



**Testimony of New York City Public Schools
On Early Childhood Provider Payments
Before the NYC Council Committee on Education**

January 30, 2026

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz and members of the City Council Committee on Education. My name is Simone Hawkins, and I serve as Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education at New York City Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and for your continued partnership in supporting New York City's youngest learners and the early childhood providers who serve them.

NYCPS shares the Council's commitment to transparency, accountability, and timely payments to early care and education providers. Our contracted provider partners, who comprise about 60 percent of our portfolio of seats, play a critical role in delivering high-quality early learning experiences to thousands of children across New York City. Ensuring predictable and sustainable funding to them is essential to the stability of the system. We also share the Council's goal of supporting high-quality early childhood care and learning across the city, and look forward to continued partnership on policies and investments that strengthen providers and improve outcomes for children and families.

I know this to be true not only as the Deputy Chancellor, but also as a parent who relied on this very system for my daughter. I would like to briefly share with you information about early childhood provider payments, our ongoing efforts to improve that support, and our thoughts about the proposed legislation.

How early childhood provider payments work

NYCPS contracts with early childhood providers through a flat-rate funding model designed to promote stability and equity across programs. In most cases, this model provides funding above enrollment levels and includes advance payments at the start of the program year. Where registered contracts exist, these advances are intended to support providers with upfront operating costs and reduce financial volatility. While specific payment processes vary across early childhood program modalities and contract types, the overarching funding structure is designed to promote stability, equity, and fiscal accountability throughout the system.

Invoices submitted by providers are reconciled against these advances, enrolled, allocable costs, and approved operating budgets. In many cases, invoice submission appropriately occurs after required documentation is complete or after reconciliation with advances is necessary. As a result, invoices are not always submitted or processed on a uniform monthly schedule. This timing reflects the structure of the funding model and the need to ensure accuracy and fiscal responsibility.

NYCPS works closely with providers throughout this process and remains committed to addressing concerns, resolving issues, and ensuring that payments are made fairly and properly.



Ongoing improvements and provider support

Although progress in responding to those provider concerns has been achieved over the past two years, we recognize that we must make additional refinements. NYCPS, with support from the City Council, has undertaken a range of efforts to strengthen payment processes and improve the provider experience, focused on modernizing systems and processes that support contract management, documentation, and payment tracking for early childhood providers.

At the same time, we recognize that some early childhood providers continue to face challenges navigating the administrative requirements associated with contracting with the City of New York. These requirements are essential for accountability and stewardship of public funds, but they can be difficult to manage without sufficient support.

NYCPS continues to offer technical assistance to providers to help them navigate administrative requirements.

Proposed legislation

I will now turn to the proposed legislation, Intro 203, which requires reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers. NYCPS shares the goal of strengthening transparency and accountability connected to provider payments and welcomes continued partnership with the Council to advance that high priority. We look forward to working with you on the following adjustments to the reporting requirements. At the same time, as drafted, the bill raises several concerns that we believe should be addressed to ensure it is effective and aligned with how payments function in practice.

First, quarterly reporting more accurately reflects payment activity. Given the use of advance payments, budget approvals, and reconciliation processes, quarterly invoice data would give the most complete picture and provide the clarity the Council seeks.

Second, we look forward to working with you to clarify certain definitions in the proposed legislation to ensure clear and meaningful accountability.

Finally, we believe with proposed changes that this report could align and enhance other existing public reporting like the Terms and Conditions reports.

A path forward

NYCPS remains committed to working with the Council to improve transparency and accountability. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on amendments that align reporting requirements with existing systems and ensure that any new obligations advance shared goals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to continued partnership with the Council on behalf of New York City's children, families, and early childhood providers.



January 30, 2026

Testimony of Emma Gossett, Lead Budget and Policy Analyst, New York City Independent Budget Office

City Council Committee on Education:
Payments to Early Childhood Care and Education Providers

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee on Education. I am Emma Gossett, Lead Budget and Policy Analyst at the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO). IBO is a nonpartisan, independent government agency mandated by the New York City Charter. IBO's mission is to enhance public understanding of New York City's budget, public policy, and economy through independent analysis.

In 2009, the New York State legislature amended State Education Law to authorize IBO to provide analysis and publish reports based on detailed data and information obtained from New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). This section of law is tied to the reauthorization of mayoral control and has been in place for 15 years. As a result of IBO's unique position in New York City government and access to NYCPS data, IBO has published many reports using student-, school-, and system-level information. Some examples include Education Indicators, a treasure trove of data on the students, schools, and buildings that is regularly updated, and IBO's recent estimate of the need for additional teachers to meet the state's class size law mandate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing on Intro 327, which would require additional reporting on invoices for early childhood education providers. In my testimony, I will begin by describing the landscape of early childhood education (ECE) contracts. I will then discuss challenges within the procurement process that IBO has identified, both for providers and for NYCPS, as well as ways this proposed bill could provide greater transparency beyond the current City Council Terms and Conditions report. This testimony builds on IBO's previous work on early childhood [budgets](#), [enrollment and retention](#), and [capacity and utilization](#).

Landscape of Early Childhood Education Contracts

Early childhood education programs can be based in centers, run by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), or in homes, called Family Childcare Centers (FCCs). Importantly, FCCs are not included in the current City Council Terms and Conditions report data as





their payments are processed through a separate vendor portal. Head Start programs are also not included. Based on the City Council Terms and Conditions Report for fiscal year 2025 (school year 2024-2025), 900 ECE vendors had contracts in place with NYCPS, with a total annual contract cost of \$1.7 billion. Vendor contracts ranged from as small as \$70,000 to as large as \$62 million, with an average contract amount of \$1.9 million. For example, one vendor in 2025 held a \$22 million contract. This contract provided for 6 center-based programs with 64 staff members and capacity to serve over 300 students.

In fiscal year 2025, contracted programs represented 58% of all 3-K and pre-K seats provided through NYCPS, or approximately 70,000 seats, out of a total of 122,000 seats citywide.

As the City seeks to expand ECE options to younger students for a 2-Care pilot, NYCPS has said it will seek contracts with early childcare contractors to build capacity. I will next describe current challenges within the contracting process faced by existing providers that may impact that expansion.

Challenges Faced by Providers

IBO has spoken with ECE providers about contracting with NYCPS and identified some of the largest challenges:

1. **Contract Registration:** Providers have indicated there can be significant delays in the registration of contracts. Based on IBO's analysis of data from prior years in Checkbook NYC, IBO found that the number of contracts registered after the contract's start date has increased over time: from an average of 83 days late in 2021 to an average of 247 days late in 2024. This means that providers whose contracts were registered in 2024, most of which were for programs at charter schools. This means that providers whose contracts were registered in 2024 would have had to front costs for up to 8 months before receiving any payments (including advances). The fact that registrations are happening later over time compounds the problem.
2. **Advances:** Once a provider submits a budget, programs are then eligible for advances of between 25 and 35% of their annual contract, depending on program type. While providers say that payment timing has improved over the past few





years, they noted that advances are crucial to their ability to operate programs and maintain staffing levels.

3. **Invoices:** Providers are unable to submit invoices until the first day of the *next* service month. In other words, once invoices are submitted, providers may already be nearly a month past when the expense was incurred. Providers have shared that this schedule of payment and invoicing limits their ability to fund unexpected expenses.
4. **Recoupment:** NYCPS recoups the advance that was provided at the start of the fiscal year by subtracting 1/8th of the advance in every month from any payment sent to providers across the eight service months. Providers have shared that recoupment has made it so that providers have at times reduced their personal pay to make up funding shortfalls.
5. **Funding depends on enrollment/attendance:** Changes in enrollment lead to changes in monthly payments: depending on that month's enrollment and certified attendance, NYCPS will pay out a share of the awarded contract. The guidelines for how much depend on which of three tiers the providers' enrollment falls within. Providers have consistently identified this as a challenge and particularly so for fixed costs, like rent and staffing. This challenge can be especially hard for smaller providers with fewer students initially enrolled.

Challenges within the NYCPS Process

I will now turn to NYCPS and challenges with the invoice and payment submission process.

1. **Disconnected Systems:** NYCPS staff navigate multiple systems for invoicing and payment. FCC providers use the City's procurement system, PASSport, while CBO providers use PreKids (an internal NYCPS system) to submit invoices and maintain enrollment. For NYCPS staff, PreKids does not communicate with the City's Financial Management System (FMS) through which all payments are made by the City, requiring NYCPS staff to perform manual checks between FMS and PreKids using a third internal NYCPS system, the Financial Accounting Management Information System (FAMIS). This increases the time between invoice and payment, providing an administrative burden for NYCPS and a potential financial burden for





providers. Finding a system that allows a direct line to FMS for NYCPS operational analysts and directors may improve this process.

2. **Approval Process:** Once an operations analyst has determined there is sufficient funding to pay an invoice, staff approve the invoice and send it to the operations director. Contract invoices for seats that align with the NYCPS elementary school day (School Day) require sign-off from the operations director alone. Means-tested seats, such as Extended Day and Year seats, have an additional round of verification through the central finance team before payment can be processed. If NYCPS staff have questions or concerns, they return the invoice to the vendor. This crucial step in the process is not reflected anywhere within public data. As a result, it is unclear how frequently this occurs and what is the documented reason for each invoice return.

Data Challenges

I will now turn to the current City Council Terms and Conditions report. I will provide some takeaways and opportunities for future data collection. IBO assumes that the invoices reflected in the data are only invoices that have been approved by NYCPS; not the full amount of invoices that have been submitted and are awaiting full approval.

1. **Invoices:** Across all of fiscal year 2025, providers invoiced \$779 million, which is less than half of the total amount of awarded contracts that year. In the first fiscal quarter, providers invoiced a total of \$9 million, a much smaller amount than the following three quarters. This discrepancy may reflect the timing of the school year (School Day programs begin enrollment in September); it may also indicate a delay in contract registration and subsequently, a program's ability to invoice expenses. An opportunity for future data collection would be to provide a record for any invoices that are submitted by providers but returned by NYCPS for re-submission.
2. **Partial Payments:** It is IBO's understanding that NYCPS—consistent with other city agencies—does not issue “partial payments.” As IBO has stated in prior [testimony](#), agencies could be required to pay a majority percentage (for example, 80%) of every invoice submitted by human service vendors in good standing, and complete approval for the rest of the invoice in a reasonable timeframe (such as 30 or 60





days). IBO supports the spirit of Intro 327 to require NYCPS to report quarterly on initial invoiced amounts as compared with final approved invoiced amounts.

3. **NYCPS Payments & Recoupment:** NYCPS paid \$1.1 billion to providers in fiscal year 2025, or 66% of total awarded contracts. Total payments exceeded what was invoiced by providers by \$340 million. Further data on the amount of invoices submitted that are still awaiting approval may provide additional insight into these discrepancies. Having invoices disaggregated monthly rather than by fiscal quarter would also provide further details on timing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

For more IBO reports and to sign up for IBO's newsletter, please scan the QR code.



SCAN ME





Appendix

ECE Contracts in FY2025

Total Contract Amount	\$1,703,989,963
Total Invoices Submitted	\$779,253,311
Total Payments Made by NYCPS	\$1,120,975,056
Share of All Contracts Invoiced	45.7%
Share of All Contracts Paid by NYCPS	65.8%

SOURCE: IBO Analysis of City Council Terms & Condition Report on Early Childhood Education Payments FY25 1-4.

NOTES: These data include only contractors using the PreKids portal, and do not include FCC providers who use the PASSport system or Head Start programs.

ECE Invoices Submitted by Vendors in FY2025 by Fiscal Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total Invoices Submitted	\$8,986,375	\$207,598,760	\$294,031,591	\$268,636,585
Average Invoice Amount	\$9,908	\$228,131	\$323,112	\$295,205
Maximum Invoice Amount	\$1,079,812	\$6,520,740	\$16,993,406	\$9,307,109

SOURCE: IBO Analysis of City Council Terms & Condition Report on Early Childhood Education Payments FY25 1-4.

NOTES: These data include only contractors using the PreKids portal, and do not include FCC providers who use the PASSport system or Head Start programs.

ECE Payments Made by NYCPS to Vendors in FY2025 by Fiscal Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total NYCPS Payments	\$355,725,639	\$262,271,176	\$257,802,435	\$245,175,806
Average NYCPS Payment Amount	\$392,200	\$288,210	\$283,299	\$269,424
Maximum Payment Amount	\$13,974,118	\$6,799,817	\$11,307,192	\$9,009,129

SOURCE: IBO Analysis of City Council Terms & Condition Report on Early Childhood Education Payments FY25 1-4.

NOTES: These data include only contractors using the PreKids portal, and do not include FCC providers who use the PASSport system or Head Start programs.





Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Re: Reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers (Intro. 203). January 30, 2026

Board of Directors

Kimberley D. Harris, *President*
Jessica A. Davis, *Treasurer*
Eric F. Grossman, *President Emeritus*
Carmita Alonso
Matt Berke
Whitney Chatterjee
Matt Darnall
Brian Friedman
Jamie A. Levitt, *past president*
Maura K. Monaghan
Jon H. Oram
Jonathan D. Polkes
Victoria Reese
Ashish Shah
Misti Ushio
Veronica M. Wissel

Executive Director

Maria M. Odom

Chief Operating Officer

Melkis Alvarez-Baez

Deputy Director

Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed bill to amend the administrative code to require reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers (Intro. 203). My name is Betty Baez Melo, and I am an attorney and Director of the Early Childhood Education Project at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the education system, starting from the time children are born.

Every child should have access to a high-quality early childhood care and education program. While we advocate primarily on behalf of children and families, we support efforts to better resource programs and the early childhood workforce, including by increasing oversight in provider payments. We recognize that delayed payments jeopardize the ability of early childhood programs to stay afloat and cause administrative burdens for programs that divert attention and resources from the children in their care.

In addition to the early childhood care and education programs that contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide Infant & Toddler, 3-K, and Pre-K programs, the DOE also contracts with community-based preschool special education programs to provide classrooms for young children with disabilities who need very intensive supports. These programs also face challenges and delays in securing timely payment from the DOE.

The DOE relies on preschool special education programs to support preschoolers with the most intensive disabilities. The programs offer small special education classrooms with specialized staff for students with disabilities who cannot attend general



education 3-K and Pre-K programs. They are vital in ensuring that the City meets its legal obligation to provide a preschool special class seat for every child who needs one.

Too often, in conversations about early childhood education providers, preschool special education providers are left out. To ensure community-based organizations that contract with the DOE to provide preschool special education classes are included in the data reported, we recommend explicitly naming these programs in the reporting bill (Intro. 203), such as by adding the following underlined language:

b. The department shall submit to the mayor and the speaker of the council, and post on the department's website, on a monthly basis a report regarding reimbursements to early childhood care and education providers, including preschool special education providers, which the department has contracted with to provide these services

Earlier this month, the DOE posted information online projecting a shortage of preschool special education classrooms this spring¹ that could leave hundreds of young children with disabilities who have a legal right to attend a special education classroom sitting at home while their peers benefit from preschool programs. Therefore, the City and the DOE must make every effort to ensure they are supporting and timely compensating preschool special education programs and that they are meeting their full legal obligations to preschoolers with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ See Regional Need for Preschool Special Education, available at <https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/working-with-nycps/early-childhood/regional-need-for-preschool-special-education>.



Testimony to
New York City Council Education Committee
Councilmember Eric Dinowitz, Chair

Hearing on Intro T2026-0327
Reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers.

Submitted by
Kate Hoy, LMSW
Vice President for Children's Services

On behalf of
Inter Agency Council of
Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.
150 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001
(212) 645-6360
kate@iacny.org

January 30th, 2026



January 30, 2026

IAC is a non-profit membership organization serving the five boroughs of New York City metropolitan area, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and regions throughout New York State. We represent a diverse coalition of over 200 member agencies, including nonprofit specialized 4410 special education preschool and 853 school-age programs, early intervention programs, family groups, and independent practitioners dedicated to supporting children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Our mission is to ensure that people with I/DD have the resources, services, and opportunities they need to live full and productive lives.

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz and members of the Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue. My name is Kate Hoy. I'm Vice President of Children's Services at the The Inter Agency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.

While our 4410 special education providers are deeply grateful to the DOE and City for the preschool enhancement contracts, the current invoicing and approval process is threatening the very existence of some of these vital programs. I have spoken with providers across the city, and their experiences reveal a volatile system. One provider in Queens was encouraged to start an extended-day program this past September. They hired staff and excited their families, only to be told funding would begin in November. It is now the end of January, and they have received zero funding and zero communication. As they put it: *'The staff is receiving extra pay for longer hours and we are trying to stretch dollars we don't have... I am not sure how much longer we can support this.'*

Another is currently owed over \$400,000 for a single site. Despite having an approved budget, they were denied standard start-up funds and are now facing significant pushback from their lending sources.

The lack of consistent guidance is a recurring theme. Providers describe shifting goalposts, where an expense approved one year is rejected the next without explanation. We have schools reconfiguring classrooms for accessibility—only to be denied without explanation while others are approved for identical projects. One reported running a program for **13 months without a single dollar of reimbursement**, stating that DOE analysts were *'stalling so long they pushed us to the brink financially.'* This administrative bottleneck has a domino effect: delayed invoices prevent the filing of Consolidated Fiscal Reports (CFRs), which in turn jeopardizes future rate-setting and audits. The current rules are needlessly rigid—if a provider identifies an October expense after they've billed for that month, they are currently prohibited from going back to claim it, leading to forced underspending. We cannot tell families their children with autism and other disabilities are a priority while treating the schools that serve them as an afterthought.



January 30, 2026

The current administrative process has turned a vital resource into a substantial financial burden. Last year, many providers were blocked from submitting a budget until November because the portal simply wasn't available; once it opened, they entered a grueling cycle of rejections and weeks of silence, with some not seeing budget approval until March or even May. Even after contracts reached the Comptroller, they sat for weeks.

Perhaps most distressing is the lack of a consistent point of contact; providers described being 'passed around' between departments, even finding their contracts suddenly listed as 'closed' in the system with no one to explain why. We cannot improve staff retention or enhance programs when we are spending down reserves just to float the City's obligations for 10 months of the school year.

If these were traditional DOE classrooms, the lights would stay on and the teachers would be paid. Our 4410 providers deserve the same stability. (As a side note, providers are still waiting for clarity on salary increases for contract enhancement providers. Salaries haven't moved since the original enhancement contract in 2021, leaving one program to enter union negotiations unable to predictably bargain or offer the competitive wages our teachers deserve.) We cannot achieve parity for our students if we don't have salary certainty for the teachers who serve them.

In addition to endorsing the recommendations made by the IBO today regarding data on contract registration and returned invoices, we support Intro 327 and ask the council to mandate a streamlined, transparent invoicing process and timeline, and ensure that the 'enhancement' of a contract doesn't become a financial breaking point for the organizations and people providing the care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For questions regarding this testimony, or to speak with one of our nonprofit 4410 providers about their experiences, please contact: Kate@iacny.org



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

**Testimony at the Committee on Education
Friday, January 30th, 2026**

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz and esteemed members of the Committee on Education. My name is Terry Stewart, and I am the Director of Early Childhood Center at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House was originally founded in 1894 as a free kindergarten for immigrants and is among the oldest settlement houses in the nation. At its core, the work has not changed since our founding as we remain dedicated to improving the lives of New Yorkers through education, nutrition and wellness, and mental health services. Among our variety of community-based programs, providing education and care for the children of low-income New Yorkers remains a key part of our mission 132 years later through our Early Childhood Center.

Our program provides an exceptional social, emotional and educational development experience and a wide range of integrated services for 147 preschool children ages 3 and 4 and their families. The core philosophy of our program is to address each child and family individually and tailor our interdisciplinary services to address the full range of strengths and needs so that each child can excel. We offer a wide range of supportive services for the whole family, including legal assistance, health screenings, English language classes, support groups for parents, cooking workshops, parenting education and more. The program addresses the whole child and family, from their health and nutrition to family dynamics and the successful transition to kindergarten. Children and families benefit from our wonderful teaching teams and social workers and other Lenox Hill Neighborhood House services including Visual & Performing Arts, farm-to-table nutritious meals, Aquatics, and more.

We are a Head Start provider and serve the neediest families in New York and provide a high quality program to achieve the best outcomes for our students and their families. As a program funded partially by the City Department of Education (DOE), we are in support of amending the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers across the city. In addition to DOE, we are familiar with how payment delays across City agencies can adversely impact service providers. Improvements to transparency are one way to help keep agencies on track to making non-profit partners financially whole.

As Council Member Gutiérrez, along with some colleagues in state and city government can attest, having visited our program last year, we are a model provider with a wealth of experience providing educational services to young families. In this time of uncertainty, on-time payments and greater transparency are essential to ensuring that we can continue providing high quality care to the children and families that we service in our Early Childhood Center. This proposed local law, which would require public reporting on payment practices to contracted agencies like ours, would provide a gauge on reimbursement performance and may lead to a



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

change in practices..

We hope the committee members consider supporting this legislation. Strengthening transparency and accountability will lead to stability for early childhood programs at a critical time. Thank you.

Testimony for New York City Council Committee on Education

Eric Dinowitz, Chairperson

Friday, January 30, 2026 – 10:00 AM

by Paula Magnus

Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good morning, Chairperson Dinowitz, and members of the Committee on Education.

My name is Paula Magnus, Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Congratulations, Chairperson Dinowitz, on your appointment as Chair of the Committee on Education. We would be honored to welcome you to Northside for a visit to see our early childhood programs in action.

Northside Center strongly supports this legislation requiring DOE to report on payments to early childhood providers.

For over 80 years, Northside has served New York City's most vulnerable children. We currently serve more than 5,500 children annually across Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn through Head Start, Early Head Start, our Therapeutic Early Childhood Center, and educational support services.

Why This Reporting Requirement Matters:

Payment delays create fiscal instability. Like many community-based providers, we front costs for payroll, classroom materials, and direct educational services while waiting months for DOE reimbursements. This depletes reserves needed for waitlist reduction and program expansion—at a time when demand for early childhood education has surged.

Reducing contracts funding based on enrollment. Currently, funding is reduced for some contracts when child attendance falls below a predetermined—and often unfair—percentage. These reductions have a serious financial impact on providers. However, many of the associated costs are fixed. For example, whether a classroom has 10 children or 30, a qualified teacher must still be present. These costs cannot be treated as variable or eliminated based on attendance alone.

For this reason, the practice of reducing funding under certain contracts should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the reality of fixed operational costs. Doing so is essential to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of our much needed child care and educational services.

Financial impact of expanding universal childcare on current childcare providers.

Additionally, before any expansion of universal childcare programs is implemented, it is critical to ensure that existing providers are financially stable. Without this support, current services risk being lost, undermining the very goal of expansion. If existing programs are forced to close, the promised increase in childcare availability across the city will not materialize.

Transparency drives accountability. Public reporting on invoice processing timelines, outstanding amounts, and payment bottlenecks will help providers forecast cash flow, improve budgeting, and enable policymakers to address systemic issues like streamlining approvals and ensuring reimbursement rates cover true costs.

Delays harm vulnerable children. All of the families we serve meet income eligibility requirements equivalent to or below those for free school lunch.

Our Outcomes Depend on Stable Funding:

- 92% of our Head Start students met or exceeded developmental expectations for socioemotional development
- 95% of students in our Learning Support and Education Advocacy Program successfully advanced to the next grade level

These results require consistent staffing, facilities, and family support all jeopardized by unpredictable payment cycles.

We urge the Committee to:

1. Advance this bill promptly
2. Explore complementary measures: enforceable payment timelines, multi-year contracting, and rate adequacy reviews

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and are available for any questions. Thank you for your leadership. Northside stands ready to collaborate with the Council, DOE, and partners to strengthen early childhood education infrastructure for our city's youngest learners.

Contact: Paula Magnus, Deputy Director

Pmagnus@northsidecenter.org

(212) 426-3430

Northside Center for Child Development

1475 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10029 northsidecenter.org

Testimony on Int. No. 203-2026

Committee on Education – January 30, 2026

Good morning Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee.

My name is Kevin Kung, and I am an early childhood education provider operating multiple community-based programs in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Introduction Number 203-2026, which relates to reporting on payments to early childhood care and education providers.

I want to begin by acknowledging the intent behind this bill. Transparency matters, and the payment delays experienced in 2022 were real and destabilizing for many providers. Efforts to prevent a repeat of that situation are important.

That said, I would like to offer a provider-level perspective that I believe is important for the Committee to hear.

In my own experience as an operator, I have not experienced prolonged invoice delays when all required documentation, receipts, and supporting materials were submitted accurately and on time. When providers reach out to me for assistance with invoicing issues, the challenges I most often see stem from difficulty navigating complex documentation requirements and manual review processes, rather than from intentional delay.

Reporting on invoice timelines may tell us *what* is happening, but it does not meaningfully address *why* challenges occur or how to prevent them.

If the goal of this Committee is to stabilize providers and strengthen the early childhood system, I would respectfully urge consideration of three additional areas.

First, cost pressures and administrative burden.

Beyond rising labor, insurance, food, and utility costs, providers are operating under layered city, state, and federal documentation requirements, many of which overlap or duplicate one another. These requirements consume significant administrative time and resources, particularly for community-based organizations without large back-office staff.

I believe it is worth examining whether current documentation requirements are meaningfully improving accountability and outcomes, or whether certain requirements can be streamlined, standardized, or eliminated without compromising oversight. Reducing unnecessary administrative burden is, in itself, a meaningful form of cost relief.

In addition, NYC Public Schools early childhood contracts lack built-in cost-of-living adjustments. Providers are expected to absorb inflation year after year, which is not sustainable and undermines long-term program stability.

Second, provider voice and cross-agency coordination.

Early childhood education in New York City does not operate under a single system. Providers must navigate multiple agencies across different levels of government, including OCFS at the state level, ACS for child care vouchers, NYC Public Schools for 3-K and Pre-K, and regulatory oversight from the Department of Health. When opening or expanding centers, providers must also coordinate with the FDNY and the Department of Buildings.

These agencies often operate with different timelines, requirements, and interpretations of policy. When systems are not aligned, it creates unnecessary conflict and friction—not only for providers, but for families—sometimes resulting in families being unable to access services they are otherwise eligible for.

For this reason, I strongly encourage the Committee to convene a standing advisory council of early childhood operators. Such a body would allow policymakers and agencies to receive real-time operational feedback, identify misalignment across systems, and design solutions that reflect how these programs function together in practice.

Third, administrative capacity and process improvement.

If invoice processing delays are a concern, the most direct solution is addressing capacity and systems. Invoice review remains largely manual and dependent on a limited number of staff, with each submission requiring line-by-line review. I urge the Committee to work with NYC Public Schools to assess what staffing, technology, or process improvements are needed to modernize invoicing and reduce bottlenecks.

In closing, transparency alone does not stabilize providers.

Predictable funding, streamlined administrative requirements, meaningful provider engagement, and sufficient administrative capacity do.

Thank you for your time and for your continued attention to the needs of New York City's early childhood community.

Testimony from Olena Knyzhnyk-Olson for Committee on Education.

I testified via zoom today 01/30/2026. I wanted to come in person and I couldn't due to staffing coverage – another big issue for all CBOs.....

Three biggest issues that I brought into light for committee today:

1. Delays with payments exist. The timeline is always unpredictable and there are nobody who oversees these issues. We found out in the middle of September that our contract needs amendment – it probably was done a few weeks. SO – it had been around 6 months (SIX MONTHS!!!) for it to happen.
2. PAY PARITY for early education staff. Currently – DOE offers currently new teachers with bachelors degree with NO PRIOR TEACHING EXPERIENCE \$71,314 and new teachers with masters degree with NO PRIOR TEACHING EXPERIENCE \$80, 166. While CBO's Masters degree teacher with years of experience and a license gets around \$69K. It is either our staff gets paid same OR qualifications need to be drastically changed/lowered.
3. Cost of living expenses – providers were told in the meeting in September of 2025 that contracts will be extended for 2 more years – with no raise. We are already struggling with current budget – prices went up for everything – insurances, expenses for bills, food. In my personal situation – we have raised property taxes and now it affects our program a lot.

If you please look into these issues – we all would be very grateful.

Sincerely,

Olena Knyzhnyk-Olson

Educational Director in Brooklyn at Let's Play & Learn

Testimony on Behalf of CBO UPK Teachers

My name is Sabrina Brown, and I am a CBO UPK teacher. I am writing today to speak about the deep inequity that CBO UPK teachers face compared to our DOE counterparts, despite doing the same exact work and being held to the same exact standards.

CBO UPK teachers are required to have the same certifications as DOE teachers. We teach the same curriculum. We are observed, evaluated, and monitored by the DOE. We are held accountable in the same ways and expected to meet the same benchmarks for student outcomes, family engagement, and classroom quality.

Yet, we are **not treated equally**.

CBO UPK teachers do **not** make the same salary as DOE teachers. We do **not** receive the same benefits. We do **not** have access to a pension. We do **not** receive the same level of job security or long-term financial stability. This is inequity, plain and simple.

We are asked to do the same work, with the same level of professionalism, responsibility, and dedication—but without equal pay, equal benefits, or equal respect.

CBO UPK teachers stay in this field not because it is easy or financially rewarding, but because we are deeply passionate about early childhood education. We are loyal to our centers, committed to the families we serve, and invested in our students' growth and success. We build strong relationships with children and families, often serving communities that need stability, consistency, and care the most.

That passion, dedication, and loyalty should **not** be exploited.

Loving what we do should not mean accepting less. Passion should not be used as a reason to deny fair compensation, benefits, or retirement security. Respect must be shown not just in words, but in policy and pay.

CBO UPK teachers deserve **EQUAL PAY**.

We deserve **EQUAL BENEFITS**.

We deserve **EQUAL PENSIONS**.

We deserve **EQUAL RESPECT**.

If the expectations are equal, then the treatment must be equal.

Anything less sends the message that our work—and by extension, our students and families—are worth less. That is unacceptable.

We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for **fair treatment**. We are asking for **equity**. We are asking to be valued the same way as DOE teachers because we *are* doing the same work.

CBO UPK teachers deserve **EQUAL EVERYTHING**. Thank you for listening.

**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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simone Hawkins

Address: NYCPS

I represent: _____

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Bender

Address: _____

I represent: Day Care Council of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 327 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emma Gossett

Address: _____

I represent: IBO NYC

Address: 110 William St.

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