



**Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development**

**TESTIMONY**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES**

**Hearing on**

**DYCD Adult Literacy Program and Intro 649**

**A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code requiring  
Bilingual After-School Programs**

**PRESENTED BY**

**DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANDRA GUTIERREZ &  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SUSAN HASKELL**

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2019**

Good morning Chair Rose and members of the Youth Services Committee. I am Sandra Gutierrez, Deputy Commissioner for Community Development at the Department of Youth & Community Development.

I am pleased to be joined by Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services, Assistant Commissioner Wanda Ascherl, and Assistant Commissioner Rong Zhang.

On behalf of Commissioner Bill Chong, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on DYCD's Adult Literacy Services and Intro 649, which would require bilingual instruction in afterschool programs in certain school districts. I will testify on Adult Literacy and Deputy Commissioner Haskell will then discuss the bill.

These topics really speak to DYCD's mission to invest in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.

### **Adult Literacy Programs**

The ability to read and write is fundamental to a person's capacity to succeed in life. English proficiency is associated with the ability to find and keep employment that pays a living wage and provides opportunities for upward advancement. This helps parents fully support and participate in their child's education and to actively engage in civic life. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, 1.8 million individuals or 23% of the NYC population are not proficient in English and 1.1 million or 19% of the city's population 25 and older have less than a high school education.

We want to thank the Council for its strong, long-standing partnership on Adult Literacy programs. It has been critical to funding programs across the City. DYCD commits \$13.87 million to support Adult Literacy Programs from a mix of Federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and City tax levy funding. This work is complimented by other literacy programs supported by the Department of Education, the City University of New York and the public library systems.

DYCD's adult literacy programs include a variety of courses to meet the various needs of participants. For example, these adult literacy programs offer Adult Basic Education (ABE) that teaches both native and non-native English speakers reading, writing and math. We offer Testing Assessment Secondary Completion, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that teach listening, speaking, reading and writing to individuals whose primary language is not English.

We appreciate the work of our literacy providers who are at the front-line committed to serving immigrant communities who are constantly threatened by ICE raids, family separation and the new "Public Charge" rule. We also want to acknowledge the work of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. We have been working closely with them on advising programs on the impact of the latest actions in Washington. Fortunately, families that participate in DYCD-funded services will not be impacted by changes to the public charge rule.

In our efforts to support funded programs to make continuous improvement, DYCD, in collaboration with our technical assistance provider, the Literacy Assistance Center, provides professional development and technical assistance to literacy providers. Staff development focuses on building best practices in literacy, numeracy, English language instruction and curriculum design. Last year, over 40 training and coaching sessions were provided to approximately 400 literacy staff.

In Fiscal 2019, our adult literacy programs enrolled over 16,000 participants. While the majority of program participants made progress in literacy, over 56% of the enrolled participants improved their reading skills by at least one grade level. Students not only benefit academically by participating in our literacy programs, they also receive other much needed assistance such as referral to employment training, college assistance and individual support.

Before I turn to Deputy Commissioner Haskell, I'd like to share a story about a student from one of our programs to demonstrate the value of our programs. The student was incarcerated at 16 and became pregnant at 17 years old. But she got a second chance by enrolling in one of our programs. Here's what she wrote about the program: "It's a calm and supportive environment, the teachers and workers treat me with respect. They are supporting, understanding and care about me getting my education. On the days I couldn't attend, the teacher called with deep concern. They taught me what to say at job interviews and even provided me with interview clothes. The program is important to me because it gave me a second chance at success. It has bestowed a purpose in my life, giving me the chance to make my parents proud and most importantly be the best I can be for my daughter." This is just one out of thousands of examples of the extraordinary work our programs do to help students.

### **Intro 649**

Deputy Commissioner Haskell:

DYCD supports the delivery of afterschool services for young people with a range of language skills, in a manner that is linguistically and culturally accessible. There are many benefits for young people to participate in our programs, including development of positive self-esteem, fostering positive peer connections and caring relationships between youth and staff, engagement of parents in the development of their children, and exposure to different languages and cultures within a community that can instill an appreciation for diversity.

Our program participants speak many languages in addition to English. Even so, 97% of participants, the vast majority, report that they speak English well. In Fiscal Year 2019, of the 180,000 afterschool participants age 18 and under, roughly 22,800 (13%) indicated that English was not their primary language, but the majority of those students (76%) also reported that they were able to speak English well or better. Roughly 5,500 participants (3% of the youth served) indicated that they didn't speak English well or at all.

Our partnerships with community-based providers are essential to our successful programs. Our funding model reflects that community-based organizations and their staff are

best equipped to meet the needs of English Language Learners. A key role of DYCD's partners in afterschool for non-English speaking youth is to help them adapt to their community and become contributing members in their neighborhood. As a youth development environment, after school programs can play a vital role in the process of learning language and culture in a new setting.

The organizations that we fund are expected to hire staff and design programs in accordance with the needs of their participants.

Successful program elements for English Language Learners include:

- Hiring staff from the neighborhood including those who speak the languages of participants.
- Providing essential written materials in languages spoken by their communities (enrollment forms, parental consent forms).
- Program activities which engage all the senses to develop language skills.
- Students engaging with peers, making social connections that will support language development in a supportive setting.
- Using play, arts, literacy and STEM activities, for example, to reinforce youth development principles regardless of language ability.
- Programs working closely with their school, which may have additional language resources, including a language service for parent meetings and orientations.

Here are a few examples of after school programs and their approach to supporting English Language Learners:

#### **YMCA of Greater New York COMPASS Elementary School Program at PS 57, Staten Island**

In Chair Rose's district, at PS 57, the YMCA serves a large Liberian community in Park Hill. A main focus for the program is having staff on site that speak multiple dialects of the African community, Spanish, Arabic, and Urdu to help parents and youth who need assistance. The program translates important written materials for parents, to help keep them engaged in their child's experience in after school. Additionally, the program partnership with the school includes having after school staff present for day school family events.

#### **CAMBA SONYC Program at MS 246, Brooklyn**

In Council Member Eugene's district, CAMBA operates a SONYC program at MS 246 Walt Whitman. The program serves a predominantly Caribbean population and some staff speak Haitian Creole and are able to translate when students and parents need assistance. In partnership

with Caribbean American Sports & Cultural Youth Movement, Inc (CASYM), they offer steel pan classes. They hosted a Family Night with a Caribbean Carnival theme where staff and students dressed in attire to represent Caribbean countries and a cultural dinner was served. The theme carried over into the Community School event that took place the next day.

### **St. Nick's Alliance COMPASS Programs, Brooklyn**

In Northern Brooklyn at St. Nick's Alliance, about 26% of youth enrolled in their programs are English Language Learners. St. Nick's developed a multi-tiered Literacy Immersion Model. The program enables young people to explore learning through visual, performing and digital arts. They celebrate the culture and language of origin of participants through a partnership with the New York City Children's Theater and Magic Box Productions, which specialize in teaching English Language Learners.

St. Nick's also operates a mobile library with a 15,000-title collection in English and non-English languages and offers reading coaches for one-on-one and small group instruction, as well as transformational coaching to help English Language Learners with behavioral challenges.

### **New York Edge Beacon Community Center at the Academy for New Americans**

New York Edge operates at the Academy for New Americans, a school in Astoria that provides after school services to young people who recently arrived in this country, and are still learning English. Youth study at the Academy, and then transfer to their neighborhood middle school or to a traditional high school when their English language has improved. Children in this program come from 38 countries and speak 18 languages. Staff members serve as interpreters in Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Hindi, Urdu, Russian, and Greek.

In addition to the recruitment efforts of our providers, families can learn where services are available through our centralized resources. For example, DYCD operates Youth Connect, a 1-800 hotline. Callers can learn about our programs and find program sites in their neighborhood. When callers need interpretation assistance, we connect them to our language bank operators, who have the ability to speak up to 180 different languages.

We recently launched discoverDYCD 2.0. This new public website allows New Yorkers to find DYCD resources throughout the City, and it is also available in over 180 languages. DiscoverDYCD includes a feature which also allows users to apply to many DYCD services at one time .

To reach out more directly to immigrant communities, DYCD advertises services in community newspapers in multiple languages, including the Haitian Times (Haitian Creole), Russkaya Reklama (Russian), El Diario, (Spanish), Pakistani Post (Urdu), Weekly Thikana (Bengali) and *Polska Gazeta* (Polish).

To help us meet the needs of all New Yorkers, we are currently conducting a community needs assessment across the city in the 10 specified languages under the City's Language

Access law and Yiddish. The data will be used to inform DYCD's strategic planning, and new directions for the agency.

Through hundreds of after school programs, including the examples described above, DYCD is well-positioned to meet the needs of young people and families.

We appreciate the spirit of the bill and look forward to continued discussions with the Council on promoting services for English Language Learners. Once again, thank you for holding this hearing today. We look forward to collaborating with the City Council on how best to support literacy and afterschool programs.



# **New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy**

**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair**

**Oversight Hearing  
September 19, 2019**

**Testimony of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy  
Presented by Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center**

Good day. Thank you Chairperson Rose and members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ira Yankwitt and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center, a 36-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the adult education system, and to advancing adult literacy as a foundation for equal opportunity and social justice. Today I will be testifying on behalf of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, or NYCCAL, a coalition comprised of adult literacy teachers, program managers, students, and allies from over 40 community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs across the five boroughs.

Today in New York City, there are approximately 2.2 million adults who lack English language proficiency, a high school diploma, or both. The majority of these adults are immigrants. Others were born in the United States but underserved by the public school system. Many of these adults are unemployed or live in poverty. Most are people of color. Limited skills impact almost every aspect of their lives, making it difficult for them to secure living-wage jobs, support their children in school, advocate for their rights as workers, access quality health care, and fully participate in the political process. Yet public funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 4% of these 2.2 million adults are able to access basic education, high school equivalency, or English language classes in any given year.

NYCCAL is grateful to the City Council for championing the cause of these adults and for securing a \$12 million expansion of adult literacy funding and services for each of the past four years. Unfortunately, this funding and these services are just the tip of the iceberg.

When it comes to funding for adult literacy, there are really three issues. The first is the paucity of the funding itself, which shuts the doors to over 95% of those adults in need. The second is the unreliable nature of the current funding streams, which poses a continuous threat to program stability, staff continuity, and the ability to fully achieve program and policy goals. The third is the inadequacy of the funding formulas and rates, which undermine programs' ability to provide the full array and depth of services that students need.

In December of 2017, my organization, the Literacy Assistance Center, released a report entitled "Investing in Quality: A Blueprint for Adult Literacy Programs and Funders". Funded by DYCD, the report details 14 "Building Blocks" of a comprehensive, community-based adult literacy program, identifies the resources needed to fully implement the Building Blocks, and includes a first-of-its-kind cost model. Based on our cost model, we found that community-based adult literacy programs would need to have their current funding rates increased by at least *four times* in order to fully implement the components and services outlined in the report. While this might sound like a big leap, we know that at the current funding rates, many of the critical program components that we identify – such as full-time teachers, counseling, student support services, workforce transition services, professional development and planning time for staff, and integrated technology - are often compromised.

NYCCAL is calling on the City Council and the Mayor to take two crucial steps toward creating a city that truly provides educational opportunity for all:

1) Baseline the \$12 million for DYCD-funded adult literacy services and combine these funds with the existing \$3.5 million in previously baselined funding.

2) Once the baselined funding level for adult literacy services is increased, issue a new adult literacy program RFP that establishes a funding rate that will enable programs to provide the high quality, comprehensive services that all adult students deserve. Currently, DYCD-funded programs provide less than \$1,000 per student. NYCCAL calls on the next DYCD RFP to establish a rate of no less than double that amount and, ideally, up to four times that amount, consistent with the rate identified in our analysis.

NYCCAL believes that being able to read and write, speak and understand English, obtain an equivalency diploma, and successfully enter job training or post-secondary education are the rights of every New Yorker, and that every adult in need should be able to access high quality adult literacy services. If we are truly a city committed to equal opportunity and social justice, we should expect no less.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Debbie Rose, Chair**

**Presented by Lena Cohen, Policy Analyst on  
Immigrant Issues and Civic Engagement  
September 19, 2019**

Good afternoon Chair Rose and members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses of New York. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 42 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. Now in our 100th year, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers.

UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels. Immigrants make up a significant percentage of the individuals our members serve annually in their programs with specialized immigrant services, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, legal services, and citizenship, newcomer, and refugee assistance.

We thank the City Council for negotiating a FY2020 budget that included \$12 million for New York City adult literacy programs. This testimony will focus on the network of adult literacy services in New York City and recommendations to strengthen these programs moving forward.

**Adult Literacy**

Adult literacy supports individuals, families, and communities through a broad range of benefits. At its core, English language proficiency is essential to fully partake in the economic, social and civic aspects of our society. From the ability to navigate public transportation, to the ability to communicate with health professionals, to the ability to support a child's success in the school system, to the ability to find good paying employment or to pursue higher education, English language skills are a necessity.

In today's economy, New Yorkers cannot hope to compete for well-paying jobs if they lack basic English skills. However, with New York City currently being home to nearly 2.2 million adults without a high school diploma, English proficiency, or both, the City's Office of Workforce Development reported that **only 3% of those in need of language development skills are able to participate in City-funded classes.**

Further exacerbating the funding challenges are recent changes in federal policies that make adult literacy classes much more difficult to access. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implemented new provisions in 2018 that make it more difficult for individuals with the lowest skills levels, or those lacking permanent documentation, to be served. Instead, WIOA now incentivizes services to those adult learners closest to achieving a near-term workforce outcome. For instance, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) formerly administered an English Language Civics (EL Civics) program, which provided literacy and civics instruction to immigrants on the pathway to becoming citizens. In 2018, that service option was eliminated and replaced by the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program, which employs a higher-level training curriculum. NYSED has estimated that as a result, up to 17,000 students that were previously served in EL Civics with these federal dollars now face displacement by higher-skilled learners.

#### **Recommendations:**

In order to ensure that all New Yorkers who wish to access these programs can continue to do so, United Neighborhood Houses urges the City to:

- 1. Baseline \$12m for DYCD-funded adult literacy programs in the FY2021 budget;**
- 2. Increase reimbursement rates to meet the true cost of delivering services; and**
- 3. Invest in a pilot program that funds adult literacy providers at the true cost of delivering high quality services in order to achieve the full range of outcomes that literacy programs can achieve.**

#### *Baseline Funding*

With the support and leadership of the City Council, the City has invested \$12m in adult literacy programs in the last four fiscal years. In FY2017, the City grew adult literacy funding through DYCD from \$4.9 million to a total of \$15 million. City Council leadership has maintained this funding level in the three years since. However, \$12m of that funding is one-year in nature, meaning each year programs don't know if they can keep the doors open or must lay off staff and cancel classes. This perennial uncertainty makes retention of qualified staff very difficult, as well as precludes long-term planning.

#### *Reimbursement Rates*

One of the other significant challenges of the adult literacy system is that it is seriously underfunded, and where funding does exist, it is at reimbursement rates that do not fully cover the cost of delivering high-quality adult literacy classes. A 2017 DYCD-commissioned report conducted by the Literacy Assistance Center -- titled *Investing in Quality* -- analyzed the true costs of providing quality adult literacy programming and found that on average, adult literacy programs cost about \$3,600 to

provide instruction and support to each student they serve<sup>1</sup>; instead, the current reimbursement rate hovers between \$850- \$1,000 per student. This means that many adult literacy providers are actually experiencing a loss on contracts when they provide literacy services to their community and must raise private dollars to support this program.

Given that DYCD-funded adult literacy contracts are in their final extension year and are due for a new procurement for programs to begin July 1, 2020, the impending RFP offers an opportunity for DYCD to finally increase reimbursement rates. Therefore, it is important to increase literacy funds and baseline them in the FY2021 budget. **Only with baselined funding will the Department of Youth and Community Development be able to develop a new RFP with fair reimbursement rates.**

#### *Pilot Program*

UNH recommends the City Council work with the Administration to set aside at least \$2 million for a pilot program that would fund programs at approximately four times DYCD's current rate. The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that funding programs at or closer to the level called for in the *Investing in Quality* report will lead to greater student gains and/or a wider range of student outcomes than current levels of funding enable programs and students to achieve. It would also potentially enable the Council, administration, DYCD, and other funders to correlate specific program enhancements to targeted student goals and outcomes.

#### **Intro 649-2018**

UNH appreciates the City Council also creating this opportunity to discuss Int 0649-2018, which would require bilingual after-school programs and language access in after-school programs. Settlement houses are deeply embedded in the communities that they serve and continuously strive to cater their programming to the specific needs of their communities.

However, City and State contracts for after-school programs do not provide sufficient funds to allow providers to hire staff that meet the language requirements in this legislation. Many after-school program staff are working for the minimum wage or just a little more. After-school programs are thus competing with other jobs that offer similar compensation but do not require specialized skills. Furthermore, starting September 25<sup>th</sup>, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will be placing new clearance requirements on after-school staff which will make staffing programs even more difficult.

Because of the low pay offered to this important workforce, after-school providers will be unable to hire staff who meet the requirements in Int. 0649-2018. UNH urges the City Council to work with providers and DYCD to ensure that provider rates are enhanced in order to offer competitive salaries to the hard-working staff in after-school programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for the Council's leadership on these critical issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Literacy Assistance Center, 2018. *Investing in Quality, A Blueprint for Adult Literacy Programs and Funders*: <http://www.lacnyc.org/investing-in-quality.html>.



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**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair**

**Oversight Hearing  
September 19, 2019**

**Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition  
Presented by Liza Schwartzwald, Manager of Education Policy**

Good afternoon and thank you Chair Rose and members of the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify. My name is Liza Schwartzwald and I am a Manager of Education Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for more than 200 groups serving immigrants and refugees across New York State. The NYIC has a distinguished track record of improving Multilingual Language Learners' and immigrant students' access to resources, working with the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to address barriers immigrants face, as well as supporting adult literacy programs across the city. Our member organizations specifically serve the needs of marginalized immigrant communities - including newly-arrived immigrants, low-income families, and youth and adults with limited English proficiency.

The NYIC wishes to thank you, Hon. Council Member Rose, and we wish to express our deep appreciation to the City Council and the Mayor for the \$12 million investment in adult literacy funding and services over these past three years.

As part of the NYIC's expansive approach to education, many of our members run adult literacy programs essential to ensuring the success of immigrant families. Currently, there are approximately 2.2 million adults in New York City who lack English language proficiency, a high school diploma or both, of which over 75% are immigrants. Yet public funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 4% of these 2.2 million adults are able to access basic education, high school equivalency, or English language classes in any given year.

In a city committed to immigrant rights, justice, and opportunity for our increasingly diverse community, failing to adequately support city-funded English language and literacy classes would be an abandonment of the thousands of adults who benefit from them. Adult literacy classes provide the basis for our immigrant community to navigate every aspect of life in a new country. This is especially important for immigrant parents of young children who are limited English proficient. Parents of young children are their child's most important resource in accessing education services, healthcare, and other necessary services. Adult literacy classes provide parents with the opportunity to acquire these necessary skills and also support their children throughout their own education.

In support of these adult learners, we call on the City Council and the Mayor to support these two critical steps:

- 1) Baseline the \$12 million for DYCD-funded adult literacy services and combine these funds with the existing \$3.5 million in previously baselined funding.
- 2) Once the baselined funding level for adult literacy services is increased, issue a new adult literacy program RFP that establishes a funding rate that will enable programs to provide the high quality, comprehensive services that all adult students deserve. Currently, DYCD-funded programs provide less than \$1,000 per student. The next DYCD RFP should establish a rate of no less than double that amount, or \$2,000 for every student. The Literacy Assistance Center's Report, "Investing in Quality: A Blueprint for Adult Literacy Programs and Funders", funded by the DYCD, shows the true cost for programs to be four times the current rate of just under \$1,000 per student.

The Mayor and City Council have shown a principled commitment to the children of New York City and have rightfully made meaningful investments in our K-12 system. However, for the one in three New Yorkers in need of adult literacy education, we have much left to do. The NYIC and NYCCAL believe that being able to read and write, speak and understand



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English, obtain a high school or equivalency diploma, and successfully enter job training or post-secondary education are the rights of every New Yorker. To make that vision a reality, we urge the Mayor and City Council to baseline adult literacy funding and ensure that every adult who could benefit from these programs is able to gain access to high-quality adult literacy services.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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- **HELLO, MY NAME IS NANCY. I AM A SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND A MEMBER OF THE VOICES OF WOMEN KNOWN AS VOW.**
- **VOW IS A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WHO ORGANIZE TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEMS THAT ABUSED WOMEN TURN TO FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE.**
- **IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE PROVIDE SERVICES TO VICTIMS IN A SAFE, COMPASSIONATE AND SWIFT MANNER.**
- **ONE OF THE KEY GAPS IN PROVIDING THESE SERVICES IS THAT MANY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS DO NOT HAVE A PEER DELIVERED SERVICES MODEL IN PLACE.**
- **WE BELIEVE THAT AGENCIES THAT RECEIVE FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES SHOULD HAVE AN ACTIVE PEER DELIVERED SERVICES MODEL.**

- **THEY CAN BEGIN BY HAVING ALL OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT ADVERTISEMENTS INCLUDE LANGUAGE THAT ENCOURAGES SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO APPLY.**
- **MOREOVER, WE BELIEVE THAT CITY COUNCIL, THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES/HUMAN RESOURCE ADMINISTRATION AND THE MAYOR'S OFFICE TO END DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SHOULD MANDATE THAT ORGANIZATIONS APPLYING FOR FUNDING HAVE THIS MODEL IN PLACE WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATION.**
- **HIRING SURVIVORS HELPS OTHER SURVIVORS ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS WITH SOMEONE WHO SHARES A SIMILAR STORY. IT CAN INCREASE HOPE, WHICH MANY SURVIVORS HAVE LOST DURING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.**
- **THIS IS JUST A BEGINNING AND WE ENCOURAGE ALL WHO WORK IN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES FIELD TO PUT INTO ACTION A PEER DELIVERED SERVICES MODEL.**
- **THANK YOU.**



FOR THE RECORD

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**New York City Council  
Committee on Youth Services  
Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York  
Presented by Lisa Garcia, Senior Director of Afterschool and Day Camp**

**Oversight Hearing: DYCD's Adult Literacy Program and Intro 649-2018  
September 19, 2019**

Good morning, my name is Lisa Garcia, senior Director of Afterschool and Day Camp, and I will be testifying on behalf of the YMCA of Greater New York. Thank you Chair Rose and to the Youth Services Committee for the opportunity to testify on both DYCD's adult literacy program and Introduction 649 of 201, which would require afterschool programs to have bi-lingual components in their program.

New York City's YMCA is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. Our organization of over 4,000 employees works every day to help people make positive changes in their lives and we invest in the communities we serve. With 24 YMCA physical branches and more than 100 community sites across the city, the Y is among the city's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to adulthood — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

First, regarding DYCD's adult literacy programs, the YMCA has seven New Americans Welcome Centers, plus nine offsite locations with full services, throughout the five boroughs serving over 5,000 individuals and families annually. Since 2008, our multilingual resource and referral centers provide immigrant families with a wide array of instructional, vocational, recreational, family support, and social services. Free programs for New Americans include: English as a Second Language, Cultural Orientation, Citizenship Preparation, Job Readiness, Computer Literacy, Adult Literacy, and High School Equivalency Test Preparation and Workforce Development. Our participants English oral skills range from illiteracy through high proficiency, many seeking basic language skills to integrate into their community and others seeking workforce development.

The Y is grateful to the City Council for your continued support and for securing a \$12 million in adult literacy funding and services for each of the past four years. Currently, the Y receives \$203,519 in non-discretionary adult literacy funding. As you know these non-discretionary adult literacy contracts are due to expire. As members of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, we have advocated for the current \$12 million to be baselined and significantly increased for the next DYCD RFP. It is becoming increasingly difficult to deliver quality

programming at the current average of \$814.00 per participant rates, which do not account for increases in indirect expenses. Therefore, increasing the rates to at least \$2,000 per participant, as NYCCAL is advocating for, will shore up the adult literacy system.

Next, as a lead provider of afterschool programming for elementary, middle and high school, the YMCA appreciates the intention of the proposed legislation to require bi-lingual components into afterschool programming. However, there are factors that the Council should consider, as this legislation is deliberated and negotiated: 1. Cost of skilled bi-lingual staff; 2. Lack of COMPASS/SONYC RFP; and 3. Limited youth development workforce.

Fluent bi-lingual staff will be needed to develop appropriate afterschool curriculum. Our curriculum is based on a program model that focuses on learning enhancement, health and recreation, and building competence and confidence in children. Language fluency is a specialized skill set that comes with an added cost, therefore developing appropriate bi-lingual afterschool curriculum and hiring staff to implement will increase program operating cost.

The Y empowers thousands of children and teens, in over 70 NYC public school buildings through COMPASS and SONYC funding, each day to develop a ferocious love of learning, an excitement to try new things, and to access information, resources and people that will amplify their potential. In 2018 DYCD issued and rescinded the COMPASS/SONYC RFP due to push back from providers over the low per student rates. It has become increasingly challenging to provide quality youth services in a fiscally responsible manner under the current structure of the system. Without knowing whether a new RFP will be funded adequately to meet the needs of the current system or if it will be reissued in the near future, we question how the indirect cost of implementing bi-lingual components into afterschool curriculum without placing the burden on already fiscally constraint providers?

In general, staffing youth programs is challenging due to youth development staffing shortage. The Y's staff-to-student ratio is 1:10 and the site capacity can range from 24 to as many as 500 children. The current challenge is meeting this staffing ration. With a limited workforce, it will be that much more challenging to find qualified bi-lingual youth development workers skilled in the need language.

We appreciate your support, leadership, and partnership in helping deliver quality adult literacy and quality afterschool program that help more people learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to continuing our successful collaboration and to working with your committee and the City of New York for many years to come.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Rivadeneyra, Senior Director of Government Relations, at [mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org](mailto:mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org) or 212-630-9717.

**TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**

**New York City Council  
Committee on Youth Services  
Oversight: Adult Literacy and Int. No. 649**

**Submitted by:**

**Faith Behum**

**UJA-Federation of New York**

**September 19, 2019**

Good morning Chairperson Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services. My name is Faith Behum I am an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York. Established 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to the mission is to care for those in need. UJA identifies and meets the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA connects people to their communities and respond to crises in New York, Israel and around the world. UJA supports a network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services. On behalf of UJA, the network of nonprofit partners and those served, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the adult literacy system in New York City as well as on Local Law 649.

### **The Adult Literacy System**

UJA appreciates the commitment of the New York City Council and the Administration to investing in adult literacy programs in New York City, notably for the continued investment of \$12 million in educational opportunities for immigrant New Yorkers, a commitment which was renewed for Fiscal Year 2020. For the 2.2 million adults in New York City – one-third of the adult population – who lack English Language Proficiency, basic literacy skills, or a high school diploma, these programs are necessary tools in teaching these individuals how to read, write, obtain an equivalency diploma, enter job training or post-secondary education programs. In this uncertain political climate, these services are more important than ever in ensuring that immigrant families understand their rights and know what resources are available to them, as well as ensuring they understand how to navigate the healthcare system and the school system. By continuing the \$12 million investment, more immigrants will be able to access higher education programs as well as jobs and careers that will allow them to take care of themselves and their families.

According to the Community Needs Assessment conducted by DYCD in 2016, adult education/literacy classes, was one of the greatest needs and service gaps reported.<sup>1</sup> This finding was consistent throughout the city. This need is echoed by the 2016 survey conducted by the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL) of adult literacy providers, with 54 responding organizations, which found that these organizations' collective waitlist for classes exceeded 15,000 individuals.<sup>2</sup> However, this number represents an undercount on need, as not all programs were surveyed or were able to provide data regarding waitlists. Furthermore, the City's ability to offer adult literacy programs is fairly constrained. Considering all local, state, and federal investments, the City's Office of Workforce Development reports just 61,000 individuals are served annually in "basic education" programs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The City of New York Department of Youth and Community Development. *Community Needs Assessment Report 2017*. [http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2017\\_CNA\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2017_CNA_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> NYCCAL survey data

<sup>3</sup> <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/careerpathways/downloads/pdf/Career-Pathways-Progress-Update.pdf>

When it comes to funding for adult literacy, there are really three issues. The first is the paucity of the funding itself, which shuts the doors to over 95% of those adults in need. The second is the unreliable nature of the current funding streams, which poses a continuous threat to program stability, staff continuity, and the ability to fully achieve program and policy goals. The third is the inadequacy of the funding formulas and rates, which undermine programs' ability to provide the full array and depth of services that students need.

In December of 2017, the Literacy Assistance Center released a report entitled "Investing in Quality: A Blueprint for Adult Literacy Programs and Funders." Funded by DYCD, the report details 14 "Building Blocks" of a comprehensive, community-based adult literacy program, identifies the resources needed to fully implement the Building Blocks, and includes a cost model. According to the cost model, community-based adult literacy programs would need to have their current funding rates increased by at least *four times* in order to fully implement the components and services outlined in the report. At the current funding rates, many of the critical program components that were identified in the report – such as full-time teachers, counseling, student support services, workforce transition services, professional development and planning time for staff, and integrated technology - are often compromised.

We urge the City Council and the Administration to take two crucial steps:

- 1) Restore and baseline the \$12 million for DYCD-funded adult literacy services and combine these funds with the existing \$3.5 million in baselined DYCD funding.
- 2) Once the baselined funding for adult literacy services is increased and DYCD begins to draft its next RFP for multi-year funding scheduled to be released in the coming year, commit to funding programs at a rate that will better enable them to provide the high quality, comprehensive services that all adult students deserve. Currently, DYCD-funded programs provide less than \$1,000 per student. The New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, of which UJA-Federation is a member, calls on the next DYCD RFP to establish a rate of no less than double that amount, or \$2,000 for every student. While this rate falls short of the level of funding called for in the Investing in Quality report, NYCCAL is sensitive to the need to balance quantity and quality. With baseline funding of \$15.5 million and a rate of \$2,000 per student, DYCD-funded programs would be able to serve over 7,500 students a year, maintaining capacity and increasing the quality of services, as we continue to work with this council and this administration to further increase the city's investment in both.

By baselining funding and issuing a new procurement, community-based adult literacy providers will be able to more effectively serve their students.

**Int. No. 649: A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring bilingual afterschool programs**

COMPASS and SONYC afterschool programs offer participants assistance with their homework as well as provide opportunities to improve their literacy skills and increase their knowledge about science, technology, engineering and math through project-based learning. These

programs also provide an outlet for children and youth to participate in team sports and art classes.

UJA and our nonprofit partners who oversee COMPASS and SONYC programs want to create an environment where every participant can engage fully with the components of these programs. However, it is unrealistic to require afterschool programs to have bilingual components and to hire and retain bilingual instructors and staff without including additional investments to fund these resources. In the fall of 2018, the COMPASS and SONYC RFPs were cancelled due largely to the inadequate rates that were present in the RFPs. Due to cancellation of the RFPs, providers' contracts have been extended, with no adjustment to the rates in those contracts. The current rates included in COMPASS and SONYC contracts make it extremely difficult for providers to offer high-quality programs to participants.

Other issues must be addressed in order to improve reimbursement for both SONYC and COMPASS programs and adequately support the providers of these services before adding new unfunded service requirements. All COMPASS programs continue to not be funded at the same rate. Despite similar services offered across elementary after-school programs, COMPASS slots are funded at two different rates. Programs previously funded by the City Council before they were baselined at the end of the Bloomberg administration receive \$2,800 per child, which is \$400 less than the \$3,200 base rate. Also, the implementation of indirect rates and cost of living adjustments (COLA) varies by programs. Some programs have received funding for COLAs in their COMPASS and SONYC contracts while others have received no funding.

Besides the additional costs programs will incur for hiring and retaining bilingual staff and instructors, it is unclear if programs will be even able to locate staff with these credentials. SONYC and COMPASS programs already report difficulty with finding and maintaining qualified staff. Requiring programs to hire bilingual staff will make filling staffing quotas even more difficult.

UJA would like to thank Council Members Eugene and Holden for introducing Int. No. 649 and for recognizing the unique needs of children and youth who are English-language learners attending COMPASS and SONYC afterschool programs. We encourage the council members to work with afterschool providers to determine the best ways to fully include English-language learners in their programs without placing an unfunded mandate on these providers.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on both the adult literacy system in New York City and proposed Local Law 649. If you have any questions please contact Faith Behum at [behumf@ujafedny.org](mailto:behumf@ujafedny.org).

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9.19.19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lena Cohen

Address: 45 Broadway 20th Fl. NY, NY 10006

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

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

**THE COUNCIL  
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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Liza Schwartzwald

Address: 131 W 32nd Street

I represent: New York Immigration Coalition

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sandra Gutierrez

Address: Deputy Commissioner for Community Development

I represent: Dtcd

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Haskell

Address: Deputy Cmsr for Youth Services

I represent: DYCD

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

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 in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rong Zhang

Address: Assistant Commissioner

I represent: DYCD

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

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 in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wanda Ascher

Address: Asst Commissioner

I represent: DYCD

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-19-19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nancy Robles

Address: P.O. Box 780 104 Maspeth NY 11378

I represent: VOW Voices of Women

Address: 271 Cadman Plaza East Suite 2  
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Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/19/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ira Yankwitz

Address: 85 Broad Street

I represent: Literacy Assistance Center / NYC

Address: Coalition for Adult Literacy

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