

TESTIMONY

BY

COMMISSIONER JONNEL DORIS

NEW YORK CITY

DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

BEFORE

THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND THE

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2020

Good morning Chair Gjonaj, Chair Vallone, and members of the Committee on Small Business and the Committee on Economic Development. My name is Jonnel Doris, and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (“SBS”). I am joined by SBS First Deputy Commissioner Jackie Mallon, Amy Peterson, Director for the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development, and Justin Kreamer, Senior Vice President for New York City Economic Development Corporation.

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on our Workforce1 centers and the evolving impacts of COVID19 on the city’s workforce. As the nation faces an uncertain economic future, New York City job seekers are facing unprecedented challenges. Our goal is to continue to reach New Yorkers across the city, connect them to the resources they need to persevere through this crisis, and emerge stronger.

Through our network of 18 Workforce1 Career Centers, SBS connects jobseekers with employment opportunities, industry-informed trainings, and a variety of candidate development services, such as resume development, interview preparation, and job search workshops. Annually, we serve over 100,000 and connect more than 25,000 New Yorkers to employment and nearly 3,000 New Yorkers with the training needed to

advance their careers. Through our Industry Partnerships, SBS has worked collaboratively with industry to design training models that prepare local talent for careers in the food service, industrial, construction, healthcare, and tech sectors.

Despite the uncontrollable impact of COVID 19 on our City, SBS was able to quickly shift all 18 Workforce1 Career Centers to a virtual-service delivery model. As a result, Our Workforce1 Centers were fully operational by March 23rd. This allowed us to provide critical support to nursing homes, community hospitals and other essential service providers in filling their urgent staff needs at the height of the pandemic.

Our Workforce1 career center staff continue to be focused on identifying job opportunities. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have assisted more than 63,000 individuals, referred over 32,000 people to jobs, worked with over 900 businesses on over 19,000 job opportunities. To date, we have connected more than 7,500 New Yorkers to jobs with an average wage of \$17.36.

New York City industries have been devastated by the pandemic, job losses have been extensive SBS is here to help job seekers connect to

new jobs and adapt in the face of this crisis to upgrade their skills and help them pivot to new careers.

As a response to the increased demand for home health aides during the COVID crisis, we launched the Home Health Aide (HHA) Training Program to support the City's long-term care sector during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. We introduced Career Discovery NYC, a centralized resource to help New Yorkers with career discovery and training. From mid-March through the end of October, 1,053 participants enrolled in our training programs to prepare for careers in tech, industrial and healthcare.

New York City recovered 312,000 jobs from May to October, and our unemployment rate dropped 7.1 percentage points since June. Both the private and government sectors continue to slowly see an increase. SBS is dedicated to our core outreach, collaborating with a network of over 300 community-based organizations throughout the five boroughs to source candidates and address barriers faced by job seekers. Through our Workforce1 system, SBS works on addressing specific communities' critical needs by providing and tailoring services to veterans, out-of-work youth, foreign-born New Yorkers, and New Yorkers formerly involved with the justice system.

SBS is committed to doing everything we can to support New Yorkers through this pandemic. I look forward to our continued collaboration with the City Council on this effort. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to update you on SBS's workforce services. I am happy to answer your questions.

December 9, 2020

Good morning Chair Vallone, members of the Committee. My name is Tom Grech and I am President and CEO of the Queens Chamber of Commerce, the oldest and largest business association in Queens. We currently represent more than 1,300 businesses—the vast majority of which are small businesses—with more than 125,000 Queens-based employees.

Queens was the epicenter of the epicenter of the pandemic, and in addition to the tremendous human toll, COVID has devastated our local economy. Unemployment reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. Lost revenue forced cherished neighborhood institutions to shut their doors forever, and many small businesses that did survive are hanging on by a thread.

Like many organizations we were forced to pivot to meet the new needs of our members and help them overcome the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Today, out of duty to our community, we serve non members as well; all who need our help.

Throughout the pandemic, we have leveraged our strong relationships with organizations in every neighborhood in the borough and pivoted to provide support to businesses in underserved communities. From working to save NYC's oldest bar, Neirs Tavern to participating on the Mayors Small Business Advisory Council, the Queens Chamber has partnered with Small Business Services to make every dollar count. This has included connecting small businesses with government resources and assisting them with applying for PPP loans; providing micro grants to businesses that have allowed them to open safely; expanding on-the-ground outreach to local businesses to

connect them with resources necessary to recover; and partnering with NYC SBS to distribute PPE to businesses so they can keep their employees and customers safe. In fact, we set up our own command center here in Queens and thanks to SBS handed out over 1mm facemasks.

As Queens is the most diverse county in America, we have urgently focused on supporting MWBEs, businesses in black & immigrant communities and other underserved business areas. These businesses are less likely to have received federal funding through the PPP program or be able to access quality, low-interest loans.

Thanks to a grant from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, the five boroughwide Chambers of Commerce have partnered with the Partnership for New York City, EDC and SBS to launch the New York City Small Business Resource Network. This program will see a newly established team of dedicated specialists embedded within each Chamber, working directly with local entrepreneurs in the hardest-hit communities to helping them gain access to a range of programs and services.

The goal of all of this work has been to allow businesses to keep New Yorkers employed.

But to build our economy back stronger, fairer and more resilient than it ever was before, we need to do more. In addition to providing direct support to struggling businesses, we must support economic development projects that create jobs and affordable housing, catalyze economic activity that supports existing small businesses, strengthen our neighborhoods by creating more schools and park space, and generate tax revenue for the city and state to pay for essential services.

This includes kickstarting New York City Economic Development Corporation's long-stalled plan for Willets Point to create a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood with housing, retail, and schools. The plan calls for 1,100 units

of affordable housing, acres of open space, \$50 million in infrastructure upgrades, environmental remediation and a new elementary school and will create a vibrant neighborhood that compliments diverse communities like Flushing and Corona.

At a time when so many of our mom and pop neighborhood establishments are hanging by a thread, and millions of New Yorkers fear losing their jobs, the time to act is now. The Chamber looks forward to working with the committee and the entire Council to get Queens and all of New York working again

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Grech". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Thomas J. Grech, President & Chief Executive Officer



URI NYC
Urban Resource Institute

CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY

Urban Resource Institute

December 12, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Vallone, Chairman Gjonaj and members of the Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Small Business. First, thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony to the New City Council during these challenging times. My name is Joel Gregory Thomas and I have the pleasure of serving as Senior Director of the Urban Resource Institute's (URI) Economic Empowerment Program. I am thankful for the opportunity to submit written testimony that shares important lessons and takeaways from our front-line work at the Urban Resource Institute during the pandemic and its impact on our Economic Empowerment Programming.

About URI

This year URI marks 40 years of serving vulnerable populations and an unwavering dedication to those impacted by domestic and gender-based violence. In New York City alone, we offer close to 1,200 beds to victims of violence on any given evening, making us the largest provider of domestic violence shelter in the country with plans to further increase capacity in the near future. Aligned with our approach to deliver innovative client-centered and trauma-informed services to victims of domestic and gender-based violence, we are proud to also offer shelters for homeless families, and job placement services for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. In addition to services for victims, URI offers programs geared toward the prevention and intervention of domestic and gender-based violence. To this end, URI offers programs and services to include economic empowerment programs for survivors and a full suite of violence prevention and community education programs in intermediate and high schools, with the capacity to reach 40,000 people each year, as well as an accountability program for perpetrators of abuse in Manhattan and in Westchester counties.

Our Response to COVID-19

As New York began to shelter-in-place, URI teams quickly partnered with city and state representatives including but not limited to the department of health to understand the virus, and the necessary implications for the populations we service as well as our staff. This resulted in engagement in a proactive review of existing protocols, and the determination of the need for and development of new policies, protocols, and resources to ensure that programs and services would continue to operate without interruption and in the safest possible manner. URI department heads, in conjunction with program staff, specifically worked to implement enhanced safety protocols for staff and clients and ways of assessing and addressing client medical needs, developing systems of health tracking and processes for daily check-in. We stocked food pantries, collected and distributed PPE, and quickly worked to create pay incentives for on-site staff while standardizing our services to build structure and normalcy. To address our entire constituency, we quickly shared our message, including the creation of a new intranet site for staff, external website updates, emails, the media, and other communications. Key messages



included safety-planning tips during Covid-19 and the reinforcement that shelters remain open and ready to serve victims.

URI's Approach to Serving Clients During COVID-19

While URI's staff and clients are no strangers to crisis, our work reconfirms the physical, emotional, and financial effects of abusive relationships and their lingering damage made all the more challenging by the pandemic and its physical, emotional, psychological and financial effects. Using a trauma-informed approach, we identified and implemented procedures across each shelter and within our non-residential programs to ensure consistency of services, including crisis intervention, case management, counseling, and educational support. We also worked to ascertain the ways in which we engaged clients to ensure that they had ongoing access to support and worked to enhance their positioning in response to a changing economic environment.

Within our economic empowerment program, staff immediately determined that there was a need to shift its approach to accommodate the need for social distancing and moved from in-person services to virtual programs and services for clients. We recognized as the pandemic progressed that along with employment industry challenges, there were also possible opportunities for learning meaningful new skills that will be sought after from a growing demand for a virtual workforce. We focused on developing and offering workshops that close the digital divide and enhance our clients' ability to use virtual platforms, computer applications and communications. We did so through the development of an Administrative Track that enhances these skills. We also worked to collaborate with other providers and companies in an effort to provide paid virtual internships so that participating clients could gain experience, and practice the skills they learned and explore potential job placement opportunities. Given that many of our clients are also parents with children who are now being educated in part at home, this also allowed our clients to support their children while enhancing their own economic opportunities.

Despite all of the challenges since the beginning of the pandemic, the Economic Empowerment program has served 180 clients and provided 48 virtual workshops. None of this would have been possible without URI's commitment to allocating resources that allowed us to ensure all clients had access to technology and Wi-Fi. This represented a significant cost to URI, but we realized the current reality necessitated the installation of expanded Wi-Fi into all of its shelters so that clients would have access to reliable internet for the duration of their stay at the shelter. This has been critical to participate in virtual training and educational opportunities. With some funding from the Office of Family Children CARES Grant, we were also able to secure additional laptops and hotspots to enhance participation in our program.

PARTNERSHIPS

The URI Economic Empowerment Program also worked to increase its engagement with new and existing community partnerships to ensure that clients had access to specialized training, internships, and employment once they successfully completed the EEP workshops and training. The EEP has focused on developing partnerships with organizations that are in high growth industries, such as technology, finance, healthcare, culinary arts, and construction. Due



to the severe impact of COVID 19 on the employment opportunities in hospitality, tourism, restaurant, and retail industries, our training and partnerships have shifted away from these industries. A few of our partnerships include the Financial Management Association, offering finances and virtual internships opportunities, Andromeda Community Initiatives, which offers masonry certification, and virtual internships at the West Harlem Development Corporation. In addition, as a member of the New York City Small Business Services (SBS) Workforce 1 Community Partners program, our clients have streamlined access to employment and training opportunities within the New York City public workforce system. However, access has not been fully realized with city agencies that remain physically closed.

URI's leadership and response efforts during the pandemic have been recognized by those in city and state government as well as by its colleagues. Notable items included invitations extended to Nathaniel Fields, URI's Chief Executive Officer to participate in NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Nonprofits and Social Services Advisory Council on "reopening" New York City; the special COVID-19 domestic violence task force of the New York State Council on Women and Girls; the COVID-19 Response Work Group of the New York City Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV); the Fatality Review Committee of the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the city and state DV task forces, as well as COVID recovery task force.

Additionally, the economic empowerment program received recognition as an innovator of opportunities for survivors of domestic violence and homeless families and was featured in the NYCETC New Member Spotlight series newsletter and social media outlets highlighting the launch of our new Economic Empowerment Programs. Here is a link to the NYCETC website that features the EEP. The feature can be found here: <https://nycetc.org/nycetc-member-spotlight-urban-resource-institute>

**Testimony before the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and
Small Business**

Paul A. Vallone, Chair – Economic Development

Mark Gjonaj, Chair – Small Business

December 9, 2020

Rebecca Lurie

Community and Worker Ownership Project

Good morning Chairs Vallone and Gjonaj. Thank you for holding this hearing and doing your hard work as City Councilmembers. My name is Rebecca Lurie. I am the founder of the Community and Worker Ownership Project at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, on faculty there in the Urban Studies Department and a worker-owner of a new cooperative, City Roots Contractors Guild. I also come to you with over 20 years of working in sector-based workforce development programs in our city with unions and community based organizations.

Last spring I was invited to join the Mayor's Covid Recovery Advisory Council for Labor and Workforce Development. Since then I convene a Working Group on Cooperative Solutions, aimed to encourage and explore innovative solutions for our economy through this critical time and beyond with these industry representatives and partners.

At the college and in partnership with the cooperative industry business association, NYC Network for Worker Coops, we have designed instruction for workers to become cooperative owners. I have engaged in instruction models from popular education to the college level.

Throughout we have learned where there are barriers to deliver cooperative business education and where there are openings. When workforce development funding is used for job training, requiring job placement there is a simple misfit for entrepreneurs. Becoming a worker-owner of a small firm will not hit the traditional milestone used in workforce development of a paystub in 90 days. However, collaborating on an endeavor to run and operate a company offers people a pathway to personal fulfillment and agency that cannot be measured by a paycheck alone. The entrepreneurial spirit paired with a passion for one's community is priceless.

When I ran a workforce development program after 9/11 we had to turn people away when they expressed a goal of wanting to start their own company. We would not hit the WIOA outcomes

with a goal like that! But allowing and supporting cooperative businesses, along with a paradigm of an ecosystem of business supports, we can support neighborhood revitalization and self actualization. Cooperatives are a path to a more sustainable and inclusive economy, grounded in principles of democracy and worker voice. This cannot be underestimated when genuinely considering DEI initiatives. Initiatives that are aimed for diversity, equity and inclusion. When occurring in communities of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) we lay the groundwork that can untether BIPOC from the economy that for too long has come with exploitation and exclusion.

Covid had made challenges to small businesses huge. The gigification of work in too many sectors has risen as a business solution that is intended only to extract wealth of labor for investors. Keeping talent and profit in the company and the community serves as a multiplier effect for community development and community wellbeing.

Our EDC needs to look at real estate as an asset to unleash towards this multiplier. By many accounts, the largest barrier to equity in our city is real estate. We need to unleash property to support cooperative businesses, knowing that a stated purpose of these businesses is to serve local economies and the people who work there.

Our Mayor just announced a new initiative, Owner to owners NYC. This will support business owners to sell to their workers, creating succession plans that remain anchored in place and with the legacy already built. We need to assure that this plan can be successful with access to proper training opportunities.

We need to tie economic development and workforce training together with property uses and access to training and education that support the type of small businesses that cooperatives represent; for the people and by the people with democratic control at its core that stay in place. Strengthening cooperative businesses and their ecosystem for success provides more than a pathway to a job, but it allows us to use public funds to build community assets that will stay and grow in our communities, especially those communities most impacted by Covid and generational inequalities. This could represent a structural approach to DEI with the power of a JEDI; Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

For further inquiry please contact me at rebecca.lurie@slu.cuny.edu



Oversight Hearing:
Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
December 9, 2020 / 10 am
Committees on Economic Development (Chair: CM Vallone) & Small Business (Chair: CM Gjonaj)

Based in West Harlem, SoHarlem Inc.'s mission is to create equitable opportunities through cultural industries workforce development, not simply because it is right, but because equity is essential to successful economic development in historically disenfranchised communities like ours where the unemployment rate nearly doubles the national average.

In West Harlem, 21% of our neighbors (1 in 5) - mostly women and children, mostly Black and Latina – still live below the poverty line. Our community also has a disproportionately high number of formerly incarcerated residents whose employment options are bleak. According to New York University's Furman Center, the median household income in West Harlem is \$23,150, significantly lower than the U.S national average of \$56,604.

To achieve our mission, we incubate creative entrepreneurs while they launch micro-enterprises within Harlem, and we train local under/unemployed residents in the jobs needed to sustain them.

In focusing on cultural industries workforce development, rather than simply individual upward mobility, SoHarlem, a place based social enterprise, seeks to meet the collective needs of the communities we serve. This point of view differentiates SoHarlem from other not for profit job developers in Harlem.

In addition to nurturing our creative entrepreneurs by giving them the tools they need for success, SoHarlem provides workspace and training in basic sewing skills for under and unemployed residents. Trainees develop a range of sewing skills, gain exposure from industry professionals, and practical experience in a supervised environment. Our aim is to support the New York fashion and design ecosystem by providing a pool of workers to fill jobs left empty by the retirement of so many aging skilled workers.

SoHarlem and Janus Properties, our primary partner, share the desire of the community to address high unemployment in Manhattanville, and to ensure that home-grown businesses and creative industry enterprises, owned and staffed by local people, are a central component of the re-developed Factory District.

Last Spring, SoHarlem was able to keep our apprentices and artisans employed by raising funds to create medical masks and gowns for hospitals and other community groups in need. This was an invaluable learning experience for the people we train. Our plan is to expand our garment construction training to address the high rate of unemployment in the Upper Manhattan, but due to the pandemic, we will need government support to prepare under-employed and unemployed residents for a career path.

By 2028, according to ITAC (Industrial & Technology Assistance Corporation), more than 2.4 million jobs will be available in U.S. manufacturing, with more than 4.6 million over the next decade. Workers with advanced skills will be needed to lead and operate modern production facilities. The average salary for these workers is estimated at more than \$77K annually. Despite the pandemic, SoHarlem still has an opportunity to help fill the void in U.S. manufacturing.

Due to surging Covid-19 numbers in our zip code, SoHarlem, Inc. will close today (Dec. 9, 2020) for the remainder of the month despite the holidays being our best season for selling the works of our designers and apprentices. In anticipation of this possibility, we were prepared to pivot our efforts to competitive online shopping. We also will use this time to prepare and plan for opportunities to ensure our workforce is ready, able and expanding in 2021. We implore the City to do the right thing.

www.soharlem.org

**NYC Council Committees on Economic Development and Small Business
Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
Testimony of Terrence Byerson, Community Relations Manager of STRIVE**

Thank you Chair Vallone, Chair Gjonaj, and Members of the Council for holding today's important hearing on workforce development. My name is Terrence Byerson and I am the Community Relations Manager of STRIVE, one of New York's leading workforce solutions for those that have encountered barriers to employment opportunities. Our proven model has propelled thousands of New Yorkers onto economic stability and mobility. When people are working to change their lives, STRIVE provides them with a path to successfully launch that transformation. We empower our students to employment that leads to careers and not just jobs, while providing the essential social supports necessary to sustain employment.

Since 1984, New Yorkers have come to STRIVE in order to improve their way of life. 98% of STRIVE's participants include individuals from underserved Black and Brown communities throughout the city, most of whom have experienced situations that include food and housing insecurity, criminal justice involvement, little or no jobs skills and educational limits, among other hardships. These are some of the many obstacles that present major challenges as it pertains to job opportunities, and it's our mission to help alleviate these challenges for everyone who walks through our doors. Our model has a strong track record of success, and in 2019 we had a 91% graduation rate and maintained a 70% placement and retention rate.

At the onset of the pandemic, we immediately pivoted our approach to our service delivery. Further, this shift was not only due to COVID, but because of the social and economic hardship faced by our communities. The black and brown communities that we serve have been devastated by the pandemic, and we saw an increased demand for our services. In a time of crisis, leaders lead, and we felt obligated to continue our services to assist our STRIVE family, and the community at large. We never stopped providing programming at STRIVE, and we maintained enrollment. In order to continue classes, we provided laptops and WiFi hotspots to our participants as needed. We also put our student's mental health first during this difficult time, and partnered with mental health providers for students seeking such services. STRIVE initiated "Job Club", a bi-weekly introduction of employers to students seeking employment, not only to STRIVE students but to the wider community of unemployed individuals. We also supported our local community by conducting a clothes drive and distributing hot meals to the community. In addition, STRIVE provided diapers and other clothes for parents with infants and small children, as well as distributing masks to our communities via the Mayor's Action Plan. Further, we proactively reached out to our alumni community during this time of crisis, contacting over 4,000 alumni to assess their needs or help navigate unemployment, and conducting entrepreneurship and financial capability courses. In addition, STRIVE created a women's empowerment network for alumni seeking mentors and advisors. Overall, STRIVE placed over 360 graduates or alumni in employment and sent individuals on over 900 interviews.

In 2021, STRIVE is not slowing down on providing much needed resources and exemplary service to our students and alumni, especially at a time when our services are needed now more than ever. As the world changes, STRIVE will move with it, helping our graduates come out of this pandemic better off than they were in early 2020. However, the City is relying on organizations like STRIVE to aid in the City's economic recovery efforts, and we need the City's continued and expanded partnership to help the communities we serve. The Council has proven that they believe in our work and we are grateful for that partnership, as seen in our \$50K award through the Speaker's Initiative, and we would like to build on that strong relationship in order to

support our communities. We are also calling on the City to restore funding to the Job Training and Placement Initiative to pre-pandemic levels, as the cuts it received in FY21 have been difficult for communities that need support now. Such services are even more vital during this time of uncertainty due to COVID-19 and other factors. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing our work together to serve New Yorkers.

Testimony submitted by

Lowell J. Herschberger
Director of Career and Education Programs
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

December 9, 2020

Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment (Committees on Economic Development and Small Business)

I am an East New York resident, leader at the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, and member of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition.

Our neighborhood was one of the hardest hit in the current COVID 19 pandemic. Many businesses are closed and unemployment is hitting record levels. Typically, our unemployment rate is 5-10% higher than the city average and the current crisis has only exacerbated this unjust disparity with an unemployment rate nearing 25%.

I am here to endorse the NYCETC platform which will be articulated later today as well as to highlight a local concern of neighborhood advocates who have organized the Coalition for Community Advancement. The group was first formed when the neighborhood was facing a massive rezoning which occurred in 2016. I am here to say that the agreements made in that rezoning process have not been kept. Developers are experiencing the benefits of the increased density, but the community has not received the benefit of jobs promised. We were promised 3,900 jobs as part of \$16.7 Million dollar investment in the local IBZ. I am here to ask, "Where are the 3,900 jobs?" We need EDC and NYC to answer for the promises they made to our community.

In July of 2020 The Coalition created a Platform for a Just Transition that called on City, State and Federal government to achieve legislation that compensates and reparates for the decades-long disinvestment by government and private interests, which contributed to the diminished lack of health care opportunities, healthy food options, safe and affordable housing, accessible lending, and economic opportunities that made ENY more vulnerable to the pandemic.

It lays out priorities for both housing and economic justice for East NEW York. In Economic Justice it calls for the 1) Preserving and strengthening our small businesses, 2) Access to a growing and changing economy and 3) Preserving and strengthening our industrial sector.

Our first priority is to demand accountability from the City and the Economic Development Corporation on their commitment to invest \$16.7 Million into the East New York Industrial Business Zone and the creation of 3,900 jobs promised back in 2016.

Now, 4 years later we should have seen \$ 6,680,000 of those investments and 1,560 new jobs. To date, we have not seen either of these commitments.

The City and the EDC must prioritize these commitments.

The Coalition for Community Advancement demands immediate accountability and transparency. East New York cannot have more failed commitments. The City has failed in establishing the basement legalization pilot program and the developing 1,300 units of affordable housing in the 1st 2 years(2018) -- to date, we count only 672 affordable units.

East New York needs these 3900 jobs more than ever as we see close to a quarter of our neighbors facing joblessness.

Please help us get the transparency and action we need in this difficult time.

Testimony to New York City Council

Re: Resolution 1320-2020

Councilmembers:

Asking the USDA to expand the SNAP online pilot to include a wider range of qualified retailers is a great step to increasing access, but does not go far enough. Unless it is amended, this pilot's design will only exacerbate the very issues (like low wages) that make food inaccessible in the first place.

The primary online retailers are Amazon and Walmart, yet these corporations are not required to disclose how much of their revenue is from their very own employees needing to use SNAP benefits. Participating retailers – including delivery service providers – must pay a living wage. Otherwise we are feeding SNAP recipients off the backs of marginalized and exploited workers who themselves end up requiring SNAP benefits.

As you consider the implications small business, economic development, workforce development and combating unemployment, please review the labor of delivery workers for employers of all sizes. Their labor is what makes the SNAP online program work. Increasing local retailers means that they, too, should be called to meet standards of fair pay and safe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

I urge you to amend Resolution 1320-2020 and bring it to the floor for a vote. This resolution must require retailer transparency and fair labor practices to be consistent with the track record of the New York City Council. New York City can lead the way for this change and join others¹ in ensuring policies (from local to federal) do not perpetuate poverty.

Thank you for your time and solidarity.

Best regards,

Dia Edmunds

¹ Durban, D., & Duckworth, T. (2020, July 02). Durbin, Duckworth Introduce Bill To Implement And Expand Online SNAP Purchasing Nationwide: U.S. Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois. Retrieved October 05, 2020, from <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-duckworth-introduce-bill-to-implement-and-expand-online-snap-purchasing-nationwide>



**New York City Council Committee on Economic Development and Committee on Small
Business**

Joint Oversight Hearing – Workforce Development and Combatting Unemployment

Hearing Date: December 9, 2020

Date Submitted: December 11, 2020

Dear Chair Vallone, Chair Gjonaj, and members of the Council Committees on Economic Development and Small Business:

My name is Davon Russell, and I am the president of Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), a Bronx -based community development organization with the mission of providing South Bronx residents with access to all the resources that create thriving neighborhoods. For 25 years we have served thousands of children, youth, seniors and families across the South Bronx and beyond. A key component of our community development work is helping small businesses, many of whom are hanging on by a thread due to the COVID-19 pandemic and crippling recession.

WHEDco empowers low-income New Yorkers to create their own economic opportunities by starting small businesses and creating safer, healthier and more vibrant neighborhoods. Our specific areas of focus are home-based childcare, or family childcare (FCC); helping entrepreneurs grow businesses in the food industry by providing affordable kitchen space at our Bronx CookSpace; and supporting over 500 small businesses along the Jerome Avenue and Southern Boulevard commercial corridors near our affordable housing developments.

During the pandemic, we have stepped up our support businesses by enhancing remote access to free legal services and one-on-one financial management; holding webinars for small business owners on topics such as credit, marketing, labor guidelines, and financial options; providing remote technical assistance to help businesses get online, adapt to e-commerce, and market their products and services to meet new demand; and sharing resources and updates about relief funds with businesses via WHEDco’s website and other platforms.

Much of our small business support helps home based childcare, or family childcare (FCC) providers. We have a network of over 300 licensed providers in the Bronx, and we support over 10,000 providers across the city who care for fewer than three unrelated children and are therefore licensed-exempt.

Established at WHEDco's inception, our services for FCC providers include business development and training, home visits and monitoring to ensure that standards are maintained, and technical and business assistance.

Because of the pandemic, as with our other small business support, we've moved our professional development trainings online and added new services. We help providers obtain masks and cleaning supplies, implement daily health checks, and connect them to resources such as technology for remote learning, mental health services, grocery store gift cards, and our food pantry.

The vast majority of the small businesses we support are owned and operated by people of color, primarily women of color in FCC businesses, many of whom speak a primary language other than English. We know that the pandemic and recession have hit nearly everyone, but no one has borne the brunt as much as women and people of color. According to a study conducted by the New York City Comptroller's Office in June, 85% of minority- and women-owned businesses believe they cannot survive for more than six months¹. Across the nation, some studies estimate that over 50% of Black businesses will shutter², and that so far Black, Latino and Asian businesses are shutting down at far higher rates than white-owned businesses³.

The number of children attending daycare has dwindled significantly due to the recession, and the loss in revenue has many FCC providers closing at an alarming rate, and many of those that are still open are barely scraping by.

Childcare is considered an essential service, and the centers don't have the option to close. The customers they still have are often essential workers, and the centers them to return to work and thereby play a crucial role in keeping countless other businesses afloat. However, serving essential workers comes with an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 and a whole new set of safety protocols.

Additionally, FCC providers are now caring for school age remote learners and must act as home school teachers, IT support staff, and provide uninterrupted access to high-speed internet and other technology.

Suffice to say, the responsibilities they shoulder have increased substantially, but they have, by and large, received little financial help. Due to language barriers, limited access to time and resources and myriad other reasons, many found Payroll Protection Program and similar funding at the city and state level extremely hard to access. Because family childcare providers often lack capital, many banks will not issue them loans.

¹ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/minority-and-women-owned-businesses-at-risk-impact-of-covid-19-on-new-york-city-firms/>

² <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/07/black-owned-businesses-may-not-survive-covid-19/>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/04/economy/black-business-coronavirus-study/index.html>

Nor has there been meaningful recognition of this sector as essential, with no prioritized access to hazard pay for staff, PPE, cleaning supplies, or supports to adjust program spaces.

Countless FCC providers rely on organizations such as WHEDco for basic, possibly business- and life-saving services and supplies. But there is only so much nonprofits can do.

This is why we urge the City take the following steps to keep small businesses afloat, protecting the economy at large and the precise population that has been devastated by the economic fallout of the pandemic.

For FCC and other small businesses, we recommend that the City:

- Offer linguistically accessible guidance and technical assistance on accessing small business relief, for example, the Federal Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program and other grant opportunities
- Provide more relief grants for small businesses in the Bronx with reasonable terms and ease of access, including for limited English speakers
- Design direct grants, not based on reimbursement, specifically targeting FCC providers, that reflect the dynamics of home-based businesses and sole proprietorship, and are flexible in use of funds
- Provide greater access to affordable (low- to no-interest), convenient capital through the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund
- Offer more grant support to nonprofits assisting small businesses
- Provide guidance and technical assistance on compliance with Department of Labor and other relevant small business requirements to avoid crippling fines
- Work with regulators to stem the alarming tide of bank closures in the Bronx.

Additionally, to advance equity and roll back the historic and systemic inequities that affect majority low-income, Black and brown communities like those in the Bronx, the City should:

- Require a level of local procurement in contracts, development and city-funded projects implemented in the Bronx by any and all agencies
- Require some procurement from certified and uncertified local MWBEs in the Bronx
- Require transparency in communicating, in advance, the anticipated job needs on city-funded projects, developments and contracts to local coalitions, community groups, and elected officials, so that a pipeline of talent can be recruited and/or trained in advance
- Require local hiring on city-funded projects, developments and contracts
- Provide paid trainings for low-income workers to access different opportunities in high-demand fields
- Bridge the chasm between NYC's workforce system (the Mayor's office, Small Business Services, workforce providers, etc.) and its economic development system
- Support worker ownership to advance the development of cooperatives

- Provide more support to strengthen businesses' ability to plan for disasters and major transitions like retirement, such as a retirement fund for entrepreneurs and other independent workers; assistance with planning for passing businesses on to relatives, heirs, workers, etc.

These measures have the ability to save small businesses owned by low-income POC and immigrants, including FCC providers, but the City must act quickly. We urge the City Council to continue its commitment to protecting small businesses, working families, and the economy as a whole, and immediately begin working with the Mayor on the creation and implementation of new strategies listed above to further protect these vital businesses.

I thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I welcome any questions or comments you may have.

Sincerely,

Davon Russell



TESTIMONY

Oversight Hearing on Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:
Worker Cooperatives—An Effective Workforce Development Strategy”

Presented to

New York City Council, Committee on Economic Development

Hon. Paul Vallone, Chair

New York City Council, Committee on Small Business

Hon. Mark Gjonaj, Chair

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Prepared By:

Anh-Thu Nguyen

Director of Strategic Partnerships

New York City Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative

Democracy at Work Institute

115 E 23rd Street, 3rd Floor #1550

New York, New York 10010

Good afternoon, Chairs Gjonaj and Vallone, and the distinguished members of the New York City Council Committees on Small Business & Economic Development. 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. I am also here on behalf of the 13 partner organizations of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) supported through City Council. I thank you for the opportunity to speak about how worker cooperative business development can and should go hand-in-hand with workforce development to create access to good jobs, build and ensure higher standards across industries, and facilitate 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. This work gives us a unique perspective into worker ownership and its connection to workforce development-- one that focuses on creating good, stable, dignified jobs for people, especially those in low-wage and contingent work. We have seen best practices and inspiring transformation through integrating worker ownership with workforce development, that has created better jobs, better industries, and stability and opportunity for working families. I want to share with you one such success story from our own backyard.

The south Bronx has for 35 years been home to a national model for high-road workforce development and the largest worker cooperative in the country--- Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA). CHCA has transformed home health care--a traditionally, low-wage, high-turnover industry, where the vast majority of workers are low-wage, immigrant women-of-color--for the better, raising job quality and industry standards through worker ownership and continuous investment in an embedded on-the-job training and skills development program. This workforce development model operates on a seamless continuum from recruitment to training, certification, placement and employment. CHCA now has more than 2,000 staff, overwhelmingly women and immigrants of color—and it has produced incredible workforce development results. Of 630 jobseekers enrolled annually with CHCA's training program, 94 percent graduate with a portable credential and 85% are employed as home health aides. Of those, 68% remain employed after one year. All of those who graduate are guaranteed a job with CHCA, if they wish. In comparison, according to the national Benchmarking Project, similar low-income training programs on average secure employment for only 29% of enrollees, and of those just 38% remain employed after one year.

Another example: at the Democracy at Work Institute, we have been working in partnership with the CUNY Institute of Mexican Studies to incubate and demonstrate another model for workforce development and social entrepreneurship--Radiate Consulting. We work together to identify promising, entrepreneurial immigrant students and recent graduates with barriers to obtaining consistent work, who want to develop their careers through worker-ownership. We

provide the wraparound services that engage and provide supports as they navigate the working world, continued opportunities for professional development, and support as they launch their business, gain clients, and build their skills as emerging young professionals.

NY City Council's investment in worker ownership is a national model for creating sustainable economic development that has borne fruit. In response to the COVID-19 economic crisis, the Mayor is taking bold steps to save jobs and businesses through the launch of Employee Ownership NYC. Its Owner to Owners hotline--managed by our organization and funded in part through the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative's City Council funding--is already resulting in an uptick in small and medium-sized businesses looking to convert to worker ownership to stabilize and ensure longevity. We will also see unemployed workers looking to skill up and pivot to work in different industries. This presents a unique opportunity to pair workforce development training and placement with businesses transitioning to worker ownership, creating opportunity and strengthening our local economy in doing so.

Worker cooperative businesses are unique in their ability to establish, grow, and retain community wealth, create good, stable jobs regardless of the type of work, and make entrepreneurship accessible to all. We believe that it is critical to continue the work that we are doing to support workers and create new opportunities for high road work, help small businesses, primarily in immigrant communities and communities of color, keep their doors open, build and root wealth in neighborhood and communities, and sustain and grow the diversity of the small businesses in NYC for the next generation.

We ask City Council to further its support for WCBDI and worker co-ops as a critical part of workforce development in the essential long term economic recovery work that will be needed in the year to come-- through continuing funding for WCBDI in FY22 as well as through ensuring that more workforce development resources are inclusive of worker cooperative education and training.

I thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify. Thank you for all that you do and for your continued partnership. We hope that you will consider our budget priorities and recommendations during the budget negotiation process in the coming year, and we look forward to continuing the work to build wealth for our communities through worker ownership.

Hello, Members of the NYC City Council. My name is Alisalda Coronado, I am a Family Child Care provider from the Bronx.

I first invite you to listen to an important list of words. Community, Essential, Essential Workers, Parents, and Guardians, Early Childhood Educator, Caregiver, Infants, Toddlers, Children, Hard work, Provider, Remote Learning, the Workforce!

All words that mean so much, All words that are at the core of what a community consists of, All words that showcase how a community thrives, functions, and economically sustains itself!

I come to you today, to ask that we come together for the greater good and well-being of our children, family, community, workforce, and workforce. I come to you today to voice and sound the alarm as a Family Child Care (FCC) Provider and community member. FCC providers are providing nurturing, stimulating care for the most vulnerable children in our city, including infants and toddlers, children with special needs, and homeless children.

At a time when demand for FCC is higher than it's ever been, the pandemic has greatly exacerbated the challenges FCC providers -- especially

independent providers -- experience as educators and small business owners, including:

- lack of clear communication from public agencies, including the absence of health guidance during the surge last spring
- lack of coordination among regulatory agencies
- lower revenue from enrollment as we practice social distancing, but higher operating costs
- inadequate funding for base rates and increased operating costs related to the pandemic

Here are our recommendations: ...

- Develop a coordinated approach to supporting the health, safety and sustainability of FCC Providers and the families they work with.
- Communicate regularly with FCC businesses in clear, accessible formats and in languages that they speak. Not sharing health guidance, small grant opportunities and other information exposes FCC to greater health and financial risk.
- Offer grants that are tailored to the needs of FCC Providers and other home-based businesses. Adopt streamlined application processes, allow maximum flexibility in spending (so that Providers may pay

down debt if necessary), and make funds available up front. Most of my colleagues are not able to advance our own funds to pay bills at this point.

Please don't turn your backs on Community, Essential Workers, Parents, and Guardians, Early Childhood Educators, Caregivers, Infants, Toddlers, Children, Hard work, Providers, Remote Learning, and the Workforce.

Buenas tardes miembros del Consejo de la Ciudad de Nueva York. Mi nombre es Alisalda Coronado, soy una proveedora de cuidado infantil familiar del Bronx.

Primero les invito a escuchar una importante lista de palabras:

Comunidad, Esencial, Trabajadores esenciales, Padres y tutores, Educador de la primera infancia, Cuidador, Bebés, Niños pequeños, Niños, Trabajo duro, Proveedor, Aprendizaje a distancia, la Fuerza de trabajo!

Todas son palabras que significan tanto, Todas son palabras que están en el centro de lo que una comunidad consiste, Todas son palabras que muestran cómo una comunidad prospera, funciona, y se sostiene económicamente!

Vengo a ustedes hoy, para pedirles que nos unamos para el bien mayor y el bienestar de nuestros niños, familia, comunidad, fuerza de trabajo, y fuerza laboral. Vengo a ustedes hoy para dar la voz y la alarma como Proveedora de Cuidado Infantil Familiar (FCC) y miembro de la comunidad. Los proveedores de la FCC están proporcionando cuidado enriquecedor y estimulante para los niños más vulnerables de nuestra ciudad, incluyendo bebés y niños pequeños, niños con necesidades especiales y niños sin hogar.

En un momento en que la demanda de la FCC es mayor que nunca, la pandemia ha exacerbado enormemente los desafíos que los proveedores de la FCC, especialmente los proveedores independientes, experimentan como educadores y propietarios de pequeñas empresas, lo que incluye:

- La falta de comunicación clara de las agencias públicas, incluyendo la ausencia de guía sobre salud durante el brote de la primavera pasada

- La falta de coordinación entre los organismos reguladores

- Menores ingresos por la matrícula al practicar el distanciamiento social, pero mayores costos operativos

- Financiación insuficiente en cuanto a las tasas básicas y aumento de los gastos de funcionamiento relacionados con la pandemia

Aquí están nuestras recomendaciones: ...

Desarrollar un enfoque coordinado para apoyar la salud, la seguridad y la sostenibilidad de los Proveedores de FCC y las familias con las que trabajan.

Comunicarse regularmente con las empresas de la FCC en formatos claros y accesibles y en los idiomas que hablan. El no compartir la guía de salud, las oportunidades de pequeños subsidios y otra información expone a la FCC a un mayor riesgo de salud y financiero.

Ofrecer subsidios que se adapten a las necesidades de los Proveedores de la FCC y otras empresas con sede en el hogar. Adoptar procesos de solicitud racionalizados, permitir la máxima flexibilidad en el gasto (de modo que los Proveedores puedan pagar la deuda si es necesario), y hacer que los fondos estén disponibles por adelantado. La mayoría de mis colegas no pueden adelantar nuestros propios fondos para pagar las facturas en este momento.

Por favor, no le den la espalda a la comunidad, a los trabajadores esenciales, a los padres y tutores, a los educadores de la primera infancia, a los cuidadores, a los bebés, a los niños pequeños, a los niños, al trabajo duro, a los proveedores, al aprendizaje a distancia y a la fuerza de trabajo!



TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Economic Development jointly with the Committee on Small Business
Oversight Hearing: Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
Wednesday December 9th, 2020

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

Introduction:

Good morning Chair Vallone, Chair Gjonaj, and members of the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and Small Business. 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 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 critical 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.

This year as the COVID-19 pandemic tore through every corner of New York City, thrusting City contracted human services workers onto the frontlines of a global health crisis—ensuring high-risk populations such as seniors and disabled New Yorkers had access to food and mental health support, providing childcare for the families of first responders, running drop-in centers and shelters for homeless New Yorkers, supporting our City's youth struggling to keep up with their education without resources to learn remotely, and ensuring New Yorkers have access to the skills, training and education needed to economically respond and recover from this pandemic.

While we are here today to discuss how our City can combat unemployment it must be stressed that New York City's essential human services workforce has suffered a net loss of over 44,000 jobs¹ since February 2020 with no job rebound as layoffs continued past April. This startling loss of jobs is the highest of any essential industry in New York City and is the direct result of cuts to human services at the City and State level and the lack of support from the Federal government. This includes the incredibly dangerous cuts to the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Initiative by the City in both FY20 and FY21 that Contracts Chair Kallos held a City Council oversight hearing about on November 25, 2020².

¹ <http://www.centrernyc.org/reports-briefs/2020/10/1/cnycas-covid-19-economic-update>

² <https://benkallos.com/press-release/eve-thanksgiving-non-profits-testify-urgent-need-restore-funding-cuts> ;
<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=813445&GUID=1ABF948F-F20F-442E-9CE1-2CAFBD6CF7AB>

This massive net loss of jobs is not only devastating for the over 44,000 workers who were laid off during this pandemic with no job rebound in sight, but also to the New York City as a whole. **Our City's failure to have a strong and fully funded human services sector undermines the scope and effectiveness of essential services during a time of desperately growing need and sets back our City's journey towards recovery.** This includes vital workforce development providers tasked with running education and training programs for displaced workforces and the communities hardest hit by COVID-19 who are currently operating under underfunded City contracts and low staffing levels.

While the economic impact of COVID-19 made the City's budget tighter than ever it also displayed the clear need to appropriately invest in essential human service workers whom we rely so heavily on. Cuts to human services need to be fully restored in upcoming FY21 budget modifications and, as we emerge from this crisis, the City's top priority must be to finally value and invest in the essential human services workforce.

State of the Human Services Workforce:

Workers in New York City's nonprofit human services sector make less than half compared to those outside of the sector with similar credentials and experience. 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 elected officials refuse to listen to providers and drastically undervalue the services they are contracted to provide, it is the human services workforce, which is 82% women and 80% people of color, who are disproportionately impacted³. New York City underfunds the direct service costs in human services contracts by at least 20% pre-COVID-19⁴ and that gap is growing, creating the desperate need for funding for human services to be restored and bolstered.**

The City is not getting a deal by chronically underfunding homeless shelters, foster care agencies, food pantries, and senior centers; it is directly harming the low wage workers who keep these programs running. Eighteen percent of New York City human services providers were insolvent before New York City even saw it's first case of COVID-19⁵ and 80% of the largest human services organizations have budgets that are 90% or more dependent on government funding⁶. When these contracts drastically underfund programs, set rock bottom rates per services unit, and require high mandated targets, the City is dependent on low-wage workers to fill in these gaps.

The average human services worker makes only \$32,700 in New York City⁷, far below what the 2019 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard found to be required to meet the basic needs and expenses of living. The median cost for rent in New York City has gone up over 20% since 2010⁸ yet in that same period the average pay for human services workers has increased less than any other low-pay industry in the City including retail, restaurants, and personal/laundry services⁹. Pay is so low that over 60% of the human services workforce qualified for some form of public assistance

³ <https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/RestoreOpportunityNow/RONreport.pdf>

⁴ <https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/HSCCommission/HSCCommissionReport.pdf>

⁵ <https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/HSCCommission/HSCCommissionReport.pdf>

⁶ <http://seachange.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/SeaChange-Oliver-Wyman-Risk-Report.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.centernyc.org/salary-parity-in-nyc>

⁸ <https://streeteasy.com/blog/august-2019-market-reports/>

⁹ <http://www.centernyc.org/salary-parity-in-nyc>

themselves¹⁰.

The human services workforce has been toiling under City-contracted poverty wages long before the devastating effects of COVID-19. Then, instead of being met with tangible support, over 44,000 workers lost their jobs due to cuts to human services by the City and State and lack of support from the Federal government. **It is long past time for NYC to appropriately invest in essential human service workers whom we all rely so heavily by restoring cut funding for human services in the FY20 and FY21 budgets and finally paying human services workers them fair wages under City contracts.**

The Economic Impact of Cuts to the Human Services Sector:

In addition to harming an essential workforce, compounding cuts to human services cost the City more money in the long run. It is in the fiscal interest of New York City to reverse course and invest in the human services sector now so it can play a key role in the long-term economic recovery of New York City as we rebuild from COVID-19. **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 support services such as access to food, shelter, and afterschool programs that allow families and children to focus more time and energy on education.**

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 Hygiene¹¹. 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 annually¹², 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 into the local economy¹³. 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 must be utilized as a core pillar of New York City's COVID-19 recovery.

The other side of this equation would be the continued disinvestment in human services in response to the City's budget deficit via sweeping cuts to human services and the refusal to restore funding that was slashed in FY20 and FY21, including cuts to the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative. This course of action would continue to erode vital services for communities of color, people with disabilities, and low-income communities who have already been hardest hit by this pandemic and lead to even more layoffs of essential

¹⁰ <https://humanservicescouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Initiatives/RestoreOpportunityNow/RONreport.pdf>

¹¹ <https://shnny.org/images/uploads/NY-NY-III-Interim-Report.pdf>

¹² https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Correction_FY2019.pdf

¹³ <https://philanthropynewyork.org/news/mayor-de-blasio-can-make-lasting-change-nonprofit-living-wages-and-career-opportunities>

workers.

Conclusion:

New York City cannot address its workforce development needs and high unemployment numbers in the wake of COVID-19 without fully funding human services. Human services providers on the frontlines of New York's COVID-19 response and recovery are on the brink of failure due to millions of compounding and secretive cuts throughout the pandemic and within the FY21 Adopted budget.

Cuts to human services do not impact all New Yorkers equally—they obstruct our City's recovery in the communities already most impact by COVID-19 due to structural racism, ableism, and income inequality with Black and brown New Yorkers are suffering the deepest harm. In order to support recovery in the communities that need it most, funding for the jobs and services that the human services sector provides must be restored and bolstered. Without immediate action, it will only be more difficult for our City to recover and rebuild.

Thank you, Chairs Vallone and Gjonaj, for providing me with this opportunity to testify and holding this important oversight hearing. We value our partnership with the City Council and know you stand with us in our call to address this crisis.

MJ Okma, Policy and Campaign Strategist
Human Services Council of New York
okmam@humanservicescouncil.org



New York City Council Joint Hearing - Economic Development + Small Business Services December 9, 2020 at 10:00 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 the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the communities that OBT serves and the ways our organization and sector have responded to the increased and urgent needs. What is clear to all those who work with disenfranchised and struggling New Yorkers right now is that training, education, and connections to jobs are lifelines right now. And we need more lifelines.

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.

COVID-19's Impact on the Communities We Serve

COVID-19 has taken an incredible toll on our city. It has also had a disproportionate impact on the City's low-income, Black and Brown communities. These are the very communities that organizations like OBT have served for decades. 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.¹ 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%).² In this face of such vulnerability, organizations that are already embedded in the

¹ https://hesterstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Excluded-in-the-Epicenter_final-compressed.pdf

² <https://sph.cuny.edu/research/covid-19-tracking-survey/week-2/>

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.

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 has only exacerbated the already present economic needs. In NYC, we have seen the number of Out of School/Out of Work youth decrease over the past ten years; this crisis has undone the progress made since the 2008 recession. As of October 2020, between 259,000 to 324,000 16-24 year olds already out of work and out of school, compared to 129,000 in 2019.

OBT Meeting the Need

When COVID-19 hit, we shifted immediately to remote programming. We've navigated the technical challenges: getting students laptops, mobile hotspots, practice test books, setting up zoom google classrooms, Slack, and other platforms. I'm extremely proud of the resilience of our students and staff in adapting and continuing to support one another.

Virtual Education, Training, and Internships

For young people, we have continued our High School Equivalency preparation programs that provide case management, industry-recognized certifications, and paid internship opportunities. We also have continued our advanced trainings with industry-certified curriculum in the healthcare, technology, and construction sectors, which offer hands-on learning opportunities and paid internships. Though it's been challenging to facilitate remote learning and remote internships, our students continue to thrive, with an over 75% completion rate across all programs.

Our adult participants are still attending classes, with a blended model of remote and in-person learning, in accordance with DOE and City guidance. Our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes continue to be well-attended, as immigrant New Yorkers gain the skills and confidence to communicate in English. We also offer High School Equivalency preparation for adults that continues via Google Classroom and Zoom.

Bootcamps + Bridge Programs

We noticed an urgent need for support that could fast-track young adults into jobs. We innovated two bootcamps over the summer with direct employment connections - a Contact Tracing Bootcamp and Customer Service Bootcamp. Each training had a nearly 100% completion rate, and graduates went on to land jobs or decided to enroll in college. We also created a Python Coding Bridge Program to ready students for our Cloud Support Engineering Training. The success of short-term, labor-market-driven programs like these demonstrates (1) the nimbleness of the workforce development sector, and (2) young adults' appetite for making themselves more competitive in this economy.

Virtual Recruitment Events + Un/Employment Navigation Support

As thousands of New Yorkers were laid off and facing an increasingly challenging economy, OBT's support, guidance, and connections to employer partners were more critical than ever. We set up a few new ways to reach our communities. First, we began weekly webinars that at

first focused on navigating unemployment resources. Now, after more than 25 webinars, these webinars focus on social and economic resources more broadly. In October, we piloted virtual hiring events, and are proud to report that 18 attendees secured jobs as a result. We continue to offer resume assistance, interview preparation, and job placement services to any adult who is seeking work.

OBT's Emergency Fund

It's no secret that the impact of COVID-19 on New Yorkers' abilities to feed their families and afford basic necessities has been devastating. That's why OBT launched an Emergency Fund in March to support our participants and alumni in meeting their needs. To date, we've provided over \$60,000 to over 160 individuals and families to help pay for food, phone and utility bills, laptops, diapers, and medicine.

Where More Support is Needed

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. We also know that "back to normal" is not good enough. "Normal" for millions of New Yorkers meant multiple low-wage jobs with little mobility, no access to healthcare or other benefits, little economic security and unsafe working conditions, and unpredictable schedules. A stronger and inclusive economy that ensures job quality, career mobility, living wage pay and benefits, stable schedules, and safe working conditions is the new starting line.

Universal Broadband Access

This is a non-negotiable. Between what we're seeing with the DOE and our own experience in supporting internet access (purchasing hot spots, subsidizing internet access, etc.), as a City we are completely out of step with the necessary infrastructure to support the ways in which people need to access education, employment, healthcare, and other resources.

Invest in Bridge Programming

Bridge programming has long been a priority for NYC's workforce organizations. Every year, during every testimony, my colleagues and I and our staff and students testify about the importance of ways to connect every single person to training. There is research that underscores its importance. At OBT we are particularly concerned about access to apprenticeship programs, advanced trainings (particularly in technology), and higher education, all of which lead to higher-paying jobs and careers.

Expand Sector-Based Programs Where There is Job Growth

Even young people with high school diplomas are having difficulty accessing entry level jobs in the tight and competitive COVID economy. Sector-based trainings in technology and healthcare with industry-certified curriculum and paid internship opportunities make young people more marketable. They also provide much-needed opportunities to network, which helps them get hired after graduation.

Increase Funding for Digital Literacy Initiatives

Digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers. The transition to remote working and learning has further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide

through city-wide broadband access. The City must also increase its investment in digital literacy initiatives, particularly for those communities that face the steepest learning curve - adults and those with the dual challenge of language isolation. Through a recent research project with NYCEDC in Sunset Park, we found that students in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes had comparatively low digital skills and disproportionately high interest in learning these skills.

Where There is Economic Development, There Must Be CBO Workforce Training

New York City must do its part to create opportunities for un- and underemployed residents - and create access to those opportunities. When the City invests in an economic development project, it should not only work with HireNYC and Workforce1 Centers, but also with local community-based workforce development organizations. We can innovate training programs that will ensure that local residents who need these opportunities the most can qualify for them.

More broadly, workforce providers and the communities we serve must be at the table and invested in COVID recovery process now. We need to be training and preparing New Yorkers now for the current and post COVID economy - overall sector specific and foundational skill needs and ability to work in an online environment remain the same. We need to use this moment to prepare people, especially those that have more time due to un- and under-employment, for what comes next.

Right-size Workforce Training Budgets

Workforce training organizations like OBT have always provided wraparound supports, including transportation, access to childcare, case management and navigation of city agencies, etc. This is integral to creating the conditions for engagement during program, and supporting the transition into the workplace. The pandemic has amplified the need for these and we are doing more than ever. Rather than relying on nonprofits to fundraise privately to supplement contractual budgets, all workforce contracts should reflect actual costs of programming outside of training and job placement. Furthermore, austerity budgeting will have extremely deleterious effects on an equitable economic recovery - we must invest in a sustainable economy built from the bottom-up. An equitable recovery plan must reprioritize and redirect resources toward community investments through a combination of new revenue streams and increased cuts in other portions of the City budget.

Economic Recovery Will Not Be Equitable Unless NYC Invests in Workforce Development

We are facing unprecedented economic hardship whose impacts are felt particularly sharply by New York's most vulnerable communities. Empower workforce providers to do what we do best to mitigate this pain - training and educating New Yorkers for jobs in growing sectors. Do not leave behind those young people who have stopped out of the traditional K-12 system to care for sick family members, or took a leave from college to earn money to feed their family. Invest in them now because their need is more urgent than ever. There are simple solutions that we know work - tailored training in partnership with employers, paid hands-on learning opportunities like internships and pre-apprenticeships, and City-sponsored job opportunities with City-sponsored pathways to access them. I urge you to prioritize these solutions as you work towards a recovery plan. Thank you for your time, attention, and partnership. With any questions, you can reach me at lpolo@obtjobs.org.



capital for healthy
families & communities

**New York City
Committee on Economic Development and Committee on Small Businesses
Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
City Council Hearing 12/10/2020**

**To: New York City City Council Members on the Committee on Economic Development and the
Committee on Small Business**

My name is Amy Chea and I am a Program Officer at the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) heading up the Early Care and Education work in New York City. LIIF is a community development financial institution that believes everyone in the United States should benefit from living in a community of opportunity, equity and well-being. LIIF has emphasized the field of Early Care and Education (ECE) in its strategic plan, and has mobilized capital and partners to achieve this vision. LIIF has invested in ECE facilities and ECE providers through capital grants, technical assistance and training, emergency/disaster recovery, and policy advocacy and research. ECE is a public good, and should be regarded and financed as such.

How New York City responds to the needs of the child care sector during the COVID-19 crisis affects our city's economy, working families' livelihoods and our children's future wellbeing. Without adequate support for ECE providers, we risk the permanent loss of roughly half the city's child care slots, the majority of which are owned and operated by women and people of color. Because of pressure for space, most child care in our city occurs in licensed family child care homes (FCCs), and providers take on the dual roles of small business owners and educators. LIIF believes that supporting these small business owners is critical for our city's economic recovery, and funding this sector advances racial and gender equity overall.

Prior to the pandemic, the ECE sector faced many challenges and equity issues, such as significant undersupply, under-funded operations, unaffordability for the average family, and an undervalued and disrespected workforce. These issues are exacerbated due to COVID-19 and our city's FCC providers experienced immense difficulty in accessing relief funds. (Nationally, child care businesses received less than 5% of the total \$521.4 billion in lending through the Paycheck Protection Program.) LIIF responded with a strategic intervention and launched a major fundraising effort to provide emergency relief. Together with regional funders and local partners, LIIF is working to get resources into the hands of these small businesses that provide this critical service.

LIIF's New York City Child Care Emergency Grant Program provided emergency relief grants to licensed FCCs who are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. Many FCCs in the city – already operating on shoestring budgets – lost nearly 70% of their incoming revenue during the first week of sheltering-in-place. **LIIF recognized that these providers were not just at risk of losing their businesses,**

but since they were operating out of their residences, they were also at risk of losing their homes.

Through this effort, LIIF provided critically needed grants to these primarily women- and minority-owned businesses to support the business owners and their employees.

Through the generous support of private funders, 182 eligible programs received \$1.2 MM in funds to cover operating expenses to retain their staff, pay their rent or mortgage, and pay taxes, insurance, utilities and other expenses related to typical operations for their program. LIIF worked closely with five community partners to identify the applicant pool. Through a rigorous selection process, which prioritized lower income zip codes hardest hit by the pandemic, LIIF identified 182 FCC programs to award grants ranging from \$3000 to \$10,000. These grant funds helped ECE providers keep their doors open so that they could continue to serve their communities safely. These providers serve the families of essential workers and remain a critical part of the city's economic recovery and pandemic response. LIIF will continue to provide technical assistance and business supports to the grantees through the next year, but more funding and support is necessary.

I'd like to take this time to highlight our grantees and the populations they serve. A total of 375 FCC providers (out of 6,000+ licensed FCC programs in NYC) applied for this grant opportunity, with requests ranging from \$800 to \$11,000. The majority of applicants live in the Bronx, but we covered programs in all five boroughs.

In the group of 182 FCC programs LIIF awarded:

- 99% of the FCC providers identify as Female
- 98% of the FCC providers identify as a Person of Color, particularly Hispanic/Latino and Black and African-American
- 96% of the FCC programs serve infants and toddlers
- 52% of the FCC programs serve children with developmental delays and special needs
- 63% of the FCC programs serve dual language learners
- 42% of the FCC programs serve children who are experiencing homelessness, living in transitional housing, or in the foster system

In terms of how their businesses are faring:

- 95% of grantees are currently open
- 67% of grantees had to temporarily close their programs, for a range of 3 weeks to 8 months
- 88% of grantees currently have enrollment at or less than half of their licensed capacity

The last statistic regarding decreasing enrollment numbers highlights the importance of why FCC providers need more funding. Their income is based on their program's enrollment numbers and how many children come through their doors, and right now, they are suffering with low enrollment more than ever before. Families are out of work, and can no longer afford care, or they are afraid to send their children to school.

Now that the emergency funds have been disbursed, LIIF has funding to work with our partners to continue to support these family child care providers with technical assistance, workshops and trainings, and small business support through the end of the fiscal year. Although LIIF is extremely happy with the successes of the NYC Child Care Emergency Grant Program, there are thousands more FCC programs across the city (approximately 6,400 total) that are at risk of closing without similar, and more, financial support and technical assistance. FCC providers need additional support.

LIIF makes the following recommendations:

1. Meet with FCC providers and local advocate groups to learn more about the needs of the sector.
2. Design small business grants specifically targeting FCC providers that are:
 - a. Linguistically accessible
 - b. Reflect the dynamics of home-based businesses and sole proprietorship
 - c. Direct grants, not based on reimbursement
 - d. Flexible in use of funds
3. Offer a grant program that allows child care facilities to modify their program to accommodate heightened health and safety requirements. Examples are:
 - a. Cleaning supplies
 - b. Program materials to promote social distancing
 - c. Facility modifications like air purifiers and
 - d. Technology to accommodate distance/remote learning
4. Offer guidance and technical assistance on accessing small business relief.
5. Offer guidance and technical assistance on compliance with Department of Labor requirements/other relevant small business compliance components to avoid crippling fines.
6. Collaborate with external partners and community organizations to advocate for supportive policies to support family child care and to treat ECE as a public good.

Examples of What's Working in Other Cities

LIIF operates a repair and renovation program in San Francisco using city funds, and many providers have found this program to be very helpful in keeping their program open and safe for children and adults. This facility grant program could be modified for New York to support providers as they navigate the pandemic.

Additionally, the City of Los Angeles just dedicated \$11MM to emergency relief funding for child care programs and LIIF is proudly administering this grant money for over 700 programs, both centers and homes. New York City needs to similarly invest boldly in the small business owners and workers who are supporting our city through some of the worst times our residents have ever endured. LIIF is prepared to support these family child care providers, and hopes to collaborate with organizations and institutions who are willing to help these small business owners out of the pandemic to not just recover, but to be sustainable in the years to come.

Conclusion

As you can see, the child care sector in New York City, particularly the home-based programs, are in dire need for your help. They need you to see them, to hear them, to fight for them, but most importantly, to value them. These family child care providers are providing essential services to our essential workers and our economic recovery rests on their backs. They are the workforce behind our workforce. I invite you to read some stories from our grantees, so you can see how impactful these small grants were. We have thousands upon thousands of family child care providers in New York City who still have not received any financial relief, and even with \$1.2MM in initial funding, we need millions more.

If I could quote a family child care provider, Alisalda Coronado, who testified during the verbal testimonies on Wednesday, December 9th, and who also happens to be one of our grantees, "Please don't turn your backs on Community, Essential Workers, Parents and Guardians, Early Childhood Educators, Caregivers, Infants, Toddlers, Children, Hard Workers, Providers, Remote Learning, and the Workforce."

Thank you for your time.

Appendix A: LIIF Grantee Stories

THANK YOU to our funders and our partners! With their help, 182 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-owned and women-owned businesses received critically needed funds to sustain their program, keep their homes and pay their bills. It is crucial to highlight the real life impact these funds have on these small businesses. Below are some stories LIIF has compiled:

“It gave me hope, and it helped me stay afloat. A life line.” – *Gladys from Staten Island*

“The funding I received was a true blessing. It essentially was a month’s buffer. I have been able to maintain staffing with ~50-60% capacity. I have carefully budget and stocked up on PPE in case we have a harsh winter. I was able to purchase materials for remote learning. I am so grateful to LIIF as a small minority female business owner. It is a blessing to still be open and serving my community when so many around me are closed.” – *Nickashia from Brooklyn*

“We were also taking stock of the many blessings we have enjoyed in 2020, in spite of the pandemic! We both agreed that right up there on our list of blessings was YOU! Your unwavering support and consistent flow of information resulted in the \$3,000 grant! Wow! It really helped reduce our child care associated debt! We will be forever grateful to you!” – *Miguel and Addys from the Bronx*

“The LIIF Grant allowed me to restore my program during the pandemic. This grant also helped me prepare me and my employees with the proper PPE when working with the kids. I was able to pay my house and light bills, where I have my business. Even during the pandemic, I was able to pay my employees. Thankfully, with this grant, I was able to succeed without all of my children. Without this grant, my program would not be standing and I am extremely grateful for the grant that was given to me.” – *Mary from the Bronx*

“The funding I received helped me to reemploy my staff who I had to lay off because of the COVID-19 epidemic. It also helped to pay my monthly operating expenses required to keep my business alive. Without the funding from LIIF I would not have been able to reopen my business as soon as I did. Thank you for your help.” – *Heather from the Bronx*

“Because of the funding, I was able to remain open for the children in my community, many of whom are children of essential workers. Thank you!” – *Glennys from Queens*

“I cannot thank you enough for the grant I have received. Ninety percent of the children come from low income homes. Due to COVID-19, the enrollment at [my program] has decreased to less than 50 percent. This grant helps us give the children quality service by paying the salaries of my assistants.” – *Deborah from the Bronx*

“It helped me pay my mortgage, my utilities, insurance, and helped me so much. It kept me going. My income took a dive with the COVID-19 epidemic. I’m so grateful to LIIF for their help. I was able to open my door for the parents that needed to bring their children.” – *Doris from the Bronx*

“LIIF funds helped [my program] a lot, since our program has suffered a large deficit of children due to the pandemic. With this grant, we were able to pay part of the business expenses and we can continue to keep my staff working with us. We were able to buy emergency supplies for COVID-19. We are very grateful that the program was selected for this great grant opportunity. Thank you once again for helping small businesses like us. We are a very important pillar for our children and especially our community.” – *Miguelina from the Bronx*

“It helped us survive when we thought we would have to close our doors due to lack of enrollment. It allowed us to serve our community and essential workers when everyone else was closed.” – *Tiffany from the Bronx*

“We are completely broke due to this pandemic. Prior to the pandemic we had over 70% capacity but as soon as it hit we went down to having nobody. After 4 months only two kids have come down from the twelve we had. We are literally open thanks to this funding, otherwise we would've been out of business.” – *Georgina from the Bronx*

“The LIIF grant brought great relief to the debt the program had accrued during the shutdown period of the pandemic. It allowed us to take care of the bills and keep afloat.” – *Enma from the Bronx*

Appendix B: LIIF NYC Child Care Emergency Grant Program Applicant Data

As of May 2020, there are 6,429 registered/licenses family child care programs in New York City. The \$1.2MM in pass-through grants was able to serve 182 FCC providers. The city has a long way to go if they want to save child care and get our folks back to work safely.

Applicants by Borough

Borough	% of Applicants
Bronx	66% (248)
Brooklyn	12% (45)
Manhattan	13% (47)
Queens	7% (27)
Staten Island	2% (8)

Applicants by Community Partner Organizations

Organization	% of Applicants
All Our Kin	16% (62)
Cypress Hills Child Care Corp	5% (20)
Lutheran Social Services of NY	16% (60)
ParentChild+	3% (10)
WHEDco	22% (82)
<i>Unaffiliated</i>	<i>38% (141)</i>

Appendix C: Survey Data from Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes

The National Association for the Education of Young Children released the results of a nationwide provider survey today, which you can find here:

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf

Results for NY are as follows:

233 responses; 56% from child care centers and 44% from family child care homes.

- 62% of respondents from child care center and family child care homes said they are currently losing money by remaining open, even as they are desperately trying to stay open for the children and families they serve.
- 60% of respondents reported putting supplies or other items on their personal credit card or dipping into their personal savings accounts, including 82% of family child care homes.
- 92% of respondents are paying additional costs for cleaning supplies; 80% are paying additional costs for PPE, and 64% are paying additional costs for staff/personnel, including 74% of child care centers.
- 41% are confronting so much uncertainty that they are unable to say how much longer they will be able to stay open.
- Of those who do know, 29% say they will have to close within three months, including 40% of family child care homes, if enrollment stays where it is and they don't receive additional public support.
- 53% of respondents said they know of multiple child care centers and/or family child care homes in their community that have closed permanently New York

Bowen
Public
Affairs
Consulting

Testimony before the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and Small Business

Paul A. Vallone, Chair – Economic Development

Mark Gjonaj, Chair – Small Business

December 8, 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 Vallone, Chair Gjonaj, Council Members and staff of the Committees on Economic Development and Small Business, and for the opportunity to speak today. I speak today on behalf of the New York City Network of Cooperatives (NYC NOWC), and am also informed by my experience with other clients and advocacy work.

Worker cooperatives provide a unique opportunity to simultaneously provide New Yorkers with not just jobs, but ownership and, accordingly, management of the very place they work. The New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives, as NYC's trade association for worker cooperative businesses in the NYC metropolitan region, has worked extensively with coops and organizations that support them to build workplace democracy and improve business conditions for democratic, worker-owned businesses.

I come at work with NYC NOWC from a vantage point informed not only by advocacy for transgender people, as I am a transgender woman and activist, but also as someone who has advocated for and helped design workforce programs. I worked with many stakeholders inside and outside of the NYC government to develop Unity Works, a workforce program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning, or LGBTQ, runaway and homeless youth.

Unity Works is specifically a partnership between the NYC Unity Project, the Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Center for Youth Employment. In helping develop this program, I spoke with people on the ground, youth and advocates alike, about what kinds of employment opportunities LGBTQ youth were interested in. I repeatedly heard that many youth were interested in learning skills to support their own businesses—in other words, youth wanted to learn about entrepreneurship. And as I talked with other workforce program experts, I realized that this was a desire expressed by youth outside of the LGBTQ community within workforce programs. Youth want to run things.

Simultaneously, as one of my friends notes, youth turn twenty-five everyday, a line which emphasizes the importance of providing workforce development services throughout the age spectrum. And this is where worker cooperatives present a remarkable opportunity: NYC NOWC and its partners in the worker cooperative world have created programs to train people—regardless of statutory separations between youth and adult—how to create and run their own businesses—businesses whose ownership structures are spread among all workers. Worker cooperatives are an especially successful method for building ownership among workers in Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. The appeal of worker cooperatives for LGBTQ people is not hard to fathom: there is ample evidence that LGBTQ people, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people, face not only disproportionate unemployment rates, but also pay gaps and anti-LGBTQ harassment.¹ These facets of discrimination are amplified especially for BIPOC LGBTQ people. Creating one's own

¹ Heiman, L.B., and Fineman, S.E.. (2018). Brief of the Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National LGBTQ Task Force, and PFLAG as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents in *Mark Janus v. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 31, et al.* Available at https://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/legal-docs/downloads/janus_v_american_federation_amicus_final_to_be_filed.pdf

business, or taking part in a business run by democratically minded people who empower their workers to make ownership and management decisions, is a fantastic model for helping LGBTQ people, especially BIPOC LGBTQ people, achieve success in the workplace.

Thus, I ask that the City explore means of using existing workforce programming to promote worker cooperatives, and bring marginalized communities—such as LGBTQ people—into programs that train them how to start and run worker cooperatives. While federal funding streams at present may be deeply focused on job attachment and more traditional methods of putting people into the workforce, City Tax Levy is free of such limitations, and should be used to encourage connection between worker cooperatives and workforce development programs.

As the City ponders methods of building into a more just vision for future development to recover from the COVID crisis, worker cooperatives are integral to rebuilding disinvested communities, and supporting workers, such as LGBTQ workers, who even in times of plenty face systemic employment discrimination.

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.



BRAVEN

December 8, 2020

Re: Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment

To the Honorable Members of the Committees on Economic Development and Small Business,

In America, we've promised that hard work and ambition will be met with equality of opportunity. The reality is that many college undergraduates are in a quiet crisis. While education has the potential to be the great equalizer, even before Covid:

27%

Only **27%** of the 1.2 million annual first-generation or low-income 4-year college enrollees landed strong jobs after graduation.

66¢

A bachelor's degree holder from a low-income background starting their career earns only **66 cents on the dollar** compared to those from higher-income backgrounds.¹

5X

Those who are initially underemployed after graduation from college are **5x** more likely to be underemployed after 5 years than those who were not.²

For these reasons and more, we encourage NYC policymakers and stakeholders to consider a broad spectrum of workforce development programs that is inclusive of programs for those earning, or who have earned bachelor's degrees, especially young people of color, from low-income households and/or under-represented neighborhoods in NYC.

We call on legislators to prioritize investments in helping New Yorkers by funding academic courses focused on career at the community college and Baccalaureate levels, designing policy to empower young people to obtain strong jobs and remove employment barriers that create disparities, and promoting more effective data transparency between city and state agencies serving New Yorkers, to help the state better address this economic crisis and to allow our young people to thrive. **In addition to our Lehman College partnership, several CUNY Senior Colleges are interested in bringing Braven to their campuses. Given their extraordinary financial challenges - support from the City would help bridge the gap in order to bring support to them now when students need it the most.**

ABOUT BRAVEN

Braven partners with colleges such as Lehman College to offer a credit-bearing course that empowers promising, underrepresented young people—first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color—with the skills, confidence, experiences and networks necessary to transition from college to strong first jobs, which lead to meaningful careers and lives of impact. Undergraduates who have worked their way to and through college have earned the right to compete and have significant potential to be economically mobile but also face systemic headwinds in accessing jobs worthy of their degrees.

OUR VISION & MODEL

Braven empowers promising undergraduates with the skills, confidence, experiences, and networks necessary to transition from college to strong first jobs, which lead to meaningful careers and lives of impact. We know that our country's next generation of leaders will emerge from everywhere. We envision an American Dream Team—100,000 diverse leaders-in-the-making—prepared to access and thrive in strong first jobs after college

¹ Brookings Institution.

² [Burning Glass Technologies' Report: The Permanent Detour – Underemployment's Long-Term Effects on the Careers of College Grads](#)

graduation. As evidenced by the challenges presented above, we also know they need a talent and persistence strategy that matches them in both strength and diversity.

Braven works to fill that gap by partnering with universities and employers to offer a two-part experience that empowers predominantly low-income, under-represented, first generation, 4-year college students. This experience begins with a **credit-bearing college course** followed by a post-course **set of supports** (i.e. professional mentor, opportunities newsletter, career treks) that lasts through graduation. Our students, whom we call Fellows, emerge from Braven with the *skills, experiences and networks* they need to land a strong first job and get on a path to economic freedom.

OUTCOMES

Braven has worked with 2,400+ students in the last 6 years and our Fellows are persisting in college and achieving exciting levels of internship and job attainment. We have 400 more Fellows currently enrolled.

- ❖ **Persistence:** 95% of our Fellows are persisting in or have graduated from college.
- ❖ **Internships:** 73% of Braven college graduates have at least one internship during college, compared with 49% of first-generation seniors at large state universities.
- ❖ **Jobs:** Fellows outpace their peers nationally in strong job attainment within 6 months of graduation. 71% of Fellows secured quality full-time jobs worthy of their bachelor's or enrolled in graduate school compared to 49% of Black & Latinx students from public universities.

SYSTEMS CHANGES

The Braven model is sustainable, replicable and is creating critical system change. This is largely because our model does not work independent of other systems. It is embedded with higher education and is built in partnership with employers. Braven helps create systemic change in 3 key areas:

- 1) Higher education's approach to preparing young people for career success.
- 2) Employers strategies for sourcing talent.
- 3) Colleges' methods for increasing persistence rates.

MORE DETAILS ON THE BRAVEN EXPERIENCE

Braven's Approach:

Braven's strong results are driven by our two-part core approach which we implement in partnership with Lehman College (CUNY), Rutgers University-Newark, San José State University, and National Louis University in Chicago. Fellows gain the skills, confidence, experiences and social capital they need to be on a path to economic freedom. On average, fellows receive a 2.5 year overall "Braven experience."

- **Part I: Accelerator Course:** The Braven experience begins with an online and in-person career-acceleration course that students (Fellows) take for credit. Fellows complete weekly online modules and assignments to develop in five professional competencies. Volunteer professionals from local employers, called Leadership Coaches, facilitate the in-person time and lead teams of 5-8 Fellows through weekly Learning Labs, sharing real-world application and feedback.
- **Part II: Post-Course Experience:** Following the course, Post-Accelerator Fellows (PAFs) receive additional opportunities to stay on track to securing strong internships and jobs through 1:1 on professional mentoring and talent connections facilitated by Braven.

Braven Employer Partners: Partnerships with employers play a key role. For employers, these partnerships provide meaningful employee professional development and offer early access to diverse talent. For Fellows, these partnerships build their networks and open doors to strong internships and jobs.

Our Employer Partners invite students on company Treks, sponsor events, participate in student capstone challenges and support the work financially. Braven also recruits local professionals, including many from Employer Partners, to serve as Leadership Coaches, Mock Interviewers, and Professional Mentors. Our

Leadership Coaches lead teams of 5-8 Fellows through the course, teaching them how to navigate the professional world while getting hands-on practice managing diverse, millennial teams.

Within today's workforce system, it's critical to support this group who will help boost social mobility and shrink the wage gap. 49% of Braven Fellows out earn their parents with their first job - by comparison, by age 30, Americans have a 50-50 shot of out earning their parents.³ NYC will meet its full potential when marginalized job seekers have a fair opportunity to compete for jobs and fuel the economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use a racial equity lens to put public funding to work to accelerate the careers of all jobless youth including those working on or with college degrees.

- Fund academic courses focused on career at the community college and Baccalaureate levels.
- Create an evidence informed innovation fund to test and scale effective strategies around workforce development solutions for a broad spectrum of young people from opportunity youth to those enrolled in higher education.
- Increase career accelerating opportunities for jobless youth from underrepresented and/or low income backgrounds and neighborhoods by funding paid internships as was suggested by Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor, CUNY in a recent [NYT article](#).
- Direct public resources to communities most impacted by racism, disinvestment, and Covid-19.

2. Increase data sharing and transparency across state and city agencies that touch education and WFD to identify and address equity gaps in our public investments.

3. Create a Strong Jobs Fund that is:

- **Results oriented - is focused on a set of common outcomes that could be achieved through multiple means** (i.e. academic courses focused on career, expanded career services staff and resources, partnerships with employers)
- **Aimed at increasing career accelerating, integrated work experiences** such as research, internships, apprenticeships, capstone projects with employers and more.
- **Public and privately funded through an employer matching grant**
- **Open to 2 and 4-year public and non-profit IHEs with a preference for MSIs, CUNYs or Non-Profits** serving significant percentages or numbers of Pell grant recipients, first generation college students and/or students who are BIPOC.

These policy changes will allow our current students and alumni to overcome barriers to employment, build the skills that they need for in-demand occupations and retain the jobs that can support them and their families. **A broad focus on unemployed young people that includes both Opportunity Youth and young people from a low-income or under-represented background who are earning or who have earned bachelor's degrees is in the best interest of NYC.** Investing in job seekers is a win-win scenario for both job seekers and employers and can drive a more equitable recovery.

Sincerely,

Kilsys Payamps-Roure

NYC Executive Director, Braven

For more information, please view our website at braven.org or email: kilsys@bebraven.org

³ Chetty, Raj et al. *The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility since 1940*



NYC Council Committees on Small Business and Economic Development
Joint Oversight Hearing – Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
December 9, 2020

Good Afternoon: Thank you to Chair Gjonaj and Chair Vallone, as well as to members on the Committees on Small Business and Economic Development for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Ramon Peguero and I am the President & CEO for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 38-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

As a member of the New York City Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Consortium, we are contracted by the state to support high quality, culturally responsive early care and education services in home and center based early education programs, both private and subsidized. CHCF has a particular focus on supporting home-based family child care programs, independent programs as well as those that contract with the DOE directly or through Networks, the majority of which are Spanish speaking. Family child care programs are small businesses, owned and operated overwhelmingly by women of color, many of whom speak a primary language other than English. This sector has always been essential to the overall financial stability of working families, the larger business community, and the city and state economy; yet these overwhelmingly women-owned small businesses have consistently been marginalized in child care spaces, education spaces, and in business spaces, leading to disparities in access to funding and supports. The adverse impact of these existing disparities has been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic, leaving this crucial small business sector, which uplifts the stability of all other sectors, on the verge of collapse.

Reduced enrollment and access to families in need of care

Child care programs have always existed on razor thin margins, dependent on child enrollment and attendance for continuity of payment and being held to state-set market rates that do not reflect the true cost of running their business providing high quality care and early education for New York's children and working families. Many groups have been advocating for years at the state level for changes to the market rate and funding levels that would better reflect the true cost of this essential care in a way that would not place the high-cost burden on working families who struggle to pay for care. However, continued neglect has left the system and providers exceptionally vulnerable with the onset of the pandemic and the natural, temporary drop in use of their services.

In line with the experiences of so many essential small businesses, child care providers saw a decrease in demand (enrollment) in their programs as many working parents shifted to work-from-home or were laid off or furloughed as some business sectors shut down entirely. At the same time, many of the neighborhoods that rely on these providers are also the source of much of the essential workforce that the city has relied upon during state closures. Even while it was unsafe to do so in many regards,



essential worker parents were forced to make difficult decisions to risk their health and that of their household members to maintain family financial stability. Child care programs remained key in keeping the essential workforce active. While the City ordered the closure of child care centers in April, home-based programs overwhelmingly remained open, despite the health risks they faced, to meet the flexible working schedule needs of the families. Many programs remained open with only a few children enrolled, not making enough to cover the costs of staying open. Even as the City DOE rolled out systems of care for essential workers during school closure through the RECs, they did not engage FCC programs, ideal for care during the pandemic based on their small group sizes, cutting them off from potential funded care that could keep their businesses afloat while joining collective efforts to support the essential workforce. This lack of inclusion has continued into the more recent Learning Lab/Learning Bridges programs.

With the inability to sustain their businesses, many of these child care programs have closed their doors permanently throughout the pandemic, laying off their support staff and losing their own source of income, and further growing child care deserts which will pose greater barriers for working families to return to the workforce as it slowly opens back up. Of further concern, as essential and non-essential workers have begun returning to the workforce and in need of child care, they have been unable to access subsidy enrollment that would allow them to use care providers' services. Both ACS and HRA processing of income eligible working family applications for subsidy have come to a near standstill for the past several months, stagnating not only the parent ability to fully return to work, but stagnating the flow of funding into child care businesses. We have yet to get a sufficient answer from either agency as to why this standstill is occurring and how to get applications moving at a pace reflective of the crisis and need.

Barriers in access to small business relief

With significant inconsistencies in enrollment and attendance, limited connection to city efforts to connect working families to care during school closures, and delays in ACS and HRA enrolling and renewing working family subsidies, Family Child Care providers have desperately been trying to access small business and child care funding relief. With the CARES Act, SBA PPP loans, while open to child care provider businesses, were exceptionally difficult for these unique small businesses to access. Many providers were turned away from larger lending institutions who prioritized their larger clientele in accessing the loans. Providers were often left on their own in trying to navigate the complexities of the eligibility and application processes, with additional barriers faced for providers who speak a language other than English. As a result, very few providers were successfully able to access the SBA loans. This experience of little to no technical support was reflected in similar small business relief grant opportunities at the state and city level.

The CARES Act also allocated \$164 million in Child Care Development Block Grant funding to New York State, intended specifically for child care providers and child care for essential workers. While nowhere near the level of relief needed for a child care sector that is on the verge of collapse, with looming catastrophic effects on the larger workforce returning to work as we move through and out of the pandemic, advocates and providers were hopeful for some small reprieve. Unfortunately, the state-set



requirements for provider grants created many undue barriers, resulting in very few grant payments actually having been received by providers to date.

It is imperative that the city rapidly, intentionally and meaningfully act to sustain and safeguard family child care programs from permanent closure. With any relief funding, the city must allocate hazard pay enhanced rates to providers who serve income eligible families and have remained open since the onset of the pandemic, even if they have had to temporarily or intermittently close due to COVID. The added costs of keeping programs open, adjusting spaces and services to meet the new “reality,” and the particular risk that providers and their staff have placed themselves in by continuing as the backbone of care, not only for infants, toddlers and PreK, but now for school aged students who are not back in school buildings full time, requires that they are receiving enhanced rates that reflect the value and risk associated with their services during this time. Hazard pay enhancements could go a long way towards keeping their businesses alive through and beyond this critical moment.

Additionally, the city should create small business grants that are equitably accessible for exceptionally vulnerable small businesses, such as family child care, with priority given to this sector if possible. These grants should be streamlined for easy access and should be based on direct grants, as opposed to reimbursement-based funding that relies on providers and other vulnerable small business to pay money that they do not have out of pocket, with flexibility in use of funds. The City should also ensure that the process is easy to navigate and linguistically accessible, with equitable access to technical supports and consultation to ensure timely payment and minimal risk of recoupment.

It cannot be emphasized enough that there is an immediate need to address the exceptional vulnerabilities of family child care providers, both as small businesses and as a crucial support to the larger workforce as we move through and beyond this pandemic. This small business sector simply cannot be allowed to crumble, not only for the (predominantly) women who run and staff these businesses and their personal family financial well-being, but also because we *know* that they are a permanent need for working families and the business sectors that rely upon a steady workforce to thrive.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you.

**Testimony to the New York City Council’s Committees on Small Business and Economic Development
regarding**

“Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment”

December 9, 2020

Presented by the Consortium for Worker Education, Inc.

Good Morning, Committee Chairs Gnonaj and Vallone, Council members and Committee staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on how the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and our network of workforce development community-based organizations (CBOs) and union partners to work to ameliorate the increasing numbers of unemployed New Yorkers. CWE actively engages with the City Council and State agencies to deliver workforce education and training to underserved NYC communities’ residents. CWE’s ***Jobs to Build On program (JtBO) and Worker Service Center Program (WSC)*** were launched by the City Council as its own Workforce Development initiatives.

CWE is unique in its structure, demonstrating collaborative relations between organized labor and community groups on behalf of workers. While such a mutually benefiting relationship is often recommended, nationally, it is only exists in New York City.

Several months into the ongoing public health crisis, we know that the economic impacts of this pandemic will not be short-lived. The rising unemployment levels are impacting communities of color the most, the same communities that have suffered in the highest numbers from COVID-19. We need government action, at the local, state, and federal level, to help working families survive the crisis and re-enter the workforce. At CWE, that means uplifting the integral community organizations and unions that NYC workers know, trust, and depend on. Those groups are uniquely equipped to support our city’s unemployed and underemployed, not simply with their workforce development offerings, but their holistic approaches to supporting the individual worker. They understand that it is difficult to find and keep a job if a person’s basic needs are not met first. This testimony will provide some details about how CWE’s network of workforce development partners are supporting those unemployed New Yorkers most in need.

The Consortium consists of more than 40 trusted community-based organizations, including our senior partners: Henry Street Settlement, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI), SOBRO, Non-Traditional Employment for Women (NEW), Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT), CAMBA, Per Scholas and Urban Upbound who participate through CWE’s programs: ***JtBO, WSC*** or the ***Immigrant Protection Group (IPG)***. Our Network partners provide an array of employment services, including job placement, industry-specific training and workforce education opportunities. These organizations quickly transitioned to host these classes and services virtually after the “PAUSE” in March. Throughout 2020, these groups have continued apace with their education programs, reorganized their classes, and guaranteed that their students received both educational continuity and institutional, material and personal support. CWE’s service resource umbrella has been integral to sustaining these important programs in economically distressed communities.

As part of this holistic model, CWE’s partners have expanded security net services—securing unemployment insurance, growing food/ nutrition assistance programs, providing internet access and loans of tech equipment, building resources to access childcare, healthcare and housing, and connecting workers to timely vital social services. Since March, unemployed New Yorkers have been placed ongoingly in the growing number of essential service jobs in such fields as healthcare, transportation and construction.

CWE's workforce development Network trains and places workers in Essential occupations including:

- **The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)**, part of CWE's JtBO Initiative, works with formerly incarcerated job seekers, who have entered employment in Essential service fields like the cleaning and sanitation services at NYCHA housing projects.
- **CAMBA** put job seekers in Central Brooklyn to work in Essential sector industries like health care, security at homeless shelters, and wholesale grocery distribution.
- Many of the graduates of **Brooklyn Workforce Initiatives (BWI)** have gained employment in Essential jobs such as bus drivers and NYCHA maintenance workers.

The Network's workforce preparation, training and remote education services include:

- **Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)** went to remote learning services, with its 30 online ESOL and HSE classes were maintained with a 70% attendance rate
- The **Coalition for the Homeless** program provides computer classes, job readiness training and internships to women living in homeless shelters.
- The **Center for Family Life**, which supports worker co-op development in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, has continued to provide remote ESOL workshops, workforce development, and family counseling to its participants. In response to COVID-19, a new line of business is being developed to perform deep disinfection cleaning in commercial buildings.
- **Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC)** has launched a virtual culinary skills certifications program.

CWE's Network delivers robust safety-net services in housing, healthcare, unemployment insurance, food/nutrition assistance and temporary financial support to New Yorkers in need. Of note, among many:

- **Urban Upbound** Northwest Queens organized a food distribution network that serves some of the largest housing projects in the city.
- **The Independent Drivers Guild** created "**Labor Delivers,**" a program in which unemployed taxi and black car drivers deliver food to people who might otherwise go hungry. Within a month of its inception, over 11,000 drivers were employed in food delivery, and over 6 million meals had been delivered to New York City residents.
- **Henry St. Settlement** and **CAMBA** have created and operate some of the largest community food banks in NYC.

As the public health crisis persists, CWE and our partners are actively engaged in city-wide workforce development recovery effort. The Consortium, in partnership with James Parrot of the New School Center for New York City Affairs, established the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Project* with the objective of monitoring New York City's ongoing economic and employment conditions and developing policy and programmatic recommendations to facilitate worker and small business recovery. We are fervently committed to the continued support of New York's workers in need of education, training and upgrade skills in our changed new economy.

Given this crisis for workers, to who's "going back", to lost employment, to profound economic turmoil, CWE has, as its mandate, to do whatever in our ability to ameliorate the burden to our City's current and future workers; to partner and collaborate by all means possible; to secure critical resources and to create and innovate for new, sustainable work opportunities.

The Consortium for Worker Education

CWE's Jobs to Build On (JTBO) workforce development program is funded annually by the New York City Council for worker training and employment with a focus on neighborhoods with high and long-term unemployment. JtBO networks with workforce education and training CBOs to recruit, train, and place unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers. Since JtBO was formed in 2007, it has trained and placed more than 25,000 New Yorkers in quality, well-paying careers.

CWE's Worker Service Centers (WSC) program provides instructional services to community-based organizations that conduct workforce training for New York City residents. These services range from job readiness and computer skills classes to short-term occupational training. WSC participants are provided with the basic skills and job readiness preparation to advance to Jobs to Build On and other job training programs. The program is funded by the New York City Council.

CWE's Immigrant Protection Group is a coalition of 13 union and community-based organizations that collaborate to advocate for the rights of immigrants. Under normal circumstances, the mission of the partnership includes asylum services and family petitions, ESOL and citizenship classes, legal fraud prevention education and other services. Many partners have added new services to respond to Covid-related safety net, health, housing and general welfare concerns of the immigrant community.

The CWE Health Care Institute has delivered Allied Health Care occupational education and training for 14 essential worker job titles to 1199SEIU's entry-level healthcare workers in the NYC's care-continuum. This includes certification preparation for new and upgrade employment.

The Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Project (FEP) was developed in 2002 to assist working parents to increase access to childcare subsidies and quality care in New York City through a streamlined process for children up to 13 years of age with qualifying incomes. This project is administered by CWE in coordination with the state and city childcare agencies.

Together with its community and labor partners, the Consortium for Worker Education's network served over 45,000 residents in FY19-20. One third of JtBO placements that year were in union jobs. CWE partners with the NYC Central Labor Council (CLC) and 46 of the CLC's affiliates to provide vocational training and skills upgrades to tens of thousands of unionized workers in all sectors. For 18 years, CWE has delivered training for NYC Building and Construction Trades Council's E.J. Molloy Construction Skills pre-apprenticeship program.



For more about the Consortium for Worker Education, visit cwe.org or follow us on social media.



Testimony for the New York City Council Oversight Hearing on Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment

Wednesday, December 9, 2020, 10:00 AM

Sponsored by the Committee on Economic Development and the
Committee on Small Business

Prepared by BronxWorks
Eileen Torres, Executive Director

Presented by Ken Small, Development Director

Committee chairs and members, thank you for convening this hearing. My name is Ken Small. I am the development director for BronxWorks, a New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC) member and one of several settlement houses that serve the 1.5 million people who call the Bronx home.

The coronavirus has had a devastating effect on the Bronx. Our borough accounts for a disproportionate number of COVID-related infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. The late autumn surge that we are witnessing globally and nationally does not bode well for the people or communities of the Bronx.

The coronavirus has hit the Bronx economy like a nuclear blast, vaporizing jobs and wiping out scores of local businesses. Whereas the unemployment rate for the Bronx was five percent in October 2019, the figure for this October was 17.5%. While that represents an improvement from the July figure of 25%, the October number remains much higher than the monthly figures from the 2008-2009 recession.

The unemployment rate for the Bronx since April has averaged about 21%. The rates over the last seven months are matched only by numbers last witnessed during the Great Depression, with the rate hitting a record high 23.5% in 1933.

The pandemic has hit the Bronx economy hard because many Bronx residents held jobs in the hospitality, food service, arts and entertainment, and in-person retail sectors. These are sectors that were completely shut down for much of the spring and summer, with food service facing the possibility of another shutdown in a matter of days.

The pandemic and subsequent economic free-fall has forced BronxWorks in general and our workforce development programs in particular to adapt. Overall, our organization has seen a three- or four-fold increase in the number of persons seeking food pantry help. In addition to

providing food and SNAP enrollment assistance, our pantries now provide referrals for mental health services, unemployment benefits, health insurance, and skills training.

At one BronxWorks pantry, for example, the average number of families served each month between January and March was 135. From April through August, the average rose to 368. This autumn, the usage rates remain substantially higher than historical norms. The spring and summer utilization rates are likely to become the new normal.

Our Workforce Development Department, whose duties have long included job readiness training, employment placement assistance, financial literacy counseling, and post-secondary education referrals, now finds its staff providing emergency food assistance as well. One of our workforce programs has established a pantry, while another has partnered with Grow NYC to provide families with fresh produce that is locally sourced.

Job placement assistance has become more difficult as a result of the near-collapse of the hospitality and in-person retail sectors. The food service sector, which rebounded somewhat when restaurants were permitted to have indoor dining this summer, now faces the possibility of a second shutdown. For some restaurant owners, this could really be the proverbial final nail in the coffin.

Many restaurants have found it difficult to pivot to the preparation of delivered meals, despite the establishment of emergency food programs by the city. While some have re-hired staff who were laid off this spring, many have found the costs associated with scaling back up to their previous capacity to be prohibitive.

BronxWorks continues to seek partnerships with industry sectors that are hiring. While Amazon and other online retailers have employment opportunities at fulfillment centers, getting to those opportunities can be a challenge for Bronx residents who do not own a car. Public transportation connections to these jobs is often at best tenuous and frequently non-existent.

The health care sector has significant demand for nurses, medical technicians, and contact tracers. These occupations often have training or credentialing requirements that take several months or even years, making it difficult for those who have immediate employment needs but lack the appropriate education and certification. This is true with regards to many technology occupations as well.

Asana, Etsy, Google, and Soundcloud are among the leading technology sector employers in New York City. Neighborhoods like the Union Square area in Manhattan and DUMBO in Brooklyn have served as incubators for tech start-ups and small businesses. A host of non-technology industries also require technology professionals to support back-office operations that are essential to their success, including the management of accounting, fundraising, human resources, program management, and quality assurance systems.

For many Bronx residents, access to the tech industry and tech occupations remains elusive. For those who come to BronxWorks for employment services, a host of barriers exist, including a lack of prerequisite skills necessary for technology training, limited access to the informal networks that often provide access to job opportunities, and no prior comparable work experience.

BronxWorks has positioned itself as a launching pad from which Bronx residents can acquire needed prerequisite skills and secure the needed wrap-around resources. Prerequisite skills may include pre-HSE or HSE preparation, English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) classes, and workplace decorum.

As a settlement house, BronxWorks is well-positioned to provide job seekers with the wrap-around resources necessary to ensure a successful labor force launch. These include childcare services, help with accessing subsidies, housing counseling to ensure stable habitation, financial literacy counseling, legal residency or citizenship application help, and family preservation support.

These first-stage supports serve as a platform for short-term or long-term skills development and placement assistance. Short-term help entails linking job seekers to security guard or construction trades flagger training, while long-term help can involve home health aide, certified nursing assistant, cybersecurity, or commercial driver's license training. In all instances—short-term or long-term—BronxWorks partners with state-certified training institutions or post-secondary education providers, in particular community colleges, which offer degree or certificate programs.

Many who come to BronxWorks seeking employment assistance must contend with stressors that can in fact be barriers to job stability. They have debt from loans for trade schools or college. They must care for young children, older adults, or both.

Those who have lost their jobs during the pandemic have accumulated rent arrears and struggle to maintain Internet service so that their older children can continue remote learning. Joblessness has also meant a loss of health insurance.

At the individual or family level, these stressors underscore the need for workforce development programs to now have a mental health component or to have strong links with mental health providers. BronxWorks has sought to do both, adding mental health assessment or counseling to some workforce efforts and partnering with organizations like the Institute for Family Health or the Urban Health Plan.

At the community or macro level, the stressors are a reminder of the importance of federal relief for workers, business owners, and local governments. They are also a reminder of the need for philanthropy and the public sector to invest in these programs in general, as well as the providers who administer them. Without such investments, our new normal will look less like 2019 and more like 1933, the worst year of the Great Depression.

Submitted for the public record on December 9, 2020.

Tarisha Fleurmond

Policy Brief

Title: Addressing Food Insecurity and Safe Access to Nutritious Foods by Expanding the SNAP Online Pilot

Background

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world since they were already suffering from hunger and malnutrition prior to the pandemic. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), New York city’s food insecurity rate is 12 percent higher than the national rate and 21 percent higher than the New York state rate.² Over 2.4 million New York State residents, or 11.9 percent, are food insecure.³ Many parents lost access to free and reduced-price school meals during the pandemic which added a burden to provide more meals for their families. As of late May, 368 million school-children were missing out on daily school meals on which they depended.⁴ Food insecurity can have a devastating effect on children’s development.⁵ Almost half of all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants nationwide are under the age of 18.⁶ According to the 2020 Global Nutrition report, people who already suffer as a consequence of inequities- including the poor, women and children, those living in fragile or conflict-affected states, minorities, refugees, and the unsheltered – are particularly affected by both the virus and the impact of containment measures.⁷ Good nutrition is an essential part of an individual’s defense against COVID-19.

Policy Context

Res 1320-2020 is calling upon the USDA to expand the number of retailers that are permitted in the SNAP online purchasing program to ensure vulnerable communities in New York City can safely access healthy food.

¹ World Food Summit, 1996

² US: *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2017*; NYS & NYC: *Map the Meals Gap (2016)*; *Feeding America (2018)*

³ US: *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2017*; NYS & NYC: *Map the Meals Gap (2016)*; *Feeding America (2018)*

⁴ Data on the global monitoring of school meals during COVID-19 school closures is updated frequently: https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/?_ga=2.63572263.982488836.1591373547-1890028486.1585930400

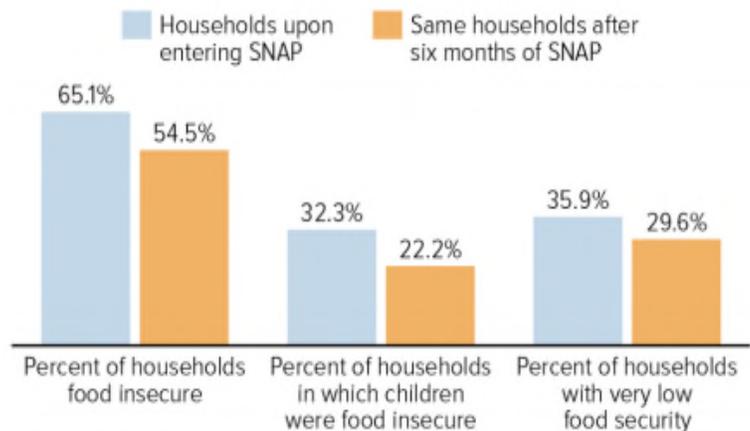
⁵ STEVEN CARLSON, DOTTIE ROSENBAUM, BRYNNE KEITH-JENNINGS, AND CATLIN NCHAKO **SNAP Works for America’s Children**. SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

⁶ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

⁷ Global Nutrition Report, 2020 <https://globalnutritionreport.org/>

The SNAP program helps combat food insecurity by offering nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and by providing economic benefits to communities.⁸ In fact, SNAP is the largest program in the most important anti-hunger program.⁹ Currently, Amazon, ShopRite, and Walmart are the only retailers allowing SNAP payments online in New York. SNAP is considered a first responder in natural disasters providing quick critical food assistance to vulnerable households.¹⁰ Upon approval of this resolution, SNAP's role in offering safe nutritious benefits to participants will be magnified and it will make New York the first state to expand this legislation.

SNAP Helps Families Afford Adequate Food



Note: "Food insecure" = household lacks consistent access to nutritious food at some point during the year because of limited resources. "Households with food insecure children" = households in which both children and adults experience food insecurity during the year. "Very low food security" = one or more household members have to skip meals or otherwise eat less at some point during the year because they lack money.

Source: Agriculture Department, "Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security," August 2013. This chart shows the results of a study that looked at longitudinal data comparing SNAP households upon beginning to receive SNAP, and six months after SNAP receipt.

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

Recommendation

The USDA can take action to support people in a time of great need by expanding the SNAP online pilot. This will help control the spread by reducing physical contact and will help stimulate the economy in those neighborhoods by creating jobs for safe healthy food delivery.¹¹ The residents will also benefit from costs and time savings to markets giving them more time to spend with their family.¹² Moreover, expanding SNAP online food shopping will help expand choice, including culturally appropriate foods, so that New Yorkers can choose which foods they want to eat and feed their families. Other actions should include investment in tools like safe delivery options that can enhance the SNAP online pilot during current and future crisis response. Expanding the Snap online pilot to local food stores will help improve food access for the most vulnerable from the safety of their homes by increasing their purchasing power and supporting children who no longer have access to school meals. This resolution will impact sustainability and improve livelihoods in those neighborhoods that are at a greater risk while also preparing for a more wide-range, environmentally sustainable, and resilient food system.¹³

⁸ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

⁹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

¹⁰ Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

¹¹ Bodor, J., Rose, D., Farley, T., Swalm, C., & Scott, S. (2008). Neighbourhood fruit and vegetable availability and consumption: The role of small food stores in an urban environment. *Public Health Nutrition*, 11(4), 413-420. doi:10.1017/S1368980007000493

¹² Nevin Cohen, Katherine Tomaino Fraser, Chloe Arnow, Michelle Mulcahy and Christophe Hille. Online Grocery Shopping by NYC Public Housing Residents Using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits: A Service Ecosystems Perspective. Published: 9 June 2020

¹³ Nevin Cohen, Katherine Tomaino Fraser, Chloe Arnow, Michelle Mulcahy and Christophe Hille. Online Grocery Shopping by NYC Public Housing Residents Using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits: A Service Ecosystems Perspective. Published: 9 June 2020

Conclusion

The USDA is called to action to improve the health and wellbeing of low-income communities specifically the children¹⁴ by expanding access to healthy nutritious foods through the SNAP online pilot. Congress should push for a resolution to expand the SNAP online pilot to limit the food insecurity barriers worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁴STEVEN CARLSON, DOTTIE ROSENBAUM, BRYNNE KEITH-JENNINGS, AND CATLIN NCHAKO **SNAP Works for America's Children**. SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

Written Testimony on the Topic of Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment

This testimony is being submitted by Katy Gaul-Stigge (CEO), Alicia McGrath (Executive Vice President, Mission Services), and Jennifer Tavis (Senior Vice President, Workforce Development) at Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. Goodwill NYNJ empowers individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment to gain independence through the power of work, and our organization has been helping New Yorkers connect to employment for over a century. Last year, Goodwill NYNJ provided job placement, training, on-the-job coaching, and retention services for over 26,000 people who are unemployed or underemployed on their journey to employment, including more than 7,000 people with disabilities. In 2019, Goodwill NYNJ help 2,000 people get jobs, including nearly 800 individuals with disabilities, outside our stores at hospitals, tech firms, and NYC agencies.

As one of the City's workforce providers, Goodwill NYNJ has been called upon to aid in the City's job recovery efforts, and we are deeply committed to helping our fellow New Yorkers through this difficult time. We have transformed our operations into a hybrid virtual and on-site face-to-face service model. We have worked to increase our reach to meet the growing demand for assistance in our communities. And yet, in this time of extreme need, we are facing budget cuts that hamper rather than expand our capacity to aid with economic and job recovery. Employers throughout the City rely on workforce providers like Goodwill NYNJ to provide a pipeline of local talent for critical jobs, and we play an essential role in helping City government address unemployment in difficult times. We need expanded resources to meet the moment, and the proposed cuts will hurt the most vulnerable New Yorkers at a time when they need the most help.

During the pandemic, we have seen severe impacts to the vulnerable New Yorkers we serve. Our placements have declined steeply, and our 1-year job retention rate has fallen from more than 60% pre-pandemic to less than 30% since March 2020. Many of the people we served were employed in the service sectors that have been hardest hit by pandemic closures. To reenter the workforce and get back on their feet, they need access to affordable child care, healthcare, and rental assistance, as well as training to change from sectors in decline to sectors that are hiring.

Our organization has pivoted to provide a new array of virtual services enabling our participants and our workers to stay safe through the pandemic. This has allowed us to serve even more New Yorkers by opening up our virtual workshops to a wider audience than we could accommodate in person. When we are eventually able to move past the public health crisis, we anticipate that demand for services to assist with economic recovery will skyrocket, and it's going to require creativity and resources to meet the demand.

We can't and shouldn't go back to business as usual when the health crisis passes. We need to expand our capacity to address the current high unemployment rate, and we need to embrace the opportunity to invest in the communities that have seen the worst impacts of the concurrent health and economic crises we are now experiencing. We can't allow austerity to deepen existing inequalities in our City or to reduce our ability to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. We also need to embrace the opportunities created by the move to virtual services and virtual work. Virtual services allow providers like us to scale our reach beyond our four walls, which will be necessary in the days to come as we cope with a bubble of pandemic related unemployment. Virtual work provides opportunities for people with disabilities that struggle with mobility to access new job opportunities.

Now is the time to invest in New Yorkers and provide them with the skills and support they need to navigate a transformed economy. Digital skills and digital access are more important than ever. We need to arm jobseekers with the technology, connectivity, and digital fluency they need to navigate an increasingly virtual job market. Even in-person positions today require applicants to navigate online application and interview processes. We need to help jobseekers reskill to adapt to shifts in areas of job opportunity. We've seen significant unmet demand in the tech and health sectors as well as in security and warehousing. We need to help jobseekers prepare for and gain access to these opportunities.

As leaders in New York City government, we ask that you include workforce providers and the communities we serve in the dialogue about how to invest in the City's economic recovery. We ask that you prioritize and collaborate with the most heavily impacted communities, and most of all we ask that you deepen your investment in these services rather than making cuts that will endanger the City's economic recovery. With an unemployment crisis of this magnitude, we need New Yorkers to have access to the work supports, training, and placement services they need to sustain their families and help rebuild our local economy.



Lazar Treschan
Vice President, Policy and Impact
HERE to HERE

Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council
Committees on Economic Development and Small Business
Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
December 9, 2020

Hearing Topic: *Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment*

Recommendation: *Use the current crisis to reinvent talent development for an inclusive recovery and economy that serves ALL New Yorkers*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lazar Treschan, and I am the Vice President for Policy and Impact at [HERE to HERE](#), a new Bronx-based intermediary dedicated to changing our systems of education to make them more student-centered and employer driven. HERE to HERE was created to raise public awareness and increase support for ***reinvented systems of education and employment that braid work and academic learning***. These new systems could hasten the City's recovery while creating a more inclusive economy for the young people of New York City now and for generations to come. HERE to HERE's goal is to advance a youth talent development system so that all Bronx and NYC students in public schools and City University of New York (CUNY) programs are well-positioned to secure and thrive in family sustaining careers by the time they are 25 years old.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created terrible hardships for New Yorkers. But it has also presented us with an historic opportunity to reflect on the shortcomings in our current educational and hiring systems which put so many of our young people at a disadvantage in our own labor market. We need to build a system that ensures New York City's future growth is inclusive, powered by local talent, sustainable and gives a new competitive advantage to our city's employers and economy. This new youth talent development approach would offer all young people in our city the chance for greater career success, while better meeting the needs of local employers for highly qualified, diverse candidates. We can combat the unemployment created by the current crisis and ensure by creating a new system of talent development that create real opportunity for all New Yorkers, and the inclusive economic growth we have never truly enjoyed.

The Challenge and Need for Change

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed deep inequities in our society, which are, in part, a product of and amplified by our lack of an effective talent development system. We will not be

able to “unsee” what this crisis has shown us about these disparities and the harm they cause, even when we have a vaccine. Nor should we.

Too much social stratification begins in K-12 and results in the racial and economic disparities that make us all more vulnerable, less resilient, and less productive. Going forward we must create a talent development system that allows for a stronger recovery from this and the inevitable next shock, and a more inclusive and productive economy in the long-term. Even before the pandemic, we had a “leaky pipeline”, with only a small share of young people who entered NYC high schools achieving a meaningful postsecondary degree, which is currently the most effective signal for career success.

Too many existing hiring processes--reliance on existing social networks, resumes that prioritize elite institutions, the entire concept of “culture fit”--perpetuate biases and disparities. New York City has historically supplemented its labor market supply with talent from elsewhere, masking how our education and training systems did not serve many residents nor local businesses well. Especially as remote work expands, we need to ensure New Yorkers can compete in that even more global market. Without this focus, we collectively risk widening inequities.

We see the results of these disparities in the markedly different rates of success for high school graduates in terms of college completion and career success. Yes, more young people are graduating high school and enrolling in college than ever, but we are not seeing these positive trends result in the outcomes that we should truly care about. We are facing staggering rates of college non-completion, particularly among black and Latinx young people. And the high levels of entry-level employment in sectors like retail, food service, and hospitality, will not return, even with vaccine rollout, for years. We need to train our local talent for better jobs.¹

How to Change

A groundswell was already building prior to COVID-19 to rethink the connection between schooling and employment—particularly the roles of educational institutions and employers in providing youth with the tools and opportunities needed to build a more equitable future. The movement has drawn energy from all quarters, but particularly from young people and employers. Students, especially those from low-income communities, see little connection between their current classwork and their career prospects. Business leaders, on the other hand, find many of today’s young job applicants lack the practical communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in a modern, rapidly changing workplace. And yet, research shows that work-based learning strengthens student engagement, increases their

¹ The absence of an effective and integrated talent development system has resulted in the inadequate and inequitable preparation of local talent for the jobs of today and tomorrow. This harms not only the individuals who are unable to secure family-sustaining careers but also employers seeking needed talent and the City’s overall economy. The ability of New York City to attract talent from all over the globe has long obscured the reality that young people who were born here are not fully benefiting from or able to contribute to the city’s economic prosperity: Young people born in-state—particularly Black and Latinx residents—are less likely to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher, be employed, and live in higher income households than those born out of state.

likelihood to graduate from high school and attend college, and builds professional networks important to accessing entry level career opportunities.

Around the country, states (Texas, Delaware, Washington) and cities (Boston, New Orleans, Denver) are schools, colleges, employers and communities are creating braided pathways beginning in K-12 to prepare young people to survive and thrive in the new economy.

At the state level, the Governor recently established an Office of Workforce Development and the Board of Regents is re-evaluating graduation requirements; by offering students the option of substituting career-oriented activities for one Regent's examination. In New York City, calls for change have led to a burgeoning interest in career and technical education and the development of new models that strengthen ties between summer jobs and year-round schoolwork. Employers increased focus on this issue, even in the midst of the economic uncertainties of Covid, underscores its importance. Based on their work with HERE to HERE, 27 leading New York companies launched the NY Jobs CEO Council this past August to focus on partnering with CUNY and DOE to strengthen NYC's talent pipeline.

If we create an effective youth talent development system, we will be less stratified, and will bounce back quicker from the next shock, and have a more productive economy less hampered by inequality. We can also deal with challenges we were already facing, including an economy more reliant on technology and automation, and less reliant on old models of education, training and hiring, which have contributed to the inequitable outcomes that we see today. And we can set aside partisan, unproductive debates about school governance (charters) and assessment (high stakes testing). This is a rare chance to start both from the ground up--with youth and communities--and from the top down, with CEOs and public officials-- building on best practice to rethink our reliance on the aspects of our K-12 and postsecondary education systems that are not optimally preparing young people nor our businesses to thrive in the 21st century.

We urge the City Council, and leaders from across sectors in New York, to enact the following changes:

Policy change at the high school level = shift school focus and accountability to empowering students to make informed postsecondary choices upon graduation. Graduation without a plan is not enough.

We need to expand student work-based learning opportunities for students: more school-connected youth apprenticeships and internships, and other career-oriented opportunities that meet standards for rigor and quality. This means a fully-funded SYEP, but one that is linked to schools. Schools should align staffing and PD to support WBL programming: including use of WBL coordinators, dedicated staff to support this work. We need to implement informed postsecondary choice as the key performance metric for schools -- and eventually shift away from five required Regents exams to two (Math, ELA), with more WBL activities and assessments of informed postsecondary choice substituting for high stakes tests. Existing tools to advance this work: align schools to the NYC Career Readiness Framework; greater usage of the CDOS Regents Diploma; and school-based SYEP.

Outcomes: students will graduate high school with greater knowledge of their own skills and interests; a sense of agency and efficacy; and are more prepared to succeed in whatever next step helps them fulfill their dreams and find family-sustaining careers.

Policy change at CUNY and postsecondary institutions = integration of school and work, through deep engagement of employers and career-focused opportunities for all students based on in-demand occupations with family-sustaining career trajectories. Just “going to college” is not enough.

We should expand credit for work experience at CUNY to recognize how many students work, how much they learn on the job, and how to apply those learnings to their college experience. We should support CUNY to create more applied associates and bachelor degree programs where paid work experience constitutes a significant percentage of the degree requirement. Incentivize and concentrate resources into more employer-engaged, applied learning programs, empowered campus career centers, and hiring more employers as faculty.

Outcomes: have increased earning potential; wider social networks; and are much better prepared to secure family sustaining careers and contribute to NYC’s recovery. Employers gain a more skilled, diverse workforce, with more local knowledge and connections to local markets.

These are outcomes that all New Yorkers can get behind. All it takes is the will to do it. We urge the City Council to take the lead, and HERE to HERE stands ready to partner with you in this effort.

What can the City Council do TODAY?

- Commit to fully funding SYEP in 2021 and ensure that it follows the school-based model, so that every high school student gets more than just a summer job, but a paid summer internship
- Push for new and existing CUNY funding to be used toward embedding career development into their degree programs, career centers connected to industry, and resources for paid internships as part of every degree program;
- Push for an expansion of credit for prior work, so that college and high school students face less of a tradeoff between work and school. Create new legislation and push for policies that build off students’ part-time jobs so that they can earn money to support their families, but also have structured ways to take what they learn in the workplace and connect it to their classroom activities and life goals.

Reinventing New York City’s youth talent development is an essential economic strategy if we want to have an inclusive, thriving economy.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony and your partnership. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions ltreschan@heretohere.org.

Good afternoon, Chair Gjonaj, Chair Vallone, and committee members. My name is Sonam Choedon and I am the Outreach and Member Success Manager at Hot Bread Kitchen. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Hot Bread Kitchen works with immigrants and women of color in the five boroughs. I work directly with the women we serve through our workforce program, and I can best illustrate the value of our services through a story about one of our members. Nafissatou came to the US from Burkina-Faso in 2016. She came alone to East Harlem, leaving her husband behind, to find economic opportunity and advancement in our city. Nafi joined our workforce program in 2017, and shared with us after a long and unfruitful job search that she felt she was being overlooked because she wears a headscarf. At Hot Bread Kitchen, she found a community of women who shared similar backgrounds and the same goal--gainful employment. Through our skills training, job placement and well-established network of employers, Nafi landed a job through her hard work and our connections.

Fast forward to the present day, and Nafi is still a part of the Hot Bread Kitchen community. She is one of over 200 of our program members to receive cash assistance, social service supports, technical assistance to access public benefits like UI, ongoing training, and job placement services since the pandemic started. Nafi was laid off in March, and with our support, went back to work in June. Our current work with Nafi is connecting her to reliable childcare through our partnerships and to another workforce program member who offered help.

Nafi is representative of all of the women we serve--they are immigrants, primarily. They are working mothers. They are often single parents. They share an ambition to grow a career and become, as we like to say, breadwinners in their families. What they don't have is what so many of us take for granted: networks, opportunities, education, connections. Our workforce program, like many in the city, provides so much more than just training and job placement. We provide a house of services to meet our members' needs and we provide a home, a place where people can come back to reach their goals.

While we serve New Yorkers like Nafi, we also serve the city's employers. We connect them to candidates they wouldn't otherwise meet. We customize training and education to meet their specific needs and demands. We provide support services to their workers so that they can stay at work and succeed. Because of this we have served 48 employers with 111 hires in 2019. Time and time again we have heard- "Whenever we need a new team member, our supervisors raise their hand for a Hot Bread Kitchen program graduate"

because they know that through our support- they meet an employee who is a lifelong learner and team player. Through continued market research, we are able to remain flexible and adaptive. We sit at the intersection of employer partnerships and effective development of workers. Our work doesn't end at job placement, rather when our members and our employer partners meet their full potential and this is the critical work that needs continued support and investment.



Stanley M. Isaacs
Neighborhood Center
415 E 93rd St, New York, NY 10128

Testimony by Damion Samuels, Senior Director of Youth Services and Community Engagement at the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center.

December 9, 2020

Thank you to the Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Small Businesses for providing this opportunity to speak with all of you. I hope to share with you the challenges the communities we serve have experienced during the pandemic, our response to those challenges and some suggestions for how we move forward in a way that includes our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens.

The Isaacs Center is a multi-service organization providing services to all ages for nearly 60 years. Our programs are located at the Isaacs Houses and Holmes Towers public housing developments on the Upper East Side, and the Taft Houses Senior Center in East Harlem.

A large portion of our service portfolio is our commitment to Workforce Development for youth and young adults. Our workforce development portfolio is focused on three employment sectors: Community Healthcare, Human Services, Food and Hospitality. Each of these employment sectors has been severely impacted by stay-at-home orders and other mitigation efforts that are essential to reduce the spread of COVID 19.

The economic effects of the Pandemic have disproportionately affected People of Color, young people and those lacking a High School Degree, three constituencies that make up the bulk of young people enrolled in Isaacs Center Education and Workforce Development Programs. The Study "*The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of COVID-19 in New York City*" clearly describes how already marginalized groups have borne the brunt of the Pandemic. According to the study, 68% of those who have experienced job loss are persons of color and one-third of young adults ages 18-24 have lost jobs during the Covid-19 crisis. More than half of all likely dislocated young adults worked in restaurants and hotels and non-essential retail trade.

Moreover, our culinary arts training program was devastated by the impact of COVID-19 on the restaurant and hospitality industry. In response, Isaacs Center has doubled its employer engagement efforts resulting in over 75 new contacts with hospitality industry

leaders and stakeholders. To reduce our reliance on traditional employer engagement strategies, we have shifted our approach from a sole focus on the hospitality industry to one that also emerging opportunities in the health and wellness ecosystem. At the same time, we were able to create new work opportunities for our participants in our Community Kitchen, as we saw a dramatic increase in the need for meals to support the hungry and food insecure in our community.

As a result of the pandemic, the Isaacs Center received nine times the number of meal requests typically submitted. In response to increased food insecurity and hunger, and with the support of private philanthropy, Isaacs Center expanded kitchen operations to support the community, doubling the number of meals prepared each day from 800 to 1,600. The expansion provided an opportunity for dual-purpose programming, engaging young adult interns enrolled in the Center's Culinary Arts Training Program. From April to September of this year, our community kitchen operated with two shifts of cooking teams made up of chefs, kitchen aids, and culinary students. Isaacs Center also redeployed staff displaced from education, workforce development, and afterschool programs, quickly training them to fill in on meal delivery routes and other older adult services to ensure continuity when other staff had to self-quarantine or became sick. ***As a result of these efforts the Isaacs Center has produced and distributed over 18,000 meals during the last six months.***

In response to the public health emergency, the Isaacs Center partnered with New York Presbyterian Hospital to launch an innovative summer internship program. 100 young people were trained on community healthcare and wellness, with the goal of creating a workforce more equipped to find employment success in the healthcare sector in a COVID-19 landscape. Young people worked in a range of essential roles from staffing a food pantry, facilitating community health outreach campaigns, delivering PPE to home bound older adults, supporting mental health first aid efforts, and preparing and distributing healthy meals.

As described in the report, *"Filling the Lifeboats Getting Americans Back to Work in the Pandemic,"* from Burning Glass Technologies, "providing job seekers with skills-level data that highlights adjacencies to available jobs allows unemployed workers to seize opportunities they might otherwise have missed, and enables employers to connect more efficiently with the talent they need." The expanding opportunities in Test and Trace and Community Health Education, particularly around PPE and COVID 19 health outreach present the kind of short-term lifeboat opportunities that connect to long term employment opportunities. Additionally, the transferrable skills developed in these bridge/ training opportunities provide a solid foundation for entrance into a career sector with significant opportunity for growth.

Our Ask

Any and all support that can be given to support the food and hospitality industry. We are committed to the long-term health of this industry and in this moment of extreme crisis, it is incumbent on all of us to prop up an industry that is so central to the financial and cultural health of New York City.

Much of the dramatic expansion of our community kitchen was driven by one-time emergency grants from philanthropic partners given at the height of the pandemic. In order to continue the critical work of feeding food insecure New Yorkers while providing pathways to meaningful employment we need our government partners to lean in with financial supports to continue this important work.

Better coordination among the multiple agencies driving workforce development. We need a Unified strategy to connect young people to jobs that are developing in this emerging economy. Currently workforce Development is administered through HRA, SBS, DYCD, DHS, ACS et al. A common strategy is needed to uncover and promote any and all meaningful employment opportunities.

Workforce 1 centers should operate more in concert with community boards so they can leverage that power to extract specific concessions around local hiring and training from businesses opening in the community.

Support the call of many including New York City Employment and Training Coalition for Mayor De Blasio to honor the promise made in his 2014 Career Pathways Plan where he pledged 60 million for the creation of Bridge Programs.

*Testimony of Christine James-McKenzie, Associate, Communications, Learning & Policy,
JobsFirstNYC before the
12/9 Council Hearing on Workforce Development & Combating Unemployment*

Good morning to the distinguished members of the Committees on Economic Development and Small Business. My name is Christine James-McKenzie and I'm the Associate of Communications, Learning, and Policy at JobsFirstNYC, a non-profit intermediary that creates and advances solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities.

To understand the breadth of COVID-19's impact on workforce development, JobsFirstNYC has facilitated several discussions with workforce and economic development organizations across NYC. The various discussions have demonstrated that while the pandemic has not discriminated against any particular group of people, it has significantly ravaged low income communities and drastically increased the out of work and out of school rate, which is now estimated at 27%-34% of young adults. Any workforce and economic recovery strategy needs to take into account this population and the organizations that serve them.

To this end, I would like to share the following recommendations:

Map in-demand skills and partner with employers to develop new strategies to improve educational and training programs for young adults. Data linking "new" jobs to current educational offerings provisions should be a priority. Enrollment in community colleges is down by 23% and workforce training programs are struggling with public and private funding cuts. Meanwhile, numbers on early pandemic job losses indicate that 35% of young adults lost work, higher than the citywide average. It is imperative that young adults receive relevant training to meet the evolving job market. There are unique job opportunities that are emerging that employers should be encouraged to promote and offer training. The city should take the lead on making that link so that existing programs are better able to prepare young adults for employment and place them in jobs now.

Bridge the digital divide. JobsFirstNYC recommends substantial investment in providing digital tools, training and support. Lower income communities do not have ready access to broadband and digital hardware. Any workforce development investments the city makes should invest in digital access.

Provide funding for mental health counseling and support. New studies are showing the devastating impact that COVID19 has had on mental health. In communities already challenged with finding jobs, daycare and even housing, there are reports of more mental health strain. The fear of losing a job, not finding a job, losing a loved one or simply not being able to provide is causing multiple layers of anxiety. We recommend a network of community programs and advocates be given access funds to support the health and well-being of young adults and their families.

Expand funding for critical programs. The financial response to this crisis ought to be commensurate with the disruption that it has caused. Food assistance programs, academic support, and childcare assistance must be supplemented so that people can focus on upskilling and returning to work.

Stimulate entrepreneurship via local incubators and microagents. An immediate multi-tiered response is required. SBS and the NYCEDC must not simply support training out of work New Yorkers. They must also support new and small businesses so that these enterprises are able to remain open and hire locally. Incentives should include liquidity and access to loans. Entrepreneurs can benefit from special guidance. Federal aid infusions should be diverted to local microagents for equitable and wide-scale disbursement . Minority businesses would benefit from tailored stimuli that are sustainable and long term.

In the final assessment, COVID-19 challenges are not static. The changes we recommend must be pliable and be rooted in the needs of the communities we serve. Any recovery strategy undertaken by the city council, SBS, or NYCEDC should take into account these evolving needs and regularly assess the successes and failures of this strategy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate the opportunity to testify and look forward to working with each of you to enact these recommendations and ensure that all New Yorkers benefit from the city's COVID-19 relief efforts.

Thank you for an opportunity to share my perspective and thoughts on the need for digital equity in our communities.

Without a doubt, digital inequity affects many in our Brooklyn community. In Adult Learning, we have a broad view of what a student would need to successfully benefit from our services. In order to participate, potential students need technology and internet access. We have seen great growth in the number of people attending our classes. In fact, the number of students has tripled since our Winter 2020 session. With the option to attend remotely, more people have reached out.

We have worked hard to maintain our relationships with WorkForce1 partners and are able to share that information with Adult Learners in our WIOA classes. Our students are able to meet with our Case Managers and schedule virtual appointments with our WorkForce1 partners. This is very important to our community during these difficult times.

But the missing part from my point of view, are the hundreds, thousands? of potential community members we are not seeing due to that lack of internet service or the technology to work with us.

Universal Internet Service in Brooklyn and New York City would go a long way toward overcoming digital inequity.

Theresa Luke

Theresa Luke | Literacy Zone Resource Specialist
Brooklyn Public Library

<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/adult-learning>

Follow us on [Facebook!](#)



Committee on Economic Development, Jointly with the Committee on Small Business

Thursday, December 10, 2020 - 10 AM

Oversight - Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment.

Testimony from Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW)

Good morning. I am Erik Antokal and I am the AVP of Programs at of Nontraditional Employment for Women, or NEW, a nonprofit with a 42-year record of transforming the economic prospects for women through careers in the skilled trades.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been pervasive in NEW's community, and the crisis continues to be disproportionately devastating for women. Prior to March 2020, women made up 46 percent of workers in the United States, and research suggested that women would make up 43 percent of job losses. Instead, data indicated that women consisted of 54 percent of individuals who lost their jobs because of the crisis. In September 2020 alone, four times as many women dropped out of the labor force in comparison to men, or 865,000 women compared to 216,000 men. Black and brown women face even more dire crises of joblessness because of the pandemic.

In this context of enormous need, no near-term end to the pandemic in sight, and no clear plans for federal support, we must act quickly to combat the unemployment crisis where we can. Workforce development organizations like NEW offer a readily available and nimble approach to training over-impacted communities and rapidly securing safe, gainful employment. NEW's training programs, like those of so many other workforce development organizations, have been rapidly and robustly adapted to offer training in the virtual world, and continue to offer the same employer-driven education that sets up candidates for to start a new career in as little as eight weeks.

More importantly, these are not just jobs. These are careers that offer wages close to \$20.00 an hour and comprehensive benefits. In recognition of the unique safety circumstances presented by the pandemic, we and our partners in the workforce development community are focused on placing our community members in jobs that minimize the risk of transmission being situated outside or distant from other workers, offer more job security by their essential nature,, and by quickly developing employer relationships that offer work that is less sensitive to the rapid changes in health and economic circumstances.

And perhaps most importantly during these chaotic times, NEW and many other organizations offer supportive services. Social workers and their connections to public benefits systems, community-based services, and humanistic counseling are critical to ensuring that each job seeker is not just well trained,

but well supported as they navigate new constraints and new realities associated with ensuring financial security for themselves and their families in this ever-changing environment.

This is a model that has already worked for the most vulnerable New Yorkers and should be scaled up by public and private actors, particularly using the guidelines laid out in the City's Career Pathways approach. While investment in workforce development works in service of equity and support, it is also a responsible fiscal measure in the context of ever-shrinking budgets. According to multiple studies, for every \$1 invested in workforce development programs, taxpayers gain \$4 in revenue. More funding is needed for bridge programming to impart the basic skills needed by some of the most at risk New Yorkers, and more funding is needed to scale up the time-tested interventions that workforce development organizations can bring to bear on our massive economic crisis, especially as the prospect of a grim winter approaches.

We ask that the City step in to make strong support for workforce development organizations, and therefore, the most vulnerable New Yorkers, a priority by funding:

1. Outreach/marketing of services – there are significant challenges to reach/organize clients in digital world
2. Retrofit of existing space to further protect health of staff and clients
3. Upgrade of electronic hardware for remote staff
4. To increase Social Services capacity for increasingly economically constrained population
5. To restore capacity lost as a result of income losses

Thank you for your time.

**Testimony submitted by Susan Scheer, CEO, ICD-Institute for Career Development
New York City Council Committee on Economic Development
Oversight Hearing – Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment
December 9, 2020**

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Scheer, and I am the CEO of ICD-Institute for Career Development. Founded over 100 years ago to rehabilitate wounded WWI soldiers, ICD is a NYC-based non-profit that provides vocational assessment, training, and job placement free of charge to individuals with disabilities, ages 14 and up.

Even before COVID, unemployment rates for individuals with disabilities were unacceptably high. During the longest economic expansion on record, 70 percent of individuals with disabilities were not in the workforce, and the unemployment rate was 2.5 times that of individuals without a disability. Often among the last hired and in entry-level service roles, individuals with disabilities were among the first to lose their jobs in this downturn. Others were forced to give up employment because the nature of their disability placed them at higher risk for COVID-related complications should they contract the virus.

To be clear, individuals with disabilities want to work. Indeed, once ICD secured tablets and hot spots to address the “disability digital divide,” our students were eager to continue their vocational training on-line starting in April and to return to in-person training in August so they can be ready when the economy picks up. Still others took jobs keeping NYC safe by cleaning our subways and buses. We recently held our first-ever virtual graduation, with more than 100 students in attendance, and helped 11 students receive Cisco certification in networking,

including for the first time, two Deaf students who took the class on-line with an ASL interpreter present for every class.

Yet, as the scandalous unemployment numbers I cited earlier indicate, individuals with disabilities face ongoing systemic bias, or ableism. The majority of ICD's participants are people of color and live in low-income households, creating intersectional biases. In the face of these obstacles, many are forced to rely on cash assistance or federal disability benefits that offer those with a limited work history a meager average annual income of about \$10,000, making our community among the poorest in New York City.

One in five individuals has a disability. Post-COVID, that number will surely rise, as many of our fellow New Yorkers experience lasting health impacts from the virus. These so-called "long haulers" will need organizations like ICD who can help identify what types of assistive technology and other accommodations are needed if they are to return to their previous job or pursue a new line of employment. Yet, now when the demand is greatest, organizations like ours are experiencing reduced funding and the loss of talented staff.

Despite the extreme level of need, assessment and training services accessible to individuals with disabilities are largely missing from the City's current workforce development programs funded by agencies such as SBS and EDC. State and federally-funded vocational rehabilitation programs, while vital to the workforce development ecosystem, do not meet the needs of all New Yorkers with disabilities. The status quo needs to change, and it needs to change now. When you are already considered "not normal," back to normal is definitely not good enough.

We can start by welcoming individuals with disabilities and community-based providers that have expertise in preparing individuals with disabilities for employment to the planning table. Whether it is recognized or not, organizations that work with individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals who were formerly incarcerated, who have aged out of foster care, or who are homeless, are already serving individuals with disabilities.

Understanding and meeting these intersectional identities requires collaboration among funders, service providers, and those who have lived experience with disability.

In developing new approaches and new funding streams, it is imperative that traditional pay-for-performance metrics not act as a limit on the ability of providers to work with individuals with disabilities. There needs to be a recognition that the cost for services may be higher and the time needed to successfully prepare and place an individual in employment is likely to be longer. The same is true of pre-employment services such as high school equivalency programs, where gains in reading levels may take longer.

To borrow from the show *Hamilton*, “we want to be in the room where it happens.” At this historic moment, the disability community—my community—is eager to be part of rebuilding New York City’s economy. We look to the Council to ensure that the “new normal” is one that embraces disability, equity, and full inclusion.

Thank you.



December 9, 2020

City Council Hearing on Workforce Development & Combating Unemployment Center for Employment Opportunities Testimony

My name is Imani Webb-Smith, and I am a Policy Analyst for The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). I am here today to highlight the needs of New Yorkers with criminal convictions who are being left behind in New York's workforce system during the Coronavirus pandemic.

CEO's mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals who have recently returned home from incarceration. As the largest provider of reentry employment services in New York State, we serve primarily persons on parole and probation supervision, with a focus on those deemed at highest risk of returning to incarceration. Our approach has been shown in rigorous third party evaluations to reduce recidivism while also returning \$3.30 for every \$1 of public investment.

Our program has two core components: transitional employment, and vocational services that are provided to help participants get and keep full-time jobs (job coaching and development, job placement, retention and support). To provide transitional jobs, CEO operates work crews across New York State that provide a variety of general labor services. Access to immediate work on a transitional work crew helps our participants to gain stability and motivation as they work to attain long-term employment outside of CEO.

CEO has remained fully engaged in its emergency relief efforts to support formerly incarcerated job seekers while simultaneously providing essential services throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. We converted all vocational services to a work from home configuration, in which staff engage participants remotely. To ensure our transitional work crews continue to operate, we instituted protocols to safely operate teams using guidance from the CDC and other public health authorities. We continue to offer remote paid training options and coaching sessions for participants, even those who cannot attend crews, to maintain engagement.

In addition, CEO responded to emergency requests from a variety of city government agencies during COVID-19:

- On April 1, the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) made an emergency request for CEO to provide staff to support the city in releasing more than 100 people from Rikers Island who were incarcerated on technical parole violations and currently homeless. When the city released these individuals to a local hotel, MOCJ contracted with CEO to have CEO staff provide daily wellness and safety checks with these individuals to ensure their health and wellbeing.



Center for Employment Opportunities

- Additionally, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) requested that CEO add additional crews to support the cleaning and sanitation needs for city housing agencies.
- CEO is also providing food distribution for senior residents at NYCHA properties. In just 44 delivery days, CEO delivered a grand total of 96,138 individual meals to senior residents.

Across the city, CEO's priority remains channeling resources to formerly incarcerated New Yorkers to allow them to put food on the table, achieve economic mobility and avoid returning to jail or prison. **The resources we receive from the state and city government are critical to helping us do so.**

COVID's Impact on Communities of Color

It has been well established that COVID-19 is impacting communities of color at a disproportionate rate in New York City. According to the NYC Department of Health, people of color made up 24% of COVID cases, 72% of hospitalizations and 88% of deaths in New York City.¹

These disparities have largely been attributed to a history of disinvestment in communities of color. The legacy of this disinvestment and systemic racism is not the natural outcome of individual choice. The overrepresentation of Black and Brown people in New York's jails and prisons is not attributable to group preference; the fact that Black and Brown New Yorkers accounted for up to 90% of coronavirus related arrests² is not coincidence -- it is the result of deliberate policy choices.

As the state and local jails release people from incarceration to combat the pandemic,, there is an increased need to provide support for these individuals. Many returning citizens will return to communities already reeling from the COVID crisis. The national unemployment rate grew to 14.7% in April; white unemployment was below the average at 14.2% while African-American unemployment stood at 16.7%.³ Unemployment among the formerly incarcerated was already at Great Depression levels prior to COVID-- 27% according to one analysis.⁴

To address the disparate impact on communities of color, the state and city must support nonprofit partners during this difficult time. This crisis has hit the nonprofit community unbelievably hard - the organizations that serve the most vulnerable in our country have

¹ NYC Hospitals.

See:<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-deaths-race-ethnicity-04162020-1.pdf>

² Culliton, Kathleen. "Black, Brown New Yorkers Make Up 90% Of Coronavirus Arrests: NYPD." New York City Patch,2020
<https://www.patch.com/new-york/new-york-city/black-brown-new-yorkers-make-90-coronavirus-arrests-nypd>

³ US DOL (Friday, May 8) Employment Situation Summary. See:
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>

⁴Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people (July 2018) See:
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>



struggled to operate through COVID-19, despite the fact that their services are in demand now more than ever.

Workforce investment and policy is key to criminal justice reform and racial equity in response to COVID-19. Federal, state and local appropriations, statute, regulation and policy shape formerly incarcerated people's access to vocational training, transitional jobs, and a career. **As the nation's largest employment-focused reentry organization, CEO will highlight key challenges for lawmakers in obtaining and keeping a job upon returning home from incarceration:**

❖ **Significant Employment Barriers for Justice-Impacted Individuals**

Investing in workforce development requires targeting the specific barriers of returning citizens, and recognizing the enduring impact of incarceration for Black Americans and communities of color. CEO participants are under correctional control and involved in criminal justice systems perpetuated by policies that have racially disparate impacts and make employment more difficult. More than half of participants have no prior work experience prior to CEO, and nearly 90% do not have post-secondary education.

❖ **Workforce Investment Often Fails to Reach Returning Citizens**

Few workforce funds and training opportunities reach the more than 600,000 individuals released from incarceration each year nationally. Specifically, transitional jobs are an evidence-based employment intervention for recently incarcerated individuals, yet federal workforce programs underutilize transitional jobs as a tool. If workforce development strategies better target reentry and align across federal programs and sectors, then more individuals will be equipped to obtain quality employment, contribute to our economy and successfully avoid recidivism.

❖ **COVID-19 Impact and Recovery Exacerbates Employment Challenges**

The ongoing fallout from COVID-19 means that participants will enter the workforce when jobs are scarce, and return to communities most impacted by the pandemic. Furthermore, state and local governments partner with CEO's social enterprise to provide transitional jobs, yet now face significant budget shortfalls. This means fewer local funds to invest in reentry, even as more people are released from prison and jail.

Thank you all for your time.

Imani Webb-Smith
Policy Analyst
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)

New York City Council.
The Committee on Economic Development
jointly with
The Committee on Small Business. December 9th. 2020.
Full Testimonial

I would first like to start by thanking this committee and all your City Council colleagues and staff for you truly heroic work to ensure the continued survival of our City.

While I do appreciate, and am thankful, for the City Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; other City business must continue. Small businesses are uniquely positioned to develop and quickly implement innovative recovery solutions. They need your support.

Hello, my name is Osman Mariano, I am a graduate student at CUNY's School of Public Health over the course of this semester, our CUNY Graduate School of Public Health class has been tasked to advocate for current legislations that affect New Yorker (using equity as lens).

I am here to give support and bring attention to City Council Resolution 007-2018 that urges the state legislature and governor to pass and sign into law the creation of a standard definition of honey and uniform regulations for its standards.

Bolstering New York's honey industry is an innovative approach that can add to New York's recovery.

In 2010 New York legalized beekeeping, as of 2016 there were 300 keep keepers. This small yet vibrant community needs your support.

With a global market of 2.3 billion dollars, honey is the 3rd most faked food in the world.

Every year 600lbs of honey are consumed in the US, that's about 1Billion dollars. US Honey consumption has increased 30% in the last decade. Per capital, New York is the largest honey producer in the Northeast (the 10th largest in the nation) and yet there is no precise definition nor regulatory standards for honey. This issue must be addressed urgently as it affects local markets and New Yorkers of all stripes.

As demand for honey continues to increase prices have stayed stable or even dropped in some cases. Despite climate change, and the decimation of local hives, honey prices all over the world have remained stable or reduced. Last year the EU reported a 40% decreased in local honey production, yet prices continued to decrease.

This market paradox is an example of markets not being able to regulate themselves as well as an indication that adulterated honey has been able to enter the market (including from honey producing countries have been blacklisted).

Although it is a single-ingredient food, defining honey remains problematic. The FDA uses a very basic and broad definition of honey taken from the online versions of Webster's dictionary and Encyclopedia Britannica¹.

The usage of the common term for honey as a standard definition makes it easier to adulterate as well as confuses consumers². On the other hand, defining honey by its chemical composition is expensive and limited by the availability of the constantly updated technologies³.

Similarly, as problematic are the unregulated practices used to sell and produce honey. Having a USDA seal or grade, for example, does not require inspection by the USDA^{4,5}.

A lack of definition and poor standards have unintended consequences especially when taken together⁶. For incidence, beekeepers tout organic honey as honey made from farmed bees that forage in the wild. However, this unmonitored foraging led to a 2012 incident where bees produced blue and green honey –the result of their having eaten M&M shells from a nearby biogas plant⁷.

Even now, several pushes to require the USDA to define honey have been rebuffed. Comprehensive government directives are need. In a decade long, multi-agency investigation dubbed “Honeygate” -adulterated honey was found to include antibiotics known to cause bone marrow cancers⁸.

As technologies have changed and food sciences refined, so too has the scientific field of food fraud detection (DiDonna, 2020).

Calls for better tools to detect adulterated foods have a long history. As early as 1820, chemists were testing for the presence of harmful substances in foods. In the US the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 was passed to formalize methods for detecting “Adulterated” foods –this act later spawned the creation of the Food and Drug Administration (DiDonna, 2020).

However, legislation may not be enough. Regulations themselves are not immune to the normal legislative chaos. In Missouri, for example, small beekeepers are not required to follow many state honey regulations and can sell directly to customers at farmers markets –this includes out of state customers. However, these same small beekeepers cannot sell their product at stores and supermarkets in Missouri⁹.

Comprehensive regulations, deep and structural market distortions aside, needs stakeholder buy-in.

With its top-down approach, resulting in limited buy-in, the EU for example, reports that 20% of European honey is adulterated despite rigid EU food and safety standards.

Not only does Res 007-2018 have strong economic development implications, that affect all New Yorker’s. But as a high/low-end product, honey has buy-in from New Yorkers from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Developing this market will be met with minimal pushback, while resulting in better regulations, increased consumer protections and confidence, creating new jobs and sources for municipal income.

Regulatory and market divides need to be bridged; New York City Council Resolution 0071-2018 is a good first step.

Thank you again for the opportunity to president testimony, and for your attention to this urgent matter.

I look forward to following-up with you but can also be reached via enclosed contact information.

Osman Mariano

Address: 431 West 54St Apt 5A
NY, NY 10019

E-mail: Osman.Mariano44@sphmail.CUNY.edu

Cellphone: 646-236-0140

Endnotes

- ¹ Food Safety News. “Honeygate” Sting Leads to Charges for Illegal Chinese Honey Importation. Food Safety News. Published February 26, 2013. Accessed October 10, 2020. <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/02/honeygate-sting-leads-to-charges-for-illegal-chinese-honey-importation/>
- ² Bee Culture. CATCH THE BUZZ – Work Being Done by The Industry to Ensure Honey’s Purity Will Continue. | Bee Culture. Beeculture.com. Published April 25, 2019. Accessed October 10, 2020. <https://www.beeculture.com/catch-the-buzz-work-being-done-by-the-industry-to-ensure-honeys-purity-will-continue/>
- ³ Decernis. Trends in Food Fraud Detection - Decernis. Decernis. Published September 25, 2020. Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://decernis.com/trends-in-food-fraud-detection-2/>
- ⁴ Government Publishing Office. Federal Register, Volume 76 Issue 2 (Tuesday, January 4, 2011). Govinfo.gov. Published April 2, 2011. Accessed October 23, 2020. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2011-01-04/html/2010-33137.htm>
- ⁵ National Honey Board. National Honey Board. National Honey Board. Published 2012. Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.honey.com/faq>
- ⁶ National Honey Board. Definition of Honey and Honey Products. National Honey Board. Published 2003, 2003. Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.honey.com/files/general/Honey-Definitions.pdf>
- ⁷ National Geographic. Pictures: Colored Honey Made by Candy-Eating French Bees. Nationalgeographic.com. Published October 13, 2012. Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/10/121011-blue-honey-honeybees-animals-science/>
- ⁸ Food Safety News. “Honeygate” Sting Leads to Charges for Illegal Chinese Honey Importation. Food Safety News. Published February 26, 2013. Accessed October 10, 2020. <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/02/honeygate-sting-leads-to-charges-for-illegal-chinese-honey-importation/>
- ⁹ Makovec, E. (2015, August 14). Deregulating Honey In Missouri: There are 19 ways to kill a bill and only one way to pass it. Bee Culture -. <https://www.beeculture.com/deregulating-honey-in-missourithere-are-19-ways-to-kill-a-bill-and-only-one-way-to-pass-it/>

Policy Brief

Let's bee serious: Create a definition and regulations for honey

Res 0071-2018

By Council Member Levin.

A resolution calling upon the New York State legislature to pass and the governor to sign legislation that would define honey and provide standards for honey sold in the State

Background

Americans consumes approximately 600 million pounds of honey each yearⁱ. Yet this billion-dollar market does not have a uniform definition for honey nor standards for its sale and useⁱ.

In 2019, the US exported over 157 million pounds of honey, New York was largest honey producer in the Northeast and 10th large in the countryⁱ.

Policy Context

Although it is a single-ingredient food, defining honey remains problematic. The FDA uses a very basic and broad definition of honey taken from the online versions of Webster's dictionary and Encyclopedia Britannicaⁱⁱ. The usage of the common term for honey as a standard definition makes it easier to adulterate as well as confuses consumersⁱⁱⁱ. On the other hand, defining honey by its chemical composition is expensive and limited by the availability of the constantly updated technologies^{iv}.

Similarly as problematic are the unregulated practices used to sell and produce honey. Having a USDA seal or grade, for example, does not require inspection by the USDA^{v,vi}.

A lack of definition and poor standards have unintended consequences especially when taken together^{vii}. For incidence, beekeepers tout organic honey as honey made from farmed bees that forage in the wild. However, this unmonitored foraging led to a 2012 incident where bees produced blue and green honey –the result of their having eaten M&M shells from a nearby biogas plant^{viii}.

Even now, several pushes to require the USDA to define honey have been rebuffed. Comprehensive government directives are need. In a decade long,

multi-agency investigation dubbed “Honeygate” -adulterated honey was found to include antibiotics known to cause bone marrow cancers ^{ix}.

Conclusion

Markets cannot regulate themselves, even ones based on a single-ingredient food. With imported honey accounting for 75% of the billion-dollar US honey market, and a per capita consumption that has increased by 30% in the last decade, honey regulations are needed more urgently than ever. Honey needs to have a precise definition and comprehensive regulatory standards --res 0071-2018 is a step in the right direction.

References

Good afternoon, thank you to the chairs, city council and fellow panelists for everything you're doing to help unemployed New Yorkers. My name is Megan Nilon, resident of Washington Heights and current graduate student at CUNY. I'm also an avid gardener and here to speak about the 5,000 acres of unused land in NYC that can be used for urban agriculture and farm economies. Earlier this year, the city council passed Local Law 40, a 10-year food policy plan that includes "developing and improving food and farm economies" and "increasing urban agriculture and sustainability." Urban agriculture can generate revenue and provide long-term employment for our communities, in addition to plenty of part-time employment for students and youth and working opportunities for disabled New Yorkers. Urban farming also provides a COVID-friendly working environment, as employees can easily socially distance outside while performing their tasks.

In 2018, intro 1058 called for development of a comprehensive urban agriculture plan. In order to generate more jobs through urban agriculture, the city council should establish a committee on urban agriculture to catalogue available land and provide resources and materials to community members to start their own farming businesses. New York City should also make it easier for those already gardening to retain income earned on city owned land. Many community gardeners are immigrants, communities of color and NYCHA residents, and they deserve to earn income from their labor. I urge the city council to consider urban agriculture development as one way to support economic growth and equity in our communities.

Thank you for your time.

Committee on Economic Development

Members: Vallone, Powers, Gjonaj, Koo, Cornegy, Menchaca, Lander, Barron, Louis

Jointly with the Committee on Small Business

Members: Gjonaj, Rosenthal, Perkins, Rodriguez, Levin

- Thursday, December 10, 2020 - 10 AM
- Oversight - Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment.

Good morning

I'm Irene Branche, Chief Development and Evaluation Officer for The HOPE Program

HOPE builds sustainable futures through comprehensive training, job placements, advancement and lifelong career support.

Our focus is on New Yorkers with significant barriers to employment - history with the criminal legal system, homelessness, substance abuse, and others.

And our results are strong - in non-pandemic times, on average, we place 75-80% of graduates in jobs and 80% sustain attachment to the workforce

As a result of our targeted focus on green jobs, these placements are often in solar installation, energy auditing, landscaping/horticulture, green construction, building support and more - contributing to New York City's sustainability goals

We also offer general career training, so people have the essential skills to thrive in careers across sectors
Everyone in this hearing is talking about the heightened importance of the workforce development system in this time as we prepare New Yorkers to compete in a new, more equitable (fingers crossed!) economy.

This is absolutely true - and we are proud to be working with our clients to re-attach to the workforce after COVID-related layoffs, training new clients for jobs, and working with employers and other partners to understand the evolving labor market so we can develop programs to prepare workers for these new opportunities.

I also want to highlight the comprehensive nature of programs like HOPE, which go far beyond industry-recognized credentials, sharper resumes, and more compelling interviews.

Our services have been absolutely essential to meeting the immediate basic needs of New Yorkers who are bearing the brunt of this crisis.

We have put over \$250K in cash assistance in the pockets of New Yorkers to address food insecurity, rent, and other basic needs

We have provided an additional \$250K in earned wages for transitional jobs - doing Census outreach, voter registration, community greening and much more.

We are all more aware of the digital divide than ever before - HOPE has provided 450 laptops and wifi hotspots to New Yorkers who could otherwise not be able to access training

We are providing direct mental health support, case management, and referrals to longer-term mental health care - as you can imagine, these services have been in greater demand this year than in the past.

Our workforce community is essential to the sustainability of our city - as we support New Yorkers who are often at the end of the line to secure jobs and support their families. Further, we make up part of the social safety net which is currently being tested.

I want to end on a note of thanks - to Small Business Services which has been our partner in the CoolRoofs transitional employment program; also thank you to the New York City Council (and Levin and Powers in particular for your direct support)

This work wouldn't be possible without your serving as a champion and we look forward to future partnership.

December 9th, 2020

Committee on Economic Development jointly with the Committee on Small Business

Chair Gjonaj & Chair Vallone and Members of the NYC Council -

Good afternoon and thank you for hosting this hearing today.

My name is Abe Mendez and I am here representing Per Scholas. At Per Scholas we advance economic equity through rigorous training for careers in tech while connecting our graduates to leading businesses in need of talent. Over the past 25 years, we have trained over 8,000 New Yorkers and partnered with over 500 businesses.

I wish I could deliver this testimony in person but I am participating today via zoom, like the 400 New Yorkers who have enrolled at Per Scholas this year.

In order to ensure they could access our training, Per Scholas mobilized its resources and provided technology - including laptops and internet access - to those in need. However, the digital divide remains, with nearly 40% of Bronx Residents lacking access to the internet. More needs to be done to ensure that all adults who are seeking employment can access training programs remotely.

Despite the turbulent market, demand for tech skills remains high. Over 330 of our graduates have obtained employment during the pandemic, earning a starting salary of \$21/hr (equating to a 4x increase in their average pre-training wages). However, there's more work to be done. The Bronx has a 17.5% unemployment rate, the highest in New York State.

New Yorkers need programs like Per Scholas now more than ever. Over the past few years we have developed multiple pathways into our programs, including bridge training, which has seen hundreds of young adults enroll in our training who otherwise would not have qualified. These pathways are crucial as we have seen demand skyrocket for our training program by 200%.

Per Scholas is a proud member of the NYC Employment & Training Coalition and I encourage the Council to adopt the Coalition's recommendations, including increasing investment in adult education, job training and bridge programs.

Workforce organizations are vital to the economic recovery of the city and together we can put New Yorkers back to work.

Thank you.

Good Afternoon Commissioners and Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Valerie Payne, I am Executive Director of Rebuilding Together NYC, as well as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of the NYC Employment and Training Coalition, led by Jose Ortiz whose testimony you heard earlier and whose recommendations I also support.

Rebuilding Together is a non-profit whose mission to repair homes, revitalize communities and reskill individuals. We **perform** critical home repair and accessibility modifications for low-income and most often elderly homeowners (*employing over a dozen general contractors or small businesses in the process*), we also **convene** corporate volunteer groups to make repairs and refurbish non-profit and community centers and we **operate** a workforce development program to prepare unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers for careers in construction and the skilled trades.

This year as we all know well **The pandemic has had tragic consequences for unemployed, underemployed and low-wage workers.**

- The individuals Rebuilding Together serves are from all five boroughs and upwards of 60% are residents of NYCHA housing. They have incomes at or below 70% of Average Median Income, 71% identify as Black or African-American, 20% identified as Latinx. In other words, they are also those hardest hit and most impacted by the pandemic.
- If the City does not take action to support New Yorkers in short-term hiring and relief efforts as well as long-term training and career development, the racial and economic inequity across the city will be worse in 2025 than it was in 2015. Now is the time to deeply invest in strengthening our communities and economic future by building a system that is data informed, as Director Peterson discussed, to ensure that services are easy to access, and responsive to labor market needs and the needs of New Yorkers.
- o **Workforce development providers are and will be called on to do more, but aren't able to do so without increased resources - and in fact diminishing resources.**
 - The good news is that the construction industry pivoted to introduce many safety measures and construction in the city is continuing. In the Construction Outlook Update Brooklyn Snapshot published in September 2020 by the NY Building Congress they write that after the pause of non-essential construction and "all construction was permitted to resume in June, starts doubled from the month prior and continued to rise into July."
 - Good paying jobs in construction continue to be available and continue to increase in number. As Director Peterson also mentioned the Building Trades Commitment and HIRE NYC Construction Careers are a step in the right direction. My fingers are crossed for the city and subsequently workforce providers to obtain infrastructure funds.
- o **Workforce development organizations are uniquely positioned to pivot quickly and respond to changes in the labor market**
 - Rebuilding Together quickly pivoted to operate our Pre-Apprenticeship Construction training on-line and enrolled, graduated and placed participants in good paying union-track constructions jobs with Turner

Construction, Monadnock, L and L painting among other companies over the summer and we continue to do so. We are in the middle of our 4th virtual cohort.

- We recently obtained a COVID relief grant from Robin Hood which will allow us to purchase and provide tablets to individuals who do not have the appropriate technology to participate.
- We continue to involve industry professionals and graduates as guest speakers, using the resources of the Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training which over the summer bolstered their on-line or virtual curriculum.
- **Need to deeply invest in low-income, Black and Brown, and historically marginalized communities we serve through employment and training programs like ours - otherwise will see an even deeper generational slip into poverty**
 - Rebuilding Together provides a solution to train and place individuals in viable well-paying careers that persist despite the ravages of the pandemic.
- Unfortunately due to budget cuts and decreased private sector investment Rebuilding Together has had to reduce our capacity.
 - We reduced our budget since we could not conduct all of the in-person fundraising activities we rely upon and all staff are working at 80% only 4 of 5 days a week.

In closing, because government contracts do not typically cover the full costs of operating workforce programs, we are forced to rely upon fundraising to fill that gap. Many companies who typically provide support are providing less or not at all which forces us to train fewer people. This is very unfortunate when we know so many more are unemployed, we know the jobs are there and we could be reskilling a greater number of individuals for a career in construction. Rebuilding Together is ready. Thank you.

 - **New York City and State have consistently underinvested in adult education and job training over the course of decades.** These failed policies and inadequate systems have sustained racial and economic inequity, and a continued impoverishment of our communities. New Yorkers who were failed by the public school system have been abandoned as adults without access to education and training that would empower them with real economic opportunity with living wages, career mobility and job quality.
- Guiding principles of inclusive & equitable COVID recovery
 - **Workforce providers & communities we serve must be at the table + invested in COVID recovery process now.** We need to be training and preparing New Yorkers now for the current and post COVID economy - overall sector specific and foundational skill needs and ability to work in an online environment remain the same. We need to use this moment to prepare people, especially those that have more time due to un- and under-employment, for what comes next.
 - **“Back to normal” is not good enough:** “Normal” for millions of New Yorkers meant multiple low-wage jobs with little mobility, no access to healthcare or other benefits, little economic security and unsafe working conditions, and unpredictable schedules. A stronger and inclusive economy that ensures job quality, career mobility, living wage pay and benefits, stable schedules, and safe working conditions is the new starting line.

Prioritize & collaborate with impacted communities: Ensure that programs and investments prioritize the communities, individuals and small businesses that have been hardest hit by this pandemic, and particularly those facing historic marginalization and disinvestment. Work in collaboration with community based organizations and local stakeholders to build policy, programs and investments, enabling innovation not regulation.

- **No austerity budgeting - Invest in a sustainable economy built from the bottom-up:** Rebuilding NYC's economy with a focus on its workforce and local small businesses is an investment in our future economy and tax base, not an act of charity. An equitable recovery plan must reprioritize and redirect resources toward community investments through a combination of new revenue streams and increased cuts in other portions of the City budget.