ever.

By cutting the BACPP, the city will squander an opportunity to develop the best practices to make this affordable housing innovation a reality.

The coronavirus crisis has exposed and exacerbated the profound inequalities that define life in this city. Preliminary data released by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene show that the victims of this pandemic are disproportionately Latino and black. Communities like East New York — those that were already struggling with high rates of poverty, housing insecurity and overcrowding, and public health challenges — have been hardest hit by the pandemic. And they will be hardest hit by the economic nightmare that is unfolding now.

The residents Brooklyn Community District 5 (CD 5) are 95% people of color. Our residents have a poverty rate of 30%, compared to twenty percent citywide. The rate of childhood asthma emergency department visits is 315 per 10,000 children, compared to 223 citywide, indicating preexisting vulnerability to respiratory issues in the community. Moreover, the rate of avoidable hospitalizations among adults in East New York is 2,245 per 100,000 adults, more than double the citywide rate of 1,033, suggesting that underlying health conditions go untreated due to lack of quality primary care. All of these indicators reveal a community disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of this pandemic.

Housing overcrowding lends also itself to higher rates of transmission. In CD 5, the share of rental units that are overcrowded is 16.6%, compared to 10.6% citywide. This underscores the critical need to expand – not cut – affordable rental housing development in a neighborhood like East New York.

At this pivotal juncture in our city's history, in order to ensure that longstanding injustices be remedied, not aggravated, we should be preserving critical programs like BACPP, which will do so much to address financial stability, affordable housing, and public health in a hard-hit community like East New York.

I thank you again for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions regarding this testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me at ryanc@cypresshills.org.

Thank you and be safe.

Good afternoon Council Members and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ryan Hickey and I'm the Project Director at the Cooper Square Community Land Trust (CLT), the city's oldest functioning CLT. Founded out of the struggle against Robert Moses and the city's urban renewal plans, the Cooper Square CLT ensures the permanent affordability of over 320 residential units and 24 commercial spaces. On average, our affordability levels hover around 30% of area median income – a near-impossible feat for market-based, for-profit housing.

The Cooper Square CLT strongly urges the City Council to renew FY21 discretionary funding support for the CLT initiative, which provides crucial support to emerging CLTs in all five boroughs. Now more than ever, New York City must invest in sustainable, community-led solutions like CLTs in order to stabilize housing, strengthen neighborhoods, and ensure a just recovery post-COVID-19. I have attached a FY2021 one-pager and mid-year FY2020 progress report about the CLT initiative.

Emerging CLTs are taking root to address the city's worsening housing crisis by developing and preserving permanently affordable housing for people with low and extremely low incomes. Put simply, our success means fewer people entering the shelter system, sleeping on the street, or in overcrowded housing. Long before this crisis we've known our shelter system was bursting at the seams while our housing plans failed to reach households with the lowest incomes. CLTs are the piece of the housing puzzle that can meet these needs.

CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own and steward land, and are flexible models that allow for a variety of community needs, including housing. We are seeing the development and preservation of different types of housing, including mutual and multifamily housing, limited equity cooperatives, 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure and speculation, as well as community and cultural spaces, gardens, and other infrastructure.

We are grateful for the Council's discretionary funding support in FY20, which enabled the CLT initiative to make major strides over the past year. With the Council's support, our partners have engaged thousands of community members in education and organizing; developed CLT steering committees and founding boards; incorporated new CLTs and expanded existing ones; and have deepened partnerships with nonprofit developers and community stakeholders. **For Cooper Square, your support has meant the successful expansion of our land trust to include 36 more permanently affordable rental units – units forever kept out of the speculative market, and which will remain under community control. We have started a tenants' association and have begun a series of bilingual workshops, which will ultimately lead to tenants running and voting for representation on the Two Buildings Tenants United (TBTU) Board – the owning entity of their buildings – as well as the CLT Board.**

Renewed FY21 discretionary funding will support CLTs like ours as we acquire property, launch and expand operations, and engage community members in ongoing organizing and stewardship. Since the pandemic we, alongside the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, have been conducting near-weekly phone check-ins with tenants to identify our most at-risk households in order to ensure their health and safety while connecting them with any services they may need. This work is critical and needs your continued support.

History shows that CLTs are more resilient than market-based housing options and have been essential to past recovery efforts – from the 2008 financial crash¹ to Hurricane Maria and Irma in Puerto Rico². And as huge private equity firms like Blackstone wait in the wings to pick off distressed properties after COVID, NYC must be ahead of the curve and be proactive to stabilize NYC neighborhoods³. With your continued support, CLTs will be similarly crucial to recovery efforts in black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by COVID-19.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and please do not hesitate to contact me at coopersquareCLT@gmail.com.

**Ryan Hickey
Project Director
Cooper Square Community Land Trust**

¹ See Thaden, E. (2011). Stable Home Ownership in a Turbulent Economy: Delinquencies and Foreclosures Remain Low in Community Land Trusts. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper.

² See Algoed, L. & Hernández Torrales, M. (2019). The Land is Ours. Vulnerabilization and resistance in informal settlements in Puerto Rico: Lessons from the Caño Martín Peña Community Land Trust. *Radical Housing Journal* 1(1): 29-47.

³Gittelsohn, John, and Jack Sidders. "Loaded With Cash, Property Buyers Wait for Sellers to Crack." *Bloomberg.com*, Bloomberg, 19 May 2020, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-19/loaded-with-cash-real-estate-buyers-wait-for-sellers-to-crack.



TESTIMONY

Preliminary Budget Hearing:
“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:
Worker Cooperatives As An Economic Development Strategy”

Presented to

New York City Council, Committees on Finance and Subcommittee on the Capital Budget
Hon. Daniel Dromm, Chair
Hon. Vanessa Gibson, Chair
Thurs. May 21, 2020

Prepared By:

Saduf Syal, Coordinating Director
New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNoWC)

New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives

495 Flatbush Ave. Suite 2 Brooklyn NY 11225
Phone: (212) 390-8178

Good evening Speaker Johnson, Chairs Dromm and Gibson, and Council members and staff of the Committee. My name is Saduf Syal, and I am with the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (also known as NYC NoWC). I'm also here on behalf of the 13 nonprofit organizations of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) which as you know is funded with city council discretionary funds.

Over this past fiscal year, WCBDI received \$3.6 million in funding to support worker cooperative businesses and thousands of individuals across the five boroughs. We ask city council to further its support for WCBDI through FY21 in order for us to double down on the essential long term economic recovery work that will be needed to get our communities out of this crisis

- **WCBDI is an initiative that works to support businesses that are owned and controlled by women, immigrants and people of color coming from communities directly impacted by COVID 19 - and this work in this moment is essential.**
- **Over these past few months of this crisis, the WCBDI organizations have been working tirelessly to support distressed businesses in navigating this crisis, reaching over 2000 individuals and almost 350 businesses virtually during this time of need.** This support is crucial to ensuring that these good businesses are able to survive this crisis.
- Many of those we support have been excluded from federal relief and benefits and have struggled to access grants or emergency loan programs. We have helped and continue to help them in doing so.
- Worker cooperatives are good businesses that operate for the benefit of the workers and the community at large, They are a solution to issues of inequity, issues that have been further exposed and exacerbated during this crisis. During this time, worker coops are doing everything they can to weather the storm, prevent layoffs, and center their products and services on the needs of the broader community. For example, some are working to address food insecurities right now, and others are providing critical health and safety trainings during this pandemic online.
- As many of our worker cooperatives continue to struggle, they are also bracing for any responsible reopening and will continue to need the support of WCBDI. How, for example, can the many existing worker cooperatives for cleaning provide essential cleaning services in a reopened economy while protecting their worker-owners and customers effectively? WCBDI will be critical in supporting these cooperative businesses throughout this crisis and its recovery.
- **Finally, this initiative also works to save businesses and jobs by converting traditional businesses to worker-ownership:** Thousands of NYC small businesses are in danger of closing as a result of the pandemic and we have the wrap-around services, education and training, financing and expertise to assist in making worker-ownership a real possibility. The folx that are here with me today on this virtual panel will shed more light on these important aspects of WCBDI.

We ask City Council to further its support for WCBDI and worker coops as part of the essential long term economic recovery work that will be needed in the year to come.

Finally, NYC NOWC is a member of USBNYC, United for Small Business NYC, and we believe more support is needed for small businesses and immigrant-owned businesses in general - We support commercial rent cancellation during this time and long term stabilization as well as more funds for excluded workers.

We thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify. We hope that you will consider our budget priorities and recommendations during the budget negotiation process.



Safe Horizon is the nation's largest non-profit victims services organization and offers a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. We are increasingly using a lens of racial equity to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the public positions we hold. We see up-close everyday the ways COVID-19 has laid bare the inequities and inequalities that impact the communities society marginalizes the most. As an organization focused on the short and long-term impacts of trauma and violence, we are deeply worried for our neighbors and loved ones across New York City who continue to experience trauma in the home while also living through the collective trauma of COVID-19.

We recognize and understand the difficult budget choices the Administration and the City Council will have to make in the weeks and months ahead. As the City Council considers what will almost certainly be an austere budget for FY21, we urge you and your colleagues to reflect on the special vulnerability that victims of domestic and family violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and other interconnected forms of violence continue to face each and every day during this COVID-19 era.

We would like to offer a general overview of how Safe Horizon is operating during this pandemic and utilizing our FY20 City Council discretionary funding since the statewide PAUSE went into effect in March. We believe that this will demonstrate to the Council why these discretionary funds are critical now and will be just as critical in FY21 as we collectively pull our City back together and connect survivors, their families, and their communities to the supports they need and deserve to heal and recover.

Overview

Normally, Safe Horizon has close to 1,000 employees working in over 200 locations across New York City. These locations include courthouses, police precincts, Family Justice Centers, and other sites. Since the PAUSE went into effect, many Safe Horizon staff are now working remotely as their program sites have closed. For example, staff who normally sit in the city's five Family Courts are now helping their clients petition for orders of protection by telephone or other mediums. Advocates who normally sit in police precincts are reaching out via telephone to New Yorkers who file police reports related to domestic violence, assault, or other crimes. Similarly, our staff who normally sit in the Family Justice Centers are continuing to offer safety planning to their clients over the phone. While the workplace may have shifted from on-site locations to homes and apartments throughout the metropolitan region, our staff continue to offer a client-centered, trauma-informed response to victims of violence and abuse each day.

Some of our program sites have been deemed "essential" and are still operating, albeit at reduced capacity. All eight of our domestic violence shelters remain open and are providing safety and

sanctuary to individuals and families fleeing violence in the home. Our five Child Advocacy Centers also remain open and are providing a coordinated investigation and response to child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse. Finally, our Streetwork Project is continuing to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter and services. This includes our overnight shelter and our two drop-in centers, which continue to help young people with curbside services and assistance.

City Council Discretionary Funding

Council Initiative: *Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault* - \$748,000

Safe Horizon Program: *Child Advocacy Centers*

Contract Agency: *Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ)*

Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are at the forefront of the City's response to child abuse. By placing specially trained detectives, prosecutors, child protective staff, pediatricians, and Safe Horizon staff all in one child-friendly setting, we provide a safe and supportive setting for children who are disclosing sexual and/or severe physical abuse. This also allows us to facilitate a swift coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team (MDT) response. This City Council discretionary funding supports the core work of the CACs. It supports a variety of staff lines, including clinical forensic interviewers and clinical directors and pays for rent and operations. It helps pay for the training that our staff receive in order to conduct legally sound and trauma-informed forensic interviews of child victims. In essence, these funds allow the CACs to do the critical work that the City depends on us to do.

As mentioned above, all five of Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers have remained open since the PAUSE went into effect albeit at reduced staffing levels. Safe Horizon staff at the CACs continue to see child victims for forensic interviews as well as safety and mental health assessments. We are also providing trauma counseling and victim advocacy by telecommunication. We have increased our distribution of emergency food and helped connect families with community resources such as unemployment benefits, food pantries, rental and housing assistance, and personal protective equipment (PPEs.).

For cases of suspected child abuse that did not physically come to the CAC, we continue to review these cases with our on-site MDT. Where possible, we provide alternative coordination and response services including safety planning and remote services. Finally, we have been able to distribute some of our protective equipment, including gloves, masks, and sanitizers with our MDT partners who were not able to access these items in a timely manner and who had to make direct face-to-face contacts with children and their families.

Chillingly, calls to the Statewide Central Register are down, but we know that children are experiencing abuse in homes across our city right now. The cases we are seeing are severe, and we are helping families navigate a difficult and confusing time. When we transition out of PAUSE, we will need a strong, coordinated response to child abuse to help those children who are hidden right now. Children are scared and hurting, and NYC's five Child Advocacy Centers are prepared to provide the care they and their families require.

Council Initiative: *Safe Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE)* - \$275,000

Safe Horizon Program: *Domestic Violence Law Project*

Contract Agency: *Human Resources Administration (HRA)*

Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLP) provides free legal services to indigent and low-income victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city. This funding allows us to assist with orders of protection, child support, custody, visitation, and divorce proceedings.

DVLP continues to service low-income survivors of domestic violence by conducting civil legal screening remotely to clients of the Family Justice Centers and our domestic violence shelters. We also continue to operate our internal helpline where we speak to survivors on a daily basis. Additionally, we are assisting the Safe Horizon Family Court programs by offering legal consults to individuals who call for assistance and helping survivors draft petitions for orders of protection. DVLP is still able to open new cases and file matters that the court will allow. This funding allows our team to still reach survivors and offer services to NYC's most vulnerable.

Council Initiative: *Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)* - \$20,000

Council Initiative: *YWI - Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of DV* - \$75,000

Safe Horizon Program: *Immigration Law Project*

Contract Agency: *HRA & MOCJ*

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) provides free and low-cost legal services for immigrant and undocumented victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist them with applications for U-Visas, T-Visas, VAWA self-petitions, asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense.

ILP has experienced a significant increase in demand for legal assistance over the past several years. In a typical week, ILP receives upwards of 200 calls from immigrant clients seeking information about their legal options or updates to an existing case. On average, it now takes 4-6 weeks to schedule an intake session, and it has been more difficult to clear intake waiting lists because the need is so great. Additionally, this administration has implemented policy after policy that make it much more difficult to obtain relief for survivors. We have to expend significantly more time and resources on each case. While defending our clients against these harmful policies, ILP has also been engaging in advocacy to actively try and reverse some of these policies. IOI funding allows our legal team to serve the immigrant survivors of crime and abuse who are seeking our services. And YWI funding allows us to provide full representation and legal consultations to even more immigrant victims of domestic violence, the majority of whom are between the ages of 16 and 24.

Since the federal government has kept Immigration Courts open during this pandemic, ILP staff have become essential, front-line workers in the fight to protect immigrant victims and our communities as a whole in the midst of this health crisis. Since the PAUSE went into effect, ILP staff have:

- conducted telephonic intakes and client meetings remotely;
- filed applications for renewals of work permits, DACA, and U-Visas;
- appeared in Immigration Court for asylum hearings (and won!);
- filed motions, appeals, and served process on the U.S. government in federal litigation;
- responded to Requests for Evidence on "green card" applications;
- and responded to clients' inquiries regarding available benefits, such as unemployment and eligibility under the CARES act.

Immigrant survivors are confused and scared right now, especially as the federal government issues more anti-immigrant policies. Our ILP team is here to help this community of survivors who are feeling the weight of the federal government pushing down on them.

Council Initiative: *Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative* - **\$115,385**

Council Initiative: *Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative* - **\$140,000**

Safe Horizon Program: *Counseling Center*

Contract Agency: *Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)*

Safe Horizon's Counseling Center provides licensed, evidence-based mental health treatment to infants, children, and adults who have experienced and/or witnessed violence and abuse.

Since the PAUSE went into effect, the Counseling Center staff have transitioned to 100% remote teletherapy. The Counseling Center continues to provide critical mental health treatment services to our clients, who are some of the most vulnerable and isolated children and families in our community, and have heard from many that this support has served as a lifeline during the pandemic.

Counseling Center staff play a crucial role in the behavioral health sector, particularly during this pandemic, by providing expert crisis intervention and community-based stabilization to prevent the need for hospital-based services for families experiencing significantly elevated risk. We are also seeing elevated risk within our community's population of traumatized youth. Our Court-Involved Youth funds provide training, technical assistance, and support to staff to provide life-saving intervention with those youth who express thoughts of self-harm and engage in attempts of "extreme" coping. Similarly, our Children Under Five funding provides vital training and technical assistance to the essential workers of our DV shelters who have been on the frontlines since this pandemic began.

Without trauma-informed intervention, there may be lifelong developmental consequences and ultimately involvement of the criminal justice and family court systems. Both City Council Initiatives allow Safe Horizon staff to address that underlying trauma and connect children and young people to the comfort and healing that support healthy development. Children are vulnerable right now and must be at the heart of the City's response to COVID-19.

Council Initiative: *Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DOVE) Initiative* - **\$9,805,000 gross / \$762,000 to Safe Horizon**

Contract Agency: *MOCJ*

Through a partnership with the City Council, Safe Horizon administers the DOVE Initiative, which expands community-based responses to domestic violence across the city.

Since the PAUSE went into effect, Safe Horizon has continued to engage with the 110 organizations included in the FY20 DOVE Initiative. As this pandemic has disproportionately impacted immigrant communities and communities of color, DOVE awardees have played an increasingly important role in reaching victims and providing a culturally and linguistically competent response to victims of domestic violence. DOVE awardees have pivoted to remote programming and have continued to provide case management, legal services, crisis intervention, outreach, training, and education, which are all essential in the City's collective response to domestic violence, which is on the rise. These organizations rooted in community continue to communicate directly to victims and to raise awareness about domestic violence and resources for survivors and families.

Safe Horizon continues to link this network to resources, share innovative ideas, and host borough-based meetings remotely along with our partners at the Mayor's Office to End Domestic & Gender-Based Violence. Safe Horizon has been very engaged with awardees since the PAUSE went into effect to answer their questions and help them connect their clients with community-based programs. We continue to monitor all award reports, develop ideas with organizations that are pivoting to meet this moment, and offer guidance to awardees when questions arise about meeting deliverables.

We know that domestic violence, family violence, and intimate partner violence are still happening in every neighborhood across NYC. Victims and survivors are making informed decisions about what is best for them right now. But we know that once PAUSE is lifted, the need for the DOVE network's services will be greater than ever. The City needs organizations on the ground to be there, ready to serve survivors. And given the exacerbation of domestic violence, Safe Horizon will need to provide more support, technical assistance, and coordination to providers to ensure that organizations are using City funds effectively and wisely. Any cuts to the DOVE Initiative will mean layoffs and cuts to community-based, trauma-informed programming. This will be a serious problem for NYC's efforts to rebuild after COVID-19.

Council Initiative: *Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade* - \$456,697

Council Initiative: *Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative* - \$28,673

Safe Horizon Program: *Streetwork Project*

Contract Agency: *Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) and DOHMH*

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project includes an overnight shelter, overnight street outreach, and two drop-in centers for homeless and at-risk young people, many of whom have experienced violence in the home and/or on the streets. We provide shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 16 to 25.

Since the PAUSE went into effect, our drop-in center services are currently restricted to meeting young people at the door, where we are handing out food, care packages, and PPE supplies and

conducting syringe exchange. Staff are conducting emergency assessments and linking youth to mental health, legal, and medical services and supports.

Overall, we have continued to engage young people around their sexual health needs. For example, we have escorted clients living with HIV to care. Streetwork is also still engaging our peer leaders through weekly Zoom meetings and email communications and providing peer stipends for clients who are able to brainstorm innovative ways to conduct outreach through social media. We are also able to escort clients to reproductive health appointments, the Social Security office, and public assistance meetings via phone and email.

Runaway and homeless youth are some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers and are often overlooked, especially during times of crisis. Streetwork Project provides critical care and connection to a community of young people deeply at risk of COVID-19.

Conclusion

Safe Horizon is grateful for the City Council's attention to the complex issues facing victims of violence and abuse during this pandemic. Victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, family violence, child abuse, sexual violence, and other interconnected forms of violence and abuse are feeling isolated, scared, and confused during a time when most of us are already feeling isolated, scared, and confused. As we rebuild after COVID-19, we cannot lose sight of the multiple layers of trauma that victims and survivors are enduring right now.

The City Council discretionary funds we've outlined here are providing critical, core funding to those very programs deemed "essential." Safe Horizon is here for survivors. And we will be here every step of the way as NYC transitions out of PAUSE. Violence does not stop for a pandemic, and neither does the work of helping survivors.

We urge you all to hold the victims and survivors in each of your districts close to your heart as you craft the budget for the coming fiscal year.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF:

Fairuz Ahmed – Secretary Communication Director

SAFEST(South Asian Fund for Education, Scholarship & Education)

Presented before The New York City Council Committees

Immigration Executive Budget Virtual hearing on May 21th 2020

My name is Fairuz Ahmed, Secretary Communication Director, from South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship, and Training (SAFEST). SAFEST is an organization that provides services according to immigrants' needs. Our mission is to educate and integrate deprived newcomers (mostly South Asian immigrants) into the civic and economic life of New York City. We work with the biggest cluster of Bangladeshi community members and our services extend to Pakistan and South Asian demographics at large in all 5 boroughs.

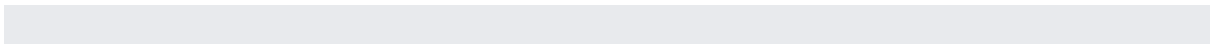
Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak about Immigration Issues and how proper budgeting can help us serve our community and have a positive impact.

I live in the Bronx and represent the 3rd largest growing population in the South Asian Community. I myself am an immigrant and have been serving my community for more than 15 years all over the United States of America. As a

South Asian representative from Mosque /Senior task force chair / Youth Education Committee members / Domestic abuse survivor support team, I and my team have first-hand experience in the field when it comes to minority group issues and challenges that our community faces on a daily basis. I also have spoken to many community leaders, parents, students, new immigrants, old immigrants, undocumented members, and members who are in the process of getting a permanent residency. and today I am here representing them.

SAFEST undertakes an ambitious plan to train and educate immigrants to learn at least a minimum knowledge of English so they may function in society. Since starting in 2015, SAFEST has gone on to deliver a comprehensive array of services to thousands of children, youth, adults and entire families from South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka who reside in all 5 New York City boroughs.

SAFEST is the first representative organization to make sure Bangladeshi immigrants and citizens are properly counted accurately. With our community properly represented we will be the fastest-growing population in New York City. A heartfelt thank you goes to the Honorable speaker Corey Johnson who was present with us in our Jamaica hills location during our event of Bangladeshi complete count committee 2020 census event.



SAFEST's services have always been "grassroots" in nature, with staff and volunteers "on the streets" in various neighborhoods to identify and engage community residents most in need of services. This approach has been essential in reaching immigrant populations that often "fly beneath the radar" of other service providers, leaving their needs largely unmet.

Many of the city's immigrant families are limited English proficient (LEP), a status now more commonly referred to in educational circles as English

language learners (ELLs). Recent (2013) DOE statistics state that ELL students make up 14.4% (N=159,162) of all pupils attending NYC public schools. Moreover, the DOE notes that 41.2% (N=438,181) report that they speak a language other than English when at home. Among the city's ELL student population, 52.5% (N=83,476) were born in America and 47.5% (N=75,686) were foreign-born. Only 35.65% of residents in ZIP Code 11432 speak English only at home.

We know that our immigrants need help to learn English because in New York State, for example, the overall high school graduation rate is about 78 percent. But for ELLs, it's 37 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Failure to graduate from high-school does not bode well for anyone in this more highly advanced technological workplace environment.

Over the years, SAFEST quickly realized that immigrant children, adults, and entire families across New York City needed multiple support services if they were to acclimate successfully to life in the United States. In direct response to that assessed need, SAFEST has helped immigrants of all ages. Since its inception, Over the last several years, our services have been subsidized by donations from the founder, other local community-based organizations, and individuals.

Over the years, we have found that immigrant clients come to our offices with human service needs (e.g., for ESL classes, emergency food, and/or shelter) in addition to their legal issues. In response, SAFEST has always provided these participants with information, referral, and assistance (IRA) services that address those needs. SAFEST's staff also provides intense follow-up services to verify that these IRA services have indeed been effective.

SAFEST will provide legal assistance to immigrants residing in the City, regardless of age, gender, country of origin, or immigration status. SAFEST's proven assessment strategies (as validated through the three-year operation of

our immigration service program, will facilitate the “fast-tracking” of clients who are seeking to attain lawful immigration statuses such as permanent residence, asylum, U.S. citizenship, or another special immigration status (e.g., U or T Visa). Consistent with our strategy of providing comprehensive services to all clients, the assessment process also includes a determination, by a paralegal or LMSW case manager, of any significant social services needs and eligibility for any government benefits and services. This portion of the assessment process leads to the delivery of participant access services described in the pages to follow.

SAFEST’s Current Program Components:

- ESL, ELL and First Literacy Training Programs-See Narrative Sections Above
- Immigration Assistance-See Narrative Sections Above.
- Mental Health Programs and Family counseling.
- Domestic Violence Counseling
- Affordable Housing & Snap Program Assistance.
- Necessary Computer Program Classes.
- Voter Education & Registration Training.
- Teachers Assistant Program.
- Worker Training, Workforce Development, and Workers Rights programs

We support the biggest concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants and citizens in the 5 boroughs of New York. We have implemented the: Census Bangladesh complete counting. And within that our 5 census workers already succumbed to COVID-19 and lost their lives. Also, we lost 200+ bread earners due to COVID-19.

We have lost more than 200+ community members due to COVID19 and now their families are facing hardship to pay rent and afford daily necessities. Many are also facing hardship paying for Citizenship fees and the high rates are creating obstacles in turning citizens into voters. From SAFEST we offer one on one English language classes and make immigrants ready for citizenship exams and support them for ESL courses. But due to COVID-19, we are unable to provide this much-needed support and hence our clients are at a loss. Unless funding them our community will lose voters and registration and class will stop.

For an all-inclusive, diversified community and country language barrier needs to be lifted and people need to have access to proper communication. I want to highlight 3 recent events that shook our community and created a lot of stress. These are facts from new immigrant families and getting assimilated into the community.

1. Stricken by COVID-19 we received calls for 11 families where they called 311 but were denied any help with food or other facilities only because they could not speak English properly. There is an option to request for interpreters, but that too needs a little bit of English to ask for. The people called had no English language background and were denied any help calling 311. Our Founder tried calling 311 on behalf of the families but since she was calling from her own cell phone, her number got flagged and the people replying denied any help.
2. The count of domestic violence has escalated immensely. Few of our clients called 911 but they were denied any help. Due to the language barrier, they could not ask for help or for an interpreter. One of our clients was facing domestic violence at home and called 911 escaping the abuser. She locked herself in the bathroom and called 911 for help. But she again had no English language background and did not know

how to request to get an interpreter. Later she faced more abuse for the lack of accessibility. She communicated with us and we later linked her up with proper care.

For 311 and 911 responders, we need to have multiple language access so all people can reach out for help when they need it.

Also with proper support and budget funding we can make our mark and carry on serving the minority groups and immigrants. I want to conclude by saying that I represented the South Asian Bangladeshi community, but I am also here representing some basic American values. It is fairness and equal opportunity for all. With proper funding and support, we can serve our clients even better and make them ideal citizens. This will ensure transparency, community growth, involvement, and a better future for all.

Below is our proposed Budgeting need:

Estimated Budget for Funding Request.

Organizational Development Cost Estimation	Organizational Infrastructure Development	\$2,000
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposed Budget for Organizational infrastructure, branding, 2. CSR Development 3. Progress monitoring & Development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the organization's decision-making committee and strategies 2. Develop office and infrastructure management 3. Develop a fundraising strategy 4. Help identify funding sources: government and foundation grants 5. Draft Letter of Interest (LOI) template 6. Draft proposal template 7. Assist in establishing an online presence with a focus on fundraising and program development 	
	Branding & CSR Development	\$2,500
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design branding of the organization, Maintain Corporate social responsibility with connective agencies 2. Design more social awareness programs to motivate the deprived communities. 	
	Monitoring & Evaluation	\$2,500

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop data collection systems to monitor and analyze program effectiveness 2. Design surveys focus groups, one-on-one interviews to gather necessary info on overall program impact, 3. Conduct qualitative/quantitative analyses, Monitor & Evaluate results of service and development for that. 	
	Total	\$7,000
The budget of Ongoing Services	Current Program Development	\$90,000

<p>9 programs * \$10,000.00</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Included: All Material Cost for per course 2. Instructors and Counselors' salaries 3. Caseworkers wages, office lease & all other utility costs, training for instructors, Counselors & Caseworkers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. ESL- Literacy Training Programs 5. Immigration Assistance 6. Mental Health Programs and Family counseling. 7. Domestic Violence Counseling 8. Affordable Housing & Snap Program Assistance. 9. Necessary Computer Program Classes. 10. Voter Education & Registration Training. 11. Teachers Assistant Program. 12. Worker Training, Workforce Development, and Workers Rights programs 	
<p>Total</p>		<p>\$97,000.00</p>

Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget

May 21, 2020 Hearing

Chairman Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. My name is David Woodlock, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer for ICL, one of New York's premier mental health agencies, providing innovative treatments, rehabilitation programs and support services to nearly 10,000 adults, children and families through more than 100 programs located throughout all five boroughs of New York City.

The COVID-19 crisis has greatly tested our ability to provide services to some of New York's neediest citizens. More than 200 clients and staff have been exposed to someone with the virus; more than 350 clients and staff have been sickened by COVID-19; and tragically, 25 people have died.

Our staff, most of whom cannot work from home and work directly with clients, have been nothing short of heroic in continuing to serve our clients. I know the same is true at hundreds of health care agencies across the city.

In response to the Covid-19 emergency, we quickly adapted our services to continue reaching our clients safely amid the pandemic. With relaxed NYS Department of Health regulations around telehealth, ICL was able to use a wide variety of communication methods to deliver services remotely, to the extent it is appropriate, for the care of the client/patient. The transition to telehealth services allowed us to follow mandated social distancing protocol, while providing services to the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Despite early challenges, the changes have improved patient care:

- The percentage of clients who cancelled appointments with us went from 33% in early March to 15% in early May, so we were able to reach more people we serve thanks to telehealth. Clients with chronic pain/depression in particular are easily able to access services without having to travel.
- A survey of 1,750 clients reported high satisfaction with telehealth, with 80% wanting to continue after the pandemic ends.
- ICL ACT team staff has been able to engage people across a broader area.
- Teleconsultation with FQHCs has helped with integration and continuation of care when our staff cannot get in touch with the primary care provider.

In anticipation of increased demand for mental health services, we implemented a rapid admissions program that streamlined clinic and other referrals by phone for telehealth or in-person sessions. A social worker is now available to offer on-the-spot counseling if needed. Since the launch on April 6, we have made 35 clinic referrals as a result of calls to our rapid admissions program.

Now, more than ever, we need your support, and we need a budget that protects funding for the services our clients rely on.

ICL has been fortunate to be one of seven agencies chosen to provide services under the Mental Health Initiative Funding for Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services. We receive \$249,103 a year to support services provided by our Bronx Supported Housing Program.

The Bronx Supported Housing Program is a New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) initiative that funds scattered-site supported housing in the Bronx and serves a total of 39 individuals. Tenants residing in ICL's Bronx program have long histories of psychiatric illness. Many are admitted with concurrent substance abuse disorders as well as chronic medical diseases such as hypertension, asthma, and diabetes. Additionally, criteria for admission to the program is based on residents having histories of substance abuse challenges, many years of criminal justice involvement, and chronic problems of medication non-adherence. This combination of disorders requires enhanced services through New York City's Assisted Out-Patient Treatment (AOT) program.

Without this funding, we would not be able to provide an array of case management and therapeutic services to help these tenants stay out of the hospitals, prisons or become street homeless. I strongly urge the Council to continue this essential support for behavioral health programs, such as ours, at this critical time.

The importance of mental health and substance use services has perhaps never been clearer than at this moment. The COVID pandemic is not only a physical health crisis, but a behavioral health crisis. New York City faces an unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral health services, especially given the protracted nature of this crisis. We know that behavioral health is essential, and our programs at ICL have stayed open despite the challenges presented by this crisis.

Behavioral health funding simply cannot be cut. Our programs were already operating on razor-thin margins before the pandemic. We have had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on technology to provide telehealth services to our clients, PPE to protect clients and staff, and incentive pay to ensure adequate staffing in our shelters.

In addition, we expect a huge drop in Medicaid and other funding from the State.

We stand ready to help our city and our communities recover from COVID-19. We know that the long-term success of New York requires behavioral health care to help individuals process the trauma, grief, anxiety and stress of this crisis. With the financial support of the City Council, we can ensure that New Yorkers regain their health and well-being, and that our city retains its commitment to take care of those in need.

To the NYC City Council:

My name is Samantha Sachs, I'm a resident of Queens, where I've lived for the past six years. I deeply love my neighborhood, my borough, and this city overall.

I do not want it to turn into a police state, even more than it already has.

It is deplorable and unconscionable that the budget cuts affecting virtually every aspect of public agencies do not, for some reason, reach the NYPD. If we cannot afford to hire teachers, then we cannot afford to hire cops.

Instead of hiring 2,300 new officers we must use the hundreds of millions of dollars that that represents to invest in healthcare, youth, education, and housing.

I am calling on the City Council to invest in real safety—not criminalization—and ensure there is justice in this budget. Otherwise, who are you accountable to? The police union? We, the taxpayers, are the ones who put you in office and who pay the checks of police officers.

Police do not make us safe. Police should not be involved in enforcing social distancing. Police should not be involved in responding to mental health emergencies. Given the constantly diminishing crime rates in this city, we should be decreasing the investment in law enforcement, not increasing it. Doing the latter has only resulted in continuous violence and harm against our community members, primarily low-income and people of color.

If you love New York City, how could pass a budget that sets the stage for increasing criminalization, alienation, and violence against black and brown New Yorkers?

Please fight with us and for the soul of this city. #NYCBudgetJustice

Thank you,

Samantha Sachs

**Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget
May 21, 2020 Hearing**

Hello, Chair Dromm and distinguished members of the City Council. I am Dr. Sara Lorenz Taki, the Medical Director of Greenwich House Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program. Greenwich House MMTP is a community-based opioid treatment program that treats approximately 800 New Yorkers with opioid use disorder. We offer treatment utilizing all forms of medication for opioid use disorder which include methadone, buprenorphine, and extended-release naltrexone, along with integrated medical, psychiatric, counseling and vocational services. We are located in lower Manhattan near transit hubs that provide easy access to patients from many boroughs.

The importance of mental health and substance use services has perhaps never been clearer than at this moment. It is clear that the pandemic is not only a physical health crisis, but a behavioral health crisis. New York City faces an unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral health services. The stress of the pandemic and its economic fallout has placed many patients with substance use disorders at risk for relapse to opioid use as well as exacerbations of mental illness. New Yorkers without prior mental illness or substance use disorders are now more likely to develop these illnesses. We are seeing increased need for mental health support, relapse prevention counseling and medical services.

Behavioral health funding simply cannot be cut. Our programs were already operating on razor-thin margins before the pandemic. We have had to spend thousands of dollars buying technology for staff and clients to enable telehealth, purchasing PPE, adding additional cleanings, and paying incentive pay to staff. In order to reduce risk of infection to patients and staff, we have had to rapidly implement telehealth services, reduce the number of in-clinic visits, and provide extended take home medication. All of these life-saving interventions have resulted in lost revenue for our organization.

Our organization receives funding from the City. We use this funding to serve many patients annually who could not otherwise afford treatment. Without this funding, we would not be able to provide addiction treatment services and our staff would face loss of employment.

We quickly adapted our services to continue reaching our clients safely amid the pandemic. We gave the maximum amount of medication to patients in order to allow them to stay home. We implemented telehealth services to protect patients and staff. Virtual support groups were developed and social distancing was implemented inside the clinic. Masking, increased cleaning, and physical barriers were created in order reduce risk of infection to patients and staff. We did not close our clinic doors or adjust our hours throughout the state of emergency and continued to provide treatment to our patients. We know that behavioral health is essential, and our programs have remained open.

We stand ready to help our city and our communities recover from COVID-19. We know that the long-term success of New York requires behavioral health care to help individuals process

the trauma, grief, anxiety and stress of this crisis. With the financial support of the City Council, we can ensure that New Yorkers regain their health and well-being, and that our city retains its commitment to take care of those in need.

Sarah Sanders
492 Monroe St, Apt 4
Brooklyn, NY 11221

I'm a Brooklyn resident, and I'm writing today on behalf of Showing Up for Racial Justice and Communities United for Police Reform to urge you to stand for budget justice.

Even in the midst of a public health crisis, the Mayor is proposing \$2 billion of cuts to core social services and safety net programs while leaving the budget for policing and jails — nearly \$6 billion! — virtually untouched.

The city's continued overinvestment in policing and punishment instead of in people's needs is alarming to me as someone who sees the disproportionate toll that COVID-19 has taken on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers even as the NYPD continues to criminalize and harass these same communities.

What we need is housing, health care, jobs and education. I am deeply concerned about the prospect of cuts to SYEP and hiring freezes for teachers. When schools reopen, it will be more important than ever that there are enough teachers and mental health care workers to address students' needs. I also want to raise the very real danger that the budget as currently proposed will result in the police being more integrated into social services—which we know is especially dangerous for communities of color. The answer is not to give more power and responsibility to the NYPD, but to adequately resource social services and communities.

I urge you all to fight for higher funding for these services and less funding for the NYPD and Department of Corrections. What are you willing to fight for to make our city a safer and healthier place for *everyone*?

Sincerely,

Sarah Sanders



May 21, 2020

TESTIMONY OF

Sarah K. Chiles

Executive Director

PRESENTED TO

The New York City Council

REGARDING

Fair Futures: Coaching and Educational Supports for Children in Foster Care Ages 14-26

My name is Sarah Chiles. I am the executive director of the Redlich Horwitz Foundation and we are part of the public-private partnership providing financial support to Fair Futures.

I want to state our gratitude for your enthusiastic embrace of Fair Futures in the FY20 budget. Your leadership has ensured that hundreds of young people in foster care are now receiving the support and guidance of a caring, connected coach and tutor. This support is more critical now than ever, as these youth struggle with the instability brought on by the pandemic. Fair Futures coaches have become their lifelines during this crisis, providing them with critical support to continue their education, access food, maintain stable housing, talk through emotions, and problem-solve school and work challenges.

I also want to express how proud we are to be part of this unprecedented collaboration across the City's child-welfare system. With all 26 foster-care agencies and over 300 staff involved, including hundreds of newly hired coaches, more than 100 organizations in the coalition, and 7 foundation partners, Fair Futures has united support from all sectors of the system. Most notable are the hundreds of youth leaders who are engaged in advocacy to maintain this critical program.

This public-private partnership has leveraged over \$2 million in private dollars to fund: a director to provide TA to all agencies and train staff; comprehensive hiring and training manuals; an online platform to track youth and systems progress and an online directory with 400 vetted workforce training programs; and a youth leader to coordinate youth engagement.

We join the 1100 young people in and aged out of foster care in asking the City to fulfill its promise to foster youth. In order for our young people to survive this crisis and its long-term effects, we urge the City Council to work collaboratively with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the City's FY2021 budget.



Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.
520 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10018
212.971.7600
www.selfhelp.net

**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services
New York City Council
FY21 Executive Budget Public Testimony
May 14, 2020**

My name is Katie Foley and I am the Director of Public Affairs at Selfhelp Community Services. Thank you to Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, Aging Committee Chair Margaret Chin, and the members of both committees for the opportunity to testify today on the FY21 Preliminary Budget.

Selfhelp was founded in 1936 to help those fleeing Nazi Germany maintain their independence and dignity as they struggled to forge new lives in America. Today, Selfhelp has grown into one of the largest and most respected not-for-profit human service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, with 46 program locations throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Nassau County. We provides a broad set of services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. Selfhelp offers a complete network of community-based home care, social service, and senior housing programs with the overarching goal of helping clients to live with dignity and independence and avoid institutional care.

Our services are extensive and include: specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; eleven affordable senior housing complexes; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; client centered technology programs including the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects, which provides seniors and people with disabilities with the information and support they need to remain living independently in their own homes.

We are grateful for the Council's long standing and ongoing support for so many important senior programs and for always emphasizing the needs of older adults in policy decisions and budget allocations. With strong community based programs, we are confident that older New Yorkers will be able to access the care and support they deserve and need to be able to age in their own homes and communities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Selfhelp has continued to serve our 20,000 elderly and vulnerable clients through our range of programs. Our home health aides have been provided much needed at-home care, our frontline staff have been caring for individuals in the Community Guardian Program,



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and all of our social workers from our community-based programs have been checking on their clients to ensure access to food, safe shelter, medical care, and more. We have quickly expanded our Virtual Senior Center to include members of Selfhelp's senior centers, NORCs, Case Management, and Housing in order to reduce social isolation among our clients. Our team is working every day to ensure our clients continue to live with dignity through this challenging time.

In today's testimony, I will focus on our budget priorities, additional information is included in the testimony submitted by Selfhelp for the preliminary budget.

Holocaust Survivor Initiative

This year, we are urging the City Council to renew this initiative, with continued support for Selfhelp and our Holocaust Survivor Program. As the largest provider of comprehensive services to survivors in North America, Selfhelp Community Services is uniquely positioned to assist this last generation of survivors. We are urging the City Council to renew this initiative, with continued support for Selfhelp and our Holocaust Survivor Program. This funding supports Selfhelp's direct social services to frail, isolated, and financially needy Holocaust Survivors.

The need is immense. Half of the approximately 4,800 survivors served by Selfhelp live at or below the poverty line. And though the number of survivors is declining, the needs of the remaining population are more intense and costly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Selfhelp social workers have been providing the specialized care that survivors deserve due to the trauma they experienced during the Holocaust. There are many unique struggles survivors face today: the isolation, the return of memories of hiding, rationing food, being away from family, as well as sickness and death. They are also among the most vulnerable and susceptible to this disease. This funding supports Selfhelp social workers who are reducing social isolation through frequent phone calls and assisting with needs such as food, bill pay, and more. Because of this funding, survivors are not alone.

This commitment allows us to turn the words "never forget" into action, and the City's investment helps us serve this population so they can continue to age with independence and dignity.

Discretionary Funding For Core Senior Services

Thank you to the New York City Council for the continued, significant investment in senior services throughout the five boroughs. Each year, the Council puts in more than \$28 million in funding for senior services initiatives, in addition to individual discretionary investments. FY21 can be no different. Now more than ever, whether held virtually or in-person, these programs are crucial to preventing isolation and supporting older adults.

We provide critical services to older adults and are concerned about the announcement made on April 21, 2020, that the City may not reimburse expenses incurred after March 22 on FY20 discretionary contracts deemed non-essential. Discretionary funding supports many Selfhelp programs, including



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senior centers, NORCs, case management, the virtual senior center, social adult day care, and our Holocaust survivor program. We understand the budget constraints the City is facing now and into next year, but discretionary funding is critical to many communities, particularly those most impacted by COVID-19. We ask that the Council works with us and the rest of the sector to preserve critical discretionary funding next year.

Initiative funding is critical for nonprofits and programs that support older New Yorkers. Cutting any amount of DFTA's budget by eliminating initiatives would have a dramatic impact to the nonprofits who receive the funding and the clients served. For example, the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative provides crucial case management services to the 50% of survivors living at or below the poverty line. Through Support Our Seniors and the Digital Inclusion Initiatives, socially isolated and homebound seniors are able to connect to the world outside through our Virtual Senior Center. At our four NORC programs, initiative funding keeps the doors open, and enables thousands of older adults to age in the communities they call home, in the City they built.

In order to create a robust aging services network to meet the needs of today's seniors and those turning 60 each day, Selfhelp supports the priorities of our partner organizations, including continued investment in all the Council initiatives that support aging programs, found in Schedule C. A few examples include:

- Support our Seniors provides diverse services across the City
- SU-CASA programs are creative aging art programs at senior centers
- Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations support New York City's diverse older adults with culturally competent services
- Healthy Aging Initiative provides support for various health-promotion programs
- Social Adult Day offers additional support for seniors with high levels of need, including for Selfhelp's Alzheimer's Resource Program

Senior Transportation Program

With support from Council Member Paul Vallone and the Queens Delegation, Selfhelp has been operating a senior transportation program to provide free transportation to and from medical appointments. Due to the success of the program and high demand from individuals, we are seeking to continue this program across Queens. With funding provided by the delegation for this year, Selfhelp has so far provided over 350 rides across multiple City Council districts in the borough. Due to the demand for accessible transportation and popularity of this program we believe that with this funding, Selfhelp will be able to continue to serve the Queens seniors that in need.

Based on feedback received by individuals who benefitted from the program, as well as the demand for services, we know that the program improves quality of life for older New Yorkers, as it eliminates concerns about transportation costs, traveling alone, and navigating public transit. Further, in transportation deserts in parts of NYC and Queens in particular, this program removed a significant barrier for older adults in caring for their health.



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Transportation programs have become a lifeline for older Queens residents who are responding to COVID-19 social distancing requirements by avoiding public transportation. This program ensures that older adults have affordable, accessible, and reliable transportation services to their medical appointments.

Virtual Senior Center

For seniors who are homebound—particularly during the current global health pandemic—Selfhelp’s Virtual Senior Center (VSC) is a vital source of face-to-face social interaction. The VSC enables homebound seniors to participate virtually in intriguing live classes, tour world famous museums, interact with peers, engage in wellness activities, and most importantly expand their social network.

Selfhelp considers it vital to address social isolation – not only because it has a dramatic impact on quality of life in older adults, but also because isolation has been linked to poorer health outcomes including higher blood pressure, greater susceptibility to the flu and other infectious diseases, earlier onset of dementia, and shorter life span.

The Virtual Senior Center (VSC) engages homebound seniors, who are no longer able to get to their local senior centers, into the larger community by using technology to connect them with other participants in a range of online, interactive, real-time classes where participants can hear, see and talk with each other. We have submitted a number of requests to various City Council members to support the continuation of this program.

While the Virtual Senior Center was designed with homebound seniors in mind, suddenly we are all homebound. Those once able to travel to their local Selfhelp senior center or participate in their supportive housing activities are now unable to do so. Our Virtual Senior Center (VSC) has truly become a lifeline. Since March 2020, the Virtual Senior Center has increased enrollment by 55% as they’ve added members from the Selfhelp community, including members of senior centers, NORCs, housing, and case management. Now, over 300 older adults are logging on to the Virtual Senior Center for lessons, discussions, and socializing, all from the safety of their homes. Margo’s story explains the importance of the VSC:

Margo is a member of our Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Innovative Senior Center, who is now participating in the VSC. Though she misses her Senior Center friends and the activities she enjoyed there, including ping pong, fitness classes, and tai chi, she is grateful to be able to fill her schedule with programming from our Virtual Senior Center. Margo shared, “I look at the [VSC] calendar every day to see what’s going on...I appreciate everything Selfhelp has been doing.”

Senior Center Model Budget

We commend the Department for the Aging (DFTA), Office of Management and Budget, and the City Council for the ongoing commitment to senior centers since the beginning of the model budget process. Funding for the City’s senior centers is a critical step to stabilizing one of the core programs that supports older New Yorkers, including many immigrant seniors.



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The model budget process included funding to be allocated in FY21, including \$10 million for senior centers and \$5 million for congregate meals and kitchen staff. We are requesting that the Council support a request for the Administration to restore and baseline \$9.7 million to restore and baseline previous one-time funding that supported senior centers, home delivered meals, NORCs, and NYCHA community spaces.

During COVID-19, Selfhelp's senior center social workers have been connected to their members through phone calls and emails. Our social workers are providing essential services helping older adults access food, medicine, and resources to maintain their mental and physical health, such as Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center. Members of Selfhelp's five senior centers were invited to join, at no cost, Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center to join an online community of live, interactive weekly classes.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)

Thank you to the Council for supporting a major investment in the City's Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) last year, particularly to support nursing services. Selfhelp provides social services to more than 1,300 residents at four Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood NORCs throughout Queens. We are very appreciative of the consistent support the NORC program has received in the City Council. Because of your enthusiasm for this program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing senior population served by Selfhelp's NORCs.

Without the support of the City Council many NORC programs would not be able to continue to provide critical services to so many older adults in New York City. We support an investment of at least \$1.7 million to ensure salary parity for DFTA-funded NORCs. The FY 2019 and 2020 budgets included \$1 million from the Administration to support select NORC programs previously funded by the Council; however, these funds were never baselined. If this funding is not restored, the future of these NORC programs is uncertain. Finally, the FY 2020 final budget included \$5,325,325 in City Council NORC Initiative funding to support dozens of NORCs and Neighborhood NORCs. This included \$1.3 million to fill a funding gap for health and nursing services in NORCs, as well as funding to open five new NORCs. We urge the Council to restore these funds to ensure these programs can continue to provide services to NORC residents.

Throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, NORCs have provided critical response services to thousands of older New Yorkers, making continued investment in this program critical. NORC staff provide wellness checks to address mental health and social isolation; assist seniors in accessing food and other supplies, and coordinate services in residential buildings not developed specifically for seniors. These activities were crucial prior to COVID-19 and have become even more important since.

A key component of the N/NORC program model is health care management and assistance. Nurses provide services to N/NORC residents that might not otherwise exist in the community, such as medication education, diabetes testing, flu shots, mobility and balance screenings, and helping clients get in touch with doctors. Older adults across New York City rely on N/NORC services to remain



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healthy and stably housed; without these services, their options for receiving appropriate community-based care would be greatly diminished.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the NORC program and for your consideration.

The Need for Affordable Housing

Selfhelp is a major provider of affordable housing for seniors in New York City and on Long Island. Our housing portfolio includes twelve affordable apartment developments, comprising of 14 buildings located in Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Long Island, which house over 1,400 low- and moderate-income senior residents in attractive, functional apartments with supportive services as needed.

Selfhelp appreciates the strong support of Mayor de Blasio and the City Council for senior affordable housing in New York City. The need for affordable senior housing with services remains as or more significant today as it was in 2016, when LiveOn NY first reported their findings that an estimated 200,000 seniors were on waiting lists for housing through the HUD202 program in New York City. In fact, housing challenges continue to plague older adults, as many seniors live on fixed incomes that cannot keep pace with rising rents; experience mobility challenges that limit housing options within an aging rental-stock; and are found to have high rates of rent burden, with 1/3 of individuals receiving SCRIE paying more than 70% of their income on rent. Given the current need for senior affordable housing, Selfhelp recommends that the City ensure that senior housing is prioritized in its overall development pipeline.

Selfhelp has been pleased to see the Administration's recognition of the need for senior specific housing as demonstrated through the investments and commitments included in the Seniors First Initiative, which has brought about historic commitments to the production and preservation of affordable senior housing. Through this initiative and the Senior Affordable Rental Assistance (SARA) program in particular, Selfhelp was awarded land by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to develop a senior building on one of its existing public housing properties, Sumner Houses, in Brooklyn. We are partnering with the RiseBoro, Urban Builders Collaborative and Lettice Construction on this development, with Daniel Libeskind as the architect. The building will have approximately 200 units and will have a community facility open to the entire Sumner complex.

Affordable Senior Housing as a Tool for Healthcare: SHASAM

An investment in the SHASAM (Selfhelp's Active Services for Aging Model) would result in savings to the State's Medicaid program by preventing or lowering costs of emergency room visits and keeping low-income seniors out of costlier levels of care, such as assisted living or nursing homes.

At each Selfhelp building, we offer service coordination through SHASAM, which makes available social work services, education, and recreation, as well as referrals to skilled nursing and home care, if and when requested by the resident. The goal of SHASAM is to provide the appropriate level of assistance to allow older adults to remain in their apartments and not move to more costly settings such as assisted living or nursing homes. Recent research shows that access to SHASAM allows older



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adults to reduce their chances of being hospitalized and/or visiting an emergency room which reduced their overall Medicaid and/or Medicare costs.

During COVID-19, Selfhelp's SHASAM social workers are checking on their residents while working from home to honor appropriate social distancing measures. In partnership with Live On NY and philanthropic support, Selfhelp housing arranged meal distribution to residents who were facing food insecurity because they were not signed up for meal delivery or home care services. Over 550 meals have been delivered to residents in Selfhelp housing and this will be continuing on an ongoing basis as needed. These essential services, and more, are keeping older adults healthy and at home during this health pandemic.

A New York-based study, conducted by Dr. Michael Gusmano of Rutgers University, compared Selfhelp residents with access to service coordination to a comparison group of seniors in the same zip codes without this support. The published research shows that residents of Selfhelp's housing are healthier than their neighbors who do not live in high-quality housing.

Research shows that residents in Selfhelp's affordable housing had:

- 68% lower odds of Selfhelp residents being hospitalized
- \$1,778 average Medicaid payment per person, per hospitalization for Selfhelp residents, versus \$5,715 for the comparison group
- 53% lower odds of a Selfhelp resident visiting an emergency room compared to a non-Selfhelp resident

The full report is available through the Journal for Health Affairs (the article is available upon request), and a white paper published by Selfhelp is available at www.selfhelp.net.

COLA

The Mayor and City Council have taken important steps to undo decades of underfunding in human services wages with multi-year cost-of-living investments. Investing in this workforce is essential to addressing the gender wage gap and uplifting thousands of New Yorkers close to the poverty line. We support the Human Services Council by requesting a 3% cost-of-living adjustment which is needed to ensure human services workers can thrive in NYC.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. On behalf of the 20,000 clients we serve, I am grateful for the Council's support on so many important programs.



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**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 21, 2020**

Thank you to the New York City Council for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of arts education. **My name is Seth Pinsky, and I am CEO of 92nd Street Y, a nonprofit cultural and community center located in Manhattan.**

While we recognize the tremendous challenges faced by the City in FY21, my request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Youth & Community Development.

92Y's Center for Arts Learning & Leadership receives support from these agencies to serve **16,000+ NYC students and teachers annually at 70+ public schools throughout all five boroughs, 80% of which are Title I.** The Center has a history of collaborative leadership, spearheading initiatives such as NYC's inaugural "Teen Arts Week" in coordination with 30+ cultural organizations throughout the City's five boroughs.

Through the Center for Arts Learning & Leadership, 92Y works together consistently with the diverse communities of New York City to offer comprehensive arts in education and career readiness initiatives. We connect our city's young people to celebrated writers, musicians, dancers and visual artists from around the world through dynamic school-based residencies; performances at our historic cultural center; and internships for youth pursuing careers in the creative industries.

Despite reduced resources and increased challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, our staff have been doing tremendous work to create and sustain programs for thousands of NYC public school students that offer a sense normalcy and joy during these difficult and unsettling times.

Immediately in March upon announcement that the NYC DOE would be transitioning to remote learning, we began surveying principals about their needs and developing innovative ways to continue providing students at our many high-need partner schools with impactful arts learning. Our staff quickly trained our Teaching Artists in remote instruction and developed remote programming for schools.

In addition to offering pre-recorded lessons, we have developed a new online Afterschool Live Arts Series. Led by our Teaching Artists, the Series invites students and families to celebrate the end of the school day with free, interactive live performances and art-making activities. For example, students explored the rhythms and movement of traditional and modern West African dance. Other programs that we have pivoted to continue remotely include Teen Producers, our paid 2-year mentorship and internship program for public high school students, our Walker Literature Project, and many of our CASA afterschool programs.

Schools are welcoming these lessons, as a principal at one of our partner elementary schools in Coney Island wrote:

Oh my. The video is absolutely incredible. Riveting material, which glued me to my tiny screen with wonderment for the entire 18 minutes and 40 seconds. The video managed to capture all the different aspects of good teaching, such as reviewing previously taught materials and

introducing new vocabulary. It included a key component of engagement - familiarity. This was done with the introduction (hello) and concluding (goodbye) songs. The various vignettes of Uncle Earl were well-placed. There was even a read aloud and a bit of history and geography lesson, culminating with darn good music. Everton is also a charming host and teacher. A well-deserved "Nice job" to everyone involved in the making of a solid educational video. Incredible. Thank you. Send more.

We are also thinking critically about how best to transition to this next recovery phase. We are working with principals, classroom teachers, DOE personnel, and teaching artists to help inform our plans for developing an adaptable program model for the next school year.

Deep budget cuts to the Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Youth & Community Development would be disastrous for arts education, the cultural community that is part of this city's fabric and a key driver of its economy, and most of all to the young people whose lives are already painfully disrupted by the current crisis.

We believe that access to high-quality arts is a right, not a privilege. We know through experience that children and youth amplify their intellectual, social and emotional capacities by engaging in the arts. By enabling young people to observe, create, critique and explore the issues embedded in various art forms and forums, we have discovered ways to prepare our young people of New York to participate fully in determining the future of their world.

Above all, we strive to help young people develop an appreciation of others' lived experiences and perspectives. When young people are empowered to participate in determining the future of our world with this enriched experience and wisdom, they will be better able to find the places where their leadership is both most meaningful to them and most beneficial to society at large.

We urge you to continue to support NYC's cultural community and its youth by restoring critical funding to the Department of Education, Department of Cultural Affairs, and Department of Youth & Community Development in FY21, as well as honoring commitments already made to arts education in FY20.

In addition to expense support through these agencies, **we ask for your continued consideration of capital projects in FY21 in addition to honoring previous capital commitments**, despite these most challenging of times, to help ensure that cultural and community organizations are equipped to safely, securely, and adequately serve all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Seth Pinsky
CEO



**New York City Council Finance Committee
SHARE: Self-Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer
Testimony delivered by Carol Evans, CEO & Executive Director
May 21, 2020**

On behalf of SHARE and the more than 225,000 women we serve each year, thank you for the Council's outstanding, ongoing support of SHARE and the Ambassador Outreach initiative, most recently with grants from the Cancer Initiative, Speaker's Initiative, Healthy Aging and Support Our Seniors Initiatives, as well as through the public health backfill. The bi-lingual Ambassador Outreach initiative directly serves approximately 45,000 medically underserved black, Latina and elderly New York City women each year, ensuring that they have the information and support they need to protect their health.

The Ambassador Program was started by SHARE to address the health-care disparities among women in low-income communities of color that have been well-documented in numerous studies over the past decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Black women have the highest death rates of all racial and ethnic groups and are 40% more likely to die of breast cancer than white women. The reasons for this difference result from many factors including having ... fewer social and economic resources. To improve this disparity, black women need more timely follow-up and improved access to high-quality treatment."

Latina women are about 20 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than non-Latina white women diagnosed at a similar age and stage, according to the American Cancer Society. Latinas are significantly more likely to present at a later stage with larger tumors that are more difficult to treat. It is believed that these disparities exist because of different access to treatment and lower rates of mammograms in the Latina community. These disparities, in both the Latina and black communities, also exist among ovarian and uterine cancer patients.

SHARE's Ambassador Program is a grassroots effort intended to reach and empower medically underserved general populations in the African-American and Latino communities in New York City. This program educates and trains African-American and Latina women who are survivors of breast, ovarian and uterine cancer and their family members to serve as advocates in their own communities. Several years ago, SHARE also began outreach to older women, another underserved population that does not have equal access to screening and treatment options. This year, we are also launching outreach for uterine cancer, a disease which disproportionately affects black women.

SHARE works in communities throughout the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. In 2019, 12 African-American and 12 Latina women served as SHARE Ambassadors. Through their collective efforts, they made approximately 500 presentations at health fairs, community, medical, and senior centers in their respective neighborhoods. In total, their efforts reached 44,809 individuals in their

communities in 2019 – a record number for this initiative. SHARE maintains a database to track all aspects of the program.

In addition, we offer bilingual printed materials (more than 85,000 distributed in 2019), helplines, support groups (1,439 attendance), and Survivor Patient Navigation at Bellevue and Mt. Sinai St. Luke's Roosevelt hospitals (approximately 500 served).

Numbers don't put a human face on our work. One recent story stands out – an elderly Latina woman in Queens, blind and a breast cancer survivor, called SHARE staff member Jennie Santiago, who facilitates her local breast cancer support group. The woman was frightened, anxious, and had nowhere else to turn. In the middle of the pandemic, her home health aid was unable to come, so she had ventured out alone to buy groceries. Once there, she was told her food stamps would not cover her items. Jennie was able to provide emotional support, and connect her to food delivery services. Although our support groups and education programs are focused on breast, ovarian and uterine cancer, SHARE provides a comprehensive range of emotional support and access to assistance that the women we serve need now more than ever.

The Ambassador initiative has made a critical difference in the health of African-American and Latina New Yorkers – from the breast cancer survivor who had her daughter undergo genetic testing after attending a presentation at a library in Queens, to the young Latina who was ready to stop her breast cancer treatment until her SHARE support group facilitator intervened, to the older woman who thought she was too old to benefit from a mammogram.

COVID-19 has highlighted the enormous inequities in our healthcare system that SHARE has worked for years to address through grassroots, peer-based programs. Now that the needs in medically underserved communities are greater than ever, we hope that you will continue your support. SHARE has rapidly pivoted to answer the enormous needs presented by COVID-19. By offering outreach, support and education to underserved black, Latina and senior New Yorkers online and on the telephone, SHARE has provided help to the most vulnerable women. We are uniquely poised to offer culturally and linguistically competent information about breast, ovarian and uterine cancer, and the unique challenges these diseases pose during the pandemic. Cancer patients are immune-compromised, and face a range of difficulties, from canceled treatments and surgeries at hospitals, to fears of increased risk from exposure. Without the generous support of the City Council, SHARE would have to drastically cut the education and support services it offers to these women.

Funding from the City Council enables SHARE to address these vital aspects of women's health through a comprehensive, grassroots program that reaches a full spectrum of New York City women from the general public, through diagnosis and post-treatment. SHARE offers these services in a cost-effective manner through the dedication of a community of survivors whose diversity reflects the communities in which they work; this dedication has also enabled us to quickly respond to the current COVID-19 crisis.

All of this vital work will be jeopardized if our funding is cut in FY 21. We hope you will support SHARE and the thousands of medically underserved black, Latina and elderly residents of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island and Queens we serve by helping us secure continued funding for the critical work we do in promoting and protecting women's health.

Please do not cut DYCD funding

To Whom it May Concern,

As a single parent and sole provider living in Brooklyn, my daughter benefits from DYCD funding which stands to be cut 5 times more than other NYC services.

Please recognize the value that these community based programs bring to our children, and how they enable children to engage in meaningful and much needed after school programs while parents are working.

Thank you on behalf of Cora Dance in Red Hook Brooklyn, and my daughter.

Sharon Kay

It appears that hope for the youth has been cancelled long before Covid 19 descended upon us. It was cancelled when the mayor and the city council decided to invest in cages and enforcers for the wealthy and the elite that kill and abuse people of color everyday on the street. Black, Brown and Indigenous people are forced into a real life version of the hunger games as it's everybody for themselves. \$11 Billion dollars that could've gone to help our communities that have been behind the 8 ball for so long are forced to seek means of survival on our own. Last year when I and my comrades said that there is no such thing as humane cages we weren't saying that for clout. According to NYS DOCCS 81% of those that are currently incarcerated that have died in prisons due to Covid 19 were people of color. I'm directly impacted by this virus since I'm blessed to have survived after having it and that's only because I was able to quarantine at home for 2 weeks and having a decent immune system to fight it off. A person that's homeless can't social distance, a person whose locked up can't social distance but you don't care about that because you're not in their position. I don't expect you to listen or even to care because according to you everyone who lacks privilege deserves to suffer in despair.

Shawn Hudson

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Carlos Menchaca
Chair, Committee on Immigration
250 Broadway Suite 1728
New York, NY 10007
menchaca@council.nyc.gov

The Honorable Daniel Dromm
Chair, Committee on Finance
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007
dromm@council.nyc.gov

**Testimony of the Vera Institute of Justice in
Support of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)**

**Submitted to the Executive Budget Hearing, Committee on Immigration,
Jointly with the Committee on Finance**

Dear Chairperson Menchaca and Chairperson Dromm:

On behalf of the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera), I write to urge you to include in the FY21 New York City Budget renewed and increased funding for the Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, and the Legal Aid Society for their work on the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP). **To meet the growing and immediate need for such services, especially during the current health crisis, we specifically urge you to fund the NYIFUP legal service providers at the total level of \$18.26 million in FY21.** Such sustained and increased funding for this critical work will continue to ensure that no detained person facing deportation in New York is forced to navigate immigration court without an attorney simply because they cannot afford one. During this frightening time, continued funding will ensure that no detained person will be forced to languish in potentially deadly immigration detention centers at heightened risk of COVID-19 without an attorney to fight with them for safety and freedom.

As you may know, the mission of Vera is to drive change and to build and improve justice systems that ensure fairness, promote safety, and strengthen communities. Since its inception in 2005, Vera's Center on Immigration and Justice has focused on increasing access to legal services for low income immigrants facing deportation, who are among our society's most vulnerable and marginalized people. Among those facing deportation, individuals who are detained are especially vulnerable to deportation as a result of isolation, the inaccessibility of witnesses, documents, and other evidence, and lack of translation and interpretation options. Now, as the greatest harm from COVID-19 threatens people in detention facilities where social distancing is not possible and health services are grossly inadequate, people in detention are more acutely vulnerable than ever before.

NYIFUP is an overwhelmingly popular program that ensures that people in these exceptionally challenging circumstances have attorneys standing with them to fight for safety and freedom. A recent

poll by the Vera Institute found that 99 percent of New York City residents support government funded lawyers for people in immigration court.¹ NYIFUP is the country's first and only statewide public defender system for detained immigrants facing deportation. The program began in 2013 with the support of New York City Council as a response to a study organized by then-Judge, and current Chief Judge Robert Katzmann of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The Study Group on Immigrant Representation convened by Chief Judge Katzmann discovered that two-thirds of detained immigrants in New York State were unrepresented, and that unrepresented detained immigrants had only a 3 percent chance of succeeding in their removal proceedings. New York City Council's NYIFUP pilot program pioneered universal representation for detained indigent immigrants who were unrepresented at their initial deportation hearings at the Varick Street Immigration Court and has become a resoundingly successful program.

Based on the initial success of the project and increased need, NYIFUP expanded to full scale across New York State in 2017 with funding from New York State. By funding NYIFUP, New York has made representation accessible for anyone who is detained, facing deportation, and unable to afford an attorney in New York. Now, NYIFUP legal teams are essential to this City's efforts to stem the worst impacts of COVID-19 by fighting alongside their clients for dignity and the freedom to return home to safely socially distance with their families.

New York's historic and bold leadership in funding deportation defense has inspired a nationwide movement of publicly funded deportation defense programs. It has catalyzed efforts to support immigrants that have been especially crucial over the past few years, as the federal government subjects immigrants to relentless attacks. The arrest and detention of immigrants have soared, families have been systemically separated, and noncitizens are more vulnerable than ever to deportation. These federal attacks on immigrants have continued with ferocity during the current health crisis, further endangering public health and deepening the disproportionately negative impact of COVID-19 on immigrants and people of color.

New York State is home to two million non-citizen immigrants who, due to the nature of immigration law, must live with the possibility that they may be found deportable by ICE – even if they currently possess lawful immigration status. Detention facilities are now more dangerous than ever before, and they cost the federal government an average of \$8.43 million per day.² Nationwide, approximately half a million people were booked into detention in FY19 – a 58% increase from FY17.³ New York City remains a prime target of federal immigration enforcement. Deportations by the ICE in the New York City area increased by 150 percent between 2016 and 2019.⁴ An alarming 1,700% increase in ICE courthouse arrests across the state between 2016 and 2018 disrupted the administration of justice,

¹ “Public Support in New York State for Government-Funded Attorneys in Immigration Court,” Vera Institute of Justice, (March 2020) <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/taking-the-pulse-new-york.pdf>

² Laurence Benson, “The Math of Immigration Detention, 2018 Update: Costs Continue to Multiply,” National Immigration Forum (May 9, 2018), available at <https://immigrationforum.org/article/math-immigration-detention-2018-update-costs-continue-multiply/>.

³ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report” (2019), available at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2019/eroReportFY2019.pdf>.

⁴ “Comptroller Stringer Investigation Reveals Huge Increases in ICE Enforcement in NYC, Leaving Families in Fear” (Feb. 21, 2019) available at https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Demographics_of_Detention_022019.pdf, (citing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “FY19 End of Year Rollout,” ERO-LESA Statistical Tracking Unit available at <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report/2018/ero-fy18-localstatistics.pdf>).

decreased public safety, and eroded trust in the justice system.⁵ ICE itself reports that as of May 16, 2020 more than 1,000 people in detention have tested positive for COVID-19, though it has only tested 2,328 of the more than 26,000 people in custody.⁶

For people facing deportation, the stakes could not be higher – physical exile from home, separation from family, loss of employment, and even violence or death in a country of origin. Now, the added risk of contracting COVID-19 raises the stakes higher than ever before. One study found that detained individuals in New York must endure deplorable conditions, including dangerously spoiled food, scarcity of potable water, verbal and psychological abuse, lack of access to health care, and solitary confinement.⁷ Yet, people in immigration court face a broken and biased system described by one federal judge as akin to hearing “death penalty cases in a traffic court setting.”⁸ In detention, people face inhumane conditions, loss of liberty, lasting trauma, and significant barriers to accessing counsel. Now, they face the heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 in an environment where social distancing is not possible and where there is not access to adequate healthcare.⁹

Despite the high stakes, immigrants facing deportation do not have the right to a public defender if they cannot afford a lawyer. As a result, most people fighting for their families and their lives in immigration court – including 70 percent of people in detention nationwide – navigate the complexities of immigration law alone.¹⁰ The obstacles facing unrepresented immigrants in general, and detained immigrants in particular, are substantial. According to the American Bar Association, it is an “understatement” to describe the field of immigration law as “vast and complex,” and immigrants who do not speak English face even more insurmountable barriers to understanding their legal rights and options.¹¹ The severe disadvantage immigrants face fighting deportation is compounded by a constantly shifting immigration landscape, in which the U.S. Attorney General and the Board of Immigration Appeals under the current presidential administration regularly issue new decisions that foreclose previously viable claims to immigration relief. During the current crisis, the federal government has further eroded the due process rights of people facing deportation, introducing unprecedented logistical and procedural barriers to fairness and dignity in immigration court. Without representation, successfully navigating this system is nearly impossible. Represented immigrants are up to ten times

⁵ Immigrant Defense Project, “Denied, Disappeared and Deported: The Toll of ICE Operations at New York’s Courts in 2019” (Jan. 2020), 1-3, available at <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Denied-Disappeared-Deported-FINAL.pdf> /

⁶ “ICE Guidance on COVID-19,” US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>

⁷ Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative, “Behind Bars in the Empire State: An Assessment of the Immigration Detention of New Yorkers,” New York Immigration Coalition (Mar. 11, 2019) available at <https://www.nyic.org/2019/03/new-report-lawyers-assess-impact-immigration-detention-new-yorkers/>.

⁸ The Honorable Mark A. Dummond, “‘Death Penalty Cases in a Traffic Court Setting’: Lessons from the Front Lines of Today’s Immigration Courts,” American Bar Association (January 15, 2019), available at <https://perma.cc/G5UB-VBKE>.

⁹ New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, “Still Detained and Denied,” 2020, available at <https://nylpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NYLPI-report-Detained-Denied.pdf>

¹⁰ The representation rate in immigration court fluctuates slightly over time. Historically, 81 percent of detained immigrants have lacked representation— between October 2000 and November 2019, 81 percent of all people in detention had never been represented (1,237,252 of 1,526,419 cases). The rate has improved slightly over the past two decades, with approximately 70 percent unrepresented in recent years—between October 2012 and November 2019, 70 percent of all people in detention had never been represented (327,828 of 466,756 cases), with the exact percentage varying slightly from year to year. See Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), “Details on Deportation Proceedings in Immigration Court,” accessed January 13, 2020, <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/>.

¹¹ Mirriam Seddiq, “Immigration Law : A Primer,” American Bar Association (Apr. 3, 2019), available at https://www.americanbar.org/groups/gpsolo/publications/gp_solo/2011/april_may/immigration_law_aprimer/.

more likely to establish a right to remain in the United States and 3.5 times more likely to win release from detention.¹²

NYIFUP helps to advance fairness and dignity in a system that otherwise sets immigrants up to fail. Since the outset of the pandemic, NYIFUP attorneys have been working harder than ever in circumstances that have made the already complex system of immigration law even more challenging. They are calling for release and safety for their clients, bringing habeas litigation to challenge the constitutionality of continued detention, federal appeals, and class action lawsuits. They continue, undeterred, in their work to counsel clients and prepare individual claims while navigating barriers to accessing witnesses, difficult client communication, and a stream of procedural challenges raised by rapidly changing immigration court policies. Clients of universal representation programs report that their attorneys treat them with respect and dignity, help them regain trust in public institutions, and restore fairness to an inhumane and unjust system.¹³

NYIFUP also keeps families together and stabilizes New York communities in the face of increasing threats to the safety and cohesion of immigrant communities, and communities at large. Immigrants account for more than one third of the City's total population and make up more than 45 percent of its labor force.¹⁴ People in dangerous detention centers and facing deportation are our neighbors, family members, and colleagues. They are deeply entrenched members of our workplaces and communities, who contribute to the economic vitality and stability of New York. They own businesses, support and care for families, and keep cities and neighborhoods safe.¹⁵ Tearing them away from their children and families causes long-lasting trauma and harm that radiates through our communities and economy. An early evaluation of the NYIFUP pilot revealed that clients served through the program had lived an average of 16 years in the United States and were projected to contribute \$2.7 million in state, local, and federal tax revenue each year. With the severe risks caused by detention and instability during this time of crisis and with continuous changes in federal policy that undermine due process protections for immigrants, NYIFUP is needed now more than ever.

Because of NYIFUP, New York leads a growing national movement to safeguard due process by securing legal representation for people in immigration proceedings. Since NYIFUP was implemented, more than 35 jurisdictions in 18 states have followed the New York's lead and are currently funding deportation defense programs, looking to New York as the model.

New York City should continue its national leadership role in serving all of those in need and standing with immigrants, especially during an unprecedented crisis in which immigrants and people of color are facing disproportionately tragic impacts as a result of the pandemic. NYIFUP is a core component of New York City's effort to stand up to federal attacks on immigrant New Yorkers and safeguard health and safety for those most acutely vulnerable in the current public health crisis. **Funding at the level of \$18.26 million is urgently needed to continue to ensure that immigrants in detention will have access to counsel and the chance to fight for freedom and safety.** By ensuring NYIFUP remains

¹² Eagly et al, "A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court," University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 164, no. 1 (2015), 1-91, <https://perma.cc/82F5-WE2D>.

¹³ Nina Siulc & Karen Berberich, "A Year of Being SAFE: Insights from the SAFE Network's First Year," Vera Institute of Justice (Nov. 2018) available at <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-year-of-being-safe.pdf>.

¹⁴ "State of our Immigrant City: Annual Report for Calendar Year 2019," Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/MOIA-Annual-Report-for-2019.pdf>

¹⁵ See Appendix B, "Profile of the foreign-born population in the State of New York," Vera Institute of Justice.

fully funded, New York City will continue its historic stance alongside immigrants in the face of cruel federal attacks against those who are an essential part of the fabric of New York.

For additional information or resources, please contact Shayna Kessler at skessler@vera.org or (917) 828-1753.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shayna Kessler
Senior Planner
Center on Immigration and Justice
Vera Institute of Justice

cc: The Honorable Margaret S. Chin
The Honorable Mathieu Eugene
The Honorable Francisco P. Moya
The Honorable Bitta Mostofi

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council Committee on Finance Meeting May 21, 2020

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Daniel Dromm

From: Sheena Wright, President & CEO, United Way of New York City

Date: May 21, 2020

Dear Councilmember Daniel Dromm,

Thank you for your leadership as New York City continues to experience the devastating impact of COVID-19, particularly among communities of color. While we defer to public health experts on the social determinants of health and environmental drivers contributing to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, we join in our City's concern and call for resources and attention to the fact that Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from COVID, and fatalities among Latinx New Yorkers are the second highest in the City.

As the New York City Council considers one of the most significant budget cycles in our City's history, **we are writing to ensure that lifelines for the communities we serve remain available.** This includes the **critical opportunities and income afforded to young people through the Summer Youth Employment Program, as well as professional development** that is fundamental for educators to support student achievement. Additionally, one issue of concern fully in the power of the City Council to address is Council discretionary funding. We know the City is in a challenging financial position. We are advocating as strongly as we can with the New York Congressional Delegation for federal relief for New York's budget deficits. Even with federal aid, the City will have to find efficiencies in the budget. However, **any cuts to City Council discretionary funding are an equity issue and will have a damaging impact on organizations serving communities of color.**

For over 80 years, United Way of New York City has worked to support vulnerable New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. We partner across the business, government, non-profit and philanthropic sectors to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in New York City. **For United Way of New York City, City Council discretionary funding has been key to ensuring that we can continue to support our work in the South Bronx through our ReadNYC program.** We know that so many other organizations also depend on discretionary funding to serve low income communities and communities of color throughout the City and we ask NYC Council to avoid cuts to City Council discretionary funding.

The goal of ReadNYC is to create systemic change in five Mott Haven elementary schools, serving a student population that is 97% Black and Latino, through promotion of an equity mindset and aligned

action among schools, community-based organizations, parents, teachers, and students. Key outcomes of our work generously supported by City Council discretionary funding includes increasing the reading proficiency for ReadNYC students and demonstrating changes in mindsets and behaviors among Mott Haven teachers and principals. Once an equity mindset is cultivated, the work begins to correct inequity and to ensure the unlimited success of students who need us the most. This work must proceed with an approach that affirms who students are and considers the strengths that are a part of every circumstance, even the strengths that invariably exist amidst the very real challenges of poverty. With an equity mindset, all stakeholders can better assess the work that is needed to improve student outcomes, resulting in students being able to see themselves in their academic studies, envision a future for themselves that's unconstrained, and move along the path to self-sufficiency. This work is pivotal in building an evidence-backed, research-based replicable model grounded in racial justice and equity that can be brought to scale across the NYC public school system. **Budget cuts in this area will be damaging to the equity focused work that we, and our fellow nonprofits do, to serve those in most need, particularly because of the impacts of this pandemic.**

The communities most impacted by COVID-19 are the communities heavily reliant on discretionary funding, which only accounts for **0.42%** of the city budget. **Discretionary funding is how organizations closest to New Yorkers and many organizations led by people of color get access to public funding.** Instead of cutting discretionary funding, we call on the City to find more impactful efficiencies, while maintaining a low-cost budget line with huge impact for under-served communities. We also support what other nonprofits are calling for: restricted funding to be made general operating support, eliminating the hearings requirement for FY20 contract registration, no retroactive cuts, and at least two weeks planning time if a program must end. These concrete actions the Council can take will support community-based organizations led by and serving those most impacted by COVID-19.

Another area of concern is the proposed budget cuts to education, including fair student funding, counselors, professional development, college access for all, summer jobs, CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Due to COVID-19, transition to distance learning has created academic learning gaps¹, and we know students, particularly those without access to enrichment programs, will be experiencing summer learning loss. **Budget cuts to these educational programs will significantly impact communities of color in New York City at a time when support for these programs is needed most.**

As mentioned, a significant part of our work through the ReadNYC program focuses on ensuring educators have an equity mindset. **Equity-focused professional development for educators is key for the success of New York City students of color and will be critical to student success after this pandemic.** Sabrina King, at ATAPE, a partner agency that helps build curriculum for our program as well as professional development for our instructors shares the following:

¹(2020, April 17). Who is showing up for remote learning? About 84% of NYC students, new data show. Chalkbeat. Retrieved from <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2020/04/17/who-is-showing-up-for-remote-learning-about-84-ofnyc-students-new-data-show/> 3

*“An equity framework guides our work. **The framework posits that high expectations and associated high leverage teaching and learning practices are essential, particularly for students of color and students whose lives are impacted by extreme poverty and associated deficit perspectives...**In order to achieve equitable outcomes, all those who are supporting student learning have to possess an equity mindset and realize that equitable outcomes require whatever it takes to meet each students’ learning needs.”*

In addition to equity-focused professional development, summer work-based programs are key pathways for New York City students to remain on track for graduation and careers. At United Way of New York City, our mandate is to stem the root causes of poverty and create systems-level change so that everyone can access quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives. Especially as a result of the disproportionate impacts of this pandemic on communities of color, this cannot be done without investment in the educational and enrichment programs that create a pathway for communities of color and low-income communities in our City to thrive. **We urge the Council to ensure that communities of color are not further impacted by budget cuts to the educational programs that are critical to recovery.**

SHELTERING ARMS

Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony submitted by Anthony
Prepared for the NY City Council Finance Committee
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
May 21st, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Anthony, and I'm a youth in foster care at Sheltering Arms. Thank you to Chair Dromm and to the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to share my story and submit testimony in support of continued funding for Fair Futures.

Sam has been my Coach since November 2018, and she has been a major asset to me. In early 2018, my Case Planner resigned and I felt like I didn't have anyone to confide in who genuinely cared and would listen to me about my day-to-day issues. I was very close to my former Case Planner, and had a hard time adjusting to my new one. I became very distant from my Case Planner and the agency, and was lost about what I wanted to do before I aged out of care. Since Sam's been my Coach, though, I've been happier and actively trying to get my life together – applying for jobs weekly, staying on top of my housing, and ensuring a better budget before aging out of foster care. I have also learned to speak up for myself and am currently working on becoming the best version of myself.

Having a Coach is different from having a Case Planner because most Case Planners only check on your living situation and if you're working or going to school – mostly asking you questions rather than sitting down and really listening about how your day was. A Coach helps you bring up self-esteem, encourages you, and makes you more comfortable opening up.

During the COVID pandemic, being trapped in the house and being stuck in one place can mess up your mental health and the way you move. But Sam has helped me during this time by texting and calling me to see how I'm doing and being a listening ear. I think Coaches are very important to have while this pandemic is going on so that when youth are having issues at their home they have somebody they can confide in versus them running away and going AWOL and losing out on allowance, or more importantly catching COVID. With a Coach checking in on you daily, they work with you to help you plan out something to do to keep you occupied while we're facing this dilemma. For me, for instance, before COVID made us go into quarantine Sam helped me find a certification internship, so for the last couple of weeks I have been able to do an internship online through Zoom and be paid and also receive my OSHA 30 in construction. I

think that's very important, because if I didn't have a Coach right now I would probably be broke while this whole pandemic is going on.

Coaches are really necessary to make sure that youth in foster care are prepared and supported to age out with a plan, especially now that so much is changing in the world. We need this support more than ever. Please fulfill the City's promise to youth in foster care and support funding for Fair Futures.

Thank you,
Anthony

SHELTERING ARMS

Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony submitted by QueenEsther Arroyo,
Community Coordinator for Rock Safe Streets, a program of Sheltering Arms
Prepared for the NY City Council Finance Committee
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
March 21st, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is QueenEsther Arroyo. I am a Community Coordinator for Rock Safe Streets, a Cure Violence program in Far Rockaway that is operated by Sheltering Arms. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest providers of education, youth development, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We serve more than 15,000 children and families each year, and employ nearly 1,300 staff from across New York City.

Our Cure Violence program, Rock Safe Streets, was launched with City Council investment in 2015 in response to historic violence in the Rockaway community. Rock Safe Streets has been in the community for five years now, and in that time we have connected youth to more than 250 jobs for their summer and winter work programs, conducted hundreds of violence interruptions and mediations, and have helped reduce shootings in the worst part of Far Rockaway by 90%.

We serve a population of youth that is at increased risk for gun violence. They come from poverty-stricken households and backgrounds full of trauma. For this community, having programs for youth this summer is not just important, it is a necessity, especially during this time of crisis due to COVID-19.

Through SYEP we have been able to expose participants to opportunities, education, training, mentorship groups, and exercises that have built their self-esteem, integrity, and character. Employment also gives our participants the opportunity to increase their self-sufficiency which helps to alleviate some of their poverty and paves the way for our community to flourish. Having these summer camps and summer employment programs also helps the parents that our youth are connected to who are struggling just to keep the bills paid and food on the table.

Due to COVID-19, we are adjusting to a "new norm" globally. We have taken on a virtual way of getting the job done across the globe. As New Yorkers we roll with the punches and turn lemons into lemonade. We have to keep the youth included in this change.

Taking away SYEP will only put more stress and anxiety on these youth and their families, especially with everything around them being disrupted and restricted during this time of crisis. Our youth rely on these programs for survival and growth. These summer programs are not just nice programs to have but they are absolutely necessary to support our communities that have been hit hardest by COVID and to help our communities as we begin to recover.

I am urging the NYC Council to show support by standing with us and restoring summer programming for youth. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Queen Esther Arroyo
Community Coordinator
Rock Safe Streets, Sheltering Arms

SHELTERING ARMS

Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony submitted by Justin Gourdine, Site Director, PS75 After School
Prepared for the NY City Council Civil Service and Labor Committee
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
March 21st, 2020**

Good Afternoon, my name is Justin Gourdine. I am the Site Director for Sheltering Arms' After School program at PS75 in the South Bronx. Thank you, Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, and the entire City Council for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest providers of education, youth development, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We serve more than 15,000 children and families each year, and employ nearly 1,300 staff from across New York City. Our After School programs in nine schools across New York City provide a safe, structured learning environment for students to strengthen their academic and leadership skills, and to engage in new ideas and experiences. At PS75 where I serve as Site Director, we serve more than 250 students each year, including 200 in summer camp last year.

I have been in the field of Youth Development for almost 15 years. Over the course of my career I have had the pleasure and privilege to be a part of three different summer camps over nine summers in various capacities. Each of program served students with different races and socio-economic backgrounds. However different they were, though, they all shared one beautiful thing: Students participating in new activities and expanding the limit of what they think is possible for their lives.

Modified programming this summer, either virtually or through socially-distant programming, can still provide critically needed support for students in our communities. Providers across NYC have come together to develop recommendations for safe alternative program models for both summer COMPASS/SONYC and SYEP– these proposals have been shared with DYCD and the NYC Council. An example of the type of safe and meaningful services that can be provided include a filmmaking program I have previously implemented with students in partnership with FilmProv. We opened up their mental vision and expanded their minds, allowing them to see the world through a new lens both figuratively and literally. They learned how to properly record videos and edit them. They also learned how to verbalize this experience and their recorded experiences, while also learning how to go in depth in their explanations – a skill that we as adults call critical thinking and explaining. In addition to supporting skills development, this type of programming would serve to engage students in positive projects that encourage them to process the emotions and trauma caused by the impact of COVID in their communities, families, and their own lives. The kids and families we serve need these kind of positive, productive, and engaging activities this summer more than ever.

It is also my personal experience in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) that made a young college student looking for a summer job fall in love with what would become his career. As an SYEP

employee at an After School program in 2006, I was introduced to the world of Youth Development and met one of my mentors who showed me the value of professionalism and the value of working diligently. This type of support can still be provided in virtual or socially-distant work placements. SYEP will help provide immense, invaluable benefit to youth this summer: it will provide structure, routine, critically needed income, skills development, network development, purpose, and so much more to youth who need it now more than ever.

Summer Camps here in New York can leave an imprint on a child's heart, and have the power to change the trajectory of their lives. Students I have served in Summer Camps are now aiding our friends and families who have been affected by COVID-19, are standouts in college sports, growing minds in the world of fashion, and serving in our armed forces. With that said, I am here to ask that we do all we can as leaders, both in politics and Youth Development, to restore summer programming and make sure youth have access to safe, structured, and pro-social activities needed now more than ever – whether virtual or through socially-distant, in-person programs. Providers like Sheltering Arms are ready with recommendations and best practices for implementing a variety of proposed program structures for this summer. We cannot let our youth fall further behind.

Thank you for fighting for our youth and communities of color. We look forward to working with you to restore summer programming. Please reach out with any questions you may have.

Justin Gourdine
Site Director, PS75 After School
Sheltering Arms

SHELTERING ARMS

Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony submitted by Elizabeth McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer
Prepared for the NY City Council Finance Committee
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearing
March 21st, 2020**

Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest providers of education, youth development, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We serve more than 15,000 children and families each year, and employ nearly 1,300 staff from across New York City.

The City must make tough decisions about the FY21 budget, but New York cannot afford to cut human services. It has never been clearer that the services provided by human service organizations like Sheltering Arms are more crucial than ever - and the need for our services will only continue to increase as families and communities grapple with the ongoing economic, health, mental health, and educational impacts of the pandemic. Our staff and services are a lifeline for many of the children, youth, and families we serve.

Human service providers like Sheltering Arms are on the frontlines caring for and protecting New York's most vulnerable populations. Staff in our residential programs risk their health and well-being each day to continue to serve youth in the foster care, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth systems, as well as adults with developmental disabilities. Our Case Planners, Therapists, and Medical staff have made huge shifts to continue to support children and families via video calls and tele-medicine, and continue to provide in-person services to families most in need to ensure the well-being of New York City's children. Administrative and support teams are working around the clock to ensure our staff have the resources, equipment, and support they need to continue to provide care and to get supplies to families in need. I could go on and on about the courageous acts of bravery and dedication our staff have shown as they also adapt to a new normal, grieve the loss of co-workers and loved ones, and support their own children's education.

The City must prioritize human service organizations in the FY21 budget to ensure New Yorkers have the support and services they need to rebuild and strengthen their well-being in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. We need you to stand up for NYC's values and support our communities that are being hit hardest.

Recovery Summer for Youth

Programming for youth will be more important than ever this summer, whether virtual or in-person. Students will need support to prevent falling even further behind before the new school year, as well as activities to keep them engaged in positive, structured activities that help them gain new skills and provide a safe space to process the enormous disruption and trauma of COVID-19 on themselves, their families, and our communities. Parents in communities we serve, who have always depended on summer SONYC/COMPASS programming to ensure their children are safe while they work, need this support now more than ever. Many parents are essential workers and must be able to continue working

throughout the summer. Parents who have lost jobs must be able to return to work when businesses begin to reopen. Afterschool and summer programming are vital to the well-being of families and the economic future of our communities.

Older Sheltering Arms youth, including youth in foster care and the homeless youth systems, benefit tremendously from the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). It is vital that SYEP be reinstated to provide vital economic stimulus in communities that need it most, and to support continued social distancing as needed throughout the summer. Remote or socially-distant work placements through SYEP will help keep youth engaged productively rather than out in the streets over the summer. Youth serving organizations, including Sheltering Arms, have worked closely with the Campaign for Children and the Campaign for Summer Jobs to propose alternative program models for summer youth programming, including summer COMPASS/SONYC and SYEP, to ensure services are provided safely in a variety of possible settings. These proposals have been shared with DYCD and the NYC Council.

After months of remote learning and staying home, New York City must actively engage youth this summer in programming that will support their education and career paths, their emotional well-being, and their family's ability to work. Without summer programming for youth of all ages, we are gravely concerned about widening gaps in educational and economic equity, increases in domestic and child abuse, and spikes in crime rates among youth.

Fair Futures: Our organization is proud to be a member of Fair Futures, a coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations focused on supporting young people in and aging out of foster care. Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fair Futures coaches and tutors have been on the forefront helping our youth in foster care secure safe housing, food and medical supplies, and assisting in the transition to virtual learning. In the midst of this crisis, they continue to provide emotional and academic support to our young people and for many, are the only support system they have. More than ever, we ask for the City to fulfill its promise to foster youth. In order for our young people to survive this crisis and its long-term effects, we urge the City Council to work collaboratively with the Mayor to restore funding for Fair Futures in the City's FY21 budget.

City Council Discretionary Initiatives

Discretionary funding, especially for City Council Initiatives, provides vital investment in New York City's communities. Especially in the face of crises like we're experiencing now, City Council Members know the needs of their communities and the providers best positioned to meet these needs. While tough decisions will need to be made, Council Initiatives that provide essential services must not be cut.

Children Under Five: This initiative supports evidence-based therapeutic services for children ages 0-5 who have experienced trauma, providing dyadic therapy with their caregiver. Through Sheltering Arms' four mental health clinics, three in Southeast Queens and one in the South Bronx, Sheltering Arms is one of only a handful of providers across NYC to provide this important care for such young children and their families in the wake of trauma, including that experienced by so many families throughout the City as a result of COVID-19. Importantly, Children Under Five discretionary funding allows us to serve uninsured clients who also often lack access to economic supports such as unemployment benefits or federal stimulus checks. We continue to provide this service via tele-health, and have only seen need for this service increase as families cope with loss, isolation, increased domestic violence, and manage the stress of such huge disruption to their lives. Over the course of two months we have seen a 46% increase in appointments kept, and maintain a waitlist for services.

Wrap-Around Support for Transitional-Aged Foster Youth: COVID-19 poses unique challenges for former foster youth. With these funds we provide youth ages 21-26 with vital coaching and support to re-engage young people, conduct baseline assessments of their needs and interests, and facilitate access to the supports and services they need to thrive, including public benefits, housing, education and/or vocational opportunities. The long-range educational, health, behavioral health, and employment outlook for former foster youth is concerning and has only been exacerbated by COVID-19. Youth who were attending college and/or part of the city's workforce have been uprooted or significantly disrupted, and many youth are facing greater mental health concerns. Our former foster youth cannot have critical coaching support taken away from them in the face of such uncertainty.

Investment in Human Services Workforce

The New York City Council is no stranger to the sustainability crisis in our sector. We are grateful to the City Council and Mayor for taking an important step toward addressing decades of chronic underfunding by committing funds in the FY20 budget last year to support providers' true indirect costs. This investment, along with previous multi-year cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) show the City's commitment to addressing underfunding, and we hope that commitment will continue this year. However, decades of chronic, compounding underinvestment in human services means that long before the pandemic, providers have faced stagnant contracts that have lost value over time (often close to 10 years with no cost-escalators), resulting in unjustifiably low wages, crumbling infrastructure, and staff turnover that significantly impact the ability of providers to maintain and improve the quality of services for more than 2.5 million New Yorkers in need.

Our deep expertise and connection to our communities has allowed us to respond to the needs of our community throughout this crisis, but at significant cost. Our frontline workers – the ones who are now providing critical care to New York's most vulnerable populations – have borne the brunt of decades of chronic underfunding and disinvestment in the human service sector. While continuing to provide lifesaving services, adjusting to completely new ways of working, and grieving the loss of loved ones, many of our frontline staff have lost second jobs that they depend on to make ends meet; others are now the only source of income for their households.

Our workforce, which is 82% women and 80% people of color, has become some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. Even before the pandemic, more than 60% of our workforce qualified for some form of public assistance. The average human services worker makes only \$37,000 annually (\$2,725/month), far below the Self-Sufficiency Standard¹ for a family living in any borough in NYC. To make matters worse, City agencies often pay their own staff significantly more than they contract providers to pay for identical positions. In our Close to Home programs, for example, entry-level Youth Specialists can make up to \$15,000 more annually working for the Administration for Children's Services. And if they travel just a bit further to Westchester and Nassau counties right outside the City, where providers are paid per diem rates that are almost double the City rate through State-funded Raise the Age programs, they can earn even more.

The disinvestment in the human services workforce is fundamentally a justice issue that has real impacts for the future of New York City communities. **A 3% COLA on the personnel services line of all human**

¹ The Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income I needed to meet families' basic needs at a minimally adequate level, including the essential expenses faced by workers, but without any public or private assistance.

[New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard Report, United Way NYC](#)

services contracts at the cost of \$48 million in the FY21 budget is necessary to begin to address our sector's longstanding needs and to prevent our vital workforce from slipping further into poverty.

Further, the City Council must work with the human services sector to secure and disburse funding for incentive pay retroactive to March 23, 2020 for all frontline human services workers who have been unable to do their jobs remotely.

We also ask that, as we begin to look to the future and our City's recovery, the City Council join us and other providers, workers, and advocates in the fight for more sustainable solutions to ensure fair, equitable pay for the human services workforce, including model budgets and mandated cost escalators.

Our workforce has long been, and will continue to be, vital to the overall functioning and health of New York City, and they have been blatantly undervalued and drastically underpaid for far too long. We urge the Council to include a 3% COLA in the FY21 budget, secure and disburse incentive pay, and work with us to implement more comprehensive solutions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on these critical budget items, and for the City Council's partnership on the issues impacting our sector and our communities. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have.

Thank you,

Elizabeth McCarthy
Chief Executive Officer
emccarthy@shelteringarmsny.org

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
FY21 Budget Testimony
May 22, 2020

Chair Dromm and members of the committee,

My name is Siri Horvitz, and I am the Government Relations Director at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. On behalf of my organization, I extend my sincere gratitude to you and your staffs for your work keeping New York City safe, informed, and supported during this unprecedented time. I also want to recognize all the essential workers for the work they do to keep the city running.

I have prepared this testimony to speak to how Lincoln Center is adapting its service during the pandemic and to address the importance of continued support for non-profit cultural organizations. Founded 60 years ago, Lincoln Center seeks to provide the best of the performing arts for all residents of New York City. To this end, we are committed to championing artistic innovation and providing free and low-cost programming of the highest caliber for all New Yorkers—last year, 55% of audiences came to a performance for free, and our community and educational programs touched each of the 51 council districts.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lincoln Center closed its physical doors on March 12, but we have pivoted to ensure that our socially distanced city still has access to high-quality performing arts and arts education. Shortly after closing, we announced *Lincoln Center at Home* (<http://lincolncenter.org/lincoln-center-at-home>), a free, one-stop, digital platform for new and archival performances, lessons, and more from the 11 constituent organizations that make their home on the Lincoln Center campus. *Lincoln Center at Home* makes it possible to participate in live-streamed arts education lessons led by Lincoln Center’s dynamic teaching artists, learn to plié with New York City Ballet dancers, and enjoy a 1965 New York Philharmonic concert conducted by Leonard Bernstein without having to pay a dime.

I want to quickly highlight one of these programs. Each Sunday at 6pm, we release our weekly “Memorial for Us All,” an opportunity to honor our shared grief and take a moment to mourn together in a way that has been otherwise impossible during the pandemic. We work with world-class artists like Yo-Yo Ma and Wynton Marsalis, and partners from the faith community, including the Mayor’s Center for Faith and Community Partnerships, to put together a short, poignant concert memorializing loved ones who have been lost to the pandemic. Music has a power to offer unity, comfort, and healing and we are proud that we can share that power with everyone experiencing loss right now.

We remain dedicated to continuing to serve our community and our city in any way we can. During the peak of the pandemic, Lincoln Center and the Juilliard School worked together to offer our dormitory space for housing health workers and other responders as they fought against the spread of the virus. We are also looking into the use of our public spaces as flexible spaces for the distribution of food to hungry New Yorkers and are exploring additional spaces to offer as testing sites, as needed. And we continue to work with the Census to encourage as many New Yorkers to participate as possible. When it is possible to reopen our halls and return to sharing our world-class art in person with New Yorkers and tourists alike, we have some exciting plans. Last December, we announced a partnership with the New York Philharmonic to renovate David Geffen Hall; this major cultural construction project will provide an influx of hundreds of millions of dollars to the City’s economy as we create a modern, innovative hall with public spaces for a wide range of free and educational programming.

We plan to use these public spaces, as well as our concert halls, to make up for lost performances in an exciting way—hosting a campus-wide festival honoring first responders and essential workers once it is safe to do so. We hope that this will be a powerful moment of community spirit and encourage New Yorkers and tourists alike to come back together in the greatest city in the world.

In the meantime, we want to assure you that until it's safe to come back together we're committed to providing vital services and will find a way to reach old and new audiences in an accessible, effective way.

We have already transitioned some of our programming to the internet—for example, our LC Moments program, which presents concerts for people with dementia and their caregivers, had a very successful digital launch, and we're planning to continue offering it online going forward, perhaps even in partnership with future in-person events. We're using the setback of this closure as an opportunity to develop innovations that will help us grow after large gatherings resume and we enter the new normal. While we continue to explore online possibilities, we hope that our public spaces, utilized by millions of people annually, can once again be a place of in-person relief and congregation (at an appropriate distance) as social distancing measures begin to ease. We continue to maintain public access to Damrosch Park for the community and are focused on opportunities to re-activate our public spaces in engaging ways, when permitted. Our return to live performances outdoors will almost certainly precede performances in our venues, as we explore ways to host socially distanced activations open to the general public.

As we try to balance massive contributed and earned income losses with retaining staff, maintaining our 16 acres of spaces, supporting artists, and developing new virtual methods to reach audiences, students, and families, city support is vital. Maintaining funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs and supporting initiative and member items allow us to work with and for New Yorkers in ways that would otherwise be impossible.

We were pleased to see support for the DCLA in the recent executive budget, and we ask for your support in maintaining crucial funding for the City's artistic and cultural institutions, including the preservation of special funding initiatives such as CASA, Autism Awareness, and Geriatric Mental Health, that support much of the sector's programming. Continued city funding for the cultural sector ensures that organizations will be able to fulfill their roles as social service providers, educating, entertaining, and uplifting New Yorkers from every neighborhood and every part of the socioeconomic ladder.

Thank you again for your continued leadership during this crisis. Please email me at shorvitz@lincolncenter.org if you have questions or would like to hear more about our plans.

Respectfully submitted,

Siri Horvitz
Director, Government Relations
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
70 Lincoln Center Plaza, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10023
shorvitz@lincolncenter.org
(212) 875-5338



**Sistas & Brothas United of the
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition**

103 East 196th Street

Bronx, NY 10468

Tel: 718-584-0515 fax: 646-350-0898

www.northwestbronx.org

Hello everyone, My name is Josh Melendez. I live in the Bronx, I am in the 6th grade and I am a youth leader at Sistas And Brothas United. I feel more uncertain of what school will look like when we return. Like many of my peers, covid19 continues to negatively impact my community in many ways and school should feel like a safe haven but after hearing the priorities of the chancellor and the Department of Education I feel like my wellbeing is not a priority.

Before schools closed due to the pandemic, there were major issues in our schools that we must address before returning. One of these issues is the lack of health resources for students.

I attend Junior High School 123 in the South Bronx where the asthma rate in children is higher than that of children across New York City, also where we have seen some of the highest number of Covid19 cases and twice the rate of death due to covid19. My School lacked resources like soap, hot water, and cleaning products which in a borough with so many vulnerable community members, the probability of spreading sickness again is high and there seems to be no attempts to address what the students and staff need most when we go back to school.

I have 6 more years before I am done with public school, how can I feel like during the next 6 years of my life, I will be invested in, if what I see that the Department of education will continue to spend 4 times the amount of money on police then what they spend on school nurses which are more important to make sure we are healthy.

I want to walk back into a school building that prioritizes proper building *maintenance*, nurses and sanitizing products in addition to mental health support, social workers and counselors instead of budget lines that criminalize young people.

Adjusting the proposed budget is not a request but a moral responsibility, otherwise, what I can learn from all of this is that my life, my voice and my health does not matter.



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Hi my name is Sky Caraballo, I'm a youth leader with Sistas & Brothas United currently a 12th grader a part of Discovery High School, I live in Norwood in the Bronx. During this troubling time of the COVID-19 pandemic it seems as if there's just a series of unfortunate events one after the other and now there will be another one with the new potential budget cuts. Budget cuts that will affect youth more than others. As of now the budget cut that will affect me the most would be the \$180 million cut for the Department Of Youth And Community Development. This cut will affect me the most because this year through my school I was able to get a guaranteed spot with the SYEP program. This both excited and relieved me because my goal for this summer was to have a job so I can start preparing for my start of college in September. With that money I would've been able to buy the things I both needed and wanted without having to rely on my mother who has two other kids to take care of.

The SYEP program is one that benefits kids greatly because it provides us with a way to choose jobs that we feel will be best suited to our interests for our future and also allows us to have an income that is ours and we are able to have a little bit of financial knowledge with what we purchase or save for. So with the cancellation of the program this summer and also other summer programs, it is very disappointing news for Teens. Instead of cutting the budget I feel like the city should really evaluate how beneficial this program is for teens. It gives them so many opportunities that allows them to flourish over the summer. For some it's a way to escape their households even if it's for a few hours. For others it allows them to have their own money and lessens their reliance on their parents, it can be a relief to struggling households and the extra income coming in relieves some of the burdens they were facing. Overall there's just a multitude of benefits the program brings, so for it to basically be put on the back burner with such a large cut to it, I feel as if the City youth is being ignored and stripped away from great opportunities.



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Hello my name is Tyenell Hoover, a youth leader at Sistas & Brothas United, I'm a 12th grader at Discovery High School in Bronx, NY. I represent the Bronx neighborhood of Bainbridge in Norwood. The Coronavirus pandemic is causing disruption within the budget of the state of NYC, and there are things being disregarded that are needed for the satisfaction, comfortability, and productivity of youth and workers within New York City. Budget cuts to the DOE will negatively affect me because as a student I know that if my peers are not getting the services they need then I'm not helping my community.

I believe it'd be best to go back to a school with building improvements rather than going back with things that still aren't able to provide me and other students with stability and comfort within the school like more police.

The DYCD cuts also negatively affect me because I have participated in the SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) for the past 2 years and I usually participate to be able to practice how to budget my own money as well as help out my family at home, which isn't extremely wealthy. Cutting SYEP from the budget will make others lose opportunities of making money necessary for their self-growth as well as financial stability.

Instead of cutting the budget, I believe that the DOE and the city should prioritize things such as mental health stability, the providing of meals for unfortunate families, a comfortable sense of online education for students and more that will one hundred percent be more effective rather than cutting things that actually matter greatly to Black and Brown communities.



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My name is Wesley Guzman. I'm a High School Senior and a youth leader at Sistas and Brothas United. I constantly worry for the health and safety of my mother who travels to work and when I drop off groceries to my grandparents. If I'm this worried while we are in this social distancing time I can only imagine how worried families will get when schools reopen. I worry for my peers and siblings that schools will not be prepared to reopen safely next year.

Prior to the school shut down due to Covid-19, many schools lacked soap, hot water, working water fountains, overcrowded classrooms, asbestos in the walls and had 0 to 1 nurses in a building for over 1000 students. These kinds of unhealthy conditions were difficult to deal with before Covid-19 but as our lives and our protocols have shifted I want to ensure that this budget does not forget about students' health needs.

As the city negotiates on budget priorities, they need to ensure that our schools will reopen with an increased access to school nurses, increase sanitary products in schools and increase building maintenance staff funds to ensure students attend schools that are safe and healthy. With that said it is critical that funding for professional development is kept as our teachers not only need training to support students transition back into schools but will need support adjusting their teaching models to adapt to our new reality. Training on restorative justice practices to support these transitions and maintaining a healthy environment are key especially because we should not rely on SSAs or NYPD to enforce any social distancing protocols in schools.

To make this possible when there's budget cuts across agencies I suggest you cut a lot more than 1% of NYPD's budget which has barely been touched in the Mayor's proposed budget. NYPD or SSAs don't make us feel safe, they make us feel like we're criminals in and out of school. They often harass black and brown students. We now see them heavily target people of color in social distancing enforcement. They haven't helped us before and they certainly won't help when schools reopen. A just budget for students doesn't criminalize them. Thank you



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Hello,

My name is Ashiyha McClurrian and I am currently a senior at Discovery high school and a youthleader with Sistas & Brothas United in The Bronx. The proposed budget cuts don't affect me directly as much because I am almost out of grade school but they affect my fellow peers around me. The two biggest cuts that will affect the youth are the DOE's 641 million dollar cut back on professional development , equity & Excellence programs and the NYC cuts on the summer youth employment program. Professional Development is when teachers in the schools gather for weekly meetings to discuss different techniques they can use to improve their teachings and help other students learn better. If professional development is cut, how will teachers continue to improve on their skills and learn how to meet the needs of all children who learn differently. This budget cut is definitely a selfish action because imagine if it was your kid with a learning disability and the school they attended didn't have the resources necessary to guide them. Wouldn't you feel helpless as a parent? Furthermore the equity and excellence program was made to engage public school kids in grades as low as K-3 in a rigorous learning environment. Sometimes public school education can seem less than in comparison to private institutions which is why we created a platform to build our kids up with the knowledge they need to be successful throughout life.

The NYC plans to cut the summer youth employment by 180 million dollars also puts teens across NYC at a disadvantage. The coronavirus has already forced millions of people to file for unemployment and for many teens we were looking for the chance to make our own money this summer but now they want to cancel it. Some of us will be entering college and wanted to save for certain expenses we couldn't afford otherwise. Next year less students won't be able to have the opportunity for summer youth employment because a decrease in funding leaves less job opportunities. These jobs create a sense of independence & responsibility but they also take the pressure off parents to provide.

Instead of cutting the budget we need to take into consideration The youth of today because we're the future and we need to feel supported and cared about in order to make a difference and become better.



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My name is Hugo Boyer, I am a senior in Discovery High School in Bronx and live in District 16. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, our city has to make major adjustments as we enter the new fiscal year. The DOE will undertake a large budget cut(\$461 million dollars), money that can effectively be used when schools reopen. As a result of these budget cuts, schools will be deprived of important new resources and materials that enable students to succeed. These materials and resources include new laptops, classroom renovations, school supplies(notebooks, pencils, pens, etc.), new textbooks, proper gym equipment, working water fountains, and more. As a senior it is my responsibility to leave my school better than it was when I came in, the budget decisions that will be made by elected officials is also part of my legacy. It is unfair for me to not speak up for the younger generation and hope that we see a major shift in the budget priorities.

When schools reopen, they will need to receive the same amount of money that they got before the pandemic or more because once the students come in, they expect success and that is what they deserve. Don't cut vital services to our youth and invest in them. If this doesn't change our black and brown communities will be the ones who suffer most. My community, my peers and my family's lives matter and it should matter to all the elected officials.

DIVEST FROM POLICING INVEST IN HEALING

DEMANDS FOR A RESTORATIVE AND JUST BUDGET

During and in the aftermath of this public health crisis, it is especially urgent that we continue the momentum for school climate reform with a financial commitment. As the city navigates budget gaps, schools must not carry the weight of cuts while agencies responsible for the criminalization of young people and communities, with already bloated budgets, remain untouched and unquestioned.

The Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY demands the following:

1 **KEEP TEACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS AND COMMIT TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, HEALING, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT, AND TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSES TO CONFLICT.**

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of prioritizing mental health, relationships, and community in our schools. Educators, students, and families need training in restorative approaches and targeted mental health interventions to support trauma-informed healing now and upon returning to school in the fall. The City should support schools by:

Rejecting the hiring freeze on teachers and social workers proposed in the Citywide Savings Plan.

Increasing and baselining funding to ensure one social worker and guidance counselor per 150 students and financially supporting schools in the hiring of peacebuilders and restorative justice coordinators.

Substantially supporting access to restorative justice curriculum and resources for educators to ensure student trauma is addressed in the classroom.

Including and baselining \$15 million in the FY 2021 budget to launch and sustain a Mental Health Continuum to support the significant behavioral health needs of students in designated neighborhoods and high-need schools.

2 **EXPAND HEALTH AND SANITATION MEASURES IN SCHOOLS TO PROTECT STUDENTS, STAFF, AND OUR COMMUNITIES.**

Upon returning to school, students, staff, parents, and other school community members need resources to ensure that their health and safety is prioritized. We demand that the City:

Ensure all schools have the staffing, funding, and supplies necessary to maintain exceptional, and, at minimum, sanitary conditions.

Training for members of the school community, to implement and support social distancing at schools.

Police should not be assigned to enforce social distancing in schools.

3 **RESTORE FUNDING FOR THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP), AND WITH IT, THE 75,000 JOBS THAT YOUNG NEW YORKERS ARE COUNTING ON.**

SYEP provides young people with the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences when school is out while helping to support their families. New York City youth cannot afford to lose this vital source of income. The City must uphold its commitment to young people and their families by:

Supporting community-based organizations who are preparing to offer meaningful remote Summer Youth Employment opportunities if social distancing remains in effect through the summer.

Work with immigration advocates and CBOs to provide SYEP opportunities for undocumented youth.

Provide summer programming to keep youth engaged, which will prevent isolation, loneliness, and further trauma, as well as minimize police interactions.

4 **REDUCE SPENDING FOR SCHOOL POLICING AND INSTITUTE A HIRING FREEZE ON THE NYPD.**

As we move through the crisis of the pandemic and prepare for reopening the city later this year, we must invest in systems that support young people, not systems that criminalize them. The city should cut NYPD spending and shift those funds to support mental health, restorative justice, and youth employment by:

Instituting a hiring freeze on the NYPD, including the School Safety Division, and plan for a long-term reduction in police headcount.

Move to permanently remove police and invasive security from schools by immediately shrinking the inflated school policing budget by limiting overtime, equipment, and OTPS, and moving the administration to identify further cost savings.



JOIN THE WORK
[DIGNITYINSCHOOLS.ORG/DSC-NY](https://dignityinschools.org/dsc-ny)



DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS



New York County Defender Services (NYCDS)

New York City FY21 Budget Priorities

New York County Defender Services is an elite public defense firm serving New York City's most vulnerable communities since 1997. We represent thousands of people accused of crimes in Manhattan every year and provide them with high-quality legal representation in criminal, civil and immigration matters. Our clients represent the diversity of New York City and hail from all of the five boroughs.

NYCDS appreciates the troubling fiscal situation that New York City potentially faces due to the coronavirus pandemic. Yet we remain hopeful that the federal government will intervene to make up some of the lost tax revenue and allow the city to continue to fund critical and innovative projects that serve New York's most vulnerable residents. With that caveat, we share our City Council discretionary funding requests along with our call to save SYEP, a vital program that benefits hundreds of our youngest clients every year. Finally, we urge the council to maintain funding for public defense providers like NYCDS who serve an essential government function by fighting to protect the constitutional rights of accused people and helping them to safely remain in their communities with their families.

City Council Discretionary Funding Requests

Member Item – ID #91998

NYCDS seeks \$10,000 in funding to hire an experienced community engagement director and support staff. We plan to hire a qualified formerly incarcerated person to serve as a liaison between our office and the communities we serve in New York County. The director will also be charged with creating, implementing and staffing a restorative justice program for our current clients, coordinating record sealing clinics staffed by NYCDS attorneys and paralegals, and planning and executing other community events

Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus – ID #91998

NYCDS also seeks \$75,000 in funding from the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus to hire an experienced community engagement director and support staff. We plan to hire a qualified formerly incarcerated person to serve as a liaison between our office and the communities we serve in New York County. The director will also be charged with creating, implementing and staffing a restorative justice program for our current clients, coordinating record sealing clinics staffed by NYCDS attorneys and paralegals, and planning and executing other community events

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative: ID #85734

As a public defender office, we have experienced immigration attorneys on staff to support thousands of non-citizen clients in their criminal cases. But our funding from the City is limited to *Padilla* advisals; a U.S. Supreme

Court decision requiring criminal defense lawyers to advise accused people of the immigration consequences of a criminal plea. Our immigration attorneys are trained and available to pursue relief for their non-citizen clients in immigration court, however they are contractually barred from doing so with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) provided funding. **NYCDS seeks funding in the amount of \$50,000 for our immigration unit to represent existing and future clients in affirmative immigration matters.**

New Initiative Alternatives to Incarceration: ID #91940

In order to stop the cycle of arrests and incarceration, prevent future crimes or parole violations, and strengthen our communities, it is necessary that individuals returning from jail have immediate access to a diverse set of social programs and professional consultations tailored to the unique needs they may possess. Our experience shows that this is the most effective method of ensuring individuals successfully reintegrating into our communities and avoid future contact with the criminal justice system. For this purpose **NYCDS requests \$150,000 in funding to support one-hundred percent of those clients that will be leaving city jails** and returning to communities they have been separated from for prolonged periods of time.

Innovative Criminal Justice Initiatives: ID #91951

Bail reform has highlighted an important city problem – there are a small number of people, often people who are experiencing street homelessness, who have dozens of arrests for low-level, non-violent offenses that stem from chronic poverty and related issues. Before bail reform, these people would be sent to Rikers Island. However, these people are no longer eligible for bail, and they require immediate social work interventions to support them after arraignment. **We request funding in the amount of \$100,000 for an experienced social worker to be in the courtroom during NYCDS' arraignment shifts in Manhattan Criminal Court.**

Court-involved Youth Mental Health: ID #91948

The new Raise the Age law recognizes that youth are different from adults and have varying needs that require unique support. After Raise the Age passed, we hired a juvenile social worker to work with specifically with our 16- and 17-year-olds. She has been an enormous success, particularly in assessing and supporting youth with complex mental health needs who are in crisis. **NYCDS seeks funding in the amount of \$150,000 to expand our specialized youth social work services** to older teens, who, like their younger counterparts, have distinct needs from adult clients, with an emphasis on education, developing healthy interpersonal skills, developing job skills and addressing complex mental health needs.

Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers: ID #91978

NYCDS is a public defender office that serves close to 15,000 clients in criminal cases every year. We estimate that approximately 40% of our clients are homeless and thousands more are severely housing insecure. In fact, requests for shelter or housing assistance are our number one social work request. **We are requesting \$75,000 in funding for a dedicated shelter/housing social worker** to better help our clients navigate the City's complex shelter, supportive housing and permanent housing systems.

Other Budget Issues

Summer Youth Employment Program

As public defenders who represent juveniles in the criminal legal system, we have long known that access to New York City's long-established Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is vital to the success of our youth clients. Last year our office represented 1,350 young people ages 14-24, a great many of whom benefited from SYEP. This far-reaching, incredibly impactful program provides an opportunity for young people to gain the proficiency necessary to eventually reach independence. We strongly support continued funding of SYEP in FY 2021.

NYCDS' juvenile defense team has seen firsthand how much our clients have to lose without SYEP. For many, enrollment in SYEP is an explicit directive from probation officers and court monitoring programs, as those with court involvement receive priority in the lottery. Teenagers and young adults who have been arrested often need exactly what SYEP offers: a structured distraction, a chance to see what gainful employment could be like, a time to raise their self-efficacy and hone specific skillsets. For some of our clients, SYEP has been the catalyst to help them create future plans, career goals, and to appreciate their own inherent abilities. Often SYEP is a New Yorker's first job. This program allows young people the opportunity to experience workplace dynamics. Those of us that have had SYEP interns in the past can remember how much they learned from the experience, and how grateful they were for the regular paycheck. Funding SYEP is not just about keeping young people busy – it is preventative work, keeping teens from making choices that are antithetical to their safety and well-being.

Judges especially value seeing SYEP on a young person's service plan. Our young clients often have to demonstrate their commitment to a law-abiding lifestyle in order to stay out of juvenile detention centers or to receive lesser sentence. Yet it is impossible for young people to change overnight without assistance; physiologically and emotionally the decision-making area of their brains are underdeveloped, and they need help to reject old habits and embrace new patterns of behavior. It is incredibly difficult to do this without seeing any possibility for a different kind of a future, or a new ambition to work toward. Taking away SYEP removes the light at the end of the tunnel for thousands of teenagers. They will not have the necessary tools that prevent them from repeating mistakes. Defunding SYEP removes the largest summer program that engages adolescents with court involvement, and at NYCDS, we are extremely frightened about what the potential consequences of such an action could be.

Other DYCD Funding

In addition to SYEP, the FY21 budget reductions proposed by the Mayor would eliminate a great deal of programming by the Department of Youth and Community Development, including Beacon, Cornerstone, and COMPASS centers, which provide camps and after school programs for hundreds of thousands of youth and GED classes, literacy programs, and other services for thousands of adults in NYC. Frankly, it would be difficult to find a child in a public school setting who has not engaged with any of these groups throughout their educational careers. Many of our parenting clients are now struggling to figure out how to manage their childcare needs throughout the long summer and are terrified of future cuts to these agencies in the fall. We want to reiterate that any decreases will have ripple effects amongst the communities that we serve and we are very fearful of the fallout. We urge you to preserve as much of this funding as possible.

About New York County Defender Services (NYCDS)

New York County Defender Services first opened our doors in 1997. Our original team of 13 attorneys banded together to provide people accused of crimes in Manhattan with the highest quality legal representation in the city.

More than twenty years later, NYCDS is now one of the premier public defender offices in the nation. We have represented more than 300,000 clients in Manhattan's criminal courts and developed deep expertise in many criminal defense sub-specialties. Our team numbers more than 100 staff, including 70 attorneys. We pride ourselves on our commitment to training and continuing education with a particular emphasis on building and developing trial skills.

NYCDS clients benefit from a diverse defense team that includes experienced trial attorneys, social workers, highly skilled investigators, paralegals and support staff. Our staff includes corrections specialists and immigration, civil and policy attorneys to protect our clients' rights inside and out of the criminal court. We also have dedicated trial attorney specialists who represent our clients in New York County's three problem solving courts: mental health, veterans' treatment and integrated domestic violence.

We are committed to ensuring that our clients and their defense attorneys have the tools and resources they need to obtain the best possible outcome in every criminal case. Liberty and justice demand no less.

Testimony re: Executive Budget Hearings - Finance
Submitted to
NYC Council Committees on Finance, Capital Budget and Immigration

Submitted by
Stephanie Gomez
Director of Immigration Initiatives
Hispanic Federation

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gomez and I am the Director of Immigration Initiatives for Hispanic Federation. I would like to thank Chairman Dromm, Chairwoman Gibson, Chairman Menchaca, and all committee members for bringing us together today to discuss the executive budget and how it pertains to our New York immigrants.

Hispanic Federation is the nation's premier Latino membership organization founded 30 years ago to address the many inequities confronting Latinos and the nonprofits that serve them and advocating for the fair and just treatment of immigrant communities nationwide. More than ever, we are committed to protect and defend Latino immigrant communities, both documented and undocumented, who live in New York State and who are excluded from receiving any emergency aid because of their immigration status. It is for this reason and a plethora of others that we stand before the New York City council today to address the issues immigrants are facing that could be remedied through budget allocation.

When discussing the executive budget, we must acknowledge the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on people of color and immigrants exacerbated by the racial and ethnic inequalities that hover over our city. Data from the New York City Department of Health shows that the virus is killing Blacks and Latinos in the five boroughs at twice the rate that it is killing Whites. Official public health data is just now accounting for the hundreds of men and women who have died of the disease in their homes. Indeed, when the worst of the crisis subsides we will find that a significant number of Latino New Yorkers, especially those whose immigration status was unsettled, avoided hospitals out of fear of incurring costs of care or falling victim to the anti-immigrant enforcement actions of the Trump administration.

New York City is home to 3.1 million immigrants who comprise about 37 percent of the City's population and 44 percent of its workforce – including approximately 360,000 undocumented workers and 48,000 undocumented business owners. In 2019, foreign-born New Yorkers, including the undocumented population, contributed about \$232 billion to the city's GDP. Among



the one million essential workers who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic—delivery workers, EMS staff, drivers, health care personnel, and others — half are immigrants. Undocumented workers and their families remain particularly vulnerable at this time. Over a third of NYC's undocumented workforce are low income, ineligible for most safety net assistance and have been excluded from federal stimulus packages.¹

Federal Exclusion of Immigrants

While congress has passed several bills to help the American public and businesses at large, the Trump administration has specifically excluded immigrants from many of these helpful stimulus programs, leaving their basic needs unmet and businesses at risk of closure. Yet, immigrants are risking their lives and safety on the frontlines of this virus. New York immigrants are the essential workers who ensure our grocery stores are in operation, deliver our meals, work on necessary construction, are first responders, provide public services, are farmworkers who keep our grocery stores stocked, care for our vulnerable elderly population, and so much more. New York City must explicitly include all immigrants in any COVID-19 relief efforts included in the budget.

The CARES Act provided a \$14.25 billion Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) for institutions of higher education to respond to the pandemic. However, the Department of Education released guidance explicitly excluding undocumented students from receiving any funding. Fifty percent of these funds must be distributed as emergency aid to students who have had their semester disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency aid may include anything under a student's cost of attendance including food, housing, course materials, technology, health care and childcare. New York City must ensure that undocumented students receive these crucial supports.

As businesses both large and small take one of the greatest economic hits their industries have seen in generations, we are witnessing mass layoffs, furloughs and pay cuts across the board. In turn, the Federal government has expanded access to social benefits, yet undocumented immigrants are not eligible for the majority of safety net programs such as non-emergency Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and most housing assistance programs. Furthermore, the \$2 trillion CARES Act excluded undocumented immigrants and even US citizens in mixed-status families from receiving stimulus checks and has not extended any unemployment benefits for undocumented immigrants. NYC must invest in citywide programs that ensure immigrants have access to safety net programs similar to those they have been excluded from at the Federal level.

Efforts in NYC for Immigrants

While the federal government (and largely the state) has excluded immigrants from COVID-19 funding, New York City has taken action to help these New Yorkers. Mayor de Blasio in partnership with Open Society Foundations, established the New York City COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief program offering one-time emergency relief payments to immigrant families –

¹ Office of the NYC Mayor, *Mayor de Blasio Announces New York City COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief Program with Open Society Foundations*, Press Release (April 16, 2020); <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/262-20/mayor-de-blasio-new-york-city-covid-19-immigrant-emergency-relief-program-open>



including undocumented workers – who play a vital role in the City’s workforce and economy. The amount for these payments is (1) \$400 for an individual, (2) \$800 for couple or single parent with children, and (3) \$1,000 for families with multiple adults and children and/or where identified increased additional supports are needed. This fund is a great start but it is much less than what was provided federally, and is merely a drop in the bucket for people who live in a city with one of the highest cost of living in the world.

Funded by philanthropic donors, CUNY has established the Chancellor’s Emergency Relief Grant Program in response to the serious financial hardships many CUNY students and their families face as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Nearly half of CUNY’s 275,000 degree-seeking students work while in school and many now find their jobs and incomes eliminated, drastically reduced or otherwise imperiled. The program will provide one-time \$500 grants to qualifying CUNY students, including undocumented immigrants and student parents.

We implore New York City to continue its efforts to provide support to the city’s most vulnerable and impacted New Yorkers.

NYC Executive Budget and Immigrants

In order to combat the destruction that this novel coronavirus has created, especially within Latino and immigrant communities, NYC must prioritize services that are meant to maintain public health and directly address the issues created by COVID-19. In addition to the recommendations discussed above, NYC must include the following in the budget:

- Invest in culturally and linguistically responsive contact tracing to prevent and identify the spread of the virus and work with CBOs who are trusted in our Latino and immigrant communities.
- Provide access to free coronavirus testing to all New Yorkers, including immigrants, those without health insurance, and all inmates in local jails working with NYC Department of Corrections.
- Provide mental health services to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, and where possible culturally relevant and in their home languages.
- NYC must prioritize cultural competence training to help mitigate the increased mortality rate of immigrants of people of color in hospitals and health care systems due to discrimination and systemic oppression.

Moreover, we support the City Council’s recommendation that the budget continue to support human services providers or community-based organizations by ensuring that workers feel protected, safe, and properly compensated; that contracts reflect the increased costs associated with COVID-19; and that agencies allow flexibility in contract scope and services. Human services providers are at the forefront of providing vital services during this time of crisis, including caring for patients, protecting victims of domestic violence, delivering meals, providing child care for essential workers, sheltering the homeless, supporting the immigrant community, and myriad other work. Issues that are arising will only be exacerbated as the City continues to rely on the work of these non-profit organizations during this time to provide services to vulnerable New Yorkers without increasing contract rates.



Lastly, if we are to effectively address this unprecedented crisis in immigrant neighborhoods of NYC, we must make sure that Latino and immigrant community-based organizations are front and center when it comes to resource allocation and interventions directed at our state's most affected populations. Our nonprofits are deeply embedded in our neighborhoods, providing frontline health and human services to millions of Latino New Yorkers.

Not only are our nonprofits crucial to the social well-being of the city, but we also play a substantial role in the city's economy. Nonprofits alone account for 16% of the private workforce, compared to 10% nationally. The community-based organizations we proudly represent employ thousands of professionals and support staff across our five boroughs: from social workers and immigration lawyers to after-school program staff and health navigators. As the COVID-19 unemployment crisis grows, New York City must work to protect nonprofits and save critical service providers from succumbing to the economic downfall experienced in the past.

Thank you for your time. Hispanic Federation is here to serve and is happy to work with the New York City Council to protect immigrant New Yorkers and the nonprofits that serve them.

Members of the Committee,

I'm writing in the hope that you will reject the Mayor's FY 2021 budget proposal.

COVID-19 has made deadly apparent the consequences of expanding incarceration and policing at the expense of virtually every institution and social program upon which our communities actually depend for their safety and wellbeing. Our city has shuttered hospitals but kept open Rikers Island, the epicenter of the global COVID pandemic. We have unused luxury apartments and dangerously overburdened homeless shelters. Vulnerable communities of color are in desperate need of food banks and care workers. Instead, the Mayor sends the NYPD to further brutalize them.

Now, the Mayor is imposing draconian austerity on our already depleted education system, summer youth employment programs, transportation infrastructure, public housing authority, and other urgent provisions, while maintaining and even augmenting the city's investment in racist policing and incarceration. We cannot afford a \$10 billion jail expansion, when millions of New Yorkers don't know how they will come up with next month's rent. We cannot afford to continue prioritizing the gaudy, self-aggrandizing budgetary demands of an increasingly rogue police department. And to do so in a moment of unprecedented loss and suffering is nothing short of grotesque.

New Yorkers deserve, and more than ever require, a city that nurtures its children and protects its elderly, that ensures economic and health justice for the Black, Brown, and migrant communities which produce so much of our "essential" workforce. That city is nowhere to be found in the Mayor's despicable budget proposal. I humbly ask that you rectify the grave injustice this administration intends to perpetrate.

Included below, please find for your additional consideration the full statement issued by Free Them All For Public Health. As a member of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and the New Sanctuary Coalition, I am awed and inspired by their dedication to protect and strengthen precisely those communities that this Mayor insists on criminalizing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Cohen", written in a cursive style.

Steven Cohen

On April 16, Mayor Bill de Blasio released his [war-driven austerity budget](#), and this week he began negotiations with the NYC Council's [Finance Committee](#), which is responsible for overseeing the hearing process until the 2021 budget is adopted. Today's hearing will include no testimony from the public, which is an evasion of public responsibility for the Mayor's disastrous financial decisions: the executive budget has over \$3 billion in cuts and tax revenues losses. These budgetary gaps will have an immediate and adverse effect on a whole range of services that New Yorkers rely on, including more than \$800 million in cuts to education alone, and the total elimination of the city's summer youth employment program.

Despite these draconian cuts and unprecedented revenue shortfalls, two city departments came out of the revised budget process not only unscathed, but with a [budget increase](#) and guaranteed [capital-growth](#): the NYPD and the Department of Corrections (DOC).

This is, in a word, despicable.

At a time when our communities' most urgent needs are health justice and economic recovery, the last thing we should do is throw an even higher share of our public resources into the violent systems of surveillance and control. Even less coherent is the city's continued commitment to pouring more than \$10 billion dollars to building new jails, which will likely be the largest capital expenditure in the city's budget for the next decade. The Mayor's controversial jails plan, which was sealed through backroom deals and rammed through the City Council's opaque land-use process, is being rolled out as part of the City's anemic budget, amidst the worst economic and health crisis in most of our lives.

Our community is only as healthy as our most marginalized neighbors, and the COVID-19 crisis has revealed just how fragile and ill our society is. The Mayor's budget reflects an addiction to mass incarceration and domestic militarization, no matter how [just](#) and [community-oriented](#) he claims to be. We cannot police ourselves out of a public health crisis, and the imprisoned cannot practice social distancing in cages. While we cannot often see our incarcerated neighbors, they are highly connected to the rest of us and placed at extraordinary risk by the daily flow of correctional officers. These health, racial, income, and policing inequalities makes us all vulnerable. Their health is our health, literally.

We're saying: enough. Free them all, now. Public health is public safety, and we must close Rikers now, without adding more to the city's jailing and policing budgets.

Money for police and cages has gone up consistently in the last decade, despite steady decreases in all kinds of crime, and countless studies show absolutely no correlation between jailing and public safety. These trends have only [accelerated](#) in this time of social distancing, further obviating the need for police and cages altogether and, at the very least, making it clear that we don't need even more resources for these violent systems than the year before.

At this rate, the city's misguided priorities mean we [are spending and plan to spend](#) more in the aggregate on policing and new forms of imprisonment than we do on education. In the words of our imprisoned comrade, Chance, "hiring more police isn't the instruments that require a better community, for they're the ones who are stopping a community to be discovered to begin with, they're the ones who are corrupted." Disinvesting from communities' needs and adding to violent systems is tantamount to a war on poor and marginalized New Yorkers.

Now is the time to shut down Rikers without pouring more millions of dollars into cages and policing. Although NYC's jail population is at an all time low (approximately 4,000 people), a majority of people detained in NYC jails (58%) are Black and an overwhelming majority (90%) are people of color. Structural racism, through imprisonment and policing, puts Black and brown New Yorkers at higher risk of exposure and infection. Mayor de Blasio can address this unequal burden and our collective health and well-being by releasing people from NYC jails, while beginning to shut down Rikers Island now.

Imagine if we instead immediately invested that money in hospitals, scaling up testing for the disease, and services for frontline healthcare and delivery workers? Imagine if we had that money to resource teachers, counselors, and mental health providers to help us cope with this crisis and beyond? Imagine if we could relieve people imprisoned with open cases, or for parole violations, of what essentially has become a death sentence? Imagine if rather than sacrificing imprisoned New Yorkers, we instead gave them and their families the affordable housing and resources they need to stay healthy, not just during a pandemic, but for our collective future?

The only way to recover from our current crisis is through investing in what communities have been asking for over the course of decades: affordable, low-income housing; free transit; youth programs; improvements to NYCHA; and other projects that will make it possible for historically marginalized people to not only recover, but stay healthy and thrive.

Mayor De Blasio must stop the war against Black, brown, and marginalized New Yorkers, especially in the Bronx and Brooklyn, where [arrests and jailing rates are highest](#). We need to stop the steady and unaccountable budget increases in policing and jailing, while pressuring the NYPD, DAs, Judges, and the DOC to free our neighbors, now.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sue N. I'm a Junior at Fort Hamilton Highschool, I live in Brooklyn, New York and I'm currently in Foster Care. Fair Futures was introduced to me recently, I was given a coach/mentor who has been extremely kind and very ambitious. I felt an instant connection after speaking to mine. I've gotten a chance to speak to my Fair Futures mentor about college and what I'm doing to stay occupied during this quarantine. It felt like I had someone on my side, she'd cheer me on and email me when she heard I was on the news. Having a mentor like this is extremely crucial for a young person, especially those in foster care and or in the system. Most times it's like we don't get heard, that youth isn't the first nor second priority especially foster kids and we wouldn't know of any opportunities that could benefit and allow us to grow, but a Fair Futures coach is that person to me and to think that I would continue to have my coach as I grow is very reassuring to me, it brings a sense of comfortability. I'm hoping that other kids can have this amazing opportunity to receive a Fair Futures mentor. I realized being in NYC and being in Foster Care I have to work 10 times harder to be heard, I have to work harder to maintain grades throughout times I've dealt with court dates and home visits and it's hard to balance a life sometimes, many kids regardless of age feel this way but my mentor wanted to help. I hope to continue to have a mentor who truly cares about our well beings. As an activist I've seen kids who feel like they aren't being seen, kids who feel like a statistic and it's a struggle to find your own worth in a large city around those who don't share our story of hardship in the system. A Fair Futures coach is what every youth in the system needs. We need someone to speak to about college, opportunities, job inquiries, housing, life goals, short term goals, because these are what makes us who we are and to have a mentor through this is the key to our success. Now I'm asking as a 17 year old student who is facing a great amount of stress with the college admission process, court, internships and organizations, to keep Fair Futures and expand our budget in order to help kids like myself to succeed. The Mayor needs to know that NYC is full of students trying to balance their lives, grades, court, therapy and more because of the circumstances most of us are in, and a coach is exactly what we need.

May 21, 2020

UPROSE Testimony Regarding NYC Budget

Testimony submitted by Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE to NYC City Council and Office of Management and Budget

Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization. Today, UPROSE is an intergenerational, multi-racial, nationally-recognized community organization that promotes the sustainability and resiliency of the Sunset Park community in Brooklyn through community organizing, education, leadership development and cultural/artistic expression. Sunset Park is a frontline community of 130,000 in Southwest Brooklyn that lives with many environmental justice issues such as polluting infrastructure from peaker power plants to solid waste transfer stations, which has led to significant health disparity. We recognize the City has taken many steps for sustainability over the years, and now in face of COVID-19 and climate change, we demand the City not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. We also urge the NYC council to prioritize the implementation of Local Law 97, continue solar installations, invest in clean energy job training programs, and to push for infrastructure projects from the NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Platform.

City Composting Programs

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills. Solid waste transfer stations are predominantly located in environmental justice communities such as Sunset Park and are major sources of air pollution that contribute to existing disparities in public health and increased vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Administration plans to slash the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling and composting organic waste. This short-sighted action has the potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability and equity goals.

While this program must be expanded to include a mandatory organics program inclusive of environmental justice communities and NYCHA residences, **today we are urging the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of**



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organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

Today, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education, and that there be equitable distribution of organics and e-waste drop-off sites throughout the City. UPROSE's Climate Justice Center is the anchor of the Northeast region for the Climate Justice Alliance, and we recognize that composting programs keep unnecessary waste outside of our landfills. Ongoing funding for these programs continues to foster environmentally conscious behavior in New Yorkers while also supporting soil regeneration. The abrupt halt in funding for the composting project has left neighbors feeling unsure of what to do next with their compost. It would be a step backwards for the City to not support this initiative with New Yorkers being more environmentally conscious now more than ever. And in the near term, we also request to see the growth of the City's organics collection to a mandatory residential organics program for everyone.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way toward allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that: at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work; at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills; at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living. We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to our communities, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority is not left behind in the budget process.

Climate Works for All

The COVID-19 crisis has devastated our communities. We need investment in green infrastructure and clean energy projects and free job training opportunities to support an



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equitable clean energy future and to put our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our city and state climate goals.

The City must fully fund the implementation of Local Law 97 in order to tackle the biggest source of carbon emissions in the most polluting buildings, and create 40,000 good jobs in the process. The City must progress its solar development goals and prioritize environmental justice communities for solar job training and creation. In the very near future, a citywide composting program is an essential service that would also provide good jobs for impacted communities while reducing our waste burden.

The City should tap into available resources, including those authorized via the federal CARES Act, existing FEMA funds, municipal liquidity grants, as well as state and federal workforce development grants.

The City has instead increased funding for the NYPD on enforcing social distancing measures. Funding to this regard supports an increase in policing black and brown communities, which are most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are several budget cut opportunities the City can make on programs such as enforcing disproportionate policing rather than cutting necessary and vital services, such as composting. Thank you for considering these urgent budget items - we all must be fully committed to meet our climate and equity goals.



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To The New York City Council,

We must rise to the challenge of this crisis and not make it worse with short sighted budget cuts. Please keep the NYC pools and beaches open this Summer. The Mayor says he is worried that the trains and the buses will be overcrowded as people travel to the beaches. So we just through up our hands, and surrender to the complexities of the virus? NO, this is NYC – get your thinking cap on and come up with solutions to the problem.

1. Run MORE buses and trains to serve people accessing the beach to reduce crowds.
2. Hire students to help maintain social distancing at the pools and beaches (kill two birds with one stone- i.e. provided Summer youth employment)
3. Hire people looking for work to help use flags that can be stuck in the sand to indicate where people can safely sit at the beach to maintain social distancing.

Closing the pools and beaches is just plain looking for trouble. You must not cut our City off from the refreshment of swimming and cooling off by the pools and beaches. Work to come up with solutions and give relief to the people of this fair City.

Sincerely,

Susan Boyle

To The New York City Council,

It is so abundantly and painfully obvious that saving summer youth employment is absolutely essential. This is the time when our government needs to step up and recognize who needs you to act for them the most- our City's children. Please use safe practices to give the children of this city constructive jobs for this Summer. They need your help. Do not just throw up your hands and say- it is too hard-we can't do it.

Summer youth employment to work hand in hand with maintaining organics waste collection- by employing youth at the collection locations. Also – keeping the pools and beaches open will work hand in hand with summer youth employment- hire the teenagers to work safely in the open air of our wonderful city pools and beaches.

Sincerely,

Susan Boyle

May 18, 2020

**Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Susannah Waldman, Coordinator for Special Mitigation Services, Friends of
Island Academy**

Dear Council Member Dromm and Committee Members,

On behalf of Friends of Island Academy, I thank the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to address you all on the important matter of this year's budget. We join the calls of fellow community members and advocates to ask the City to demonstrate that it prioritizes the safety and health of *all* its 8 million constituents equitably, by investing in organizations and agencies that provide crucial support in areas of education, employment, community-building and housing.

My name is Susannah Waldman, and I have worked at Friends of Island Academy for the past two years providing court advocacy and re-entry support for young people leaving New York City's jails and detention facilities, through our Youth Reentry Network. Through the Reentry Network, for the past 4 years, our advocates have been on the frontlines connecting with youth during their first 24 to 72 hours of incarceration on Rikers and, since 2018 Horizon, and we continue these relationships upon release; ensuring that reentry plans for all of our young people are fulfilled and supported.

We join this conversation given this budget's very real threat to our youth member's safety and health during a time already filled with uncertainty and a lack of security. The Mayor assured that his budget's main priority is to "keep people safe." We share this priority. We disagree, however, that the way to keep our communities safe is through exorbitant funding of agencies like the NYPD and DOC, at the expense of programs cherished by the very populations the Mayor is purporting to serve.

Although our Youth Reentry Network 4-year Demonstration Pilot with the City ended March 30th of this year, we had hoped to be able to continue our work in the future through continued support from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Unfortunately, at this time, our program and programs like ours, are not included in the City's FY21 budget. We implore this committee and the Mayor to recognize that the greatest way to prevent crime and keep our communities safe is by investing in them proactively, rather than the NYPD and DOC having more money to react to the fallout from the lack of such programming.

Throughout all of Friends' programming, our underlying purpose has been to help keep young people out of detention. In our experience, we have seen that young people thrive with these key elements are in place: learning/doing and attaching/belonging. Friends' programming goes beyond our Network, and we integrate these elements, serving as a street-level mobile safety net

to prepare and support families for a youth's reentry/transition home. We do this by supporting and facilitating youth enrollment in school or educational/vocational advancement, High School Equivalency instruction, tutoring and homework help; preparing young people for the world of work through job readiness, placement, and retention; providing on-site youth leadership training, opportunities for civic engagement, and arts-based programming; addressing and navigating system-related barriers on behalf of youth and families; working with counsel to provide court advocacy and mitigation services, and finally, facilitating relationships between family and peers, formal and informal neighborhood leaders, local vendors, faith-based organizations, and third-party resources/mentors for youth in their neighborhoods.

Through the Youth Reentry Network, over a 4 year period (2016-2020), Friends worked with 1,750 young people in neighborhoods throughout the City.¹ The one-year readmission rate among the 1,750 was 33.5%,² an unprecedented figure among young people who were primarily felony-charged teenagers. Our youth are all poor, people of color, and almost entirely from the same dozen or so neighborhoods. [See our map below for their locations.]

Last week, in his testimony in front of this Committee, NYPD Commissioner Shea suggested that the recent increase in releases from Rikers Island in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will result directly in a spike in crime. He then offered that hypothetical crime increase as another reason why the NYPD will require sustained levels of police on the streets of our communities. Acknowledging that the NYPD's work is important, we know that rather having more police on the street with crime levels down, it is supportive programming which meets people at their most vulnerable and leads to continued lower crime in our neighborhoods.

Innovative programs such as the Summer Youth Employment Program, funded through DYCD and Friend's Youth Reentry Network, formerly funded by DOC, set New York City apart in its ability to support vulnerable communities and specifically young people. Not only does SYEP participation increase employment opportunities, "SYEP participation decreases the probability of incarceration and decreases the probability of mortality, which has important and potentially pivotal implications for analyzing the net benefits of the program."³ Another study found that "SYEP participation has positive impacts on student academic outcomes, and these effects are particularly large for students who participate in SYEP multiple times."⁴

¹ From 2016-2020, Friends' staff met 2,953 youth in detention throughout NYC. Of those, 2900 were discharged to neighborhoods throughout NYC; of those 1750 engaged and sustained their connection with their advocates in the community. [see attached map for their locations]

² Based on DOC IIS data and Friends' data collection systems.

³ Alexander Gelber, Adam Isen, Judd B. Kessler, The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence from New York City Lotteries, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 131, Issue 1, February 2016, Pages 423–460, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjv034>.

⁴ Making Summer Matter: The Impact of Youth Employment on Academic Performance. Amy Ellen Schwartz, Joel McMurry, Jacob Leos-Urbel, Matthew Wiswall; NBER Working Paper No. 21470 Issued in August 2015, Revised in May 2020 NBER Program(s):Children, Economics of Education.

At the time when our community has an amplified need for it, the City's FY21 budget does not include funding to navigate our youth towards pro-social activities, skill-building, and educational, job, and mental health support. For example, SYEP employed over 60,000 youth during the summer of 2016, including 3,000 vulnerable youth from foster care, justice involved, runaway/homeless/receiving ACS preventive services⁵ and our Friends program has served over 1,700 youth. In September 2019, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice issued a request for funding for post-incarceration community based transitional services. It is an approach which recognizes the need to provide continued support to those whose life is upended by the arrest and detainment process and its correlation to public safety and positive life outcomes. But at this time, in *this* proposed budget, the City is not going forward with funding the Youth Reentry Network, which means that our network of 25+ advocates will not continue after June 30th. We are devastated on behalf of our youth, as at the intersection of poverty and race, we strive to provide hope and room for transformation, through the relational work at the heart of Friends' youth justice model, one young person at a time.

Rather than rely on the NYPD to respond to our most vulnerable population we should be using our community resources to support positive community engagement. COVID-19 should not be an excuse to abandon our youth, it should be a call to action and an investment in the city's future. This week, the City revealed a new website outlining community-led public safety initiatives in NYCHA houses across the city. One highlight is on the St. Nicholas Houses, which are a block from Friends' Harlem hub. The Mayor's own Action Plan for Neighborhood safety reiterates our very point, although you can substitute any of the NYC neighborhoods our youth come from, that "St. Nicholas youth face several barriers to achieving their goals, including a lack of educational and economic resources, involvement in crime or drug use, and behavioral and mental health issues. There is a need to support young residents and their families with holistic programming, focusing on assisting out of school, out of work youth with resources to build their personal and professional capacity."⁶ The current City Budget is in direct contrast to what the Mayor's office purports to believe - providing support for young residents and their families builds capacity and lowers criminal behavior.

At Friends, we work every day with youth as they leave Rikers Island and Horizon Juvenile Detention Center, and return home. Since the second week in March, when the COVID-19 pandemic led to closures across the city and the shuttering of courts and jails to all except essential staff, we have seen first-hand how this pandemic has hindered our youth member's abilities to successfully reintegrate back into their communities after leaving Rikers. Of the youth who were able to get off Rikers Island in the past two months, many of them have faced

⁵ Summer Youth Employment Annual Summary 2016, Department of Youth and Community Development at https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2016_SYEP_Annual_Summary.pdf?aria=true

⁶ Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety website, viewed on May 19, 2020 at <https://map.cityofnewyork.us/>.

immense challenges in accessing the services, supports, and resources that are typically a life-line for youth trying to redirect their lives.

One youth member we work with, Devin, was diagnosed with schizophrenia as an adolescent and had been detained on Rikers for nearly a year. At Rikers, Devin was taking his medicine regularly. Recently, Devin took a plea in a specialized mental health courtroom through a virtual appearance. Devin was still detained when he pled, but this plea included a release agreement. Pre-pandemic, he would have been given a supply of medication upon his release from Rikers, in order to have time to fill his prescription. However, Devin was told because of the pandemic and staffing issues, he would not be provided with medication and instead, he was told his prescription would be ready for pick up at his local pharmacy. When he arrived at the pharmacy the next day, he had to wait in a long line outside before he was allowed in, when he was told that they did not have his prescription. Frustrated, Devin reached out to Friends. We immediately emailed his attorney and the staff at mental health court, who were able to secure his prescription, and he had his medication within twenty four hours. Without an advocate, Devin would not have been able to obtain his medicine, which is both a public safety concern and would have been a violation of his release.

We met Ray⁷ at Rikers prior to the pandemic. At that time, he told his advocate of his goals which included working for a year to save for a college education, with the hopes of becoming a historian. As the pandemic hit Rikers, the Judge released Ray to be with his family and have time to work towards such goals. Ray was connected to employment opportunities through Friends' Career Center, but due to government office closures, he has been unable to obtain the State ID and social security card necessary to get to work. Additionally, without access to a computer or his DOE records to work on the application, he had been unable to apply for college. Ray's youth advocate knew his family was in need of support, so she raised funds to provide Ray and his family with a laptop tablet, essential hygiene supplies, and groceries. While Ray has not been re-arrested, and remains determined to continue on a positive track, he speaks of his growing frustration with the lack of opportunities available to him at this time. And without the support of his Friends' advocate – whose positions will no longer be funded by the City as of July 1st – Ray may lack the resources and support to achieve his laudable goals moving forward. As an out of work, out of school youth, Ray – and most of our youth members – falls outside much of the City's relief efforts at this time. While we are hopeful that Ray will make progress, we also know that if he does not soon have access to a job and continued education, his likelihood of turning to alternate routes of income and support could increase. We also know that the barriers which youth faced prior to COVID-19 are only exacerbated and the connections and ability to help navigate post COVID-19 systems will not be provided by NYPD intervention and more police on the street. It is programs such as Friends and others funded by DYCD and MOCJ which will

⁷ Youth names have been changed.

provide the necessary mentoring, support to stay motivated, and help getting records, identification, and vital documents to engage in programming, as city agencies re-open.

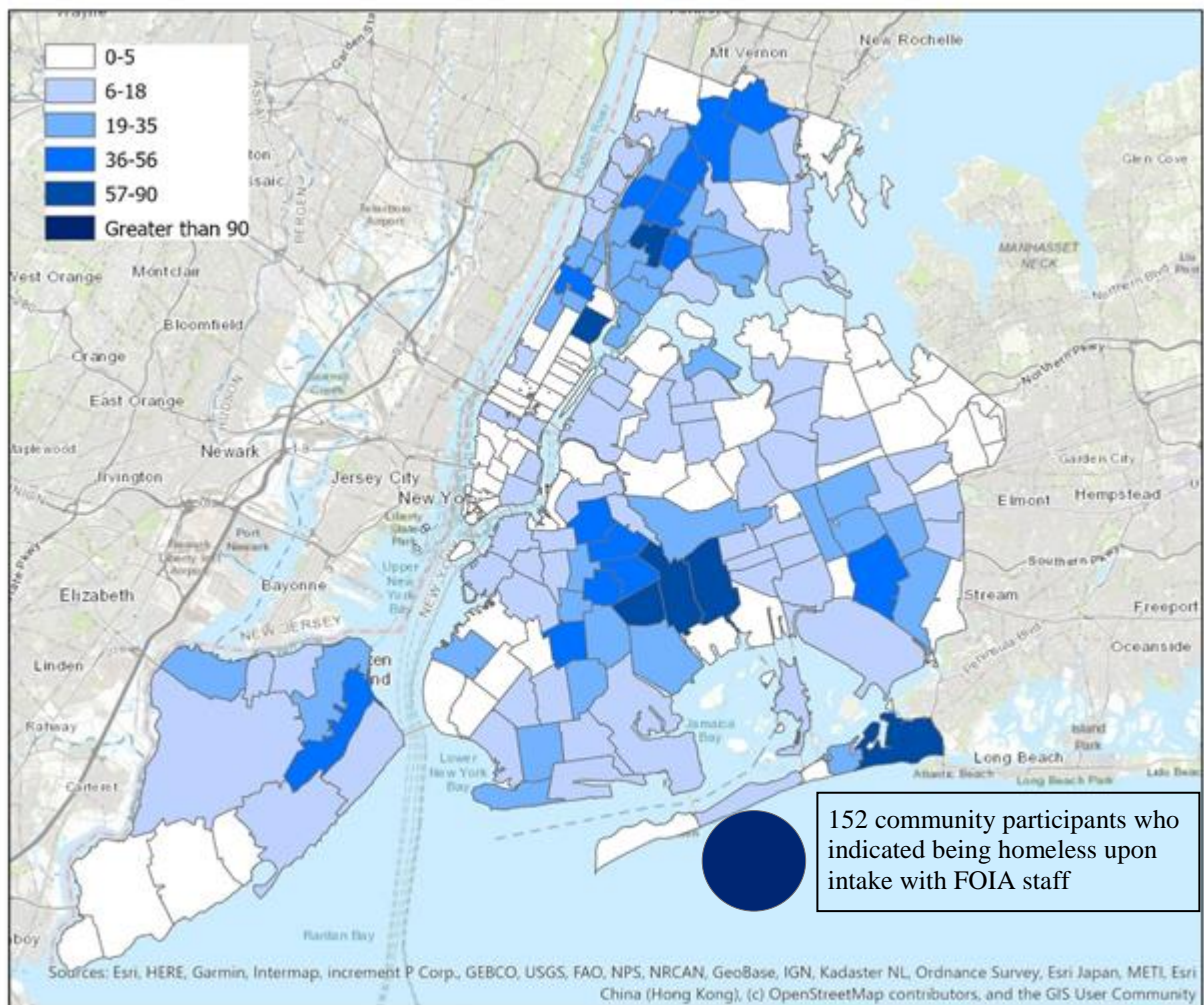
As the summer approaches, it is critical that young people are able to receive services, even if it looks different this summer, to engage in productive behavior patterns and lessen the likelihood of returning to incarceration or even worse, experience a premature death. The Brookings Institute published an article recognizing that during a health crisis “there are some predictable risks. One very real risk is exacerbating existing inequities. Today, for students who do not have access to technology, books, food, or literate adults at home, remote learning runs the risk of drastically widening the gap between young people with those resources.”⁸ Our youth have already fallen behind this school year. Not providing positive supports for the summer and fall will be predictably detrimental. Meeting young people where they are, physically and developmentally, creates a safety net that will be lost with this proposed loss of funding. It is impossible to ignore the inequities between the privileged and those without, especially amidst COVID-19, which, as Commissioner Shea said, will drive youth back to the streets for income and perceived security.

We hope that our experiences working with a population at high risk of victimization and incarceration have helped to paint a picture of how important this funding is for community security and safety - one rooted in and defined by the communities you serve. The mentorship, relentless commitment, and resources for which young people depend on from Friends and programs like ours, including summer youth and other MOCJ and DYCD programming, is irreplaceable, and it is on behalf of these vulnerable youth that we implore the City to reconsider the FY21 budget and ensure these lifelines do not end at this critical moment.

⁸ COVID-19 and school closures: What can countries learn from past emergencies? March 31, 2020 by Rebecca Winthrop viewed on May 19, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/covid-19-and-school-closures-what-can-countries-learn-from-past-emergencies/>

Where Network Participants have Returned Home Upon Leaving Rikers Island

November 1st 2016 through March 31st 2020



Total Network Participants released through March 2020: 2953. Of which, 2706 have known addresses within NYC, 152 told an FOIA advocate they are homeless, and the remaining 95 live outside NYC.



TAKEROOT JUSTICE

PRESENTED BEFORE:
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
MAY 21ST, 2020

PRESENTED BY:
Elizabeth Clay Roy
Executive Director, TakeRoot Justice

My name is Elizabeth Clay Roy, and I am the Executive Director of TakeRoot Justice, a social justice, legal services organization that serves over 2000 clients and dozens of partners across New York City each year. TakeRoot Justice has a long history of partnering with grassroots and community-based organizations that build leadership and power within New York City's low-income communities, particularly communities of color and immigrant communities.

Legal Services are part of recovery

Non-profit legal services organizations across the city continue to serve the needs of our most vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have pivoted our workforce to meet the emerging demands of this moment and ensure that vulnerable New Yorkers still have access to justice.

Some matters, especially housing stability and worker protection, are being exacerbated by the crisis and will affect families in the many months that follow. Our services are both an essential component of the coronavirus response efforts, and are ongoing supports for New York's marginalized communities.

Now, more than ever, legal services providers and our grassroots partners are relying on the City Council to ensure that funding cuts do not result in a continuing disproportionate impact on Black and Brown New Yorkers. Moreover, our staff continue to assist clients with non-COVID related issues and are preparing diligently to move pending legal matters forward as the court

systems gradually reopen. The elimination or reduction of resources would set this work back and deny our clients access to justice.

Unequal impact of COVID-19 has deep roots

Two centuries of public health research show that the most basic influences on health are people's living conditions —their housing, education, and working conditions and their access to clean air, water, nutritious food and affordable health care. In the past, epidemics of cholera, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and influenza struck the poor much more often than the better off. What we are learning is that in 2020, with our advances in knowledge, technology and societal wealth, is that we haven't yet made enough progress toward health equity.

There are deep-seated inequities that disproportionately affect many communities of color including higher rates of chronic diseases, lower access to health care, lack of paid sick leave, lack of or inadequate health insurance, income disparities, any of which could heighten the effects of a crisis like the coronavirus outbreak.

Let's use what we know about the social determinants of health for a just and equitable recovery. We believe that the City Council cares about health equity, and this budget is an critical moment to to put those values into action.

What is our societal corollary to personal protective equipment that is crucial for us to prevent and recover from this virus? What are the community level actions we can take to ensure those at greatest risk stay well? The following recommendations for continued funding are **public protective infrastructure** that our society needs:

1. **Safe Housing:** Housing is a human right one of the most important public health interventions. New York State's own Department of Health has seen housing interventions have a strong, measurable impact on reducing inpatient hospital stays and emergency room use. Persistent mold and pest issues in apartments, and poor building maintenance have contributed to longstanding respiratory illness for many New Yorkers. As NYCHA tenant leaders and TakeRoot Justice clients Ms. Lakeesha Taylor and Ms. Saundra Coleman wrote in a Daily News op-ed in April: "Tenants regularly experience water outages and hot water disruptions, making handwashing and proper disease prevention difficult. Frequent, extended elevator outages make social distancing impossible." *Legal advocacy for tenants helps them advocate for safe housing quickly, which is essential to a healthy living environment.*
2. **Housing Stability:** Black and Hispanic/Latinx New Yorkers make up 89% of those who were homeless at the beginning of this year. Affordability is the central issue- and we need to strengthen protection for renters in the midst of this health crisis to prevent thousands more New Yorkers joining them. *Funding for Stabilizing NYC and affordable housing resources at the Council district-level are essential so organizers and attorneys*

can speak with tenants about their rights and resources. Organizing is essential to keep communities housed and safe in this difficult moment.

3. **Economic Stability:** Deepening poverty and food insecurity is a crisis at the doorstep of too many New Yorkers. This is especially true for many low-wage immigrant workers, who had limited protections before the health crisis and many are not eligible for full federal relief. *The Low-Wage Worker Initiative has enabled CILEC organizations like TakeRoot Justice to handle hundreds of employment-related matters, and we are seeing increased demand to help with complex appeals for unemployment.* Since January 2020, with our partners, we have obtained over \$450,000 in settlements from employers, providing much needed income for workers, who were owed their wages and entitled to be free of discriminatory practices from the outset. *This program needs continued funding so their avenues to justice are not closed.*

The work of the *Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP)* coalition is more important than ever: Annually, we help over 30,000 New Yorkers. It is the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for working families struggling to survive in New York City.

The human consequences of our inability to meet the demand are dire:

- Children go hungry because their families have been wrongly denied unemployment benefits, public assistance, or SNAP;
- Immigrant families are leaving their homes because their landlords threaten to report them to ICE and being forced to live in the shadows out of fear;
- Families become homeless, though their homes could have been saved through foreclosure or eviction defense;
- People with disabilities are denied the disability benefits they need to live with dignity;
- Workers who have been cheated of wages by unscrupulous employers go unpaid.

In light of the human toll when civil legal services needs go unmet, we urge the Council to restore and increase funding for civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for the Working Poor allocation in particular. We ask that the Council continue funding for the Legal Services for the Working Poor initiative at the level established in FY 19, providing \$455,000 in funding to each of the original five initiative members. The positive benefits of civil legal services funding for the city's budget and its economy make it the right choice for economic, social, and humanitarian reasons.

4. **Preserving jobs and businesses:** This is quite possibly the end for thousands of businesses that are owned and staffed by people of color. This loss of jobs, income and wealth will be devastating and deepen the health risks of poverty for years to come. *Continued funding for Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WBCDI)*

has been critical to support this nascent practice and is necessary to help them stabilize these worker coops, most of which are led by women of color.

5. **Social cohesion and civic engagement** are social determinants of health- along with perceptions of equity. Community organizations play a critical role here. Grassroots, neighborhood based, Black, Brown and immigrant-led organizations that have emerged in the last few years are a great risk of closing down as their members and community supporters cannot afford to support them. *Grassroots groups have been at the forefront of the Community Land Trust movement in New York City to stabilize neighborhoods and provide affordable housing, a movement that will slow down without the Council's support this year.*

TakeRoot is supporting a just recovery with the following work:

Tenants' Rights

We work side-by-side with tenants as they fight against gentrification to demand better living conditions, affordable rents, and a voice in the policies that shape their neighborhoods.

In this moment: The clearest need right now is housing, so that people can shelter in place safely in their homes during the pandemic. Our Housing Team has buckled down and worked harder than ever. We just launched a new Response Hotline that is fielding questions about: evictions and inability to pay rent, public benefits and unemployment benefits, commercial rent, COVID-19 related issues about court and agency closures and changes to the law, housing court cases, and consumer debt issues. In addition to offering direct resources and brief legal advice, we will track community member needs and emerging patterns.

While we helped fight hard for the eviction moratorium, we already are planning for what to do when it lifts. We've created strategies for dealing with interruptions to repairs and maintenance, and strategies for defending against COVID-19-cased eviction cases, for example rent arrears caused by lost income. We're also looking towards new crisis-related government benefits (none exist yet, but they're coming and people will need to learn how to screen for eligibility and apply for them).

Workers' Rights

TakeRoot's workers' rights team combats workplace exploitation & violations against workers who assert their rights under labor laws.

In this moment: In response, the Workers' Rights Practice has expanded our representation to include workers whose applications for unemployment and pandemic unemployment benefits have been denied, and require appeals, as well as an increased focus on emergency sick leave cases. We know that health and safety at the workplace are critical issues for essential workers, and we will continue to provide guidance on these issues.

Consumer Justice

Through free resources including legal clinics, community education, consumer advocacy services and legal representation and services, the Consumer Justice team builds community strength and financial empowerment.

In this moment: As we build support systems for folks hardest hit right now, we're also focusing on our consumer justice practice whose work emerged during the last financial crisis, and is facing an unprecedented uptick again with new COVID-19 specific challenges. When the 2008 recession hit, predatory financial institutions targeted and victimized low income communities with sub-prime lending products. In the last ten years our practice has worked to wear down the stigma around having debt and address the system that makes it so easy for people to fall prey to it. This means we're advocating for fairer practices, more equitable economic models, and providing legal advice to individuals hounded by debt collectors or who are having their wages garnished with little left to live on. In addition to direct representation, we serve our clients with clinics and know your rights trainings, and sharing our legal expertise on other consumer economic issues; like banking, housing related debt, student loans, and debt relief.

We're also working with another group heavily hit at this time-survivors of intimate partner violence. The specific strategy that is aimed to keep us healthy in this pandemic – staying at home – leaves many at greater risk of intimate partner violence. Economic abuse is one of many means that abusers use to control and manipulate their partners, often gaining complete control of their finances or coercing them into extreme debt to maintain power. With so many people out of work and unable to leave their homes, the struggles are even worse. Our Consumer Justice team is working with survivors by helping them untangle their economic ties to abusers and the consumer debt incurred through financial abuse. We are hearing stories like one about an abuser who took all of the stimulus check that belonged in part to his spouse with little recourse for the spouse. We are creating and disseminating Economic Rights Fact Sheets for Survivors and Advocates and continue to provide legal advice and representation for clients in the coming months.

Capacity Building

The Capacity Building Team believes that the shared control of resources and wealth is a key component to a just society.

In this moment: Our Capacity Building and Equitable Neighborhoods teams are working closely with small-business owners and worker-owned cooperatives on commercial rent abatement and establishing governance and regulatory structures for mutual aid societies so that people can get back on their feet with the help of engaged communities.

Equitable Neighborhoods

TakeRoot Justice Equitable Neighborhoods practice works with grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalitions to make sure that people of color, immigrants and low-income residents are not ignored or pushed out in the name of "progress." *In this moment:* Offering resources for NYCHA tenants and organizers about how to ensure critical repairs are made and helping community groups navigate community planning and supporting small businesses with commercial lease transactions.

Immigrants' Rights

We believe in the freedom of movement and migration for all people. The Immigrants' Rights team finds creative ways to use and change the law in order to build power in immigrant communities of color.

In this moment: We continue to work with immigrant communities from all over the world, including many undocumented people, as well as formerly incarcerated people to ensure that vigorous legal defense continues, even as the courts go virtual.

Thank you for your time, and your action.

Arts Programs Are Essential to NYC Public Schools

Dear City Council Members,

Thank you for your continued support of arts education in New York City. I am writing regarding Waterwell Theater Program, to request your action to support non-profits in the arts and culture sector contracting with the NYC Department of Education.

Waterwell provides arts in education programs to public schools annually. Much of the expenses associated with the programs they provide to NYC public schools are covered by contract revenue from the NYC Department of Education. If outstanding invoices are not honored, this organization and many others like them will experience financial hardship and a disruption in programming.

My daughter has a learning disability and benefits immensely from this program at her school. It has helped her to learn countless skills and to gain self-confidence academically.

The 1.1 million students of the New York City Department of Education need the arts now more than ever, to keep them engaged and stimulated through this time of remote learning, and to keep up their sequential arts learning as mandated by the State of New York. The arts and culture sector fills the gap in providing arts education, but the lack of guidance from the NYC DOE makes it impossible to continue to support these students.

New York City's cultural community is ready to continue working in partnership with public schools across the city, but considerable confusion among individual schools and districts is hindering many from implementing remote learning and from receiving payment for duly contracted services, even those already completed prior to March 13.

On March 30, the NYC Department of Education issued a statement to arts partners that purchase orders would be paid for services completed, including services rendered online, yet our members are finding a very different experience. In the current situation, it is difficult to reach principals and administrators to gather required documentation for payment; some are being told their entire purchase order has been nullified; and the message many are receiving is that arts instruction is simply not essential at this juncture.

These cultural organizations provide services in advance of payment by the Department of Education, and nullifying contracts not only violates standing agreements, it robs students of what they need, and threatens the stability of organizations this city depends on to make a complete arts education available to all students. Meanwhile, the burden has been placed on classroom teachers struggling to provide remote learning content and keep students engaged - while our organizations and teaching artists are offering to provide high-quality online instruction.

On April 6, a letter was sent to Chancellor Carranza by the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, a service organization for the NYC arts in education community. Our community has yet to receive a reply, and time is of the essence. We need your help to focus his attention on this critical matter, lest our long-standing and fruitful partnership with the city's schools be undermined now and beyond this crisis.

We are requesting your support on the following needs:

- A response from Chancellor Caranza with a commitment to provide clear, written guidance to district and school leaders and to arts partners during the COVID-19 shutdown.
- Assurance that completed work will be paid for, just as other support sectors have been assured by the Mayor's Office of Contract Services.
- The opportunity for cultural organizations and teaching artists to continue their work through remote learning through the end of the school year.
- A continuing commitment to the value that arts education is an essential part of every child's education and development.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter. I look forward to your support and assistance.

Sincerely,

Tamara Daley

Public Testimony on the Fiscal 2021 Executive Budget at the May 21 City Council Hearing

Good Afternoon,

I hope this email finds you well. I'm not sure if this helps, but I wanted to share with you the organizations and their representatives that will be testifying at tomorrow's hearing under (15% & Growing Campaign) we all registered under this testimony topic as instructed:

- * Tasfia Rahman, Policy Coordinator, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)
- * Mon Yuck Yu, Executive Vice President & Chief of Staff, Academy of Medical and Public Health Services
- * Farah Salam, Community Health and Well-Being Coordinator, Arab-American Family Support Center
- * Shaaranya Pillai, Deputy Director or Selvia Sikder, Program Manager, India Home
- * Kavita Mehra, Executive Director, Sakhi for South Asian Women
- * Roshni Ahmed, Coalition/Outreach Coordinator, Women For Afghan Women

Our emails if you need to get in touch with all of us:

trahman@cacf.org<mailto:rahman@cacf.org>,
kavita.mehra@sakhi.org<mailto:kavita.mehra@sakhi.org>,
roshni@womenforafghanwomen.org<mailto:roshni@womenforafghanwomen.org>,
shaaranya@indiahome.org<mailto:shaaranya@indiahome.org>,
selvia.indiahome@gmail.com<mailto:selvia.indiahome@gmail.com>,
mon.yuck.yu@amphsonline.org<mailto:mon.yuck.yu@amphsonline.org>,
farah@aafscny.org<mailto:farah@aafscny.org>

In light of the last public hearing that went all the way to 8 PM (which I know we all have very little control over as so many people are registered and I appreciate the commitment to making space for all), I thought it might be helpful to be aware that it's currently Ramadan and a number of folks, beyond those on the panel, may have commitments in the evening that will impact how long they're able to stay on. Nevertheless, we hope the Committee can accommodate as best possible and we'll also do our best to communicate as things arise.

Thank you again for your commitment and hard work to making sure we all have the opportunity to speak!

Best

Tasfia Rahman



May 21, 2020

Tauryian S., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

My Name is Tauryian Sparrow. For the majority of my life, I have move from borough to borough, but the Bronx has been my home. I currently reside in Soundview with a lovey lady, two cats and 5 precious kittens. Growing up, I was a star student. Salutatorian during Elementary School and a straight A student for the 6th grade. I was eventually homeschooled for 4 years and transferred back into school- high school. The transition was stressful, due to becoming a Foster Child as a reason to go back to school. I never understood how high school worked; I assumed we traveled in groups like Junior High. I had little to no friends and didn't know how to cope. A few months later and I was introduced to my life coach Brittany. Brittany has and still helps me stay organized. My anxiety becomes very complicated to deal with, and I start to become overwhelmed with what the future holds for me. I was never used to doing so much schoolwork, and I never set goals for myself. Brittany helps me understand myself and my future and provides me with all the assistance I need in order to become the person both her and I know I can become. She has helped me feel more motivated to transition to college after I finish high school as it was one of my biggest fears of becoming a young adult about to graduate. I started to feel complete- and then COVID-19 hit.

The transition from school to remote learning has been taking a toll on me, and I appreciate all the assistance that My life coach provides for me, such as helping me create a schedule so I don't feel overwhelmed, making sure I have a device for classes, and motivating me to continue my studies so I can pursue my true dream: Going to college and becoming a Veterinarian ophthalmologist. Without her assistance, I would not know how to stay organized, and will once again fall into the bad habit of having incomplete school assignments and failing. It would mean the World to me to keep Brittany as my life coach, and I know that there's many other youth that are in the same predicament as me and would love to continue receiving the same assistance. A little goes a long way, and someone as simple as a life coach can make such a big impact on youths such as me :)



May 21, 2020

Tayia D., Coachee from Children's Aid Next Generation Center, Bronx, NY

Dear City Council,

Hello, my name is Tayia Day. I'm from Inwood Manhattan, NY. Fair Futures helps me get all the resources I need in order to make my time of aging out of foster care perfect. I love it because it's my own team basically working to help me succeed. I have a closer relationship with my fair futures worker than my case planning team, and I find that she assists me with things that are most important to me. I get to work with my Fair Futures social worker about my housing and passport, etc. It feels as if I have someone who agrees with what I need most importantly. So far, my social worker has been helping me come up with everything I need to prepare for housing and my learners permit. She had been staying on top of me studying to go to the DMV. This crisis has made college and my mental turn for the worse. I struggle with not being around my loved ones, so this has been very difficult for me. If I didn't have the support of my Fair Futures Worker during this pandemic, I would be going crazy. I hope to still have this support after the pandemic since the services keep me sane and maintain my happiness. My fair futures coach gives me hope for the future of foster care. I am hoping that the City Council works completely with the Mayor in helping to restore the budget for fair futures to keep youth who are in care at a steady mindset, so that they would be able to get the help they need to succeed through foster care.

Gateway Housing

**Ted Houghton
Gateway Housing
New York City Council
Finance Committee
May 21, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Ted Houghton. I'm President of Gateway Housing, a nonprofit technical assistance organization that assists government and service providers to develop effective shelter and housing for homeless New Yorkers, and on the steering committees of United For Housing and the Family Homelessness Coalition. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify against cuts to the capital budget for affordable housing development.

In the wake of the economic devastation caused by the Coronavirus shutdown, there is enormous pressure to cut the city's budget. In the effort to find budget savings where we can, it is inevitable that funding for many critical programs, services and supports will be cut. The consequences will be terrible. Nevertheless, the sudden drop in tax revenue should not stop the City from continuing to make smart investments that will bring social and economic benefits in the future. This is particularly true for one such investment: creating new affordable housing.

This is *not* the time to cut the affordable housing development budget.

With the pandemic exposing the full extent of the city's homeless crisis, now is exactly the time to *create more* affordable and supportive housing, as well as high-quality shelter. Doing so can sharply reduce exorbitant spending on emergency homeless hotels, create good-paying jobs when we need them most, and end the terrible damage homelessness has inflicted on a generation of children.

The City cannot afford to miss what is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the city's economy, the City found itself stuck in an unwinnable war against homelessness.

We created thousands of new, locally funded rental vouchers for homeless families, helping many return to permanent housing. But the lowest rental housing vacancy rate in decades has meant too many of the vouchers have gone unused, unable to counter the law of supply and demand.

The Mayor also launched a record-breaking affordable housing production initiative that likewise helped thousands of homeless people find homes again. But with so many New Yorkers becoming homeless each night, the housing just couldn't be built fast enough.

The pandemic has changed all this. And while the economic repercussions will be devastating, they also present a promising opportunity for change.

No matter what we do, New York City is likely to lose residents in the immediate future. With the drop in demand, thousands of overleveraged properties will become available for purchase and conversion to affordable housing. With far fewer tourists visiting the city for the foreseeable future, newly superfluous hotels will be available for pennies on the dollar. Otherwise healthy apartment buildings will need formerly homeless tenants with rent vouchers those tenants can finally use.

With these new conditions suddenly in place, we finally has the chance to lay the foundation for the next mayor to end widespread homelessness in New York City.

To do so, the city should first maintain – or even increase – capital investment in affordable housing production this year. The city borrows to fund this housing investment, so it has an outsized economic effect: the money creates housing (and jobs) today, but the bonds are paid back over decades. Fortunately, at this time interest rates are low, and the share of the city's budget going toward borrowing costs is far below the 15% fiscal experts recommend. In short, we can afford to do this.

The Mayor has instead proposed slashing the capital housing budget by 40% - roughly half a billion dollars annually – this year and next. These cuts will delay the creation of thousands of new affordable housing units right when we need them most – and just as the cost of acquisition and development is falling.

Cutting half a billion dollars from the capital budget sounds like a lot of savings. But because the money for long-term investments like affordable housing is borrowed, the cut will only reduce the city's cost of paying the money back - less than \$50 million a year in savings, starting a year from now. In reality, we won't save a thing. If these cuts go through, the next mayor will end up spending even more sheltering New Yorkers who remained homeless because the housing was never built.

Of course it's not enough just to restore the cuts to affordable housing. Despite its newly straitened circumstances, the city should stick to the Mayor's original vision and keep providing rental vouchers to homeless households. It must redirect capital dollars to acquire newly available distressed properties. And it should build housing for the people who need it most: homeless, senior and very poor New Yorkers, because housing vulnerable people has been proven, over and over again, to reduce public spending on healthcare, shelter and other expensive emergency interventions.

Our city's terrible homeless crisis demands a renewed commitment to creating more housing. Fortunately, few economic activities generate more benefits: such an effort will bring precisely the increased jobs and consumer spending we need right now to restore the city's economy. It is the most effective and cost-efficient option available to the Mayor to spur the city's comeback. At the same time, no investment will do more to cement the Mayor's legacy of correcting longstanding systemic inequities that have plagued the city for decades.

Executive Director of Sadie Nash Leadership Project

Hello Chairman Dromm and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Tené Howard and I am the Executive Director of the Sadie Nash Leadership Project. I am here to speak in support of Sports Training And Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI). Members of our initiative are here to ask for your continued support in **ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY21 budget**—particularly during this unprecedented time. I started as the ED on March 16th, right as this crisis was ramping up-- and this coalition has been critically important to me and Sadie Nash Leadership Project during this unprecedented crisis and has enabled us to provide collective support for our Sadie Nash students, who represent young people from 44 districts across NYC. **Our organizations are a LIFELINE for our young people**-- it is through our orgs that young people are gaining opportunities to sustain and be resilient in this unprecedented time.

At Sadie Nash Leadership Project -- the support from STARS has enabled us to show up for our Nashers and families during the COVID-19 crisis. In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we have had to develop creative and adaptive responses that center the voices and experiences of Nashers. We are proud of the work we have done to bring SNLP programming onto virtual platforms, **create new opportunities for healing and self-care**, and develop spaces in which to bring our community together for collective support and action. **Our Nashers are members of the communities of color that are feeling the impact of the pandemic acutely. We have been able to provide direct cash and food assistance to families** who have lost jobs and have been impacted by sickness. We know how important it is for us to deliver on our promise of supporting their ability to grow as leaders who can work now and in the future to create communities committed to collective care and justice for all.

This summer, in light of an unprecedented cut in services and opportunities for young people - **due to the cut in SYEP and limited access to jobs and typical summer opportunities, our 10 organizations have joined forces to create the STARS Summer Syllabus**—capturing the depth and diversity of our programs across arts, literature, athletics, leadership, and activism—with a focus on filling the gaping hole of summer youth programming.

On this call, Comptroller Springer and many of the council members shared that we have to look to the future of this city -- **our young women and gender expansive youth are the NOW and the future. Do not divest in them -- an investment in them is an investment in our collective future. We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our City Council funding of \$1,450,000 in FY21.**

--

Tené Adero Howard
Executive Director
Pronouns: she, her, hers

Sadie Nash Leadership Project
[4 West 43rd Street, Suite 502](#)
[New York, New York 10036](#)
[212-391-8664](#)

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To: New York City Council
From: Stephanie López, Managing Attorney of The Door's Legal Services Center
Re: City Council Immigration Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing
Date: May 12, 2020

The Door is a comprehensive youth development organization that assists vulnerable young people, between the ages of twelve and twenty-four, access a variety of services such as housing, GED classes, job training and legal services. Our Legal Services Center represents many young people in New York City in their Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), asylum and other humanitarian claims. For almost a decade, we have been representing unaccompanied children fleeing violence or other abuse in their home countries. Recently, we have begun representing unaccompanied children held in federal immigration detention facilities in New York.

We receive funding from the City Council as part of our work in the ICARE collaborative, and that funding is critical to helping us represent immigrant youth in their removal proceedings to ensure that their rights are respected and that they may pursue all avenues of relief to which they are entitled, especially during this public health crisis. Under the current administration, representing young people in Immigration Court has become exponentially more difficult and the government is using the COVID 19 pandemic as an excuse to continue its attack on immigrants' rights, and their ability to access pathways to humanitarian immigration relief. Our attorneys are working day in and day out to provide life-saving legal services to our young clients, in incredibly difficult circumstances. Now, more than ever, level funding for ICARE is a must, in order to protect these most vulnerable New Yorkers

Challenges Children and Youth Face in Immigration Court

Immigration Court proceedings are controlled by the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), an entity within the Department of Justice (DOJ). In the administration's most devastating attack on due process, Immigration Judges who are mandated to be impartial and are entrusted with ensuring that immigrants are afforded a full and fair hearing, have been given strict deadlines to complete cases. Notably, Immigration Judges are forced to complete "Family Unit" ("FAMU") cases – where a child entered with his or her parents -- within one year. Given this strict deadline, many Immigration Judges refuse to give reasonable adjournments for attorney preparation, and instead often set cases for individual merits hearings after only a few months. Such a compressed timeline does not give attorneys sufficient time to collect evidence, prepare witnesses or identify experts, and impermissibly impinges upon an attorney's ability to zealously advocate for a client. Not only does working under such unreasonable time constraints impact our ability to provide effective representation, but working with traumatized children in these circumstances compromises the mental health of the already vulnerable youth we serve.



Additionally, the combination of recent Attorney General and Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) decisions and the Office of Chief Counsel's combative stance on most issues has changed this nation's immigration laws, and the application of justice in Immigration Court. In 2018, in *Matter of L-A-B-R*, the Attorney General discouraged Immigration Judges from granting continuances. In January 2020, the BIA followed by issuing *Matter of Mayen*, and affirming an Immigration Judge's decision to remove a non-citizen with a pending U-Visa application rather than granting a continuance. As such, Immigration Judges are less and less likely to grant continuances for young people who are entitled to immigration relief, but are waiting for their petitions to be adjudicated by another agency. These young people are being penalized, through no fault of their own, for delays in one subsidiary of the executive branch, and the imposition of draconian quotas in another. The Door has at least two cases on appeal because an Immigration Judge refused to give an adjournment to allow USCIS to process the children's SIJS application. These two young people are siblings who came to the United States from Guatemala fleeing violence. The Immigration Court's refusal to grant them continuances, in contravention of their due process rights, effectively puts these young people on a return flight to the very violence from which they seek safe harbor.

The government's endgame is clear – to remove children who are entitled to SIJS and other forms of humanitarian relief from the United States, and return them to countries where they face violence and abuse. Legal service providers are forced to engage in much more federal litigation, motion and appellate practice to avoid the deportation of children who have viable forms of relief before USCIS. Each case takes more staff time and organizational resources, but we are committed to fighting for each and every client – however we can do so only with adequate funding.

Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic On our Work

The Door continues to represent young people even during the current pandemic. Our office is working remotely at full capacity, and our staff have shown incredible resilience and innovation, under very trying circumstances. Even after New York State and the Federal Government declared a state of emergency, EOIR dealt with the pandemic in a disorganized manner that did not consider the rights of *pro se* or otherwise vulnerable litigants. The courts closed haphazardly, with little notice, and for several weeks, EOIR primarily communicated operating updates through its Twitter account. Amidst this confusion, our attorneys were forced to travel across the city to file motions and evidence, driving to meet with clients to collect signatures, biking to pick up medical exams and endangering their own lives in order to protect their clients' rights. Finally, after extensive advocacy and litigation by practitioners, the government formally ordered the Immigration Courts closed for non-detained hearings until May 29, 2020. However, it remains unclear when and how filings are due during this time.

The other arm of immigration, USCIS, has been similarly inflexible and initially expected clients to timely respond to requests for additional evidence, even though clients could not meet with their attorneys or collect necessary documents. Our office called every single civil surgeon in the



greater New York City area attempting to find open offices so that our clients could complete mandatory medical evaluations by the deadlines set by USCIS. The one office open did not take insurance, effectively barring most of our clients from being able to complete these evaluations. Again, only after significant advocacy, has USCIS agreed to extend some deadlines, but even so, other filing deadlines – such as the requirement to apply for asylum within one year of entering the country, or to apply for SIJS before the client’s 21st birthday – stand. Lastly, Family Courts, which clients must access in order to establish their eligibility for SIJS, have largely closed because of the pandemic. Nonetheless, our attorneys have worked tirelessly to file motions in person or electronically, at great personal risk, to obtain orders on an emergency basis. To submit these motions our attorneys met with clients over phone and video, mailed documents for signature, and finally appeared for virtual court dates.

Beyond their legal cases, the thousands of clients we serve have been acutely, personally affected by the pandemic. Many are unemployed, unable to pay for rent or food and without the legal status to access desperately needed services. Others act as essential workers, delivering food and restocking groceries, with little access to health care should they fall ill. And yet they have been almost entirely excluded from federal aid packages. As an office, we continue to offer our clients social, as well as legal, supports. Our social workers host weekly support groups for our Spanish and French speaking clients so that they have a safe space to connect with each other. We have deployed volunteers and existing staff to help young people navigate public benefits, and The Door continues to provide its members with food. Additionally, we have launched an emergency fund targeted to supporting immigrant youth who need assistance as a result of COVID-19 job loss or illness.

During this pandemic it is clear that the communities we serve stand to lose the most, but The Door’s Legal Services Center is committed to continuing our representing young people in their removal proceedings. As such, The Door requests continued funding for the UMFI program. We request \$745,000 as part of the overall coalition request for \$5,400,000. The ICARE coalition currently supports 1,680 unaccompanied minors and adults with children through the Council’s generous UMFI funding. We expect to maintain this caseload in FY21- adding new cases whenever we are able to close others.

Respectfully,

Stephanie F. Lopez, Esq.
Managing Attorney
The Door’s Legal Services Center

RENEWING LOW-WAGE WORKER INITIATIVE FUNDING FOR FY21

Testimony from S. Tito Sinha,
Workers' Rights Supervising Attorney, TakeRoot Justice
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget Hearings
May 21, 2020

TakeRoot Justice's mission is to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression by strengthening the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City by providing legal, participatory research and policy support. We come before you in this moment of health and economic crisis as advocates for low-wage workers, many of whom are essential workers performing essential services on the frontlines. On their behalf, we impress upon this body that in this crisis, the advocacy for low-wage workers is itself an **essential service and essential function** that must continue to be funded. Failure to renew this funding will have a devastating impact on low-wage workers we represent and seek to represent, leaving workers without representation on issues such as the fight for unemployment benefits wrongfully denied, sick and emergency sick leave, and for health and safety at the workplace, while fighting against wage theft, discrimination, and retaliation at a time when this need is greater, wider, and deeper than ever in almost all of our lived histories.

We are a part of the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC), which is comprised of several legal services organizations and CBOs delivering high quality civil legal services in employment and immigration matters and providing community outreach to low-income immigrants in the City. The Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) provides funding for our work through the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative.

The pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on all New Yorkers, including the tens of thousands of whom are directly suffering from this health crisis, and health care workers and

first responders who are stretched beyond their limits to offer aid. The devastating impact to the local economy has caused severe damage to the economic security and well-being of many low-wage workers, many of whom are “essential workers,” and their families.

TakeRoot’s Workers’ Rights Practice has been diligently at work supporting clients and partner groups at this crucial time when legal rights and workplace protections can legitimately make a life or death difference. We have expanded our representation to include workers whose application for unemployment and pandemic unemployment benefits have been denied due to COVID-19, and require appeals, as well as an increased focus on sick and emergency sick leave cases. We have also provided and are continuing to develop Know-Your-Rights trainings for organizers and workers on new federal and state pandemic emergency legislation and directives, as well as existing federal, state, and city laws that can provide relief. We know that health and safety at the workplace are critical issues for essential workers, and we will continue to provide guidance on these issues. Finally, we have a new streamlined intake process to continue working with current clients and reach new ones.

Our work to hold exploitative employers accountable for wage-and-hour violations and discriminatory practices still continues through direct negotiations, representation at the Department of Labor and other administrative agencies, and in Court. Since January 2020, we have obtained over \$450,000 in settlements from employers, providing much needed recovery for workers, who were owed such wages and entitled to be free of discriminatory practices from the outset. While this work is now being done remotely, we press forward to seek justice and empowerment for New York City’s workers.

Now, more than ever in this critical time, low-wage workers need champions from advocates such as TakeRoot Justice, and our allied CILEC partners, Catholic Migration Services,

and Make the Road New York. Last year, at this time, we advocated for the renewal of \$2 million funding for civil legal services, and additional \$500,000 to support outreach efforts. As much as that renewal was greatly needed and appreciated, the pandemic health and economic crisis has intensified the urgency of this funding to support low-wage worker advocacy. As we stated last year, the ability of our organizations to retain new staff and continue this essential work is in jeopardy without renewal of this funding. The loss of this funding would take vital services away from low-wage and immigrant workers in New York City, many of whom are essential workers who are physically placing themselves on the frontlines as they work in essential businesses.

In the first nine months of FY20 alone, the Low-Wage Worker Initiative has enabled CILEC organizations to serve over approximately 280 low-wage and undocumented workers, in over 300 employment related legal matters. The vast majority of these claims are not resolved within the cycle of one fiscal year. So the legal advocacy work will continue even when the fiscal year ends.

We are very mindful of the City's financial situation as a result of this pandemic but we again impress upon this body that the advocacy for low-wage workers in this health and economic crisis is an **essential service and essential function** that must continue to be funded.

For these reasons, I believe the City must renew the Low-Wage Worker Initiative for FY21 and beyond.

Thank you.



**TESTIMONY OF
THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
PRESIDENT MICHAEL MULGREW**

**BEFORE THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET**

REGARDING THE NEW YORK CITY FY21 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

MAY 21, 2020

My name is Michael Mulgrew, and I am the President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the more than 190,000 UFT members, I would like to thank Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, Capital Budget Subcommittee Chair Vanessa Gibson, and all of the members of the finance committee and capital budget subcommittee for holding today's public hearing on the New York City (NYC) fiscal year 2021 executive budget. I would also like to thank education committee Chair Mark Treyger, and all of the members of the education committee, for their continuous support and advocacy during this time.

I would be remiss if I did not start by acknowledging these unprecedented times and all of the service our courageous essential workers have and continue to provide our great city. I would like to point out that while our educators may not be physically present in our classrooms, more than ever before they continue to be present in the lives our students and their families. In just a matter of one week, our city's educators did the unthinkable, the unimaginable, something we thought was years away from becoming a reality. In just a matter of one week, our city's teachers moved our entire education system from one that's delivered in the classroom to one that is virtually conducted online from home.

Some say it could not be done, but I say we rose to the occasion during this difficult time and we valiantly continue to pursue our journey to triumph. It has not all been perfect, as we have hit many bumps along the road, but today I can say with pride that our city now has an even stronger teaching workforce that is ready to tackle any and all of the challenges that lie ahead to provide the best education we can to our students.

Focus on School Funding: Protect Direct Services to Students

I understand that these are extraordinarily tough budgetary times, with possibly more financial challenges for years to come. However, we have to be strategic in the way we manage our city's fiscal standing. I understand that the executive budget proposes \$827 million in cuts to education across the current and upcoming fiscal years, and I would like to let the members of this council know that we do not take this lightly. We are also concerned about the possibility of additional proposed reductions should our state government need to enact budgetary cuts due to a lack of support from Washington D.C.

In collaboration with our state and national affiliates, NYSUT and AFT, and our New York congressional delegation, we are working to ensure that the education stabilization fund is replenished and our state and local governments receive unrestricted funds to make up for the significant budget gaps we see. I would argue that our advocacy has been successful. The U.S. House of Representative's Heroes Act includes \$90 billion for the education stabilization fund, \$500 billion for state governments, and \$375 billion for local governments. We will now continue our relentless advocacy to push the Heroes Act through the U.S. Senate and finally to the President's desk for signing.

With these efforts in play, we make the resounding argument that now is not the time to consider cutting programs that service students and school communities, particularly funds for mental health services. We need to protect FY21 school budgets and prevent cuts to programs that provide direct services to students. If cuts are absolutely necessary, we urge the New York City Council to find savings in the Department of Education's central administration across positions and contracts that do not provide direct services to students and school communities.

This is not the time to consider cuts to programs that directly impact school budgets. This includes the proposed \$100 million cut to fair student funding, which will first hurt schools serving our most high-need students, and the other proposed cuts that will devastate school level programs including \$40 million for school allocation memoranda and \$49 million for various equity-related programs, including the counseling initiative Single Shepherd. While funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program does not affect school budgets, we are very concerned about the proposed elimination of this valuable program.

When we hear cuts to school budgets, it's important that everyone understand that this translates to less education, less childcare, less counseling, and less mental health support. So many of students and their families are living a level of trauma that we have never seen before, and our membership and our programs have been there for them every step of the way. We are firmly committed to expanding our level of support during the remainder of this academic year, through the summer, and the upcoming school year, but we need your commitment to ensure we have the resources and tools to enact his promise.

Focus on Mental Health at the School Level during COVID-19: United Community Schools (UCS) & Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC)

As you know, UFT programs get your investments directly to students and teachers—a reality check that has never been more important. All UFT programs are designed to eliminate barriers to learning and so are particularly well-suited toward overcoming the academic, emotional and financial challenges the COVID-19 crisis has created for our students and their families. In particular, our UCS and PLC programs are reinventing their operations every day during this public health and economic crisis to make sure more students and more family members have access to direct services.

United Community Schools

I want to first thank the City Council for supporting UCS since its inception in 2012. Now encompassing 31 schools in New York City and serving over 20,000 students, our UCS schools support a higher percentage of our most vulnerable students than the system as a whole. UCS school staff is experienced in overcoming poverty and other barriers to learning so that low-income students, English language learners, students with special needs, and those living in temporary housing and their families can flourish. Compared to all other NYC public schools, UCS schools enroll 4.0 percentage points more English language learners, 5.1 percentage points more of students with disabilities, 5.9 percentage points more of students living in temporary housing, and a full 15.2 percentage points more of low income students.

The work runs the gamut from the state's first full-service eye care center to open inside a school to on-site mental health services and enrichment programs ranging from drum lines to debate teams. The results: academic performance, attendance, school climate and parental involvement are improving in all these schools. The progress made by elementary and middle school English language learners enrolled in UCS schools has outpaced those enrolled in all other NYC public schools since the 2016-2017 school year; proficiency rates among these students increase from 54.6 percent in the 2016-2017 school year to 62.4 in the 2018-2019 school year. Similarly, students with disabilities in UCS schools have exhibited a 9.1 percentage point increase in ELA proficiency during the same timeframe, compared to a 5.5 percentage point increase exhibited by students with disabilities in all other NYC public schools.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, our UCS Community School Directors (CSDs) stepped up to the challenge. They are making sure academic tutoring continues for students; spiritual wellness, counseling and therapy are provided remotely; extracurricular activities, including music and sports, are available remotely; and some CSDs have created a parent chat to have experts speak to parents directly. Our UCS social workers continue to serve and have enhanced their role by observing virtual classrooms to identify struggling students, conducting outreach to find students who have not logged on to virtual classrooms, and providing counseling to families who have been directly affected by COVID-19.

The UFT is asking for \$7 million to expand these direct services to students and school communities in the upcoming school year. Understanding the disproportionate effect COVID-19 has had on low-income communities, UCS schools will play a vital role in supporting these students and their families. We seek a significant expansion of mental services by hiring more social workers, who have been instrumental in providing direct clinical support and programming at our UCS schools.

Positive Learning Collaborative

Since 2013, PLC has been providing strategies and tools that replace punitive discipline with supportive interventions. Suspensions in PLC schools have fallen nearly 54% compared to the 31% decrease across all other New York City public schools, and violent incidents have fallen 44%. While school climate in these PLC schools has been on the rise, so have the academics, with math and ELA test scores either having met or exceeded average gains across all other New York City public schools. PLC is working to expand to 50 schools, which will focus on systems to support COVID-19 recovery.

PLC is particularly well suited to support schools as they work through the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is the greatest crisis of our time. We are all losing family members, friends and our sense of safety. This pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated underlying disparities in access to services. Removing the barriers to access and opportunities has become a matter of life and death.

PLC has been playing a critical role during the current public health and economic crises. Since remote learning started in March 2020, PLC has been conducting ongoing needs assessments for each of its 25 schools so they can provide the most needed interventions. PLC is providing virtual support to school leaders and educators through restorative circles focusing on grief, loss and trauma so they can care for themselves and learn strategies to support students and families facing the same challenges. PLC has begun developing and sharing content via social media platforms in the areas of self-care, yoga/mindfulness and providing professional development for staff so they are better able to help students when they return to school buildings. Our data shows daily interactions with PLC on social media to be in the tens of thousands.

The UFT is asking the City Council to invest \$2 million to provide more support to school communities. School staff will need a greater level of support to be prepared to meet their own needs as well as the needs of the children and families they serve. PLC has the expertise to support schools in responding to the mental health needs of their communities.

Focus on Remote Teaching and Learning at the School Level: UFT Teacher Center

It would be naïve for us to think that some form of remote teaching and learning will not be with us during the upcoming academic year. On April 29, I penned an op-ed in the Daily

News enumerating what we will need to get our school buildings reopen in the fall. I mentioned the challenges we need to think through as we considered what a reopened school building looks like with social distancing, and the reality is that a reopened school building will not be what we are accustomed to. If staggered schedules in schools become our new normal, then remote learning will have to be intricately woven into what will be our hybrid learning model. The UFT Teacher Center (UFTTC) has already stepped up in the area of providing professional development to educators on remote learning and teaching and is ready to continue to be the main source of professional development for our educators in school years to come.

The UFT's nationally recognized Teacher Center program provides educators with relevant, hands-on, research-based professional learning, offered by experienced NYC teachers. UFTTC mentors new teachers and strengthens their competency; helps experienced professionals deepen their knowledge and skills; and empowers educational leaders across diverse communities to share their expertise with colleagues. The UFTTC program operates in 115 school sites across all five boroughs, each staffed with experts who work with classroom educators. They also offer citywide professional learning on issues such as supports for multilingual learners and students with disabilities, strategies for integrating state standards into literacy and math instruction, and effective use of educational technology. Through this network, the UFTTC provided over 127,000 hours of professional learning to teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, school staff and parents in New York City during the 2018-2019 schoolyear.

During the COVID-19 health crisis, the UFTTC is playing a vital role in keeping NYC educators linked to each other and connected to their students. The UFTTC staff has become the critical source of deep knowledge in both the technical aspects of distance learning and in providing resources for online instructional material and virtual classroom support. At a time when most school buildings are shuttered, UFTTC staff is answering hotline calls from teachers across the city that need help with their virtual classrooms, and working with staff at UFTTC sites to provide supports tailored to those schools' needs. UFTTC can help educators translate classroom lessons that are built around personal interaction into an online format and are currently developing online professional learning around both remote learning tools and content.

We thank the New York City Council for your first-time allocation last year, and this year request \$9 million to expand our programming to additional schools across the city (including schools in the Bronx Plan), to provide professional development on remote learning as we continue to adjust due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. Additionally, UFTTC is well suited to help educators align their classroom content to the state's new Next Generation Learning Standards.

Focus on Supporting all NYC Educators: Teacher's Choice

After many years of strong advocacy from this City Council, we finally achieved a momentous milestone last year and baselined Teacher's Choice. I want to thank you all

again for this great achievement. You all understood that the most direct way to get needed classroom supplies into students' hands is through Teacher's Choice.

Teachers buy everything from pencils and notebooks to microscopes and geology kits to warm coats and emergency food bags, and this City Council initiative reimburses teachers for \$250 of those expenses. During this COVID-19 pandemic, this program continues to prove its value. When our classrooms closed abruptly many teachers left their school buildings without the supplies they needed to continue instruction, even in the form of remote learning.

We want to thank you once again for baselining this program last year, and urge you to maintain your strong advocacy for this program to ensure it is preserved at its \$20 million level.

Focus on Meeting the Needs of Public School Students Citywide: BRAVE Mental Health Hotline & Dial-A-Teacher

Our BRAVE Mental Health Hotline and Dial-A-Teacher programs provide direct support to students in need across the entire City of New York. While the BRAVE mental health hotline provides mental health support and serves as our signature anti-bullying initiative in schools, our famous Dial-A-Teacher programs offers individualized academic support and tutoring. During these difficult times, these programs continue to prove to be coveted by students and their families for the service they provide.

BRAVE Mental Health Hotline

This initiative serves at-risk students using a free hotline and chat service that connects them with mental health professionals who can provide crisis intervention, supportive listening, suicide risk assessment and advice on crisis de-escalation. The BRAVE program is at the forefront of New York City's battle against bullying in public schools, hosting anti-bullying conferences and workshops, and with information tables at educational events that have reached over 7,800 students and educators and over 5,000 family members and education activists across the boroughs during the 2018-2020 schoolyear.

During this pandemic, our BRAVE mental health program continues to operate its free hotline and online chatting services during the current novel coronavirus public health and economic crises, offering direct services to students and their families. We know many families are experiencing grief, stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, loss of income and other problems that are exacerbated or caused by the current crisis. Because of these new stresses, we reconfigured the program to provide students and families who contact BRAVE additional information on resources they can secure for assistance.

The UFT is asking for \$326,400 this year to continue to combat bullying and to expand this vital program to provide students and families additional mental health support, which we anticipate, will be in high demand during the upcoming academic year due to COVID-19.

Dial-A-Teacher

Active UFT in-service and retired members staff an after-school telephone hotline and online platform that provides homework help for the more than 60,000 calls and online requests, from students and parents that come in during the school year. For years, teachers have answered homework questions on all subjects, on all grade levels and in multiple languages, including Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Spanish and Tagalog. New York City Council support from the previous two years allowed the UFT to modernize our program's telephone system and create an online platform to expand homework help for more students.

After a brief pause to account for adjusting to remote teaching and learning, Dial-A-Teacher resumed its services in April for students during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily focusing on language arts and math homework assistance to students in grades K-5. Thanks to our new online platform, students can chat online with teachers to help them solve their homework questions. Students can, for example, take pictures of a question or draw out math problems they submit to a Dial-A-Teacher staffer via our program's new online platform. We continue to work on ways to have Dial-A-Teacher return to offering all of its expansive services in multiple languages and in all subject areas.

The UFT is requesting \$350,000 to further our online presence by enhancing the online app for students and procuring digital curriculum for multiple subject areas, in addition to updating our maintenance efforts. The current crisis has pushed us to expand remote learning for all students; our Dial-A-Teacher program must follow suit.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

These are extraordinary times and it is during these times that we have to step up to the challenges we must confront. The public health and economic crises caused by the novel coronavirus has shaken our city to its core, but I know that we are resilient and we will overcome by working together. I want to end by saying that we pray for the 67 UFT in-service and 56 UFT retired members that have perished to date because of COVID-19 related complications. As a union and as a city, we want to let their family members know that our thoughts are with them and we will continue to do what we can to offer the support they need.

Attached: Mulgrew, Michael. (2020, April 29). The kind of testing schools really need: Better coronavirus screening is imperative if the nation's largest public school system is to reopen in the fall. *Daily News*.

DAILY NEWS

The kind of testing schools really need: Better coronavirus screening is imperative if the nation's largest public school system is to reopen in the fall

BY MICHAEL MULGREW

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, APR 29, 2020, 5:00 AM

The federal government has now passed a stimulus package that includes \$25 billion to increase coronavirus testing and help reopen the nation's economy. This is the first step in what must be a sustained, coordinated effort by the federal government to provide the massive funding and kickstart the supply chains necessary for New York and other states to accomplish what needs to be done to amp up diagnostics and allow businesses and schools to reopen.

New York City has already paid a tremendous price in the pandemic, with more than 160,000 cases, and more than 12,500 deaths, according to the city Health Department. More than 50 UFT members have lost their lives during the pandemic.

New research suggests that the virus was present in New York much earlier than we first thought. We cannot know how differently the pandemic would have played out if schools and other public facilities had been closed earlier than they were. Logic would certainly suggest that better planning would have helped, in particular in the case of schools, which didn't introduce teacher training in remote instruction until mid-March.

But we do know that without committed federal partners, the price of coronavirus will continue to rise, because no state will be able to test and re-test hundreds of thousands of children and adults; to notify staff and students of potential viral exposures; to provide the personnel and supplies necessary for social distancing, screening and tracing; and to provide the materials needed for thorough cleaning and disinfecting of buildings where infections have emerged.

Some of the safety measures and protocols are already in place here, though at a much smaller scale than the massive efforts that will be necessary.

New York State already requires that incoming students have a certificate of vaccination against more than a dozen diseases, including polio, measles, mumps, hepatitis and other serious infections. The state could expand this requirement by insisting that all students and staff who are planning on attending school be tested in August for active or prior exposure to the coronavirus.

In September, medical personnel need to be available at every schoolhouse door to perform rapid temperature tests for all students and staff. Anyone with a temperature above 100.3 degrees Fahrenheit should be sent straight home, or directly to medical treatment.

Despite these precautions, since children carrying the virus may not show symptoms, it is possible that cases of the coronavirus may still emerge in the schools, where the concentration of students and staff makes it difficult if not impossible to practice effective social distance.

In such cases, the city needs to dramatically ramp up both its cleaning and disinfection protocols and the public notification procedures that are already mandated for other communicable diseases. The state will need the resources to aggressively trace those who came in contact with those who show symptoms.

Even these precautions may not be enough. Because schools have so many children in limited space, we may need to experiment with other options to adhere to social distancing, such as split schedules where students come in morning and afternoon shifts, or on alternate days.

While the buildings are closed, public school in New York is very much in session now. With only a few days of preparation and training, thousands of our members have managed to use technology to effectively engage children and their families in subjects ranging from reading and math to art and music.

My members are looking forward to seeing their students in person again. The state and the city have the time in the coming months to create a thoughtful, comprehensive plan to safely reopen school buildings and bring teachers and children back together.

Despite our members' eagerness to return to their classrooms, we are going to insist that no one — student, teacher or family member — should be back in school until protections like these are in place.

Mulgrew is president of the city's United Federation of Teachers.

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STREET VENDOR PROJECT

Urban Justice Center
40 Rector Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10003
May 20th, 2020

Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Mohamed Attia, I am the Executive Director the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center. We need the City Council to step into its role as representatives of a sanctuary city on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers and their communities, and pass a budget that secures the well-being of our immigrant communities, and prioritizes the recovery of the immigrant owned small businesses that make our city great.

There are approximately 20,000 New Yorkers who sell food and merchandise from the streets and sidewalks of NYC. 90% of the Street Vendor Project's members are low-wage immigrant workers who rely on busy streets in order to survive and are reporting income losses of 70-90%. As small business owners and workers, street vendors contribute approximately [\\$293 million](#) to the city's economy. Yet despite their critical role, street vendors have been excluded from disaster relief at every level of government.

The government sponsored relief programs leave out informal businesses such as street vendors due to rigorous technological and documentation requirements. But perhaps the biggest barrier is the lack of a social security number. A significant number of vendors are undocumented, which means they will not even qualify for unemployment benefits, despite collecting and paying sales tax like any other business. In New York City, immigrant-owned small businesses comprise 48% of our city's roughly 220,000 small businesses.

The short-term solution needed for the current financial hardship that street vendors are facing is an immediate response from the City by creating granting programs that suit street vendors as sole proprietors of their businesses regardless of their immigration status. We are calling for the creation of a NYC Immigrant Small Business Grant, with parameters of eligibility that do not depend on commercial rent payments, utility bills or payroll, or immigration status, and ensures street vendors are eligible – and supports all immigrant small businesses.

And the long- term solution for the vending dilemma is fixing the unfair system, lifting the caps on permits and licenses and enabling vendors to legally operate viable businesses – creating job opportunities for immigrant communities, and generating tax revenue for the City. The broken

vending system is a part of the injustice that many immigrant workers face, especially food workers, not only in New York City, but across the nation.

Thank you for your attention to this. Without prioritizing the needs of immigrant New Yorkers, there is no such thing as a just recovery. Our immigrant communities are counting on you to make sure we make it out of this crisis alive.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Attia

Executive Director
Street Vendor Project



Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez, I'm the Deputy Director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center, a member-led organization that advocates for street vendors' rights and fight to improve their working conditions.

Today I want to share the story of one of our members, E., who is a vendor in Corona Plaza, Queens. E. and his wife sell flowers everyday in the plaza. He said to me on Monday night, after the NYPD threatened to arrest his wife for not having an ID, after they ticketed him a hundred dollars for not having a license, he said "What am I supposed to tell my son when he is asking for food, and there isn't any? How am I supposed to stay home and not work, when I haven't gotten support from any government, not the Mayor, not the Governor, not the President? How am I supposed to feed my family?"

And so I pass his question onto you, Council Members – how is E. or any of the 360,000 undocumented immigrant workers and 48,000 undocumented business owners in New York City supposed to feed their families, when they have been excluded from relief at every level of government? Does being undocumented make you unqualified to earn an honest living or to receive the help you deserve like anyone else?

We need the City Council to step into its role as representatives of a sanctuary city on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers and their communities and pass a budget that secures the well-being of undocumented and mixed status families.

While the Mayor recently announced a partnership with the Open Society Foundations to support 20,000 undocumented New Yorkers through one-time relief checks ranging from \$400 to \$1,000, this fund will reach fewer than [three percent](#) of the half a million undocumented New Yorkers and their families who have been excluded from all relief.

To ensure all New Yorkers receive the bare minimum of support, we are calling on New York City Council to create a fund for individual payments to New York City residents excluded from the federal stimulus package in amounts that match those set by the CARES Act, the total cost of which would be \$578,088,000. If the City were to match the need for mixed-status families, the total cost would reach \$1.2 billion.

Other states and municipalities across the country are filling the gap created by the federal government by committing significant resources to undocumented residents. Austin,

Minneapolis, and Los Angeles have all allocated money to a fund for those excluded from the CARES Act. The state of California launched its \$125 million fund this week.

If New York City's goal is to equitably provide resources to all New York residents, including E., it must commit to do more – and ensure that the City's budget includes funding to support undocumented New Yorkers and mixed status families. Immigrants are more than their labor, and deserve equal respect, relief, and recognition not just for their economic contributions, but also for their very existence as human beings who live in the City of New York.

Thank you,

Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez
Deputy Director
Street Vendor Project



STREET VENDOR PROJECT

Urban Justice Center
40 Rector Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10003
May 20th 2020

Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Matthew Shapiro, I am the Legal Director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center. The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a member-led organization that advocates for street vendor rights and fight to improve their working conditions, rights which have been in crisis long before COVID-19 outbreak. SVP, founded in 2001, strives to expand vending as a viable, lawful employment option for immigrants and other entrepreneurs, and to increase public appreciation of how central vending is to our city's fabric. Through direct legal representation, small business training, organizing support, leadership development, and strategic legislative advocacy, SVP builds power and community among vendors. SVP is part of the Urban Justice Center, a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and advocacy to various marginalized groups of New Yorkers.

Our membership is composed of more than 2,000 street vendors, who are workers and small business owners across the 5 boroughs. Approximately 90% of street vendors are immigrants who have limited access to other employment opportunities, for whom vending affords them schedule flexibility and ownership. Our membership is incredibly diverse, and our members speak a wide variety of languages including Arabic, Bangla, Spanish, Mandarin, Tibetan, and Wolof.

Street vendor small business owners have been hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak. The vending community combines two of the hardest hit populations during this pandemic—immigrants and small businesses. Vendors serve all New Yorkers across the City, contribute to the local economy and culture, create jobs and pay taxes just like any small businesses, but yet, they're excluded from almost all existing government relief programs, and many are reporting record income losses of up to 90%. As primarily immigrant small business owners and workers, the many of whom are undocumented, and/or cash economy workers, Street Vendors are ineligible for government support such as paid sick leave, or even most loans and grants offered to small businesses, making an already dire situation critical.

Although some small business loans and grants exist, in practice we have found that many immigrant small business owners and sole proprietors are ultimately ineligible due to

monolingual English application documents, extensive documentation required, and extensive eligibility criteria. Additionally, a significant portion of our membership is undocumented, and thus we support them in securing resources from a variety of sources. During the pandemic, our work has been more crucial than ever as vendors need support on many fronts from applying for PUA, to connecting with other organizations to receive loans and grants, to working with them on planning the future of their businesses as many of them are worried about whether they'll be able to reopen their businesses again or not.

As an organization, we receive a grant from City Council through Small Business Services to provide our members with technical and financial consultations, conduct community outreach to vendors across the five boroughs to conduct know your rights and regulatory compliance trainings, and hold trainings with street vendors regarding opportunities for business growth and referrals to supportive government resources. We support members with pro-bono legal services, financial literacy, and assistance with completing sales tax filings.

It's critical time that we're all living in now, and our members have been in dire situation and as you can imagine, SVP has been the only resource of support for them. That's why we need to ensure the Street Vendor Project continues to have the support of the New York City Council so we may assist and support New York City's street vendor small businesses as part of a just recovery.

Thank you,

Matthew Shapiro



45 Broadway • 22nd Floor • New York, N.Y. 10006-3007
(212) 967-0322 • www.unhny.org

**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget**

Submitted by Nora Moran, Director of Policy & Advocacy

May 21, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the City FY 2021 Executive Budget. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 43 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

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

With New York City at the epicenter of a global pandemic, the recovery and long-term well being of our city is of the utmost importance. COVID-19 has ravaged New York City's economy and safety net and has underscored the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City's neighborhoods for decades. Just as they did through other crises that our city has faced, settlement houses have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 emergency response by continuing to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, including providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more.

Yet, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting revenue shortfalls, New York City is proposing significant budget cuts and reductions in services to human services programs that have become a lifeline for vulnerable New Yorkers during this crisis, and that will be crucial to our city's recovery. Economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis will only be possible if settlement houses are able to continue serving their neighborhoods. The supports that settlement houses provided before—housing assistance, mental health care and homecare, workforce development, early childhood education, food assistance, youth programming, and case management—are all the more crucial to assist our communities now.

This testimony focuses on several crucial areas of the FY2021 Executive Budget. UNH's key recommendations include:

- Ensure that budget deficits are not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services;
- Fund summer programming for young people who now face no activities in light of the Mayor's proposed cut to Beacons, NYCHA Cornerstones, COMPASS/SONYC, and the Summer Youth Employment Program;
- Suspend the DFTA home delivered meals RFP and infuse an emergency \$26.2 million into the home delivered meals program to ensure that older adults still receive nutritious meals;
- Fund the City Council's mental health initiatives;

- Restore \$12 million in adult literacy funding to save English classes for over 8,000 New Yorkers currently enrolled in community-based adult literacy programs; and
- Support the Fight for the Frontlines COVID-19 relief package, which includes providing incentive pay for frontline human services workers, ensuring adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), giving providers maximum flexibility to use contracted dollars to best support clients, and ensuring that budget deficits are not bridged with cuts to human services.

Youth Services

The FY 2021 Executive Budget eliminates funding for all summer Beacon, Cornerstone, COMPASS/SONYC, and SYEP programming. These cuts impact 175,000 young New Yorkers and their families who rely on these programs for summer engagement, including many who, in the case of SYEP, rely on the wages to help to support their households. **It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult spring.** Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are safe and available child care arrangements. Summer recovery programming is more important than ever given the sudden and extreme challenges youth and their families face this spring due to COVID-19. To ensure that young people and their families are supported, New York City must provide funding to CBOs to address the following needs whose urgency is exacerbated by the crisis of COVID-19:

1. Education – helping students build and strengthen cognitive skills through project-based learning activities and workforce development opportunities;
2. Social Emotional – offering youth opportunities to build positive and rewarding relationships with others and strengthen their self-efficacy and resilience;
3. Health – providing opportunities for safe and regular physical activity and health and nutrition education; and
4. Family and Home – supporting parents, caregivers, and families to help promote learning and healthy development in safe and stable homes.

We urge the City to work with its contractors, the CBOs, to implement the attached “Summer Recovery Programming” plan. A total absence of summer programming is likely to lead to its own set of health and safety problems for NYC’s youth and families. Young people are unlikely to remain safely indoors in cramped apartments heading into the second or third month of social distancing, especially when the weather begins to improve, and a lack of summer supports will likely make it that much harder for students to return to school in the fall.

Older Adults

Older adults are the age group most vulnerable to COVID-19, and settlement houses have been on the frontlines in meeting their emergency needs, providing them with food, financial benefits, mental health supports, and social activities to reduce social isolation. This crucial work has been carried out via DFTA’s network of contracted senior centers, NORCs, home delivered meals programs, case management programs, geriatric mental health services, and more. We are grateful that DFTA’s budget saw minimal cuts in the FY2021 Executive Budget. It is important that these programs be spared from cuts in the Adopted Budget to ensure older adults can continue to receive these life-saving supports.

One of the most dire financial needs is the traditional home delivered meals program (HDM), which has been instructed by the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to continue operating as usual during the

pandemic, despite huge upticks in demand, averaging 20-30% more clients than normal. HDM providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and social supports for those at risk of social isolation.

DFTA currently has a new Request for Proposals (RFP) out for the home delivered meals program. This RFP was released before COVID-19 hit, and is due on June 1, even though providers are still responding to the COVID-19 crisis and have less capacity to write a proposal. **A pandemic is not the time for the City to release a new procurement, and this RFP must be delayed until after COVID-19 has subsided.** We must take the lessons we have learned from this crisis about emergency food, social isolation, and the needs of older adults in order to create a stronger home delivered meals system in the future. Changing the program now runs the risk of older adults falling through the cracks.

And despite its overwhelming success in maintaining health and nutrition, the home delivered meals program is underfunded, with DFTA contracts failing to cover the full cost of providing meals. Before the pandemic, some providers individually reported losing *hundreds of thousands of dollars* each year on their contracts. DFTA contracts reimburse providers approximately 25% below the national average cost of a home delivered meal.¹ This underfunding has only been made more acute by the increased demand during COVID-19. Ultimately this underfunding impacts the quality and availability of services for the older adults who rely on these meals.

In addition to postponing the RFP, the City must allocate \$26.2 million in emergency funding for the home delivered meals program, including \$8.5 million for FY 2020 and \$17.7 million for FY 2021. This funding will cover increased demand and incentive pay for staff during the pandemic and address long-standing underfunded contracts.

The City must invest in other aging services to ensure older adults receive the critical support they need – now and in the future. First, it is urgent that the City **allocate \$10 million in baselined funding that was promised for senior centers during the FY 2018 “model budget” process**, intended to be allocated by FY 2021. Unfortunately, these funds were not included in the Executive Budget. The City must follow through on this promise. Next, the City must support its Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) by **ensuring all NORC funding is restored**, particularly Council Discretionary funding including last year’s \$1.3 million investment in NORC nursing services. Further, the City should **address long-standing salary disparities by investing \$1.7 million in DFTA-funded NORCs**, where staff are paid very low salaries that are often \$15,000 less than other DFTA-contracted staff with similar job titles. Finally, the City must **restore and baseline the Administration’s one-time annual funding and restore all of the Council’s aging discretionary programs, which together make up nearly \$40 million in the aging portfolio** and provide critical support to communities.

Mental Health Initiatives

UNH applauds the City Council for its long-standing support for programs that bring mental health services to vulnerable populations in their own communities, and for adding funding to several of these programs in FY 2020. Year after year, these initiatives provide crucial funding to nonprofit providers to offer mental health services in non-clinical community settings, including community centers, senior centers, and early childhood programs. In FY 2021, UNH recommends the City Council **restore funding to all nine of its Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Mental Health initiatives** to ensure

¹ Mathematica Policy Research, “Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs Evaluation: Meal Cost Analysis,” September 2015. The average cost for a home delivered meal for urban areas in the U.S. in 2015 was \$11.78. DFTA’s average rate is \$8.62 and in the next RFP it expects it will be \$9.58. www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2016-11/NSP-Meal-Cost-Analysis.pdf

continuity of services for the people served by these programs, including Autism Awareness, Children Under Five, Developmental, Psychological, & Behavioral Health and others. A restoration represents the minimum of what is needed as the City faces a major increase in demand for mental health services in light of COVID-19. Should funding become available, UNH recommends **increasing the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative by \$950,000 for \$2.86 million total**, to allow this program to expand to approximately ten new sites.

Adult Literacy

At its core, English language proficiency is essential to fully partake in the economic, social and civic aspects of our society. Now more than ever, funding for services that support immigrants is critical in order to protect New Yorkers against the crisis caused by COVID-19, which has disproportionately impacted immigrants. We are living at a moment when the need for digital literacy and health literacy; the ability for parents to independently support their children's education; and the ability to access, understand, and interpret complex information; has never been more apparent. Yet, today in New York City, there are more than 2.2 million adults who lack basic literacy, numeracy, English language proficiency, and/or a high school diploma. Many of these 2.2 million adults are on the frontlines of the current pandemic, performing essential work that is sustaining our communities. As we enter the recovery phase following COVID-19, economic uncertainty and extreme public health concerns elevate the critical importance of keeping adult literacy programs whole in New York City. **UNH urges the City to adopt a FY2021 budget that restores \$12 million for DYCD-funded adult literacy programs.**

Sustaining Human Services

It is vital to ensure that budget deficits are not bridged with across-the-board cuts to human services. Sweeping across-the-board cuts resulted in reduced contract payments of \$114 million in FY12 and \$60 million in FY13 that wreaked havoc on human services providers and resulted in a direct loss of services. Following that same pattern today will only exacerbate existing inequality by resulting in scaled back services for those experiencing poverty and people of color who are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Human service workers are now on the frontlines of New York City's pandemic response and they need the City's support more than ever. We urge the City to commit to providing human services workers with a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the personnel services line of all human services contracts at the cost of \$48 million. The previous COLA for human services workers from the City is set to expire at the end of FY20 and we must not allow this benefit to be stripped away, particularly during a time of economic instability for so many families. Further, we urge the City to work with the human services sector to secure incentive pay retroactively to March 23, 2020, for all human frontline human services workers who were unable to do their jobs remotely.

This preexisting funding crisis has led 68% of New York City providers to anticipate not being able to meet their pre-COVID-19 demands for services. That need is now the rise as we are also grappling with new costs and potential legislation that will add more burdens to our work. We are calling on the City Council to stand with the sector and help ensure the community-rooted human services providers that New York City relies on are financially stable now, and in the coming months. Please ensure that no bills pass City Council that impose unfunded mandates on the sector unless they are backed with immediate funding on City contracts.

Intro 1867

From their earliest days UNH and settlement houses have worked together to encourage greater civic engagement and mobilization of communities to advocate for good public policies that invest in and enhance our neighborhoods. Yet nearly one million New Yorkers can't vote in local elections due to their citizenship status.

UNH urges the City Council to pass Int. 1867, legislation that would amend the City Charter to permit lawfully present residents and those with work authorizations to vote in municipal elections, such as races for mayor, comptroller, public advocate, borough president, and city council, as well as referenda and other local contests. The legislation would also allow residents to join political parties, and vote in primary elections for municipal offices. Under its terms, a noncitizen would be qualified to vote in municipal elections if she or he is (1) a lawfully permanent resident or authorized to work in the United States; (2) a resident of New York City for at least 30 days; and (3) otherwise qualified to register to vote under New York State election law once exempted from the requirement that she or he possess United States citizenship.

In the wake of COVID-19, civic, economic, social disparities between individuals with varying citizenship statuses have never been more stark. Immigrant New Yorkers who would be impacted by the proposed legislation are holding the front lines of the pandemic, performing essential work that is sustaining our communities. Yet these individuals have been disproportionately underserved by the latest economic relief packages from the federal government, which have excluded immigrants from the support they need to continue holding our city together.

The current pandemic highlights the critical need for expanded enfranchisement to ensure all NYC residents have a say in the direction of our city. The pandemic doesn't discriminate based on immigration status, and neither should our rights to participate in our democracy and communities. Expanding the right to vote in municipal elections to residents with legal status would provide more New Yorkers with the opportunity to have a say on issues that affect them and strengthen the voices of all our communities.

Thank you for your time; for follow up, I can be reached at nmoran@unhny.org or at 212-967-0322 x 345.



Summer Recovery Programming

May 12, 2020

New York City's youth service providers have adapted quickly in the face of devastating circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within days, programs such as COMPASS/SONYC and Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers pivoted from in-person programming to remote, virtual engagement for youth and their families, while also supplementing local food distribution for families. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are currently offering online tutoring support, art and recreation programming, as well as behavioral health care and additional supports to youth and families through grab-and-go meal provision and grocery delivery for many households.

When the City announced the rollout of Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs) to provide early childhood education opportunities for the children of essential workers, CBOs, including youth services providers, rose to the occasion and deployed their own staff to support the RECs. They developed prescriptive lesson plans that conformed to Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) social-distancing standards while simultaneously providing social-emotional supports to children who were dealing with a wide range of difficult circumstances.

As these providers were in the middle of ramping-up planning to continue and expand these efforts in summer 2020, Mayor de Blasio announced the Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget, eliminating funding for all summer Beacon, Cornerstone, COMPASS/SONYC, and SYEP programming. Though the Mayor cited health and safety concerns as justification for the elimination of these programs, youth services providers themselves were never given an opportunity to weigh in on this decision in advance. Had they been asked, they could have shared the tremendous knowledge they have gleaned through pivoting to a combination of remote and in-person, socially-distant programming to help inform alternative models that would keep youth engaged and supported while keeping them safe.

It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult spring. Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are secure child care arrangements. Summer recovery programming is more important than ever given the sudden and extreme challenges youth and their families face this spring due to COVID-19. To ensure that young people and their families are supported, New York City must provide funding to CBOs to address the following needs whose urgency is exacerbated by the crisis of COVID-19:

1. Education – helping students build and strengthen cognitive skills through project-based learning activities and workforce development opportunities;
2. Social Emotional – offering youth opportunities to build positive and rewarding relationships with others and strengthen their self-efficacy and resilience;

3. Health – providing opportunities for safe and regular physical activity and health and nutrition education; and
4. Family and Home – supporting parents, caregivers, and families to help promote learning and healthy development in safe and stable homes.

The Campaign for Children, Campaign for Summer Jobs, and the Neighborhood Family Services Roundtable have worked closely with providers since the initiation of social distancing mandates to aggregate all of the careful planning and creative thinking they had been doing. What follows is a high-level outline of the enriching, engaging, and safe summer programming CBOs could offer youth in summer 2020. These are not exhaustive lists, but rather ideas to begin a dialogue and collaborative planning process for summer 2020. The solution will require flexibility on the part of both the City and its contractors, the CBOs. Summer programming for 2020 will likely be a combination of in-person, socially-distant programming for the children of essential workers and some vulnerable youth, and remote, distance-learning alternatives for those young people who will likely spend at least a portion of their summer under continued social-distancing mandates. What happens should be informed by local, community need as determined by CBOs, particularly in low-income communities-of-color hardest hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City to work with its contractors, the CBOs, to implement this plan because a total absence of summer programming is likely to lead to its own set of health and safety problems for NYC's youth and families. Young people are unlikely to remain safely indoors in cramped apartments heading into the second or third month of social distancing, especially when the weather begins to improve.

For children and youth, school closures and stay-at-home orders have blocked access to essential resources necessary for healthy development: regular nutritious meals, physical activity and time outdoors, positive relationships with peers and community adults, academic and social-emotional learning opportunities, etc. Many children are sadly experiencing the illness and loss of caregivers or multiple family members and are at risk of losing potentially unrecoverable ground academically.

Programming will give them a reason to stay inside while offering a unique checkpoint for their social-emotional health and ensure that they are prepared to begin in-person school when the time comes in the fall. In the case of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), the loss of those wages could be disastrous for many families that depend on them during regular years, let alone in the midst of an economic recession that has brought record-breaking unemployment numbers to communities-of-color in NYC.

Summer Programming for Youth Ages 6-14

Summer camp programs serve children and youth ages 6-14, and have been offered primarily via COMPASS/SONYC, Beacon and Cornerstones contracts with DYCD. Before COVID-19, summer camp ran for six to eight weeks from 8 am to 6 pm. Building on the remote work that COMPASS and SONYC programs have already been doing during the spring, these programs could transition to remote engagement opportunities should New York City still be following social distancing guidelines. If social distancing guidelines are relaxed to allow for in-person activities for children beyond those whose parents/guardians are essential workers, CBOs can build on the work they have already been carrying out via the RECs to offer safe, enriching, socially-distant in-person programming for youth.

Remote Programs

Regardless of the health circumstances in summer 2020, it will be important to have remote programming options available in order to actively foster the thinking, creativity, and resilience of youth. Many families may opt for remote programs over in-person due to residual fears even if the City is slowly opening back up.

Program Design

- COMPASS/SONYC, Beacons, and Cornerstone programs have quickly pivoted to online, remote programming from literacy, STEM, homework help and tutoring to music, dance, karate, and fitness all delivered online via video-conferencing. Many young people have adapted to this style quickly with providers reporting regular attendance. For those who have not adapted, summer presents the only opportunity to engage them before the potential start of school in September.
- One-on-one check ins with students/families is critical to ensure young people and their families are able to communicate their needs and concerns. Furthermore, CBOs use these check-ins to coordinate referrals and other supports for the whole family. They are also critical academic and social/ emotional supports and interventions.
- A combination of remote learning technology, such as Google Classroom, and analogue activities that can be completed with common household supplies can help ensure youth are not spending too much time staring at screens. Reading assignments are encouraged as well as a great way to prevent over-exposure to screens.

Staffing

- It is important that experienced staff be running these programs—where possible, programs should ensure they have credentialed social workers on staff to aid with social/emotional supports.
- CBOs should have experienced youth development staff managing the programs to ensure that the technical, emotional and academic needs of participants can be appropriately managed and addressed.
- Two staff should be moderating any live video conferencing programs at a time to ensure programming is kept safe and secure.

Funding Levels

- Funding levels should be adequate to ensure that programs can employ youth development staff who have experience working with the communities they are serving. In most cases, this would require maintaining their existing program directors as 12 month staff.
- Funding levels should be adequate to ensure that CBOs can hire licensed social workers.
- Funding levels should guarantee that CBOs have the technology to implement remote learning.

In-person programs

If social distancing guidelines are relaxed enough and parents and guardians begin returning to work, in-person summer programs will be necessary to meet families' child care needs. In addition to providing childcare, these programs will allow young people to begin the work of sorting through the myriad challenges that have arisen during months of social distancing accompanied by devastating economic and human loss.

Providing safe and enriching child care will assist the City on its path to recovery. Child care for essential workers is already a necessity. If the city begins to reopen and parents go to work or look for jobs, in-person summer programming will be essential for families. It may also provide both CBOs and DOE with important insights as schools prepare for students to phase-in their return to school.

It is also important to note that DOE RECs, Cornerstones, and Beacons have been offering limited in-person programming during COVID-19 (with Cornerstones and Beacons mainly acting as meal distribution sites). Providers have worked to develop and revise protocols to ensure this programming is safe and follows current public health guidelines have helped to develop the following recommendations and protocols.

Though there are numerous health and safety concerns that are to be expected when imagining in-person programming, providers would leverage the extensive knowledge gleaned through their work at REC sites to do so safely.

The in-person programs developed by experienced youth development experts have helped to provide critical emotional supports and check in opportunities for participating children and youth. These needs will continue, if not increase during the summer as the human costs and economic fallout of the pandemic begin to settle in.

Program Design

- Building on the work that took place in the RECs, programs could include:
- Fashion/art classes for elementary age children where children work with materials already at their desks to design a costume for a favorite character.
- Small group dance/movement classes where children maintain proper social distancing.
- Individual gym activities where children perform activities at the same time while maintaining physical distance by standing on personal colored spots or in hula hoops.
- Hallway monitoring and supervision with walkie-talkies to ensure that neither children nor adults enter hallways at the same time.

Additional considerations

- Adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential—masks for staff and children, gloves, thermometers to do forehead scan temperature checks of youth, and enough soap and paper towels to ensure proper handwashing throughout the day, plus hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible.
- Youth should have their own supplies and materials to use, so that they do not have to share items with other children that might be too difficult to properly sanitize. These should be paid for with program budgets, and the burden should not be on families to put in place.
- Partnerships with DOE, NYCHA and Parks will be essential to provide adequate space and, where possible, safe outdoor space for activities.
- Coordination with the DOE will be essential to ensure that school buildings that are open over the summer are leveraged if socially-distanced gatherings become an option.

Funding Levels

- Funding levels should be adequate to maintain the higher staffing ratios necessitated by social distancing guidelines. While SACC guidelines allow for as many as 20 children to be supported by two staff members, social distancing guidelines require smaller groups with RECs are limited to 8 children with 2 adults.

- Funding must also include the indirect costs to maintain year-round staff at CBO's to plan for school year programs.

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)

In addition to all of the social/emotional and academic benefits of summer programs described above, SYEP goes a step further and acts as an economic stimulus for young people. Many families report relying on SYEP income during regular summers, and the impact of COVID-19 has been hardest in low-income communities where many youth participate in SYEP. Providers often hear from SYEP participants that the families of SYEP participants depend on SYEP wages for basic household expenses such as food, utilities and rent.

The Campaign for Summer Jobs has compiled the following recommendations for remote/in person socially-distant summer employment programming depending on the current best practices promoted by public health officials.

Process Recommendations

- Leverage existing DOE software to do secure remote/online recruitment for programming with wages or stipends, as enrollment in SYEP requires the collection of sensitive information like Social Security Numbers
 - Providers pointed to vendors, like Submittable, who have the technology to do this for a small fee, should the City be unable to build something on their own
- Consider launching programs in mid-July or August to give providers/DYCD ramp-up time
- Consider prioritizing teens/young people from communities hardest-hit by COVID-19 for priority access to SYEP

Remote Programs

Program Design

Should the City remain under social distancing guidelines for the entire summer, there are many remote learning options that could be available to youth. In addition to Hats and Ladders—the application that was being developed for launch in summer 2020 that offered both career orientation as well as online career-exposure content—the below remote opportunities could be put in place:

- The younger-youth (YY) model could be brought entirely online fairly easily given the way it operates. It would take limited time/resources to adapt curricula to be remote.
- For older-youth (OY), it is important to distinguish their SYEP opportunities and provide them a more robust experience, such as:
 - Occupational training resulting in an industry-recognized credential – can be built on existing curricula for other DYCD- or philanthropically-funded programs, such as:
 - National Retail Federation
 - Food Protection/food handlers
 - Microsoft Office User Specialist
 - Google Suites
 - CDL test prep
 - DOE's list of credentials

- Potential partnership w/ CUNY for credits
- Career exploration supports
- Remote/virtual job “placement”
 - Helping businesses troubleshoot problems/issues they’re having
 - Working in teams to help community businesses plan re-launches when social distancing is lifted
 - Helping with social media plans for businesses, etc.
- Call centers/remote check-in on vulnerable community members/seniors, including 311

Funding Levels

In order to provide a strong remote program while also ensuring that the economic stimulus component of SYEP is not lost, funding should include:

- \$800 per participant for remote programming and/or in-person internship placement coordination
- \$1,000 stipend for youth

In-Person Programs

If public health experts say that it is safe to relax social distancing requirements by July, SYEP internship opportunities that could be ramped up quickly include:

- Counselors at summer camp programs run by CBOs;
- Support at cultural institutions;
- Positions with small business partners; and
- Customer service jobs.

Though it may be unlikely for in-person programs to operate this summer, in the event that in-person SYEP is permitted, adequate PPE must be offered to any youth working in frontline, essential positions.

For questions, please contact Gregory Brender (gbrender@unhny.org) regarding younger youth, and J.T. Falcone (jfalcone@unhny.org) regarding SYEP.

The Campaign for Children is a coalition of 150 early childhood education and after-school advocacy and provider organizations, including Citizens’ Committee for Children, United Neighborhood Houses, Children’s Aid, Good Shepherd Services, FPWA, the Day Care Council of New York, UJA-Federation of New York, and the YMCA of Greater New York.

The Campaign for Summer Jobs (CSJ) is a 20-year-old coalition of community-based social service and advocacy organizations, convened by United Neighborhood Houses, which advocates for programmatic improvements and expanded capacity for New York’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).



May 20, 2020

Dear Chair Gjonaj and members of the Small Business Committee,

United for Small Business NYC (USBnyc) is a coalition of community organizations across New York City fighting to protect small businesses and commercial tenants from the threat of displacement, with a focus on owner-operated, minority-run businesses that serve low-income and minority communities. The threat of displacement to New York City's small businesses and non-profits has been dramatically exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Our members and clients (small businesses, sole proprietorships, cooperatives, street vendors, and non-profits who provide goods and services to the public) are seeing a catastrophic drop in income, up to 100 percent. Because of this, we need swift action on the following fronts to protect small businesses across the city from displacement and closure.

Commercial rent relief

Since March 20, non-essential businesses in New York City have been closed by the PAUSE order. Many of these businesses are commercial tenants, and while they are legally prevented from operating as usual in order to protect public health, property owners are continuing to charge rents. Even businesses that have received PPP loans can only use 25% of the loan amount for rent. Sky-high commercial rents were already posing a challenge to many vital neighborhood businesses; now the only options are to take on crushing debt or to close.

We ask the city to enact emergency legislation mandating that landlords provide a full rent abatement to businesses that are closed by the PAUSE order or otherwise impacted by COVID-19, until the state of emergency ends. We also want to see long-term legislation regulating commercial rents so that small businesses are not displaced by exorbitant rent hikes once the emergency is over.

Targeted assistance for immigrant businesses

Immigrant business owners face additional challenges; we have found that many immigrant small business owners and sole proprietors are ultimately ineligible for federal and city aid due to monolingual English application documents, extensive documentation requirements, and restrictive eligibility criteria. Immigrant-owned businesses comprise over 48% of New York City's roughly 220,000 small businesses, employ nearly half a million New Yorkers, and contribute \$195 billion to the city's gross domestic product (GDP) annually. Additionally, they often provide culturally specific goods and services that sustain New York's diverse neighborhoods.



In order to ensure that they can continue these contributions, we ask for the creation of a NYC Immigrant Small Business Grant, with parameters of eligibility that do not depend on commercial rent payments, utility bills or payroll, or immigration status.

While the Mayor recently announced a partnership with the Open Society Foundations to support 20,000 undocumented New Yorkers through one-time relief checks ranging from \$400 - \$1,000, this fund will reach fewer than [three percent](#) of the half a million undocumented New Yorkers and their families who have been excluded from all relief. We want to see the creation of a fund for individual payments to New York City residents excluded from the federal stimulus package in amounts that match those set by the CARES Act.

Funding for legal assistance

The Commercial Lease Assistance Program, launched in 2018, provides free legal services to commercial tenants who cannot otherwise afford legal assistance in lease negotiation. The small business owners served by the program are 99% lower-income, 75% people of color, 64% immigrants, and 33% speaking a primary language other than English. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the organizations providing legal services through CLA have seen a tenfold increase in requests for assistance, far exceeding the program's capacity. We anticipate that with the expiration of the state's eviction moratorium and the uncertainty of NYC's eventual reopening, low-income commercial tenants will be even more in need of a source of pro bono legal assistance, and that without such assistance, we will see closures of small businesses, increased displacement pressure and discrimination from property owners, continued gentrification, and increased financial strain on community-based organizations that provide essential support services. **We request that the City expand funding for the CLA Program to at least \$2.4 million for FY21 through the Department of Small Business Services.**

This is a moment of dire urgency for small businesses and commercial tenants in New York City. If rent relief and other forms of assistance are not provided, businesses will be forced to take on crushing debt that will be difficult to pay back. Their only alternative to debt will be permanent closure. This is likely to accelerate speculation and shift control of our city's commercial corridors to large corporate landlords and private equity firms. We cannot continue to place the economic burden of this pandemic on low-income people, immigrants, and communities of color. In order to address these systemic inequities, we urge the council to take bold action.

Members: Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, Chhaya CDC, Cooper Square Committee, Fourth Arts Block, The Municipal Arts Society of New York, Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition, NYC Artist Coalition,



NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives, Street Vendor Project, TakeRoot Justice, Volunteers of Legal Service, Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation



Mayor de Blasio
Members of the City Council
New York City Hall
City Hall Park
New York, NY 10007

May 23, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Members of the City Council:

Youth leaders from the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), with members from Make the Road New York, Sistas and Brothas United, Future of Tomorrow, and the Rockaway Youth Task Force, in collaboration with youth leaders from Girls for Gender Equity, created the Youth Budget Agenda to comprehensively state the budget demands of young people to have them supported and not policed during and following the coronavirus pandemic. The young people who navigate our schools everyday and experience harm due to harsh policing and disciplinary policies are uniquely situated to lead the dialogue about developing truly safe and just learning environments. As you shape this year's budget, we encourage full funding of four priority areas from the agenda: restorative practices, increasing the number of guidance counselors and social workers as part of a mental health service continuum, fully funding the Summer Youth Employment Program, and ensuring the coronavirus response is equitable and just. We demand that you simultaneously divest from policing generally, but school policing in particular.

As an organization, UYC centers the experiences and voices of this city's young people. They are the most directly impacted by the education budget and thus the experts on the impact of policy decisions on their lives. These budget priorities were decided by young people during a virtual town hall on April 23, 2020 and their perspective is central to our work as an organization.

Please see the below testimonials from our youth membership.

1.

My name is Tavane and I'm a youth leader with Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I am also a high school student in Staten Island.

This pandemic has impacted us all, but certainly it has impacted people of color the most. Young people are going through a lot of stress because they as well as their families have lost their jobs and don't even have another way to get by.

But our stress doesn't stop there, when lawmakers instead of supporting us are attacking us by cutting our education budget while still investing millions on metal detectors to "make schools

safer,” when in reality they don’t. We are in a crisis. Our schools need more resources and more staff for students to be successful such as guidance counselors and therapists. Before the crisis many schools in poor Black and Brown neighborhoods didn’t have soap in our bathrooms, or hot water and sometimes we were locked out of bathrooms. We need to invest in supportive upgrades not surveillance like metal detectors and security cameras.

The city is now spending more than \$431 million per year on police and the NYPD School “Safety” Division. Divest the more than half a billion dollars spent annually on criminalizing and surveilling young people of color and reinvest that money to expand restorative practices citywide, and increase the number of guidance counselors, social workers, and mental health supports available in schools.

Instead of cutting resources from young people, cut the funding that our schools pay to the NYPD to police our schools. Cut the funding of NYPD youth initiatives. Police are not how youth define safety and support. The most important thing right now is to fund our futures and stop funding the NYPD because they cut our futures short by criminalizing Black and Brown communities. Now more than ever when the mayor has announced massive cuts to education we should not be spending money on school police. This moment calls for a new way forward - and we are calling for police free schools. Invest in us and everything we need.

2.

My name is Kobie and I am a youth leader with Future of Tomorrow. I am also a senior in high school here to talk about the city’s executive budget, and the city council's ability to influence education policy and funding to improve conditions within our schools.

I firmly believe I would not have made it this far without the mental health supports provided to me by my school. Before remote learning, I attended a high school campus that was highly surveilled with metal detectors, cameras, school safety agents, but not enough mental health support staff. There are 5,000 School Safety Agents across New York City’s schools, and only 1200 social workers, 2800 guidance counselors, and 1,448 school nurses available for one million students. It is important to me to know that the same support I received will be provided to all students after I graduate. I don't believe that can happen with the Department of Education's current ratio of SSA’s to social workers, guidance counselors and school nurses.

Instead of hiring more School Safety Agents, our schools need an increased number of support staff. An equitable guidance counselor ratio of 1 to 100 students. Employing one full time nurse on every school campus, and 1 available social worker to 400 students. We need considerable divestment from the NYPD’s School Safety Division budget, and an investment in support staff for our schools. More money should be spent on the wellbeing of the students as opposed to policing them.

3.

My name is Diamond Feliciano and I am a member of Make the Road New York. I am writing today because as a young person living in NYC I am concerned about the direction the budget is headed in our city and the consequences we are going to have to deal with afterward.

As someone who has been a part of the Summer Youth Employment Program, I understand first hand how essential this program is. SYEP gave me my first job opportunity at the age of 16. That summer I applied to many jobs and if it wasn't for SYEP I would have not done anything that summer. SYEP provided real-life help with things like how to manage my time, how to build a resume, how to prepare and dress for interviews, and most importantly how to budget my money. If not for syep I wouldn't have had access to this information, and life skills.

I grew up in a single-parent household so we did not have many sources of income. The money I received from SYEP was important as it allowed me to care for my necessities and help my mom with basic family needs.

I was placed at Make the Road NY where I learned how to be more articulate and became more aware of the systems that affect my life. Many of the things I learned there I would not have had, outside of my SYEP experience because I never had access to those opportunities. The skills and education I received; I am still using and will continue to be a defining aspect of my life.

This year's budget has eliminated the Summer Youth Employment Program, and with it, the 75,000 jobs that young New Yorkers are counting on.

We need that money and we need it now!

Only \$23 Million was cut to the NYPD, which is just 0.39% of their budget. This is unacceptable. It truly bothers me when I see that the city has divested from programs that enrich the lives of those that look like me and Instead they preserve and want to further invest in the NYPD. A department that has historically been used to cultivate fear and criminalize people who look like me with an escalating and oppressive police presence.

This budget does not prioritize our needs! These are the types of programs that give us the experience we rarely get in school.

Now, more than ever, the city must pass a budget that prioritizes our needs. We demand a just budget. We call on the City Council to fund summer youth employment--not cops!

4.

My name is Josh Melendez. I live in the Bronx, I am in the 6th grade and I am a youth leader at Sistas And Brothas United. I feel more uncertain of what school will look like when we return. Like many of my peers, COVID-19 continues to negatively impact my community in many ways. School should feel like a safe haven, but, after hearing the priorities of the chancellor and the Department of Education, I feel like my wellbeing is not a priority.

Before schools closed due to the pandemic, there were major issues in our schools that we must address before returning. One of these issues is the lack of health resources for students.

I attend Junior High School 123 in the South Bronx where the asthma rate in children is higher than that of children across New York City, also where we have seen some of the highest number of COVID-19 cases and twice the rate of death due to COVID-19. My school lacked resources like soap, hot water, and cleaning products. In a borough with so many vulnerable community members, the probability of spreading sickness again is high and there seems to be no attempt to address what the students and staff need most when we go back to school.

I have 6 more years before I am done with public school. How can I feel like during the next 6 years of my life, I will be invested in, if what I see is that the Department of Education will continue to spend 4 times the amount of money on police then what they spend on school nurses, which are more important to make sure we are healthy?

I want to walk back into a school building that prioritizes proper building maintenance, nurses and sanitation products in addition to mental health support, social workers and counselors instead of budget lines that criminalize young people.

Adjusting the proposed budget is not a request but a moral responsibility, otherwise, what I can learn from all of this is that my life, my voice and my health does not matter.

5.

My name is Wesley Guzman. I'm a High School Senior and a youth leader at Sistas and Brothas United. I constantly worry for the health and safety of my mother who travels to work and when I drop off groceries to my grandparents. If I'm this worried while we are in this social distancing time I can only imagine how worried families will get when schools reopen. I worry for my peers and siblings that schools will not be prepared to reopen safely next year.

Prior to the school shut down due to Covid-19, many schools lacked soap, hot water, or working water fountains, and had overcrowded classrooms, asbestos in the walls, and 1 or no nurses in a building for over 1000 students. These kinds of unhealthy conditions were difficult to deal with before COVID-19 but as our lives and our protocols have shifted I want to ensure that this budget does not forget about students' health needs.

As the city negotiates on budget priorities, they need to ensure that our schools will reopen with an increased access to school nurses, more sanitary products in schools and proper building maintenance staff funds to ensure students attend schools that are safe and healthy. With that said, it is critical that funding for professional development is kept as our teachers not only need training to support students' transition back into schools, but will need support adjusting their teaching models to adapt to our new reality. Training on restorative justice practices to support these transitions and maintaining a healthy environment are key especially because we should not rely on SSAs or NYPD to enforce any social distancing protocols in schools.

To make this possible when there's budget cuts across agencies I suggest you cut a lot more than the less than 1% of NYPD's budget which has barely been touched in the Mayor's proposed budget. The NYPD or SSAs don't make us feel safe—they make us feel like we're criminals in and out of school. They often harass black and brown students. We now see them heavily target people of color in social distancing enforcement. They haven't helped us before and they certainly won't help when schools reopen. A just budget for students doesn't criminalize them. Thank you.

Budgets are moral documents, acting on what a government values most. We urge you to listen to our youth, as well as other youth and their allies who testified on May 21st, and invest in our city's future.

Sincerely,

Urban Youth Collaborative

Dear Councilmember Rafael Salamanca::

My name is Jose I Vaquero I am a parent of a scholar at Classical Charter School a high performing charter schools in the South Bronx in a very disadvantaged and underserved community . While scholars at CCS have made outstanding academic gains, many families are forced to live in substandard housing with improper ventilation and in many instances with no heat or hot water and rodent infestation. That has been the reality of many families in our community for years. with the uncertainty times we are all facing nowadays things are even more complicated for our already struggling families. While applications for housing subsidies are frozen due to COVID-19, children and families have to endure cramped and deplorable living conditions, with little or no food. I urge to please invest in our community and address the concerns of our children and families. Fair housing and equitable living conditions are necessary for all children to thrive in life. No child in our community should be forced to endure cramped, uninhabitable living conditions

I am confident that you are going to propose Public Housing Funding that will improve the quality of life for children and families in the Bronx and New York City.

Yours,

José I Vaquero

My name is Veronica Jiao, and I am sharing my testimony to express concern about the proposed NYC Budget cuts to the Department of Youth & Community Development.

I hope you can imagine how devastating a 47% budget cut will be to the young people that benefit from these programs. As an arts educator, I've already seen how the pandemic has affected the city's most vulnerable youth, a majority of my students falling into that category. Transitioning from in-person learning to virtual learning, some of my students do not have the space to learn, their parents have been diagnosed with the virus, or they do not have the necessary equipment to attend class--arts classes that they formerly looked forward to as an escape from schoolwork or homelife.

The purpose of DYCD programs is to impact youth in a way that they might not normally have access to, to positively contribute to their human experience in a way they might not be receiving at home, due to socio-economic challenges. During this time of crisis, which has already disproportionately affected people with less access to health care & financial stability, NOW more than ever we need these programs to provide a safe space for them and avenues that allow them to reach their full potential.

I hope you'll support the proposed 1% cut to the NYPD's budget without affecting public safety, in order to provide the funds to avoid DYCD cuts. Thank you so much for reading.

Victoria Tucci

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 18, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Victoria Tucci and I am an actor pursuing my Masters in Applied Theatre at City University of New York.

The arts and arts education are a critical part of creating learning environments where one can grow their imagination, learn to think creatively and interrogate the world. As an applied theatre practitioner, I use theatre as a tool to examine and comment on the world. It is a place for students to learn to think critically and imagine ways to respond to and create a better world. The arts can me a saving grace for students and for society at large. It is a place to go for laughter, comfort, escape, joy and to learn. When I was a student my arts education helped me to stay focused and motivated to go to and do well in school.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

MY request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Victoria Tucci

To the 51 human beings who have the power to pass a people's budget.

I imagine you got up this morning and like all of us, took care of your physical needs. You used the toilet, you cleaned up, you ate breakfast. And along the way you woke the rest of the beings in your house and you helped them take care of their bodies by feeding, medicating and cleaning them up.

Now that everyone's basic needs were met the day could begin with a happy and healthy mind. The kids need to be schooled and the adults need to get to work.

Presumably there was intent and direction in your decisions that got you to this long, intense, draining meeting today. You will get through it because your basic needs were met. You can concentrate on making solid decisions because you are not concerned about feeding your family or how your kids are going to fill the hours of the day. You understand that you have to take care of your body, then your mind. Then you can concentrate on making good decisions about your safety.

I would hope that you don't wake up and check the windows and scan the perimeter. It's not healthy way to start your day.

There is a natural order to things. And you've taken the proper steps ahead of time to insure that you can provide for you basic needs.

Today you have the power to take the proactive steps to make sure that all human beings can start their day the way you did.

Not-for-profits have the know-how and the creativity to meet needs in the community. Quite frankly, needs that are not being enthusiastically met by life circumstances or the government. It has been the NFPs that have pooled resources and spent what little capital they had in the budget to help one another meet our basic human needs.

The arts organizations are about so much more than just providing an outlet for passion, creativity and emotions - all incredibly important outlets for a healthy mind. These organizations provide structure and life skills. And they often do it while providing a snack and an ear.

It has been the NFPs that have provided: food, toiletries, tampons, dog food, laundry services, delivery services to the home bound way before the government got on board. NFPs are run by creative souls that see the weak link and figure out how to strengthen it.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Keep the foundation strong and it takes less effort to keep the rest going. This model serves us as individuals and as a society.

I beg of you, be the leaders that you were voted into office to be! This is NEW YORK CITY!! Show the world how it is done! Show others that there is a reason why we are the cultural capital of the world. Prove that investment in people is the only way to proceed. By lifting each other up we are all lifted.

Spend my dollars where they are needed: on supporting my neighbors. Give communities organizations the financial support to be there for one another. These organizations know what is most needed. They have the experience of thinking outside the box and doing it on the fly! This is a time to come together, not to suppress one another and our basic human needs.

Let's create an environment where less policing is needed by meeting our neighbors needs and bringing joy and passion to each other's lives.

Cut the 1% from the police budget and put it into keeping the after school/summer programming going. If you add more police to the streets it will become a self-fulfilling prophesy. Show the world that we NYers take care of one another and have faith that the majority of people, when basic needs are covered, will step up!

It is simple common sense. Feed a human and they will eat for a day. Teach a human how to fish and they will not only never go hungry - they can teach others how to fish!!

From the depths of my heart and the depth of reason, please do not cut the budgets for the programming that changes people's lives for the better. We are better than that. You are better than that.

dsvitals@gmail.com



Wednesday, May 20, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Budget Hearing

Sonal Jessel
Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the City's budget for 2021.

My name is Sonal Jessel, and I'm the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. Over the past 31 years, WE ACT has been combating environmental racism in Northern Manhattan. I myself have received my Master in Public Health from Columbia University. I am here as an advocate concerned about the communities we serve in Northern Manhattan, which is heavily Black and Latino, low-income, and hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am also here as a member of the Climate Works for All Coalition and I am testifying today to demand prioritized funding for programs that address our climate crisis while supporting communities hardest hit by the pandemic.

WE ACT joins the Climate Works for All Coalition to stand with NYC community members, labor groups, and environmental justice communities to demand we fund equitable climate action that will also stimulate our city post-crisis. As outlined in our NYC Climate and Community Stimulus Program which we released last month, we must invest in green infrastructure projects to put our communities back to work in good union jobs that move us towards our climate goals. We must address the economic recession and the climate crisis at the same time.

Released this month, a report by the BW Research Partnership found that around half a million clean energy jobs have been lost due nationwide, and we are heading to close to a million by the end of June. Latino workers represent about one quarter of those jobs lost even though they are only about 14% of the industry. Additionally, a study by the Solar Foundation last year reported that Black workers represent only about 8% of the solar workforce. I cannot even find data on their job loss statistics in this industry. Clearly, people of color are hit hard by unemployment due to the pandemic; but on top of that, they have historically been underrepresented in the clean energy industry, particularly in renewables.

Solutions that address the disparate unemployment due to COVID-19 can also be paired with our immediate need to address climate crisis in this City. First, we demand that Local Law 97 be funded and enforced. We can create 40,000 jobs with oversight positions in the Department of Buildings. Second, we must continue with solar installations sooner rather than later. Funding available can be through a few



routes: FEMA, municipal liquidity grants, and State & Federal workforce development grants, and more.

We cannot achieve a healthy NYC and a healthy economy until we put people back to work, in a route that is equitable. Amongst many other lessons, the COVID19 pandemic is showing us how we are not prepared for the consequences of climate change, some of which we have already experienced. As a public health worker who focuses on climate change and health, I know that we will be seeing a rise in infectious diseases in New York City and around the world due to the worsening climate crisis. We don't want another pandemic. We can prevent the worst from happening if we make drastic efforts to mitigate climate change. Through these initiatives, we can provide good jobs for those that have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and intentionally close the startling racial disparity in renewable energy and clean energy industry employment.

Therefore, I join other advocates, experts, and community members in the Climate Works for All Coalition to urge the City to prioritize funding for climate change mitigation efforts such as implementing Local Law 97 and continuing solar installations.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sonal Jessel, MPH

Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10031
212-961-1000

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 19th, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Caitlin Wees, and I am a student in the MA Applied Theatre program at CUNY School of Professional Studies in Manhattan, and the Associate Producer of The One-Minute Play Festival.

As an arts education student and community arts advocate, I strongly believe in the power of the arts to transform and support the education system. Arts open up new passageways to learning for students who may struggle in formal educational settings. They provide a creative outlet, and support social-emotional learning practices. They are our way to connect with other people, beyond the boundaries of language and culture, and create a shared space and experience.

Beyond the pandemic, arts and cultural experiences are going to be the bridge to a vibrant New York City, to restore mental health for families, and to engage students in learning. Artists and cultural organizations are ready to continue partnering with schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, and health service organizations to take proactive steps to restore the health and safety of New Yorkers of all ages. In order for this to happen, city agencies need sustained funding.

My request is that budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Indeed, programs that foster renewal, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Let us remember that countless NYC youth discover a passion for theatre, music, visual art, dance, writing, or media arts, and build important life skills that help them in the future through our members' work. These young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Wees

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Corey Johnson
Speaker
New York City Council
Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Daniel Dromm
Chair, Council Finance Committee
New York City Council
Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Vanessa L. Gibson
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee
New York City Council
Via Electronic Mail

Re: Capital Budget

On behalf of the West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing, Inc. (WSFSSH.), we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Capital Budget.

WSFSSH is a 40 year old senior and supportive housing organization employing over 400 people. WSFSSH operates 28 buildings housing over 2,200 individuals in Manhattan and the Bronx, most of whose age and health places them at high risk during the COVID crisis.

As state budget cuts loom and federal support remains uncertain, the 40% cut to the capital budget in FY 20 and the 38% cut to the capital budget in FY 21 comes as another blow. WSFSSH is scheduled to close on financing for a 104-unit 100% low-income senior building that will include 32 units for formerly homeless households. The project will be financed with HPD SARA funding and either NY 15/15 operating subsidy or State ESSHI funds. Pushing out closing dates for these projects means more people sitting in shelters or on the streets. The City must use every available tool to ensure the full funding of the Supportive Housing Loan Program and other critical HPD programs that create more housing for homeless New Yorkers. If our deal does not close as scheduled, we will likely have a significant pre-development budget increase that cannot currently be funded by City resources. We will delay housing 32 homeless households, 71 low-income seniors, and be unable to provide the much needed temporary and permanent jobs our development would provide.

Housing is healthcare, and a safe, stable and affordable place to call home is the first line of defense in protecting vulnerable communities. Without a continued, significant investment in the development of housing for homeless New Yorkers, and those who will inevitably become

homeless, the city will see all of its efforts to decrease the shelter and street homeless population fail and risk future spikes of COVID fatalities.

Supportive housing development creates jobs: the approximately 400 people working for WSFSSH are essential workers for New York. They are front desk staff, porters, handypersons, supers, social workers, building management, case managers, all supporting our elderly residents.

During this crisis, the supportive housing community has adapted rapidly, developing innovative ways to deliver essential services, and keep their clients safe. WSFSSH is on the front lines of the pandemic as the individuals we serve are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 due to age, chronic health conditions, and fixed incomes. We are working tirelessly to support our residents via emergency response measures – including procuring meals, PPE, the installation of hand washing stations and providing of care packages to residents, essential staff recruitment and retention, and technology solutions for remote services.

Not only is it imperative the city and the administration preserve the capital budget for these programs, we must preserve and enhance the social services within these residences to ensure the safety and stability of our neighbors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today and are available for any questions you may have.

MCNY and NYC Budget Negotiations

Dear Councilmember Van Bramer

From all of us at the Museum of the City of New York, I thank you and your staff for your work on behalf of New Yorkers in this time of extraordinary difficulty and uncertainty. The Museum continues to serve our community through [online offerings](#) that engage New Yorkers of all ages in understanding the past challenges that have shaped our city and their role in shaping its future.

I am reaching out to you on behalf of my institution, a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, and part of New York City's cultural community, in advance of the Budget Negotiation Team meeting. Thank you for your comments at the budget hearing yesterday, truly a herculean undertaking carried out with courtesy and forbearance by all. We understand that there remain so many uncertainties you, your staff, and all our elected officials are navigating every hour of every day, how hard those decisions are, and that the impacts will be widespread. With this in mind, **I urge you to minimize any cuts to the FY21 budget that support arts and culture institutions; to keep them as whole as possible so we can maintain our commitment to staff and continue to serve our community.**

Cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs, including initiatives and council discretionary funding, will enact an outsized impact on educational and creative resources for our city's children and families—as studies show that a community's wellbeing is correlated to the number of such organizations in its midst. Our city's creative sector directly employs over 293,000 people, paying \$30.4 billion in wages, and is responsible for some \$110 billion in total economic activity. City support is critical to the security of these jobs and to the potential for cultural institutions to be a pillar of support for the city's recovery.

Cultural institutions are a primary defining characteristic of our city, not only for tourists but for New Yorkers in all five boroughs. Arts and culture provide meaning to our lives, shapes our communities, and gives us the language to move through challenging times. **New York and New Yorkers rely on and need culture as we collectively heal from this pandemic. City funding will help us be there for them.**

Sincerely,

Whitney

Whitney W. Donhauser
Ronay Menschel Director & President

Museum of the City of New York
1220 Fifth Avenue

New York, NY 10029

M: 917-209-4203

E: wdonhauser@mcny.org
www.mcny.org

Note: The Museum Building at 1220 Fifth Avenue is currently closed due to the NYS Executive Order. But do visit us online and on social media – www.mcny.org

Policing and incarceration are strategies for solving issues within our communities. They are not the only strategies and they are not the ones that are most effective.

The arrests for social distancing have been blatantly racist. The head of the benevolent association recently called the head of DOH “a bitch” on Twitter and was not asked to take the tweet down. It’s still up.

Frankly, it is not a show of strength to reward a department that has shown a lack of accountability for these behaviors and has cost the city so much money in legal fees after committing unnecessary acts of violence, by giving them even more resources.

This council has talked a lot about taking actions to reduce the number of people in the jails, but without fully funding the programs that could replace jails, there will always be some excuse to fill them.

I urge the council to change the proposed budget. Divest from policing and incarceration. Invest in the resources communities need to survive this pandemic and to thrive long after. This is a matter of political will.

allison.wilens@gmail.com

Good morning Council Members Dromm and your esteemed colleagues on the City Council's Finance Committee.

My name is William Spisak, I am the Director of Housing Justice at Chhaya CDC, based in Queens. Our mission is to build the power, housing stability, and economic well-being of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities in New York City. Today I will share our testimony on the importance of several programs in the areas of housing, immigration, and economic empowerment. These programs are critical to the South Asian community Chhaya serves as well as many other New Yorkers served by other organizations across the five boroughs.

I. Housing Programs

1) Save the Basement Pilot Program

For over a decade, Chhaya has been an advocate for creating safe and legal basement apartments to help stabilize homeownership, address affordable housing shortages, bring basements already in use up to code, and extend basic tenant protections to the residents of those units. In 2018 we were delighted to begin working on the East New York Pilot program. However, now we face an existential cut to the program because of the austerity measures taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We believe the decision to cut this program will be devastating for the future of basement conversions.

By our estimates, there are over 100,000 potential units that could be added to housing stock through a basement conversion program. These would be affordable housing units, spread throughout the boroughs in order to avoid overcrowding in neighborhoods zoned for high density, and a great economic stimulus for working class homeowners. Rather than concentrating on building new multifamily buildings where the rental income generated by tenants goes to a single landlord or a private equity firm that likely spends the money outside of the local community, basement conversions will add units in low and moderate income communities and the rental income will go directly to local homeowners who live and shop in the community, supporting local economies.

None of the benefits of basement conversions will happen unless we see the pilot through to completion and learn how to best implement a citywide program. Therefore, Chhaya urges the city council to secure funding to protect this vital program.

2) Stabilizing NYC

In spite of major victories at the state level to expand tenant protections for rent stabilized tenants, predatory equity landlords continue to find new ways to extract more wealth from low- and moderate-income communities. For many years Chhaya, through Stabilizing NYC, has waged campaigns against some of the most egregious violators of tenants' rights including A&E and Zara Realty. Currently, Chhaya's work with our partners against Zara is reaping tangible results. Tenants are winning housing court cases, being reimbursed for past overcharges, and the State Attorney General has taken on a case against Zara for their abusive behavior, a case that was taken up after years of advocacy by the Stabilizing coalition.

Without continued funding for this program, the gains we have made against these landlords can easily be reversed. Predatory equity landlords are figuring out new ways to game the system, including new tricks to manipulate major capital improvement loopholes and combining two units into one to remove them from rent stabilization restrictions. With the COVID crisis putting tenants in an even more vulnerable position as many will struggle to pay rental arrears after the eviction moratorium is lifted, we will need to organize tenant associations and provide tenant services more than ever.

3) Housing Preservation Initiative and Foreclosure Prevention

One of the most troubling trends Chhaya has observed during the COVID-19 crisis is the rise of predatory forbearance programs from lenders that can lead homeowners down the road of foreclosure and potential homelessness after the crisis. Many lenders have offered homeowners the option of entering a forbearance program if they are struggling to make their mortgage payments. While many lenders have been offering well-designed programs and detailed explanations on how the program will work, other lenders have created programs with large balloon payments that will come due in a few months that will create a difficult situation for homeowners who will likely still be out of work and unable to make the unexpectedly high payment.

As a result, Chhaya believes we will see an increase in foreclosure prevention cases in the year to come. Last year, our housing counselors provided foreclosure prevention counseling to over 70 homeowners in Queens and homeowner education services to nearly 500. The funding that allows Chhaya to do this work comes by way of the Housing Preservation Initiative and the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Initiative. Cutting these programs now would be a dangerous

misstep for our city. We know the economic consequences of COVID-19 will impact our communities for years to come, and a massive wave of foreclosures will be an early symptom of the economic crisis. Chhaya and our housing counseling partners will need the resources to guide homeowners through their options, help them understand refinancing plans, and reestablish housing stability in our communities.

4) Community Land Trust Initiative

The COVID-19 crisis is revealing the fragility of the current real estate system. Homeowners, tenants, and small businesses know that if low- and moderate-income communities are going to have a future in this city, we need to reform land ownership and stewardship. The Community Land Trust model is one of the most promising ways of stabilizing communities and fending off the real estate speculators that threaten our neighbors with displacement. Chhaya is a member of the Community Land Trust Initiative and is working on organizing small business owners to establish a cultural center and commercial Community Land Trust to fight the displacement of key cultural institutions and culturally relevant small businesses from the Jackson Heights community. The availability of this funding has allowed Chhaya to dedicate significant staff time to organizing around the community land trust for the first time. Securing it will allow us to continue to make progress and stabilize our community.

II. Immigration Programs

As an immigrant serving organization, most of our clients are in desperate need of immigration legal services. However, too many cannot afford an attorney or fall victim to predatory schemes by dishonest practitioners. Action NYC allows Chhaya to provide free legal services to immigrant clients. As one of the only South Asian organizations providing this service, our program is a critical lifeline for members of the Indian, Pakistani, Nepali, Bangladeshi, and Indo-Caribbean communities who need language assistance and/or culturally sensitive services. Each year Chhaya serves 120 immigrants through this program, helping clients with naturalization, sponsorship, visa applications, green card renewals, and other vital services.



III. Economic Empowerment

During this pandemic, many New Yorkers are out of work and facing unprecedented financial pressure. It is more important now than ever that we can continue to provide our communities with the financial counseling and economic support they need to survive this crisis. Chhaya is an OFE Financial Empowerment Center and provides financial counseling to clients throughout Queens. We are also a Free Tax Prep site and provide over 1,000 low-income taxpayers free tax services each year. These programs are vital for New Yorkers during normal times. Now that we are facing the greatest economic crisis since 2008, they will be even more important. We need culturally competent organizations to be on the frontlines providing the support communities need. We hope you can continue to fund these programs and support the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities of New York.

Sincerely,

William Spisak
Director of Housing Justice
Chhaya CDC



Wuilmer, Class E3

I'm Wuilmer Diaz, I'm from Venezuela and I have been living in NYC for 2 Years, I have been studying English University Settlement for 7 months and I think they are doing a great job. The Adult Literacy Program is an amazing system for immigrants because they help us to learn a new language, and if we can speak better English then we can get better jobs and that is incredible because we can improve our Quality of Life; we can dream and a fairer society and more humane. Definitely education is a fundamental pillar of society. I plan to live here for all my life and I think if I can speak better English, I can contribute more to American society. I would like the government to continue funding this program because they can contribute for a better society with more opportunities for everyone and economic balance between races.



Cuilou, Class E3

My name is Cuilou Li. I am from China. I have been studying English for two years. I am now studying English at the University Settlement Adult Literacy Program. I have been in America for 6 years. At the beginning, since I didn't know any English, I could only work at some Chinese speaking bakeries and restaurants. I also couldn't read letters and bills. They were all read by my sister-in-law and then explained to me. After studying English, I got a better job and have a better pay. I work as an office assistant. And I can handle all the letters and bills by myself. I also can help my family and my friends to solve their problems with English. Yes, learning English is pushing my life to a better way. I want to go to college when my English is good enough. I think it is the best for my life. So, please continue funding our program. Thank you.



Umid, Class E3

My name is Umid Kermaliyev. I am from Kazakhstan. I have been studying English for nine months. I study English in the University Settlement. I am now studying remotely (online). It's not the same, but it is still good. I hope to have a better paying job, therefore I am studying English and in the near future I plan to go to college. These classes are important to me, to others like me. University Settlement helps us by having convenient hours at night, and they are no cost to me, I take free classes. Yes, of course I would like the City of New York to continue its funding of Adult Literacy. I am grateful for their generosity. I plan for the future here in America to set up a Plumbing and HVAC Company, also I want to create URI (Umid Research Institute) group. I know that my future is going to be enhanced by the opportunity I have to study and learn English. I appreciate and thank the Government of the United States and the City and State of New York for the opportunity to study for free.



Carlos, Class E3

My name is Carlos Nunez, I am from the Dominican Republic. I have been studying English for 5 years. I study English in University settlement at 175 Eldridge Street. This program is really important to me because it has helped me to understand a little bit more of the English language. Another big reason why this is important is because I have been able to communicate more fluently.

When I first arrived at the program they evaluated me to see what grade I should be in and it was zero. Basically I didn't understand anything back then but this year in June I will be finishing the program as a new English speaker.

One of the biggest benefits or satisfaction thanks to the program is being able to accomplish my U.S citizenship. Studying English gave me the tools and opportunities to get a better job. One of my plans for the future is being able to become a translator so I can help my community. For me it's really important that the government keeps funding the program so many more people from different communities could have the opportunities that this program has offered to me.

**Testimony to the New York City Council, Executive Budget Hearing
May 21, 2020**

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for your leadership in fighting for resources for our communities. COVID'19 is taking the world by storm and during this unprecedented time of anxiety and unsureness, your initiative is reassuring, and your continued work to change this budget before it is adopted is desperately needed.

My name is Yasha Morgan and I live in The Bronx. I am an 8th-grade science teacher and a brother to a person suffering from mental illness. In my professional and personal life, I have seen how mental illness if not properly treated, can dramatically change a person's life and continue to add compound stressors.

I am here today to share my story and to ask for your support in expanding mental health resources. I would like to emphasize that New York City should not be cutting social services when people are most in need - and we do not have to. We need to divest from law enforcement agencies that have been overfunded for decades and redirect that money to the community resources that truly keep us safe.

My little brother was 4 credits away from graduating from The Borough of Manhattan Community College, during his last semester he became neurotic and aggressive. He was no longer able to carry out simple conversations without getting combative or disillusioned. He became extremely paranoid and disturbed. It wasn't long before he ended up homeless roaming the streets of New York City. A few months ago, I got a call from a mental institution in Connecticut saying that they have my brother in custody, but that's all the information they were allowed to give me. The Connecticut mental Institution, later on, released my brother back into the streets of New York City. I believe they did so because my brother was not a resident of that state and did not have health insurance and thus, they did not have any obligations to take care of him. I currently do not know the exact location of my little brother, but I do believe he is somewhere in NYC homeless, roaming the streets in a time where COVID'19 is running rampant. I often wonder if NYC had more mental health supports, would my little brother received the help that he so desperately needs? The #buildCOMMUNITIES platform (jlusa.org/buildCOMMUNITIES) outlines so many things New York City could be doing for people like my brother – providing Mental Health Urgent Care clinics, expanding crisis respite centers and diversion centers, and expanding Intensive Mobile Treatment teams to work with my brother even when he's not in a state of mind to make it to a center.

We need you, the Council members who understand the importance of resourcing other priorities, to urge the Mayor to make the boldest step he can towards a truly safer, fairer, and more progressive City by aligning our budget with those values.

Sincerely,

Yasha Morgan
Educator and Brother
Yashamorgan92@gmail.com



KCS
WWW.KCSNY.ORG

THE KOREAN COMMUNITY
SERVICES OF METROPOLITAN
NEW YORK, INC.

뉴 욕 한 인 봉 사 센 터

Since 1973

**Testimony Before the New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2021
Committee on Immigration
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
Thursday, May 21, 2020**

**Testimony of Yoojin Kim, Project Coordinator
The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

Dear Immigration Committee Chair Carlos Menchaca and Members of the Committee on Immigration,

My name is Yoojin Kim, and I am a Tobacco Cessation Navigator and Outreach Coordinator at the Korean Community Services of Metro. New York (KCS).

KCS is part of the Coalition Against Smoking in Immigrant Communities that seeks to implement a Tobacco Cessation Navigator Model city-wide. The aim of this program is to reduce smoking rates in immigrant communities through community education and by providing linkage to culturally and linguistically competent tobacco cessation services.

While New York City has made meaningful strides in reducing tobacco use among its general population, smoking rates in many immigrant communities have remained stagnant or even increased. Tobacco use for Asian American men actually increased from 19.6% in 2002 to 23.5% in 2016. This illustrates that the City's efforts to curb tobacco use have not penetrated to certain immigrant populations. This is due to the cultural and linguistic barriers that prevent many immigrant communities from accessing and receiving tobacco cessation information and services. Moreover, tobacco use is intricately intertwined to the socio-cultural norms in many immigrant communities. This is especially true for Asian American men, where tobacco use plays an important role in their social lives. To effectively reduce smoking in immigrant communities, a linguistically and culturally adept approach that seeks to address such socio-cultural norms around tobacco use is critical. The role of community-based organizations in this effort cannot be understated, as they acutely understand the needs of their communities, and already have the trust and access into their respective communities.

Since 2019, when KCS implement its Tobacco Cessation Navigation Program, KCS has provided community education and clinical outreach to educate the Korean community, provide information materials, as well as engage with clinical providers to include KCS' Tobacco Cessation Navigation Program into their referral network. Moreover, KCS provides an initial screening over the phone or in person with smokers who wish to quit, and do a warm hand-off to the Asian Smokers Quitline, which is the only organization in the entire nation that provides free tele-counseling in Korean, as well as free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (such as nicotine patches or gum).

**KCS Main Office
Adult Daycare |
Immigration | ESOL**

203-05 32nd Avenue
Bayside, NY 11361
Tel: (718) 939-6137
Fax: (718) 886-6126

**Corona Senior
Center**

37-06 111th Street
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: (718) 651-9220
Fax: (718) 478-6055

**Flushing Senior
Center**

42-15 166th Street
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 886-8203
Fax: (718) 886-8205

**Public Health and
Research Center |
Workforce Development**

325 W 38th Street, Ste. 1210
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212) 463-9685
Fax: (212) 463-8347

Brooklyn Project

8710 5th Ave. 1FL
Bay Ridge, NY 11209
Tel: (718) 630-0001
Fax: (718) 630-0002

Mental Health Clinic

42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 534-4149



Moreover, KCS has a Youth Advisory Board on Teen Vaping, comprised of 8 Korean American youth in NYC, that meet regularly to assess, discuss, and conduct media campaign to raise awareness of e-cigarette use (vaping) among youth in NYC. As e-cigarette use have become an “epidemic” among American youth, it is crucial that Korean American youth receive accurate health information and resources around e-cigarette use.

Having provided Tobacco Cessation Navigation Services since 2019, KCS made the following observations:

- the majority of NYC’s Korean community was unaware of tobacco cessation services provided by New York City or New York State;
- they were also unaware of tobacco cessation services available to them in the Korean language (Asian Smokers’ Quitline);
- they have not seen any information materials or resources on tobacco cessation provided by NYC or NYS in the Korean language;
- and among the small number of Korean smokers who knew about free cessation services and resources provided by NYC and NYS, they did not seek services due to discomfort caused by language and cultural barriers.

It is clear that there are disparities in who is able to receive tobacco cessation in NYC. Immigrant communities in NYC simply lack access to the City’s tobacco cessation information and resources. While the City’s efforts to curb tobacco use is commendable, the City can and must do more for vulnerable New Yorkers. Many immigrant communities in NYC not only face language and cultural barriers that discourage them from accessing much needed services, but they also suffer from a lack of access to health care and feelings of isolation. Many hard-working immigrant communities do not have the time or resources to reach out and actively seek help. Thus, community outreach is critical in ensuring in connecting them to services that they need. To this end, Community-Based Organizations such as KCS plays a crucial role, as they have longstanding ties with the community and the trust of community members.

Tobacco continues to be the number one preventable cause of death in New York. Ensuring the health of NYC’s diverse communities means ensuring access to critical services such as tobacco cessation services. Lives can be saved by simply making sure that all New Yorkers, regardless of their backgrounds, have access to tobacco cessation services in their native languages. On behalf of KCS and the Coalition Against Smoking in Immigrant Communities, I ask for your full support in this endeavor.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Yoo Jin Kim
Project Coordinator,
Public Health & Research Center
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS)

KCS Main Office Adult Daycare Immigration ESOL	Corona Senior Center	Flushing Senior Center	Public Health and Research Center Workforce Development	Brooklyn Project	Mental Health Clinic
203-05 32 nd Avenue Bayside, NY 11361 Tel: (718) 939-6137 Fax: (718) 886-6126	37-06 111 th Street Corona, NY 11368 Tel: (718) 651-9220 Fax: (718) 478-6055	42-15 166 th Street Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: (718) 886-8203 Fax: (718) 886-8205	325 W 38 th Street, Ste. 1210 New York, NY 10018 Tel: (212) 463-9685 Fax: (212) 463-8347	8710 5 th Ave. 1FL Bay Ridge, NY 11209 Tel: (718) 630-0001 Fax: (718) 630-0002	42-16 162 nd Street, 2FL Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: (718) 366-9540 Fax: (718) 534-4149

May 21, 2020

++ The Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007

++ The Hon. Daniel Dromm, Finance Committee Chair, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007

++ The Hon. Debi Rose Youth Services Chair, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007

RE: YouthBuild in NYC -- Citywide Speaker Initiative request for \$2.1 million for FY2021

Dear Speaker Johnson, Chairmen Dromm, Gibson, and Rose, and Members of the NY City Council:

I am David Calvert, speaking for the YouthBuild NYC Collaborative, on behalf of the ten (10) YouthBuild programs located in all five boroughs and operated by some of the finest community service institutions in the city: Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, New Settlement, SOBRO, Antioch Community Services, Youth Action YouthBuild, Central Family Life Center, The Hope Program, Historic Tappan Park Partnership, and Queens Community House. Each of these institutions has taken up the awesome challenge of turning around the lives of young people that really need that second chance, through a methodology that includes training, education, counseling, community service, follow-up services, respect, inclusion, and yes, love.

These YouthBuild programs are offered for youth 16-24 who are out of work and out of school, and desperate to get it right. Our City government first partnered with local community organizations and willing youth to provide this transformative path in 1979, when the first ever YouthBuild program was launched in East Harlem. As you may know, it spread fast, so that 20 YouthBuild programs now operate in NY State, 240 more across the US, and now 81 more in 23 other countries. This year worldwide, about 20,000 of "Opportunity Youth" will participate in YouthBuild programs replicating (and continually enhancing) the original NYC model.

YouthBuild provides the classroom training required to obtain the High School Equivalency (TASC) certification, as well as vocational certifications, job readiness training, and leadership development, college readiness, and professional internships. Just like anyone else, YouthBuild students want to succeed and are willing to work hard to get there.

The YouthBuild secret to success is already pretty well known. YouthBuild students are warmly invited in, respected, included in the program governance and decision-making, and they give back to the community even as they secure their own high school equivalency degrees and rebuild their own lives. Community asset building is central to the program. For example, YouthBuild students provide more than 30,000 hours of community service each year here in NYC alone. Nationally, YouthBuild students have built or preserved 38,000 units of low-income housing.

When we created YouthBuild 40 years ago, it was in response to emergency conditions in our

communities: so many disengaged youth, thousands of vacant city-owned buildings without solutions, and an emerging homeless housing crisis. We acted, and made a real difference. Today we face an added emergency, the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted all our lives. I am proud to report that every YouthBuild site in the city successfully transformed its operations in March from on-site classrooms and trainings to functional remote formats, and kept their students on-track and thriving. I am attaching a report to document the power and stories of that transition, and related data.

In preparation for the challenges of the coming year YouthBuild staff are already planning and training for the new programmatic environment as the pandemic continues. This includes an in-depth case management approach with specialized outreach and interventions for students dealing with Covid-related trauma, specialized vocational training that builds on remote-learning requirements, a fresh look at the labor force opportunities likely to emerge in the wake of the pandemic, and a greater focus on sending our YouthBuild graduates on to post-secondary education.

We want to thank Speaker Corey Johnson and the entire NY City Council, and Commissioner Bill Chong and DYCD, for supporting YouthBuild in NYC. We are grateful for your active support for young people's lives. We know that it requires funds and concerned government officials to make this movement work well, year after year. We also know that today's investments in our youth pay off in future savings; a recent study showed that \$1 invested in YouthBuild saves \$8 of future public sector costs. We stand ready to expand to meet the real needs of you who find themselves needing education, employment, direction and renewal.

YouthBuild functions as a partnership of the public sector, private sector, civil sector, and thousands of young people needing a second chance. Each year federal Dept of Labor/YouthBuild grants support some of the YouthBuild programs in NYC -- this year those grants were obtained by four of the ten NYC YouthBuild sites. Since 2014, the City Council has stepped in to fill the funding gap by allocating \$2.1 million through a citywide Speaker Initiative of Discretionary funds to ensure YouthBuild opportunities in every borough. Until recently we advocated for an increase of funding for this year, but given the budget considerations, we will settle for the minimum request. To ensure that all ten YouthBuild sites in the five boroughs can serve 600+ YouthBuild students in FY 2021, we urgently request continuity funding of \$2.1 million in the citywide Speaker Initiative Discretionary funding for YouthBuild.

We accept the new challenges ahead; we are on it! We need the Council to accept the challenge too, to hold steady for youth services, for young people to get a decent second chance, for our city to surge forward instead of retreat and retrench, to help ensure full productivity and pride for otherwise disconnected youth. Let's do this together!

This preliminary testimony is to present the request, with some detail attached. Note that all YouthBuild sites deliver quarterly reports to the Finance Committee of the Council. We will continue to

work closely with the Council and DYCD, updating all activity as we go.

With thanks,

David Calvert Director of Strategic Partnerships, YouthBuild NYC Collaborative (Youth Action YouthBuild)
Email: dcalvert@yayb.org Cell: 646-351-2433

Attachments:

1. YouthBuild locations in NYC
2. YouthBuild Discretionary request for \$2.1 million and projected allocations
3. YouthBuild's Impact

+++++

1. YouthBuild locations in NYC

YouthBuild sites in NYC/Long Island (11)

Title	Borough	Address	Contact	Contact info
New Settlement Apartments – “YouthBuild NSA”	Bronx (South Bronx - Mt. Eden)	1512 Townsend Avenue Bronx, NY 10452	Roman Woodson	(718) 716-8000, Ext. 419
South Bronx Overall Economic Development Organization, Inc. or SoBRO – “YouthBuild SoBRO”	Bronx (South Bronx - The Hub)	“YouthBuild SoBRO” – 555 Bergen Avenue Bronx, NY 10455	Kerwin Rivera	(646)251-1783 krivera@sobro.org
Antioch Community Services – “YouthBuild Dreams Academy”	Brooklyn	1615 St. John’s Place Brooklyn, NY 11233	Ditashiah Kohn	(718) 455-4308 dkohn@shfinc.org
South Bronx Overall Economic Development Organization, Inc., or SoBRO	Manhattan (Harlem)	669 Lenox Avenue New York, NY 10035	Carla Wilson-Redden, Director of YouthBuild Harlem	Tel: 917-530-9578 Fax: 718-732-7692 creden@sobro.org
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation – “YouthBuild NMIC”	Manhattan (Washington Hts)	45 Wadsworth Avenue New York, NY 10033	Margaret Gonzalez	(212) 453-5369 margaretgonzalez@nmic.org

Youth Action Programs & Homes, Inc. – “Youth Action YouthBuild”	Manhattan (East Harlem)	206 East 118 Street New York, NY 10035	Amanda Guzman	(212) 860-8170, Ext. 33 aguzman@yayb.org
Central Family Life Center – “YouthBuild IMPACT”	Staten Island	117 Wright Street Staten Island, NY 10304	Liz Morgan, YB Director	(646) 573-3707 – Cell W emorgan@centralfamilylife center.org
Historic Tappen Park Community Partnership, Inc. – “YouthB.U.I.L.D. Staten Island”	Staten Island	53 Broad Street Staten Island, NY 10304	Kamillah Hanks, Executive Director	(347) 695-1920 khanks@historictappenpar k.com
Queens Community House	Queens	67-09 Kissena Blvd Flushing, NY 11367	Ricardo Carrion, YB Program Director	718-374-2516 rcarrion@qchnyc.org
The Hope Program	Bronx	1360 Garrison Bronx, NY 10474	Jennifer Mitchell, Exec. Director	347-773-4782 jmitchell@thehopeprogra m.org
United Way of Greater NY – “YouthBuild Long Island”	Hempstead and Deer Park, Long Island	819 Grand Boulevard Deer Park, NY 11729	Jenette Adams, YB Program Director	631-355-3666 – cell jadams@unitedwayLI.org

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2. YouthBuild Discretionary request for \$2.1 million and projected allocations

NYC Council Discretionary YouthBuild FY2021 (projected)

22-May

<u>YouthBuild program</u>	<u>Nonprofit sponsor</u>	<u>Borough</u>	<u>EIN #</u>	<u>FY 2020 NYC Council Discretionary (actuals)</u>	<u>FY 2021 NYC Council Discretionary request (projected)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
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YouthBuild NMIC	Northern Manhattan Improvement Association (NMIC)	Manh	13-2972415	\$385,000	\$ 321,000	no DOL grant
Staten Island IMPACT	Central Family Life Center, inc.	SI		\$385,000	\$ 321,000	no DOL grant
YouthBuild Dreams	Settlement Housing Fund	BK		\$385,000	\$ 321,000	no DOL grant
YouthBuild Harlem	South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp. (SoBRO)	Manh	13-2736022	\$192,500	\$ 321,000	no DOL grant
YouthBuild SoBRO Bronx	South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp. (SoBRO)	Bronx	13-2736022	\$0	\$ 321,000	no DOL grant
The Hope Program	The Hope Program	Bronx		\$192,500	\$ 321,000	
YouthBuild Queens	Queens Community House	Queens		\$0	\$ 25,000	have DOL grant
YouthB.U.I.L.D. Staten Island	Historic Tappen Parks Partnership	SI		\$0	\$ -	have DOL grant
New Settlement YouthBuild	Crenulated Company Ltd, DBA New Settlement Apartments	Bronx	14-1719016	\$75,000	\$ 25,000	have DOL grant
Youth Action Youthbuild	Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc.	Manh	13-3203701	\$385,000	\$ 25,000	have DOL grant

YouthBuild Collaborative/TA	Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc.	citywide	13-3203701	\$100,000	\$ 99,000	technical assistance support 5%)
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Total				\$2,100,000	\$ 2,100,000	
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3. YouthBuild's Impact

YOUTHBUILD'S IMPACT

EDUCATION Compared to a motivated control group receiving other case services, YouthBuild results:

- ++ 24% increase in **college enrollment**
- ++ 52% increase in **vocational school enrollment**
- ++ 47% Increase in **GED attainment**
- ++ 56% increase in volunteerism

EMPLOYMENT

- ++ 50% of all enrollees were **placed in either employment** or postsecondary education immediately following the program
- ++ 73% of those placed **retained their placements** for at least six months
- ++ 19% increase in **weekly earnings**.

RECIDIVISM

YouthBuild's recidivism rate is only **9%** within one year of enrollment

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- ++ One year of federal YouthBuild funding at \$89.5 million (current level) results in an estimated **\$1.3 billion in lifetime savings** from taxes, crime, health, and welfare.
- ++ Every dollar spent on YouthBuild results in an estimated fiscal **return on investment of over \$10**.

Sources: Bridgeland, John: A Bridge to Reconnection: A Plan for Reconnecting One Million Opportunity Youth Each Year Through Federal Funding Streams." Civic Enterprises. 2016. Miller, Cummings, Millensky, Schwartz, Wiegand and Long. Laying a foundation: Four-Year Results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation New York: MDRC 2018.

Yvonne Roen

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council

May 20, 2020

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of arts education. My name is Yvonne Roen, and I work as a Teaching Artist for New York City Children's Theater in all five boroughs of NYC and for Illuminart on Staten Island.

My job is to create interactive lessons that support literacy, emotional intelligence, and most importantly a child's facility with their own power to create. I have seen the impact of these programs first hand. There's the young man in an ELL class at the far Eastern edge of Brooklyn who uttered his first full complete English sentence two weeks into a late spring theater program after the Teachers had been trying every day since the fall to get him to do so. There's the collection of homeless students in the Bronx who would sit in a chair with their hoodies as face-covering blankets just to gain a pod of privacy, and who by age 9 had built up a self-contained fortress against trust, who left the semester having made friends, shared stories, created dance pieces, songs, and scripts collectively with their peers. There's the young man in Hell's Kitchen who came to New York as a refugee from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and rarely spoke to strangers, and never in English when he did, who on my *first day* in the classroom shocked the teacher by coming forward with a full throated and physical contribution to the story we were acting out. On Staten Island I watched a group of quarrelsome second graders come together to build a dance and chant to express the feelings they struggled to express. There's the young woman in Queens who we were told was a selective mute on the first day of our residency and who, by the end of our program performed a speaking role in a full production in front of an audience of teachers, parents and peers. It wasn't reading, or writing, or arithmetic that helped these children focus on the tasks at hand and create brand new plays, songs, and dances from their own imagination -- it was art. Art allows us just enough space to distance ourselves from the often painful or awkward process of figuring out who we are and how we fit in the world. If these children can't figure that out, they will never be able to apply any other lesson taught to them within the schools.

The shutdown has not stopped art or it's importance. I am teaching remotely and creating video content for New York City students. New York City Children's Theater remains committed to our program for students in NYC shelters. Before writing this letter, I was editing a video which guides those students through a series of creative theater exercises around the theme of isolation in a story book we share together as part of the video. Additionally, NYCCT is sharing four full productions from our archives with classrooms all over the city via streaming platforms. Later

this week I will log on to Google Groups to lead a group of kindergarten students in Staten Island on an imagined trip to the zoo, created entirely with our own bodies and voices. In other words, we're creating engaging platforms on which students can build their learning. We're helping them manage their emotional and mental health. We're reminding them that the world is bigger than the apartment they are sheltering in and giving them the tools to keep imagining. We're connecting with the future drivers of the New York City economy which builds a large share of it's income directly from the arts. And however school comes back in September, if we have the funding, we'll keep doing that.

Please do not let budget cuts not fall disproportionately on the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, or Department of Cultural Affairs. The initial projections for these agencies would spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. Let us not take it out on young people or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Without funding, over 75 Teaching Artists between the two organizations I work for will be unemployed. In- and After-School arts programs build community, compassion, and resilience. We need those qualities now. Ours should be the last cut, not the first.

Our children represent the future city. Let's give them the creative skills to build the best city they can. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Roen