

TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

OVERSIGHT HEARING:

THE SUMMER JOBS (SYEP) PROGRAM:
AN OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS FOR SUMMER 2010

PRESENTED BY
SUZANNE LYNN, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2010
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

Good morning Chair Fidler and members of the Youth Services Committee. I am Suzanne Lynn, Deputy Commissioner for Community Development. On behalf of Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the impact that the proposed State Executive Budget would have on the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

DYCD understands the economic challenges that all levels of government are facing and the need to exercise fiscal diligence during these tough times. For the past eight years, the City met economic challenges in a responsible way. As a result, we are in a stronger position to address our current budget difficulties while still providing essential services to New York City children and families.

As Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Speaker Christine C. Quinn have said, the State Executive Budget disproportionately impacts the City. It inflicts \$1.3 billion in cuts to New York City and imposes costs shifts and new unfunded mandates in the human services area. It completely eliminates State revenue sharing for the City and funding to SYEP totaling \$35 million Statewide and \$19.5 million to the City. Restoration of these funds is the City's number one priority.

Highlights of SYEP 2009

Before I detail the impact that this drastic cut will have on this coming summer's program, for the benefit of new Council Members, I'd like to take a few moments to provide some highlights of the summer 2009 program. We also have copies of a presentation DYCD provided to the Council in the fall that has additional details.

- Through a combination of City, State and Federal funds totaling \$67.5 million, we had the largest summer program in over ten years with 52,255 youth enrolled. This included \$19.5 million in state TANF funding, which enabled DYCD to enroll 16,911 young people, and the infusion of \$28.2 million in Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds that supported 20,413 additional participants. This demonstrates what we already knew - that the City cannot do it alone, and a program supported by all three levels of government works the best.
- A record number of 139,597 young people applied for SYEP during a five-week application period. This was double the number of applications that were received in 2004 and significantly higher than the 103,189 applications received in 2008.
- 41% of SYEP participants were from Brooklyn, 25% from the Bronx, 18% from Queens, 12% from Manhattan and 4% from Staten Island.
- 56% were female and 44% were male.
- With stimulus funding, the age limit was increased from 21 to 24 years old.

- 29% were 14 – 15 years old, 38% were 16 – 17, 22% were 18 – 19 and 11% were 20 – 24.
- The average age of a participant was 17.
- 45% of participants were African-American and 26% were Latino.
- 1,000 vulnerable youth were enrolled through five contracts awarded in the new RFP to provide SYEP to youth in foster care, and those are runaway, homeless or court-involved.
- 3,812 participants who self-identified as having a disability were enrolled. This represents an increase of nearly four-fold since the program began providing specialized services to youth with disabilities in 2004.
- 8,688 different worksites participated in the 2009 program, representing a nearly three-fold increase since 2004.
- 30% of worksites were from the private sector. Since 2004, this number has grown from 10% as more employers such as CVS, Walgreens, Barnes and Noble, Emmis Communications, Ikea, and many other small businesses learned about the untapped potential and skills of our youth.
- 34% of worksites were in Brooklyn, 26% were in Manhattan, 21% were in Queens, 12% were in the Bronx, 4% were in Staten Island and 3% were located outside the city in summer camps.
- Youth were paid \$7.25 per hour for the entire program even though the federal minimum wage increased halfway through the program. In total, SYEP participants earned \$48.5 million for their hard work. We know that SYEP had a simulative impact on local communities as young people spent their money at local stores purchasing food, clothing, and school supplies and helping their families pay bills.

Summer 2010

The State cut of \$19.5 million means that approximately 17,000 fewer young people will work. Combined with DYCD's success in expending its WIA ARRA allocation, and reductions in City tax levy funding, SYEP will look far different this summer. New York City will be able to serve approximately 18,000 young people. This will be supported primarily through \$13.1 million in City tax levy (9,149 youth enrolled) and \$12.4 million (9,028 youth enrolled) in federal funding.

This is unfortunate given the progress we have made to invest in our future. If this State budget cut is adopted, it will have a detrimental impact on the lives of young people and their families. We know teens who work are more likely to remain in and graduate from

high school. For many youth, a summer job is their first exposure to the real world of work. Research by Northeastern University economist Andrew Sum shows that early work experience during the teenage years is associated with positive labor market outcomes – including easier transition into the labor market, more job opportunities, and higher earning potential.

Regrettably, when facing tough economic times, job prospects for our young people decline. The national teen unemployment rate in October reached 27.6%, the highest in 61 years and the teen work participation rate fell to 36.2%. For black male teens, the unemployment rate is at an alarming 50.4%.

This will also have a detrimental impact on non-profit organizations such as summer day camps and child care centers that depend on SYEP participants to provide services and on local businesses since fewer young people will have money to spend.

Conclusion

DYCD appreciates the Council's strong support and advocacy for summer jobs funding. It was a proud day for all of us when Chair Fidler stood with the Mayor, the Governor and many other elected officials last spring announcing the much needed infusion of ARRA funding to support SYEP 2009.

Earlier this week, Commissioner Mullgrav traveled to Albany to urge the State Legislature to demonstrate its commitment to our young people by restoring funding for summer jobs and other programs. The Commissioner is headed there again today. We are hopeful that these efforts will be successful and that additional resources will be allocated by the Federal government to ensure that SYEP in 2010 and beyond remains robust.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to discuss SYEP. I am joined by John Cirolia, Assistant Commissioner for Agency Contract Finance and Alan Cheng, Director of SYEP. We are pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Good morning everyone. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Matt Singer. I am the director of the Youth Employment Program at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Center for Family Life has managed SYEP contracts for the last 19 years, providing jobs for 700 to 1,400 teens and young adults each summer, and every year these opportunities are made possible because the state shows its commitment to youth and young adults.

Last summer we coordinated jobs for 1,356 youth – this figure is in comparison to the over 3200 youth who applied through our contract alone. What does that mean? It means that this program is in incredibly high demand and that fewer than 50% of those who applied were able to work -- those who did work provided a valuable service to organizations and companies throughout Brooklyn.

Let's ask ourselves something here... Does the number of applicants for SYEP decrease from year to year? Does it stay the same? No, every year, more young people apply for summer jobs and this summer will be no different. Except this year, it will be different – as we've seen the job market is tough for everyone. And tough times are forcing older workers to settle for jobs with lower skill levels, pushing teens and young adults out of the work force. The national unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds went above 50% in 2009 – the highest it's been since the 1940's. This is the time when having a fully funded SYEP program is most important, when so few of these jobs are available. How do we expect for these young people to have earning power years from now when they don't opportunity to build valuable skills now?

And that's pointing to the future, which is no small thing, but lets discuss the present – when we are talking about why SYEP is important, we are not talking about iPods. We're not talking about new sneakers. We're not talking about cellphones. We are talking about the rent that families have to pay to keep a roof over their heads. We are talking about the food that families have to eat to survive. Help these families survive. Support SYEP. Restore full funding to this program.

Thank you.

Matt Singer, LMSW
Director -Youth Employment Program
Center for Family Life

My name Is Daniel Garcia, I've been working with teens for many years and know first hand the value and impact that SYEP has on the youth. SYEP is the first step for many of our youth into the workforce. this step is important to the youth because it gives them the skill and training our youth need to be productive members in the workforce. This first step also is can allow be the beginning of their careers. With many different types of jobs to select from, youth can go into a field and see if this is the direction they want to go to. My first job was through SYEP and that same job I got when I was 14 is the same job I have now at 30. This is the impact SYEP has on Youth. This is a time to invest in our future workforce, our future leaders.... Help them take their first step....

Daniel Garcia

Alex Pereira

Thank you for allowing me to speak today, my name is Alex Pereira and I am here speaking on behalf of thousands of teens who put their hopes and dreams into SYEP. In a time where it is difficult to find a job SYEP has become a beacon of hope even if only temporary. SYEP has done more than just give me a paycheck it has given me experience and opportunities that have resulted being priceless. It breaks me heart to hear that SYEP funds have been cut. It is because of SYEP that I stand here with a roof over my head. Of the \$850 dollars I made last summer \$500 dollars went to help pay my families rent in a time of hardships for my dad, while the other \$350 dollars went to help lift the burden of paying for my sisters and my school supplies which included my textbooks. As anyone who has ever attended college knows, textbooks can easily surpass \$200 dollars per semester. This is why SYEP has held a special place in my heart. I have heard people say that teenagers don't know how to manage their money and buy unnecessary things, but as you can see that doesn't apply to all of us. Teens as a group have been looked down upon by many, but we are not afforded the many opportunities to prove ourselves, by removing SYEP funds you have removed a great opportunity for teens to prove ourselves and learn valuable lessons because of a false presumption. Now I would like you all to take a minute and think about something, how many places can you think of that will willingly hire a 14, 15 or even 16 or 17 year old with little to no experience at minimum wage. Then think of how many places will hire that very same person at 18 years old who wasn't able to get job experience over those lucky few who did find a job and the vastly older and more experienced bunch who because of the job market have to settle for a lower level job. It's just not a fair fight, but for years SYEP has helped to level the playing field. I understand the economy is in a rebuilding state, but removing a tool that will help the future generation who will one day run this country and make up a bulk of the workforce in years to come to succeed in helping improve our economy isn't the answer. I also understand that funds are tight but this is an investment that will not and can not fail. Today I have a job with Starbucks, and some of the many reasons why I was chosen over many others are because of my job experience and because my resume was organized well, two things SYEP had a hand in. As many of you probably know as participants of SYEP we are required to once a week attend a workshop which addresses topics such as money management and teamwork which are to very valuable tools in the real world. I have been a part of SYEP for 2 years; I have worked at Long Island College Hospital as a nurse assistant and later on that summer as an inventory worker, and as a member of NYC Parks as an assistant gardener. In my first year I worked at LICH which was a dream come true for me because I am a medical school hopeful and this would give me an insight into the hospital setting. I was able to shadow doctors and nurses and learn many things such as the chaos that is a doctors office and how things work, and later was transferred to inventory because of a need for workers in that department. In inventory I learned many things I didn't expect such as what each piece of hospital supplies does and how it works, it was a summer well spent. This previous summer because of an incident I arrived too late to retake my previous job but none the less took another job with the NYC parks department as an assistant gardener. Lets me just begin with saying this job was not for the faint of heart. This job was one of manual labor, not so different than what my father does to support our family.

It was a fun job that proved to have many lessons to teach besides the obvious gardening lessons. It taught me to have a much appreciation for those who do manual labor for a living and literally felt what its like to put your blood sweat and tears into every dollar you earn, it also provided a bond which my dad and I share. It also taught me to be smart with my money because this wasn't money which was given to me, I had to work my butt off to earn this money and it means a lot more to you when you earn it than when you are given it. In both jobs I had coworkers who where way older than me and they often gave us words of wisdom and advice. I wonder sometimes what the summer would have been like if I had not been part of SYEP, well to start I might not be standing here as the multitasking college student that I am, I might be living in a shelter because of eviction, I might have wasted my summer doing nothing, but you never know, but what I do know is that I am eternally grateful that I was able to be a member of the SYEP family, and all that it has taught me, I believe that SYEP is too valuable to our city to not be running at full force to help develop our next generation into the future workers who will inherit this economy one day, so please give us the funding that we need to continue this program because I know that you will not regret this decision. Thank you and have a nice day.

Lourdes

Hi. My name is Lourdes Vazquez and I am here on behalf of the community based organization Center for Family Life located in Sunset Park, Brooklyn (to speak against budget cuts aimed at the Summer Youth Employment Program).

Summer Youth Employment Program reaches out to all different communities and different youth. It is a great opportunity and experience for youth. It provides adolescents with 7 weeks of paid work. It allows 14-24 year olds get an insight on the world of working. It also economically helps families that fall under the lower income bracket.

I was a site monitor for SYEP 2009 and through interviews and chitchat with the youth I realized that this program should always be around. Before obtaining a job position, teens broadly selected an area that they were interested in, and then SYEP supervisors would place them in a job close to their wants. This made many youth happy at their work sites because they were doing what they liked to do. Their jobs correlated with their interests which made their experiences more enjoyable. Some examples of these incredible sites are the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Fort Hamilton Base, St. Andrews Day Care Center, FACES, and Groundswell.

The youth were motivated and excited to work. They were always smiling, of course there were some shy ones. Yet I noticed that the teens were proud of where they worked. They loved doing what they were doing, whether it was eating lunch with kids at a daycare, walking with the elderly, painting murals on our communities walls, planting fruits and vegetables, performing skits for the community, or typing at an office. These sites made it possible for these kids to do something productive with their summer. It could even be said that having a summer job made their summer a more memorable experience because it allowed them to gain skills depending on the site they worked at.

Not only that, but having a steady flow of income allowed these teens to gain some form of independence and responsibility. They were able to use that money for whatever purpose they needed. I remember one girl had told me she was saving the money she earned to pay for her first year at college. Another girl told me she really needed a laptop and was going to buy one with the money she earned. A boy told me he was going to use it for expenses that would arise throughout high school. Others mentioned it would help alleviate economic hardships in their family. SYEP made it possible for youth to meet other youth, which allowed them to have a great time. It is obvious that SYEP had economic benefits for its participants, but it also has educational benefits for its participants. SYEP participants were paid to attend workshops regarding money management, sex ed, college exploration, career exploration.

Not only are the youth in content, but supervisors are ecstatic with their syep interns. I remember speaking with SYEP site supervisors, who only had good things to say about their interns. They just loved their interns because they brought energy to the workplace. The supervisors always mentioned that their interns were helping them so much. Supervisors appreciated their interns and their hard work.

So I am requesting that no budget cuts be administered to the Summer Youth Employment Programs, where youth and supervisors alike benefit from. Do not reduce programs like these that are specifically meant to help youth in poor communities.



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Testimony to the New York City Council Youth Services Committee
Regarding the Summer Youth Employment Program

Marlena Starace
February 12, 2010

Good morning, Chairman Fidler and the members of the New York City Council. My name is Marlena Starace. I am a former participant, turned staff person at the Queens Community House Beacon Program @ JHS 190. I began participating at the Beacon when it first opened in 1998. I was thirteen years old. The summer of 2000, I applied for the Summer Youth Employment Program. That summer was the most influential time of my life. That summer my peers and I had an opportunity to develop recommendations for issues that were concerns within our community. I was fortunate to have an opportunity to gain valuable work experience in which I continue to use in my adulthood.

The fall of 2000, I was hired as a Program Aide within the Beacon. Over the course of the next ten years, I continued being employed by the Queens Community House Beacon Program. My summer job experienced gave me opportunities for contribution within my community. It gave me a sense of belonging within. I learned how to improve on my public speaking, reading and writing skills as well learning new skills. I was able to learn to value of money and how to be responsible with it. I was able to purchase school supplies and clothes for the upcoming school year instead of asking my mother who had 3 other kids to support. Who knew that at the age of 15, I would have been able to have this experience? I felt independent and empowered. These experiences change my life and directed me on a path for success. If it weren't for that summer job experience, I wouldn't be the person that I am today.

As a Youth Worker, I am proud to have the opportunity to take youth up to Albany to participate in the Campaign for Summer Jobs Youth Action Day. The success of this process has been based on strong youth participation. Young people from neighborhoods throughout New York City, who represent various backgrounds, come together for the common goal of supporting the Summer Youth Employment Program. There are opportunities for youth to learn the importance of advocacy and how their voice does make a strong impact on decisions that are being made for them. Without guaranteed funding it is difficult for local governments, youth boards and community organizations, to properly plan their programs. SYEP is important to develop the workforce of the future. The earlier that young people have opportunities and experience, the greater their chances for a successful future in the workplace and I know that from my own personal experience.

Which brings me here today; there is an absolute need for funding of the Summer Youth Employment Program. This program not only helps youth, but their families and the community. Without this program, how will youth be prepared to enter the workforce?


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TESTIMONY TO
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE
Oversight: The Summer Jobs (SYEP) Program:
An Overview and Prospects for Summer 2010
February 12, 2010

I would like to thank the Youth Services Committee for providing this opportunity to testify today concerning the importance of the Summer Youth Employment Program. My name is Nancy Downing. I am Director of Advocacy for Covenant House New York. We support the City Council Res. 0002-2010 calling on the New York State Legislature to fully fund the Summer Youth program and we support the City Council Res. 0003-2010 calling on the United States Congress to include \$500 million in the 2010 jobs bill for summer youth employment program.

Covenant House New York is the nation's largest, privately funded, non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway and at-risk youth. Last year, Covenant House New York served over 6,000 young people, primarily between the ages of 16 and 21, in our residential and community-based programs, and through our street outreach efforts.

Recent reports, prepared by economists from the Center for Labor Market Studies, demonstrate that rising youth joblessness will have a negative impact on the future economic stability of our youth as well as on the future of our state and national labor markets. One such report found that:

“There has been a growing pool of teens unable to obtain any work or only able to find part-time jobs even though they wish to work full-time.”¹

This translates into:

“Less work experience today” which “leads to less work experience tomorrow and lower earnings down the road.”²

Teens and young adults who have employment experience are more likely to stay in school, more likely to be employed and have higher paying jobs as adults, and are less likely to become pregnant as teens.³ These findings are true for all youth, and are particularly evident among low income and minority youth.

Most of the youth who come to Covenant House have dropped out of school, have little or no work experience, and are also disconnected from their families and the community. At the same time these youth express an interest in furthering their education, finding employment, and developing healthy relationships with family and community. Unfortunately, they face many barriers to achieving these goals. One of those barriers is their lack of any job experience.

The summer youth employment program not only provides valuable job experience to thousands of New Yorkers, it helps youth to develop social skills, problem solving skills, money management skills, and provides income to youth from low income families. The summer youth employment program provides positive activities for our youth to engage in and provides an energetic workforce for the community service sector.

¹ Andrew Sum, Joseph McLaughlin, Ishwar Khatiwada, Still Young, Idle and Jobless: The Continued Failure of the Nation’s Teens to Benefit From Renewed Job Growth, Report prepared for Jobs for America’s Graduates, January 2006 @ p.22.

² Andrew Sum, Joseph McLaughlin, Ishwar Khatiwada, with Sheila Palma, Center for Labor Market Studies, The Continued Collapse of the Nation’s Teen Job market and the Dismal Outlook for the 2008 Summer Labor Market for Teens: Does Anybody Care?, April 2008 @ p.4.

³ Id., @ p.4

The elimination, in the proposed FY 2010-11 state budget, of funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program is short-sighted and will have a long term future negative impact on the development and economic stability of our youth and on our city and state labor markets. The Summer Youth Employment Program is one of a few youth employment programs available to provide valuable and much needed job experience to keep our youth in school and to develop a stable workforce for the future. Investment in our youth today will improve our future economic security.

We, therefore, support the City Council Res. 0002-2010 calling on the New York State Legislature to fully fund the Summer Youth program and we support the City Council Res. 0003-2010 calling on the United States Congress to include \$500 million in the 2010 jobs bill for summer youth employment program. We are extremely grateful for the wisdom, leadership, and support shown by the Youth Services Committee on this and so many other important issues impacting our youth.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today.

Queens Community House
Testimony before New York City Council
Youth Services Committee
Regarding the
Summer Youth Employment Program
Feb. 12,2010

For further information contact:
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Good morning, Chairman Fidler and members of the New York City Council. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns about the importance of the Summer Youth Employment Program. My name is Sarah Bowman, and I am representing the Queens Community House.

We strongly support your efforts to gain restoration of the funding for summer jobs for youth. Last summer, QCH placed 430 youth in summer jobs through SYEP. The need was tremendous; we had a total of 2110 applicants for these positions. Some of the expenses the youth were able to cover through their salaries included school clothes, family utility bills and textbooks for college.

In addition to the urgent need of young people to earn a salary and gain work experience, the SYEP program provides essential infrastructure for other youth programs. Many summer day camps for working parents utilize summer youth workers as core staff. At QCH, several of our youth have continue to work in the Early Childhood Center and youth programs afterwards. QCH also placed a large number of young people at the NYC Parks Department, enhancing even that city agency's ability to handle increased utilization in the summer months.

You have been staunch supporters of SYEP and we stand with you to urge restoration of the funding for this key program.

**NEW YORK CITY YOUTH BOARD AND
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD YOUTH COUNCIL**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 12, 2010

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17,000 Youth Jobs at Risk of Elimination in the Governor's Proposed Budget

***Youth Advisory Groups and Business Leaders Call for Protection of Summer Jobs
for New York City's Young People***

New York, NY, February 12, 2010: 17,000 New York City youth will be out of a job this summer if Governor Paterson's proposed budget has its way. The budget completely eliminates all state funding for summer jobs, a \$35 million reduction statewide.

"We had 139,597 New York City youth apply for jobs in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) last year and were only able to provide jobs for 52,225; 16,911 of those jobs came from state funding," said Rich McKeon, Chair of the New York City Youth Board. "While we understand the fiscal constraints the state is facing, we're asking the New York State Legislature to stand up for the children of New York."

New York City received \$19.5 million in the last fiscal budget to provide jobs for youth in day care centers, summer camps, non-profits and companies. Currently, the city's labor market participation for 16-19 year olds is at an all-time low of below 50%.

"Last summer, Maimonides Medical Center employed 141 SYEP participants, contributing 22,767 hours of service to our patients, their families and our staff. Their tireless efforts, enthusiasm, willingness to learn and eagerness to help made a real difference in the lives of our patients. If this program is not continued, it will not only hurt the future participants, who have been able to get real life work experience, career counseling and exposure to the health care industry, it will hurt the patients we serve," noted Marc J. Leff, Vice President of Human Resources.

Summer jobs for youth are not just getting kids off the street. They help stimulate the economy, are a source of employees for non-profits, and promote financial responsibility and career development.

Stimulating the Economy and Promoting Financial Responsibility: The majority of SYEP participants spend their wages in the local community, buoying businesses throughout the five

boroughs. SYEP includes an educational component that teaches participants how to wisely spend their wages.

Source of Employees for Nonprofits: NYC's non-profits depend on Summer Youth Employment Program participants to staff their summer day camps which thousands of working parents depend upon. Without these positions filled by the Summer Youth Employment Program, cuts in summer camp spots will likely follow.

Career Development: Research by Northeastern University economist Andrew Sum shows that early work experience during the teenage years leads to positive labor market outcomes. Teens who work this year are more likely to work next year and they earn significantly more over their lifetimes. Youth who do not have positive early experiences working have enormous difficulty entering the labor market as adults. Summer jobs help young people develop crucial job skills that our employers need. In addition, youth who participate in summer jobs have a better chance of succeeding in school and graduating.

Rae Linefsky, Vice Chair of the Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, noted, "Summer jobs are a win/win. Our youth get the job experience they need to lay a strong foundation for their future and they also support their families and local businesses."

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New York City Youth Board

The Youth Board advises DYCD on the development of youth programs. As mandated by New York City Charter, the Mayor appoints up to 28 members to the Board, 14 of whom are recommended by the City Council. The board is comprised of leaders from business, academia, government, foundations, and community-based organizations, in addition to two youth representatives. The Youth Board and committees meet at least quarterly.

Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

As per the Workforce Investment ACT (WIA), a youth council must be established as a subgroup within each local Workforce Investment Board (WIB). The purpose of the local Youth Council is to strengthen the capacity of education, youth development and training programs to provide high quality services that are aligned with workforce skills required for employment and civic success in New York City. The local Youth Council promotes a network that increases communication, coordination and collaboration, and encourages public support for this effort.

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR SUMMER JOBS

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Gigi Li
Co-Director
Neighborhood Family Services Coalition

Testimony submitted to the New York City Council Youth Services Committee
Lew Fidler, Chair

Oversight Hearing – Department of Youth & Community Development's (DYCD)
Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)

February 12, 2010

Good morning. My name is Gigi Li, Co-Director of Neighborhood Family Services Coalition (NFSC), and co-chair of the Campaign for Summer Jobs (CSJ). CSJ is a coalition of nearly 100 community-based and citywide organizations in New York City that focuses on the City's summer youth employment program. Following a change in federal legislation that eliminated dedicated funding for summer jobs, United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) and NFSC co-founded the CSJ in December 1999. Since then, the Campaign has worked tirelessly to advocate for State and City funds to ensure the availability of summer jobs for youth. Anthony Ng, my fellow co-chair of the Campaign could not join me today, but he sends his greetings to the committee.

Last summer, New York City was able to enroll the highest number of young people in SYEP in about a decade. However, we are deeply concerned about summer 2010. While the City is fortunate to have a remaining \$8.7 million in ARRA CSBG funds, SYEP is facing several layers of cuts. As you know, the Governor's Executive Budget has zeroed out funding for SYEP. \$35 million of TANF funds supported around 17,000 jobs slots in New York City. We're also facing a \$1 million cut in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget (662 slots), and a possible \$4.6 million dollar cut in the Mayor's Contingency Plan (3,000 slots). As it currently stands, New York City's 2010 SYEP program will only be able support approximately 14,200 slots compared to the 52,000 slots from this past summer, which represents a reduction of about 37,800 job slots, or a 73% cut.

As we face the challenge of restoring funding to SYEP, the need and demand for SYEP is staggering. Last summer, we saw another record increase in the number of SYEP job applications to 139,597. In the past year, employment of 16- to 19- year olds fell by 8 percent, nationwide to 29.2 percent; the largest decline of any age group. In tough economic times like the one we're in now, it is more important than ever to invest in the future of our youth. Therefore, The Campaign is in full support of Resolution 0002-2010 and Resolution 0003-2010, which calls upon the New York State Legislature to fully fund summer youth employment

programs and calls upon the United States Congress to include \$500 million in the 2010 jobs bill for a summer youth employment program and to pass the bill as soon as possible, respectively.

We urge that the City do all it can to support over 52,000 jobs again through SYEP. Like in years past, The Campaign for Summer Jobs stands ready work with the Mayor, DYCD, and the City Council to secure the funds needed for SYEP. On Monday, February 1st, the Campaign held its 11th Annual Youth Action Day lobbying trip to Albany. Speakers at our morning rally included Speaker Silver, Senate Majority Leader Espada, and Assemblymember John. In the afternoon, our 300 youth attended 152 legislative meetings in small groups, and spoke about the importance of fully restoring funding to SYEP. On the federal level, UNH and NFSC through our Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce continue to advocate for a dedicated federal funding for SYEP be included in the re-authorization of the Workforce Investment Act. We have also reached out to New York State Congressmembers to voice our support to include \$500 million in the 2010 Jobs Bill for a summer youth employment program.

Every year, young people gain valuable work experiences through SYEP, helping them prepare for future careers, while earning a paycheck and learning important life skills such as time management and budgeting. These skills will make our youth competitive in today's marketplace; thus making it possible for them to make meaningful contributions that will sustain a healthy economy. Wages earned are spent right away, thereby re-injecting money back into the economy. SYEP jobs are also essential for their communities. Thousands of youth work in day camps, daycare centers, and community centers, allowing agencies to accept a higher number of enrollees during the summer months. Without SYEP youth, many families will be forced to look for alternative options this summer. SYEP is an investment that benefits the youth themselves, their immediate communities, and the economy of New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with you in the upcoming months to secure sufficient funding for SYEP in 2010 and beyond.



Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Testimony for the February 12, 2010 Hearing

of the

**New York City Council's Youth Services Committee
Summer Youth Employment (SYEP) Program**

Prepared By:

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Introduction

My name is Kathy Fitzgibbons and I am the Senior Policy Analyst for Youth Services from the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA). I would like to thank the Youth Services Committee and its Chairperson, Council Member Fidler, for holding this hearing and for providing us with the opportunity to testify on the importance of funding restorations for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

FPWA is a membership organization with almost 300 community-based social service agencies and church-based human service programs in its network. FPWA strengthens its members through management and technical assistance; training and workshops; policy and advocacy services; and through a variety of grant programs, including camp scholarships, a holiday toy drive, and individual grants for emergency needs through its participation in the New York Times Neediest Cases fund. Among FPWA's membership are 70 agencies that provide services to youth throughout New York City.

FPWA advocates for programs that are essential to the development of youth including after school and out-of-school time programs, academic enrichment activities, job and skill building opportunities and trainings, case management, and summer employment programs for low-income youth. Youth services programs are essential to develop the academic, vocational, employability and life skills of young people to better prepare them for adulthood. FPWA believes that by providing a complete system of supports and activities, the youth of today will be equipped with the tools to become the leaders of tomorrow.

SYEP Proposed Reductions

FPWA is concerned that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposes to eliminate 662 of the much needed slots for SYEP for the summer of 2010. This represents a reduction in city funding of \$1 million for this essential program. Taking into consideration that the Governor has also proposed eliminating \$35 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding for SYEP in the Executive Budget, the gap between the availability of SYEP slots and actual demand is even wider.

The Demand for SYEP

Of the nearly 900,000 young adults 16 to 24 years of age in New York City, almost 25 percent live below the federal poverty line, compared to 19 percent of all New Yorkers regardless of age. The summer of 2009 saw the highest rates of teen unemployment since 1948. In NYC, over 52,000 teens worked in the SYEP but 139,000 actually applied to the program. New York State and New York City need to invest in SYEP now more than ever. We urge the restoration of this critical funding so teens may continue to have employment opportunities at this crucial time with the economy and to help curb the growing demand for these valuable programs. SYEP can also help stimulate the local economy as earnings from SYEP programs have been used for food, clothing and household expenses.

The Value of SYEP Programs

SYEP provides youth between the ages of 14-21 with summer employment and educational experiences that build on their individual strengths and incorporate youth development principles. SYEP offers a multitude of employment opportunities to youth in the areas of clerical positions, customer service, child care, web design as well as community service opportunities through government agencies, summer camps, hospitals law firms and retail

organizations. Investing in SYEP will provide youth with the skills and confidence they need to bring to future employers. To demonstrate the value of investing in SYEP, a recent interview of more than 400 employers found that young job entrants are ill-prepared to join today's workforce. They noted that these workers had limitations in basic knowledge, workplace skills and specific applied skills. Employers suggested one way to address these deficiencies was to provide real world experiences or community involvement that improves work readiness while cultivating applied skills.¹

To further support the value of SYEP, only 14 percent of high school graduates in the workforce are confident that they are generally able to do what is expected of them. Thirty-nine percent of high school graduates feel that there are gaps in their preparation for their current jobs. Studies have documented the benefits of summer employment opportunities for youth, particularly urban youth, in applying classroom learning to workplace scenarios when building skills are not taught in school. For example, a study from the Department of Labor indicates that over 65 percent of youth participating in an evaluation showed an increase of 1.2 grade levels in reading and 1.3 grade levels in math. Additionally, the Center for Labor Market Studies found that the benefits of early employment are considerable, particularly for young men who do not plan to attend college immediately. The benefits include a smoother transition to the labor market and higher weekly and yearly earnings for up to 15 years after graduating from high school. Some evidence suggests young people who work are less likely to drop out of high school than those who do not have jobs.²

Conclusion

We are pleased the Council has developed the resolutions calling upon the New York State legislature to fully fund SYEP as well as for Congress to include \$500 million in the 2010 jobs bill for a summer youth employment program. We are hopeful these measures will bolster SYEP to help begin to meet the demand for today's workforce. It is hoped the allocations for this vital program on city, state and federal levels will be reinstated.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ Ouellette, Mark and Orrell, Brent, "Building Effective Summer Youth Employment Programs", ICF International Presidential Transition, 2008
www.greenworkskc.org/./building%20Effective%20Summer%20Youth%20Employment%20Progra.

² Ibid, pages 1-2.

SYEP makes it possible for thousands of children to be enrolled in full day care that includes arts, recreation, literacy trips and leadership development. The SYEP participants who select jobs as camp counselors are helping to support communities, as well as themselves. Because of them we can provide quality care for children, thus allowing parents to be members of the workforce. In my program the children look up to these workers and look forward to the day they turn 14 so that they may apply to be a leader as well. My year round staff of 24 youth, all came through the summer youth program and many were child participants as well. Now college students, they are still at the place that gave them their first shot at a job and now they are giving back. Hundreds of camps across the city will not be able to have the child to staff ratio required by the dept of health in order to operate licensed programs that children and families need. SYEP is good for teens, great for children and needed by communities.

Amy LaTorres

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FOR THE RECORD

February 12, 2010

Committee on Youth Services - Testimony submitted by Gregory Rideout, Deputy Program Officer, and Kristina Sepulveda, Program Coordinator - Henry Street Settlement

Henry Street Settlement has been administering the Summer Youth Employment Program to serve the young people of New York City for the past several decades. This cycle we are slated to receive almost 1600 slots across our Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and Vulnerable Youth contracts, down from just shy of 2500 in 2009, due to the anticipated reduction in ARRA funds.

The numbers connected to SYEP in terms of expenditures and young people employed each cycle are astounding and no one can argue against the powerful effect that a \$67.5 million dollar program can have when circulated around the neighborhoods in NYC, many of which see staggering rates of unemployment far above the city-wide rate of 10.3%. However, as providers, we can lose sight of what is behind these statistics – the positive effect of summer employment on the young people that we are dedicated to serve.

Chantel, 15 years old, was rather shy when she first started to work for us. Raised by a single mother who had recently been laid off, Chantel was dedicated making every possible hour of SYEP count. She quickly made a strong impression as the first intern to arrive, the last to leave, and the one who went above and beyond what was asked of her. Over the course of the summer, as her confidence in her abilities grew, she began taking on new challenges and training her peers in kind. She developed strength through her leadership style, allowing her to serve as an additional source of support for both our staff and her co-workers.

Christina, Ruth, and Elsa, all 15 years old but from opposed neighborhoods and family backgrounds in Queens, became inseparable by the third week of the program. When one of their personal lives became so complex it caused her miss work, it was the other two who tactfully brought it to the attention of our staff, who were then able to reach out to her parents and alert them to the changing dynamics in their daughter's life.

Jonathan, 14 years old from the Lower East Side of Manhattan, had difficulty focusing his boundless energy when he first began working. However, he was a bright and but with the help of his boss' attentiveness and patient guidance finished the program with glowing reviews that highlighted his enthusiasm and high energy levels.

These stories are only the beginning of what SYEP participants experience each summer. There are tales of a young person's pride when they use their debit card to buy their young siblings a well-deserved ice cream or the feeling they have when they arrive at school on the first day in new shoes they saved for all season. Nor does it come near the feeling our participants have when they speak of their own development at their next (often unsubsidized) job interviews.

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Often in periods of reflection, we turn to our own stories of youth employment, whether it is scooping ice cream or being a counselor at the very same camp where we were once campers. We remember the boost from those initial words of praise for a job well done and the increased connection we felt to the futures we only once imagined for ourselves. As adults, we often draw on those experiences in our present occupations and career paths, whether it is dealing with troublesome co-workers or a highly formatted (and stubborn) Word document. Every young person deserves at least what we had, if not better.

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