



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEES ON YOUTH SERVICES & FINANCE

FISCAL 2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

BILL CHONG
COMMISSIONER

MAY 6, 2021

Good morning, Chairs Rose and Dromm and members of the Committees on Youth Services and Finance. I'm Bill Chong, Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm joined by Jagdeen Phanor, DYCD's Chief Financial Officer; Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services; Darryl Rattray, Associate Commissioner for Youth Services and Strategic Partnerships; Valarie Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development; Dana Cantelmi, ACCO; Mike Bobbitt, Deputy Commissioner for Community Development and Rong Zhang, Assistant Commissioner for Literacy and Immigrant Services. We are grateful to have this opportunity to testify on DYCD's Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget.

As you know, last week, Mayor Bill de Blasio presented the Recovery Budget for Fiscal 2022. This Recovery Budget is an historic stimulus-driven investment in our comeback and includes a notably high level of funding for DYCD programs. It's aligned with DYCD's mission to "alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish" by funding an array of critical supports to the city's young people and families. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Chairs Rose and Dromm and the entire Council and staff for your steadfast commitment and support of DYCD and the young people and families we serve.

The Executive Budget includes \$835.1 million that will allow DYCD to enhance existing services while launching groundbreaking new initiatives that will help propel New York City's recovery.

Last month, Mayor de Blasio announced Summer Rising, a bold vision for summer learning that will be student-centered, experiential, academically rigorous and culturally responsive. Summer Rising will provide opportunities for young people to learn, to get outside, and to engage with peers and caring adults in safe, supervised, and enriching robust programs, readying them for a return to school in September 2021. The initiative is truly the best of both worlds—bringing together for the first time the strengths of DYCD-funded summer enrichment initiatives and DOE's academic programs into a singular experience for young people, particularly those from communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. K-8 students will be connected to academic classes, enrichment programming including field trips, arts activities and outdoor recreation, and will engage in daily social emotional learning activities. Programs will follow rigorous health and safety protocols, including social distancing and mask wearing, and all locations will have access to testing, nursing support and a telehealth call center. All K-8 students in NYC are eligible. We are pleased that the Executive Budget includes an additional \$44.3 million in DYCD's budget to support this effort, which includes funding for all Summer SONYC programs. We appreciate the efforts of Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter and her team on working with us on this exciting new collaboration.

Mayor de Blasio also announced additional funding for the Summer Youth Employment program to support 5,000 additional slots beyond what was previously committed, for a total investment of \$167 million. SYEP has been a rite of passage for New York young people for nearly 60 years. This summer, SYEP takes on the added role of bringing back a semblance of normalcy to the lives of 75,000 young people whose lives were upended by COVID-19. The opportunities offered by SYEP will go a long way toward helping teens and young adults learn critical skills and

map out their futures and become important contributors to the city's recovery. To ensure participant safety and meet the needs of employers during the COVID-19 recovery, project-based learning and work-based opportunities may take place on-line, in-person or in a hybrid environment.

The Executive Budget includes \$4.35 million to expand Saturday Night Lights. This youth development and violence prevention program provides young people with high-quality sports and fitness training. Funded in partnership with our District Attorneys and the NYPD, this summer it will be expanded from 20 to approximately 100 locations.

We are also pleased that the Executive Budget includes \$933,000 to launch NYC Unity Works. Launching this summer, the program will be the country's largest and most comprehensive workforce development program ever created for LGBTQI communities, and will specifically focus on supporting homeless and runaway LGBTQI youth. It arrives during this on-going pandemic that exacerbated the challenges LGBTQI young people face in connecting to educational opportunities, job training, meaningful work, housing, mental health counseling, and other supports they need to survive and thrive. We thank our partners at the NYC Unity Project, the NYC Center for Youth Employment (CYE), the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, and the Ali Forney Center.

The Executive budget also supports our ongoing work to support young people and families. I remain gratified and thankful that under Mayor De Blasio, DYCD's funding has expanded significantly, allowing many more New Yorkers to benefit from the programs and services funded by our agency.

With this Council's strong support, the de Blasio Administration virtually transformed the system for Runaway and Homeless Youth. I recall the day when we only had 253 beds, with many funded by the Council with discretionary funding thanks to the efforts of Council Member Lew Fidler. Since 2014, we have more than tripled the number of residential beds to 813, the last of which came online after the Preliminary Budget Hearing. We increased the age for service eligibility up to 24 and opened additional drop-in centers. There are currently eight DYCD-funded centers to with at least one 24/7 center operating in each of the five boroughs. Young people have access to high quality mental health services across the portfolio.

We also transformed our afterschool programs for young people. We expanded and enhanced what was then known as Out-of-School Time into the successful COMPASS and SONYC programs. The budget grew from \$150.6 million to \$381.6 million and from 563 to about 900 locations.

We expanded programming for residents of public housing through the Cornerstone Community Center program. We began at 25 locations in 2009 and now offer services at 99 developments.

We grew and enhanced Mayor David Dinkins' signature Beacon program to 91 locations and the Executive Budget includes \$1.2 million for more programming.

In support of the communities hardest hit by COVID-19, DYCD issued a Request for Proposals for anti-poverty programs that will be located in 41 Neighborhood Development areas across the city. The RFPs in each neighborhood were shaped by surveying residents what they think is their communities greatest need. These programs will address the needs of older youth, seniors, the working poor, immigrants, and struggling families through education and employment services, literacy services, and assistance to individuals and families in accessing community and social services. New contracts will commence next year and are part of our overall efforts to help the city recover.

To assist New Yorkers to find these and our other programs, DYCD developed discoverDYCD. It is a digital platform that allows the public to find resources provided by DYCD funded programs, apply for programs, track their applications and reach out to DYCD for assistance by phone, email or using our digital assistant. It's being used by parents, schools, counselors and even the police officer on the beat to connect young people to resources, all on a smart phone.

Finally, I want to share with you DYCD's response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others. Last summer, DYCD added to its strategic plan a priority to become a pro-active anti-racist city agency. This priority supports DYCD's mission and vision, will help communities recover from the disparate racial impact of COVID-19, and seeks to create systemic change. The rise of anti-Asian bias incidents and violence during the pandemic, and additional deaths of unarmed Black Americans, reinforces the importance of anti-racism strategies. DYCD is currently pursuing four anti-racist goals, and committed to updating these or creating other ones in the future:

- Researching strategies to center equity in DYCD resource allocations.
- Providing anti-racism and implicit bias training and resources to DYCD staff.
- Revising DYCD's equity and mission statements to reflect the agency's current anti-racist position.
- Increasing the pool, awareness and the hiring of consultants of color who can provide support to CBOs' organizational health, operations and program quality. Connect these consultants to SBS to learn how to obtain City MWBE certification, if they don't already this designation.

Part of these efforts include engaging young people themselves in these important conversations. Beginning last year, we have sponsored the "WE the YOUTH, You the PEOPLE!" youth town hall series with the goal of supporting young people in the development of a youth agenda to inform policy, practice, and programs that support young people. Youth are talking about the upcoming city elections and the funding priorities of candidates running for office.

These and our other initiatives are essential in fostering "a recovery for all of us." Thank you again for the chance to testify today. We are ready to answer any questions.